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The Age of Immanence: Whiteheadian Metaphysics from a Farrerian Point of View

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ABSTRACT: *This article concerns two of the twentieth century's greatest metaphysical thinkers: Alfred North Whitehead and Austin Marsden Farrer. It also concerns their efforts to address the most important problem facing philosophical theology. In this, they shared a single aim: to overcome the chilly indifference of ontological isolation with the warmth of action, real relation.*

Both Whitehead and Farrer recognized that the positivist demand for conceivability-criteria struck at the heart of theology. Farrer held out for a basic epistemological requirement: the knowing agent. This enabled him to transform verificationism into a principle of "experiencable difference." Similarly, Whitehead met the challenge of modern philosophy with a principle of concrescence. Privileging action-concepts over the logical inertia of traditional ontology, he redefined classical metaphysics as concrete connection. Therein lies his importance to philosophical theology.

It is my contention, however, that Whitehead took positivism too much to heart. This led him to push "active existence" to its ontological limits. The result is "being" exhaustively defined as "doing," and a theology equivalent to "flattened naturalism." Whitehead's God avails Itself of real existence only within the matrix of other existents. This places the emphasis exclusively on the consequent mode. Unfortunately, it also undermines any pragmatic yield his constructs might offer,

because absolute consequentialism comes at the cost of actual intending. In the end, Whitehead's radical revision of Aristotelian categories is too severe a metaphysical reaction. It leaves no opportunity, in Farrer's terms, no "prior actuality," for divine agency to exercise the choice to act.

Drawing on P.F. Strawson's analysis of the concept "person," I have identified damaging parallels between Whitehead's revisionary metaphysics and Sartrean existentialism. This defines the process theologian's seemingly inevitable progress towards atheism (something many commentators, including Farrer, suspected). This suggests that the mistake of process activism is the same substantival disjunct which lies at the heart of classical theism. It is the misalignment of consciousness and bodily act, separating enquiring subject from objects known. In other words, the philosophy of mind that underwrites process theology continues to isolate (divine) consciousness from real, active, existence. The (divine) agent is thereby denied any reality but the most "primordially deficient." This only preserves the radical separation of transcendence and immanence which, likewise, haunts scholastic theology. Like those he would refute, Whitehead ultimately surrendered the personalist presupposition of religious thought. In short, process theology aligned Creator with creation so completely that the personal God of Christian praxis is lost.

This essay is about two of the last great metaphysical thinkers: Alfred North Whitehead and Austin Marsden Farrer. It is also about the fundamental difficulty facing philosophical theology: the sheer conceptual dislocation of finite creation and the infinite Being of God. Technically speaking, that is, it concerns the clear-cut logical disjunction of transcendent Being and immanent act.

To begin with the thinkers: Whitehead is perhaps the better known, especially in the United States. More than eighty years after it was first published, *Process and Reality*[1] remains a significant force in American theology. And if it has failed to catch on elsewhere, Whitehead's "philosophy of organism" (*PR* 7) continues to pose a serious challenge to the absolutist tendencies of Western theology—so much so that it generates strong feelings, even open hostility. Edward Henderson, for example, has signalled the "revulsion" of traditional thinkers faced with "the idea of the finite God of process theology" ("Divine" 39). Considering the underlying connection between hostility and insecurity, such strong words should warn us against dismissing Whitehead too hastily. More importantly, the Whiteheadian challenge must be taken seriously because it addresses the contradiction at the heart of orthodox theology. It refutes the Aristotelian categories on which that orthodoxy has so

long stood. Striking at the logical and ontological isolation of divine *ipseity*, process cosmology hoped to purge metaphysics of that "vacuous actuality which haunts realistic philosophy . . . [the] *res vera* devoid of subjective immediacy" (Whitehead, *PR* 29). Simply put, Whitehead sought to heal the breach between God and Creation. Emphasizing the responsive nature of God over absolute self-sufficiency, he introduced consequentialist motifs into philosophical theology.

The Oxford philosopher and theologian Austin Marsden Farrer is perhaps less well known. Those familiar with his penetrating insight and eloquent expression will understand immediately why his work inspires serious philosophical inquiry. John Hick testified to a thinker "so far removed from the realm of unanalysed slogans, vague metaphors, and all forms of sloppiness and imprecision." Farrer set the standard of philosophical and theological discourse. "[T]o read someone of Farrer's stature," Hick maintained, "is to lose any taste for lower levels of theological writing" (Farrer, *Reflective* xiv). John Glasse had the reason: "Farrer always did his theology metaphysically, approaching his task in the manner of *philosophia perennis*" (Conti, *Metaphysical* xviii)[2] And, like Whitehead, Farrer was concerned to reverse the adversarial effects of Aristotelian abstraction on philosophy and theology. In his own words, Farrer, too, set out to "purge out the old Aristotelian leaven" (*Faith* v). But his route ran closer to the religious tradition out of which he philosophized. He was, accroding to Hick, "concerned to test the rationality of beliefs which he first inherited and then responsibly decided to live by" (*Reflective* xiv). For Farrer, the theologian is bound consider those practices and traditions out of which theology grows. "Whatever else the rational theologian may pretend to do, he will in fact be considering a question posed to him by religious belief; and he may as well be above board about it" (*Faith* 1).

The Wittgenstinian tone of this appeal to religious *praxis* is unmistakable. The "questions posed by religious belief" may only be understood from within the religious "language game." Moreover, this implies that it is only from within the religious "language game" that these questions may be reasonably addressed. The sentiment is characteristic of Farrer's magnum opus, *Finite and Infinite.* Here too, the emphasis is on active belief; a belief which, Farrer reminds us, "has stood more than 2000 years." And if that ancient "belief has been reasonable it has had a reason, and our only business must be to draw this out and restate it" (3).[3] Notably, *Finite and Infinite* (Farrer's response to "the breath-taking naivety of old

linguistic realism" [ix])[4] was first published in 1943, twenty-two years after Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and ten years before *Philosophical Investigations.*

Farrer had the foresight to build his philosophical theology on pragmatic ground. In doing so, I suggest, he would overcome the radical abstractions into which theology had fallen. Simultaneously, he would rebut the two most serious threats to theology, then and now. On the one side was (and is) the rationalist appeal to Absolute Being; on the other, the positivist demand for objective evidence. Farrer's philosophical theology simultaneously avoided the excesses of over-inflated transcendentalism and the deflationary effects of empirical reduction. Instead (Hick observes) he invited us to "look at the world with the perceptiveness of a poet, not imposing our cultural categories upon it but letting it affect us in its unique concrete particularity" (*Reflective* xiv).[5] Should we choose to follow, we may find that "our minds are led through the world by a rational path to its infinite creator and sustainer."[6] That is surely the right approach.

Those, then, are the thinkers. The thought with which they, and we, are concerned is the commitment to make sense of our thoughts about God. For the Farrerian scholar Charles Conti, this commitment is chartered by the logico-linguistic conditions of theology. Hence, the theological question is succinctly put.

> What justifies the passage of the mind from world to God? How can the analogies we use in the finite domain be extended, intelligibly and coherently, to the infinite? How, that is, can words which have their purchase in the finite world be used to refer to or point 'beyond' themselves to a transcendent realty? (*Metaphysical* 1)

These are the conceptual "bridges" we construct between natural and "stretched" inference. (With the focus on modes of exploration and explanation, both question and answer will inevitably be as much a matter of psychology as theology. "Philosophical doctrines are in some degree the function of the philosophers' preoccupations" [Farrer, *Finite* vii]). The theologian is faced with a classical disjunction: Being *contra* knowing. The transcendent reality of God is radically contrasted with the demand for immanent expression, for concrete experience of the divine Will.[7] Philosophically, this is commonly expressed as the contrast of mind and body or, more abstractly, subject and object. The enduring nature of the problem, however, lies in the fact that religious *praxis* concerns, not God *in se*, but the dialectical tension between finite and infinite. In contrast,

philosophers and theologians of the scholastic tradition begin and end with *Ipsum Esse*, the real and self-referential "Being" of God.

Metaphysically, that "old onto-theology" (as Feuerbach termed it)[8] recognizes only one side of the problem. It places the logical and ontological weight exclusively on transcendent reality. In other words, "reality" is abstracted from the contaminating contingencies of particular experience in order to meet the primary requirement for absolute objectivity. The sharply polarized terms of this conception issue in a schema of discrete units exempt from actual relation. In Whiteheadian parlance, each unit represents "its own private qualification" (*AI* 135). This may preserve the ontological integrity of the God-construct, but it leaves the theologian in no position to account for the intimate connection of God and Creation.

Whitehead and Farrer sought to return these abstract and transcendentalized ideas to a world of finite experience in similar ways. Principally, they both rejected the classical model of "outside-in" causation and its corollary, the absolute priority of any being. Following Aristotle, scholastic theologians put "being before becoming, so ended up with a First Cause existing in plenitude" (Conti, *Metaphysical* 259 n38).That supplied a causal argument which, again, met the first condition of a theological *a priori*: "being, just being itself, without reciprocity of action by anything else upon it such as to make it ever become in any particular other than, by its own nature, it was" (Farrer, *Reflective* 182). The resulting conception of "transcendent God as imposer," Whitehead argued, "became the "working formula of the eighteenth century. God made his appearance in religion under the frigid title of the First Cause, and was appropriately worshipped in whitewashed churches" (*AI* 146).

In outdated metaphysics, Farrer and Whitehead recognized the equally outdated physics. It is a mythology or (in Farrer's terms) a "diagrammatic fiction," which had its scientific apotheosis in Newtonian cosmology. Whitehead may have considered Newton's *Scholium* one of the "two great cosmological documents guiding western thought,"[9] but he also recognized its metaphysical deficiencies. "[W]ithin certain limits, [the *Scholium* can] be thoroughly trusted for the deduction of truths at the same level of abstraction as itself" (*PR* 93-94). But to imagine those abstractions somehow correspond to actual existents would be a serious philosophical mistake. Whitehead called it the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."

> [An] existent is understandable in complete disconnection from any other such existent: the ultimate truth is that it requires nothing but

> itself in order to exist. But in fact there is imposed on each such existent the necessity of entering into relationships with the other ultimate constituents of Nature. But you cannot discover the natures of the relata by any study of the laws of their relations. Nor conversely can you discover the laws by inspection of the natures. (*AI* 135)

Such abstract entities remain beyond the epistemological reach of knowing agents. In contrast, Whitehead defined reality as a matrix, or *nexus*, of concrete relations. The "actual world is a process, and that process is the becoming of actual occasions" (*PR* 22). This rebuts the classical hypostasis of Real Being. Privileging instead the dynamic instantiation of being-in-action, it entails "no actualities without full and proper integration with other actualities, themselves in the process of becoming" (as Conti summarized the Whiteheadian position [*Metaphysical* xxii]). More simply, "it belongs to the nature of every 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming'" (Whitehead, *PR* 22).

Beyond its own level of abstraction, Newton's corpuscular materialism corresponds to no actual or potential experience. "Realities," Farrer argued, "do not co-exist by absolute position in a Newtonian continuum; they co-exist by constituting a field of conditions for any single piece of organized agency" (*Faith* 150). Deny this, and we uphold an unreal abstraction: exploring agents isolated from the fact and mode of exploration. That abstraction will, however, correspond to the classical realist's perspective on absolute objectivity, commonly known as the "God's-eye view." Any such a claim is clearly nonsensical, for there can be no knowledge without a knowing agent. Reality makes itself known by exercising what Farrer called "disturbance effect," and Conti "interference capability."[10] Actual existents leave their "imprint" on our explorations. "Real being" is continuous with our exploratory acts. Consequently, our logically basic conception of "real being" cannot be isolated from the means and mode of exploration. Hence (Farrer argued) physical interference is "the only method of physical enquiry" (84). And it follows from this that "physical action is the only physical reality we can ever encounter" (84). *Nota bene*, Farrer's "physicalism" was no crude attempt to define the universe in terms of "sheer crass material." "[N]either science, nor a philosophy scientifically enlightened, can uphold that view." *Per contra*, he argued, "The bottom of substance is ceaseless act" (166).[11]

> The apparently solid and stupid lumps of physical matter are, in fact, nothing of the sort: they are really made up of infinitely complicated,

> minute rhythms of active process, without which process, nothing would exist at all. (*Reflective* 40)

Actual existents are *in and as* the collisions and interactions of mutually conditioning forces. Hence, seemingly "lifeless matter consists of energy caught in patterns of less or greater complexity" (*Science* 69). Reconnecting being with concrete and particular *ways* of being, Farrer simultaneously rebuked realist pretensions to omniscience, and the logico-ontological isolationism it entails. "*ESSE* is *OPERARI*, and an *operatio*, *energia*, has a plurality of elements to it" (*Finite* 21). Actual "operation," that is, issues in "co-operative effects." As a "plurality of elements," *energia* enacts the concrete combination of inter-agents. That combination constitutes the field of operations for all existents. As such, it also constitutes our own field of experience.

Something like this "plurality of elements" is also characteristic of the process cosmologist's "ultimate metaphysical principle." For Whitehead, existence is a "creative advance into novelty." The universe is an "advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction" (*PR* 21). Any existent, or actual occasion, is the embodiment of a phase in that process. An actual occasion only is as it is *in and as* the circumstances which occasioned it. Or, as Whitehead put it, "*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity *is*" (23). This, too, conjoins existence with action. Existence depends upon the "accidental embodiments" of determinate activity, and "apart from these accidents [any entity] is devoid of actuality" (79).[12] Hence, the principle of conjunction is collaborative: embodiment is a social act, it presupposes the community in which it occurs. Only the "community of common activity involving mutual implication" (79), Whitehead argued, can supply the conditions for active existence.

This insight is essential for a coherent epistemology. The presence of this "community of common activity" is built into the very possibility of experience. It underpins the reality of exploration and explanation. These are shared activities. The community agrees and supplies the terms in which they may be legitimately transacted. Hence, Whitehead described the community as a "primary matter of fact, implicitly assumed in every detail of our organization of life" (*PR* 79). Critically, the Whiteheadian point is not simply (if at all) anthropological. It is ultimately, and in the traditional sense, metaphysical. Whitehead sought to describe the fundamental building blocks of existence. By co-opting response with becoming,

he was attempting to heal the rift between accident and essence. He was building activist premises into ontology.

Nevertheless, predicating existence on action destabilizes the working formulae of scholastic ontology. Action fatally undermines that "great Newtonian fiction of a space-time continuum viewed from no point in space and no moment in time" (Farrer, *Faith* 150).[13]

> The notion of energies in a pure or simple state, prior to mutual engagement is physical nonsense. All activity is mutual, as between energies, and all activity thus mutually engaged changes and redistributes itself. (82)

Thus, the Newtonian "Doctrine of Imposed Law" goes against the grain of modern physics and modern metaphysics. Furthermore, Whitehead observed, that doctrine is "without interest apart from the correlative doctrine of transcendent imposing Deity" (*AI* 135-36). For both Farrer and Whitehead, the time had come for the God of absolutes and ultimates to make his last (non)appearance.

Process polarities & P.F. Strawson

To do justice to the full range of their respective contributions to philosophy and theology in a single essay is, of course, impossible. In what follows, therefore, I will focus on what I believe to be the key point of contention between Farrer and Whitehead. I intend to show that process theology is unable to meet the demands of either faith or philosophy because it continues to harbor a recalcitrant Aristotelianism. This is evident in Whitehead's failure to properly realign the mental and the physical poles of his metaphysic. Farrer, on the other hand, was uniquely able to address this most serious theistical difficulty. He developed a philosophical psychology better able to account for both knowing subject and object known. Rethinking the "self" in terms of conscious physical action would supply the analogical foundations for his own metaphysical revision. Farrer offers a more perfect reintegration of the two essential elements: the conscious or deliberate nature of action, and the naturally active, therefore physical, expression of consciousness. This philosophical psychology provides our thought about God with the predication principle it desperately needs. That predication principle is what classical and neo-classical theologians still lack: the means to realign both sides of the problem, transcendent agency with immanent act.

There is a curious echo of classical dualism in the founding premises of process metaphysics. Despite his revisionary outlook, Whitehead clearly defines existence as bipolar. As an Actual Entity, God resides at the physical pole. God is "derivative . . . consequent on the creative advance of the world" (*PR* 345). The mental pole, in contrast, is "deficiently actual" (or "actually deficient"). Unlimited by concrete relation, mentality remains causally unconditioned (but not quite decommissioned).

This striated philosophy of mind supplied Whitehead with a logically basic distinction between the Primordial and Consequent Natures of God. Primordiality is the sheer, appetitive drive for concrescence.[14] Consequentiality is the fulfilment of that drive. At the mental pole, God is "free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient and unconscious" (*PR* 345.) What God needs to actually *be* is in the consequences of interaction. Apart from self-enactment-in-Creation, God remains unrelated to other actualities or concrete context. Hence, Primordial Being is no real Being. It is, at best, the *potential* for being, that is, becoming. Primordiality represents the potential for Creation. This places the logical and ontological weight on the consequent mode, no prior reality required.

Defining primordiality as deficient is not simply a matter of methodology. It is (as Farrer was aware) an important metaphysical point.[15] Certainly, there is no *a priori* access to any Being. "We do not, of course, know any other God than the God who acts upon us, and around us. But then there is no other God to know; his action is his being" (*Triple* 9).[16] God is only known through divine act. However, Whitehead's emphasis on the Consequent Nature of God represents a far stronger claim.

To explain: according to Whitehead, the metaphysician's task is to describe the "ultimate generalities" or "final realities" which constitute the actual world (*PR* 8, 22). Consequently, he argued, "the metaphysical characteristics of an actual entity . . . should be those which apply to *all* actual entities" (90). On process premises, God is one of those "ultimate generalities." "God is an actual entity and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far off empty space" (18). "Being" is exhaustively expressed *in and as* activity. It follows from this that, without the act of creation, there would be no God at all. After all, "no two actualities can be torn apart: each is all in all. . . . [E]ach temporal occasion embodies God and is embodied in God" (348). This is equiprimordiality in action (as it were). God and Creation are expressions, or facets, of one and the same primordial drive to concrescence. God *is* as God creates: God is *only* actualized in full and

concrete relation to the world. “The completion of God’s nature into fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God” (345). Borrowing Grace Jantzen’s pithy expression, the world, it seems, is God’s “body.”[17]

Echoes of dualism in the foundations then. But echoes, too, of another vitally important metaphysical revision in the way Whitehead worked out that bipolarity. The resemblance between equiprimordiality and existentialism is unmistakable. Like Whitehead, Sartre rejected the scholastics’ Aristotelian metaphysic and the abstract notions of essence or “being” it supplied. And Sartre would offer a similar solution. He, too, eliminated transcendence in favour of a concept of identity defined by its enactment. The question is, do these shared commitments bind process theology to an existentialist assertion of nothingness at the heart of being?

Charles Hartshorne evidently thought not. Resisting the temptation to deny or dismiss, however, he neatly turned the tables on Sartre’s atheism, and the existential absurdity it entailed. Reverse the line of attack, Hartshorne advised, and we find “the simplest possible, yet significant, way to defend belief in God” (*IOGT* 334-5).

As Hartshorne writes, existentialists have argued that “God does not exist, therefore life is absurd (has no rational aim)” (*IOGT* 334). Hartshorne’s response was simple and to the point. “Life is not absurd, therefore, God exists” (334). Formally considered, both arguments are equally valid. But Hartshorne could lay claim to a pragmatic advantage. “In spite of Camus’ efforts [he observed], there is no way to live so as to express the belief that life is essentially absurd or in vain”(334).[18] Do so and we risk vitiating the very notion of action. Our actions are oriented towards the realization of desired ends. Deny the reality or meaningfulness of the desired ends and action itself is defeated. Surrender action and we surrender our logically basic notion of real existence.

Giving activist premises a psychological twist, consciousness is constructed from aspirations: our aims and ambitions are the building blocks of our identity. Apart from these (human) projects, there is no real “being.” But if those aims and ambitions are absurd then all our attempts to become are in vain. In short, to live without desiring or attempting to achieve even the simplest thing is not authentic; it is self-stultifying. So Hartshorne concluded: “If nothing matters, being authentic does not matter either” (*IOGT* 334). So process theologians can reject the nihilistic implications of what Hartshorne termed “French Asburdism.” They may

prefer instead something like "God as the heart and soul of all being." Or, as Whitehead elegantly put it, God as "the poet of the world, with tender patience leading us by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness" (*PR* 345).[19] Nevertheless, the central problem remains. If the parallel holds between Whitehead's principle of process and the Sartrean adage, "you are what you do, no more,"[20] then Hartshorne and Whitehead may still fail to convince.

Privileging act-consequences over agent-intending generates a tension in the inference from act-actualization to the agent *of* the act. This tension is not resolved by process theology. The fear is that transcendence, or "prior actuality" (as Farrer termed it) opens the door to "free-wheeling" supernaturalism. It threatens to thaw-out that "frigid first cause": the God who overrules nature while on some level remaining utterly independent of those actions. The orthodox notion of God "above and before all worlds" is simply unintelligible, process thinkers argue. It leaves divine Being imperfectly actualized in the creation-event. The principle of concretion demands that God be actualized in the consequent mode: in relation to the world-process, the universe of which God is the soul.[21]

For existentialists and philosophical behaviorists, this tension is easily resolved. Renouncing Cartesian realism, the "self" is re-conceived entirely in activist terms, *in and as* its own enactment. The "self" becomes the "story" of its own life. For process theology, the situation is more complicated. Unable to negate the prior reality of God outright, but equally unable to integrate such a notion into event-metaphysics, primordiality can only be classified as "deficiently actual." For Whitehead, sufficient actuality entails connaturality.[22]

This seems like a reasonable conclusion. Any agent is only realized as the agent of some act. I am only the writer of these words as I write and have written them. Prior to this, the "self" who would undertake this activity had only potential existence. And that is no real existence at all. Potentiality offers neither conceptual nor epistemological clues to agency. *A fortiori*, God *qua* Creator must be equiprimordial with the enactment of Creation.

The conclusion may seem reasonable, but process theologians cannot afford to abandon transcendence altogether.[23] Do so and they risk vitiating the causal thinking on which cosmological theism depends. Remove that metaphysical foundation and the religious inference must resort to *ex nihilo* creationism. That, or admit that it fails to get going in the first place.

This leaves process theology constructing itself within the same causal framework it sought to reject. The shift from primordial to consequent reissues the classical move from potential to actual.

This reflection of Aristotelian teleology may be too close for comfort. However, the appeal to primordiality is problematic. The inference from actual back to potential yields nothing more concrete than divine *Ipseity*. "Is" may well presuppose "could be," but that, according to Farrer, is "about as vacuous a truth as truth can be" (*Faith* 136). Logical coherence is no guarantee of actual fact and, by definition, "could be" supplies no real existence. As sheer or mere existential commitment, *in potentia*, or primordiality, refers to no actual thing.

With no clue to concrete agency on offer, the religious hypothesis founders on Whitehead's out-and-out activism. Whitehead's actual occasions supply no genuine disclosure, fail to point unequivocally to God. But this, after all, was Whitehead's metaphysical aim, just as it had been Newton's: to give cosmological expression to the necessary relation between God and Creation. Worse still, Whitehead's ontology aligns God so closely with the flux and flow of concrescence that it defeats any epistemological purchase on the divinity allegedly actualized.

Philosophers may have noticed that Whitehead's metaphysics is an example of what P.F. Strawson called the "no ownership doctrine of the self"(98).[24] That seamless alignment of agent and act leaves no room for intentionality. However, as both Strawson and Farrer would show, intentionality is the corollary of any meaningful conception of action. Otherwise put, process cosmology leaves no room for the ownership intrinsic to personal action. For Strawson, behaviorism and existentialism explain neither the presence nor the function of personal pronouns. They cannot account for the word "my" in the expression "my acts." Likewise, Whiteheadians are unable to explain what the word "God" is doing in the phrase "God's acts." If no account is forthcoming, it seems process theologians can make reference to nothing other than the process of nature itself. There is no theology to be had here.

Of course, Whitehead was no behaviorist *simpliciter*. Process theology cannot be reduced to philosophical behaviorism any more than existentialism can. To suggest otherwise would surely leave Farrer open to the same charge: that his philosophical theology could be assimilated to his philosophical anthropology. (Notably, this charge is characteristic of standard—and, I suggest, mistaken—interpretations of Feuerbach as

a reductive thinker.) More importantly, perhaps, Whitehead's emphasis on action, more properly, interaction, is hardly compatible with the materialism and (Humean) stimulus-response mechanisms on which behaviorists seem to rely.

Assimilation is not the point here. Rather, it is my contention that existentialism and behaviorism offer instructive parallels for Whiteheadian metaphysics. The common factor is a kind of reductive analysis of Cartesian consciousness. For Whitehead (as for behaviorists and existentialists), Descartes' mistake lay in his belief in enduring mental substances. This belief took Descartes far beyond the terms of his argument. "For each time he pronounces 'I am, I exist,' the actual occasion, which is the ego, is different; and the 'he' which is common to the two egos is an eternal object or, alternatively, the nexus of successive occasions" (*PR* 75). Follow this line of argument and we eventually reach a concept of action as basic or primitive—logically for behaviorists; ontologically for existentialist and process thinkers. For all three, action acquires a sort of independent existence. Lacking reflexivity, action refers to itself and its consequences, but not to the agent who acts. Simply put, behaviorists and existentialists located the clue to personal identity in action. Whitehead took this vital, and as far as it goes, accurate, insight and scaled it up, deploying it as the clue to real existence. In a sense, then, Whitehead's conception of God is the logical and ontological extension of a concept of the "self" that is expressed in behaviorism and existentialism.

"No-ownership" theories, Strawson argued, turn on an implied distinction between two senses of "ownership." Critically, one of those senses has been summarily dismissed on a charge of abstraction. Behaviorism nicely illustrates the logical sleight-of-hand at work. Writes Strawson:

> Only those things whose ownership is logically transferable can be owned at all. So experiences are not owned by anything except in the dubious sense of being causally dependent on the state of a particular body; this at least is a genuine relationship to a thing, in that they might have stood in it to another thing. (96)

Thus, for process and behaviorist thinkers alike, the transcending subject is logically circumscribed by the ownership of experience. Of course, on behaviorist premises, this correlation fails because there is no such sense of "logically non-transferable ownership." Brandishing Ockham's Razor, the "no-ownership" theorist cuts the Cartesian

umbilicus, excising the unnecessary sense of "ownership" as an extraneous metaphysical entity.

> Since the whole function of [the ego] was to own experiences, in a logically non-transferable sense of 'own', and since experiences are not owned by anything in this sense, for there is no such sense of 'own', [the ego] must be eliminated from the picture altogether. It only came in because of a confusion. (Strawson 96)

This insight represents a critical turning point in philosophy and theology. The activist revision of modern metaphysics hinges entirely on refuting the substantival concept of consciousness as a *thing*. Push the logic too far, however, and the analysis is liable to break down.

In Whitehead's defense, process metaphysics clearly does capture the dynamic continuity of existence. From moment to moment, each occasion is said to "prehend," or incorporate, the "direction" of another occasion as an element in its own concrescence.[25] Translated into philosophical psychology, the Whiteheadian "self" is a nexus in which prehensions exhibit a "central direction" (*PR* 107). This endows each member of the nexus with "some faint form of mutual conformity," which constitutes a "serial" order. In such a nexus, incorporation becomes inheritance as the direction is passed from ancestor to descendent. "[T]he life of man is a historic route of actual occasions which in a marked degree . . . inherit from each other" (89-90). That "historic," or "genetic," route is the serialization of a defining (active) characteristic.

Whitehead illustrated his point with the process of acquiring, using, and eventually losing adequate knowledge of Greek. This route of actual occasions is "a society in reference to knowledge of the Greek language. Such knowledge is a common characteristic inherited from occasion to occasion along the historic route" (*PR* 90). Evidently, Whitehead foresaw the potential for misunderstanding which this seemingly episodic description of consciousness might suggest. The "more important character of order [he acknowledged] would have been that complex character in virtue of which a man is considered to be the same enduring person from birth to death" (90).

This "complex character" may be found in the "peculiar richness of inheritance enjoyed by various occasions in some parts of the body" (Whitehead, *PR* 109). More specifically, "the brain is coordinated so that a peculiar richness of inheritance is enjoyed now by this and now by that part; and thus there is produced the presiding personality at

that moment in the body" (109).The continuity of consciousness is a result of a "central direction" passing from "presiding occasion to presiding occasion." Hence, for Whitehead, the "endurance of the mind is only one more example of the general principle on which the body is constructed" (109).

In serial order, prehensions are simultaneously connective and constitutive. They correlate an occasion with occasions past and future. The past is co-opted by the process of inheritance, while the future is co-opted by the direction inherited. For process thinkers, this might constitute a kind of ownership.

The difficulty here is that Strawson's critique is not aimed at any perceived discontinuity in the activity which, for process thinkers, defines existence. His argument does not concern the "no-ownership" theorist's ability to account for the connection between one action and the next. After all, standard causal models also tend to exhibit a kind of continuity. However, this does not mean that Hume's "billiard-ball" causality will account for the notion of "ownership."

Furthermore, aligning "continuity" with "ownership" stretches the meaning of the term far beyond ordinary usage. Possession does not entail either continuity or inheritance. Indeed, the latter could make all the difference to our understanding of particular acts. If pressed, it may even undermine our defense of Whitehead. This is because inheritance tends to locate genuine ownership elsewhere. It substitutes something more like custody for what only appeared to be possession. Hence, to claim that an action is inherited seems more likely to precede a denial of ownership than its acceptance. Having made tea, I maintain that the activity was inherited from someone else. I may be trying to be modest, or I may be trying to shift the blame. Either way, the implication is "making tea was not my idea; I can't, or won't, take responsibility for it."

The point is, we cannot substitute a stretched or metaphorical sense of "ownership" for the literal one that is in question. To say that prehensions offer a *kind* of ownership fails to account for the ordinary use of possessive pronouns. This is Strawson's point: "no-ownership" theories fail to explain what the word "my" is doing in "my acts." Moreover, it is not at all clear that we can make sense of a metaphor in these circumstances. The literal usage—on which the metaphor must be based, and of which it is an extension—has been declared meaningless. Metaphors work by stretching the meaning of a concept in order to draw our attention to a

similitude between objects or situations. However, if one of those objects or situations is an illusion, then there can be no analogical extension.

If we cannot use a metaphor to defend Whitehead, then we must use "ownership" in the ordinary sense. And it is the ordinary sense that "no-ownership" theories claim to refute. Hence, Strawson argued, the denial of ownership "is not coherent, in that one who holds it is forced to make use of that sense of possession of which he denies the existence, in presenting his case for the denial" (96). It seems our defense of Whitehead must make meaningful use of a possessive pronoun in order to refute the meaningfulness of that same pronoun.[26] As we have seen, "no-ownership" theories claim that the sense of "ownership," which seeks to indemnify an "owner" or ego whose sole purpose is to "own" acts, is false or illusory. But in order to do so, they are driven to make reference to acts *belonging* to a particular agent. The theorist must hold something like "my acts are, in fact, the prehension of one actual occasion by another"; or "my acts are, in fact, a process in which actual occasions inherit the direction or goal of their ancestors." It is this use of the word "my" that remains unexplained.

This leaves behaviorists in a particularly vulnerable position. Their conception of "ownership" denotes a contingent relation—more specifically, a causal dependence—between an action and a particular body. However, as Strawson points out, the "attempt to eliminate the "*my,"* or any expression with a similar possessive force, would yield something that was not a contingent fact at all" (97). Unable to lay claim to some particular actions—i.e., yours or mine—the behaviorist must hold something like *all* actions are "causally dependent on the state of a single body" (97). Not only is this *not* contingent, it is quite obviously false.

Perhaps uniquely among "no-ownership" theorists, Whitehead avoided this line of attack. The connection between an activity and the nexus of occasions that constitutes the agent is still, on process premises, a contingent matter. However, not only is process metaphysics free of the behaviorists' mechanistic causal requirements; it is also free of the demand to account for only one mode of activity. Thus, process thinkers might remind us that they are not simply describing human actions. They are concerned with the vital interconnection of *all* actual occasions. We have already seen that every actual occasion is connected to every other actual occasion: "each is all in all." Not only could this claim still be a contingent matter; it is not obviously false at all.

Unfortunately, this brief respite will not last. Far from accounting for the role of possessive pronouns, the shift from the personal to the cosmological simply sidelines the problem. As explorers and explainers, conscious personal agents have a role to play in the metaphysical construction. At the very least, they themselves will need explaining. And this will require an account of possessive pronouns. To explain the role of "my" in "my acts,"the process thinker must still identify a particular act or class of acts as being related to a particular nexus of occasions. "The defining characteristic of this class," Strawson observed, "is in fact that they are '*my* experiences' or 'the experiences *of* some person' where the idea of possession expressed by 'my' and 'of' is the one he [the 'no-ownership' theorist] calls into question" (97). The ascription of ownership is how these particular acts are picked out from the mass of natural fact which constitutes the agent's environment. Shifting the level of description may avoid the need to make such a distinction, but it does not resolve that basic incoherence. And that incoherence, Strawson argued, remains "a serious matter when it is a question of denying what *prima facie is* the case" (97). We do genuinely, and apparently without contradiction, ascribe the ownership of particular actions to particular agents. Moreover, "this kind of ascription is precisely such as the theorist finds unsatisfactory"(97). It would seem all the more so for the Whiteheadian because, on theistical premises, the requirement for this mode of ascription carries over from the personal to the cosmological. But the "no-ownership" theorist will "maintain his position only by denying that we could ever refer to particular states or experiences at all; and *this* position is ridiculous" (98).

Of course, the theistical case is more problematic. Metaphysical speculation is concerned with all Creation. We cannot reasonably expect to single out one action or class of actions as particularly divine, any more than we can hope to put our finger on the divine Agent. Cosmological theism faces an embarrassment of riches. However, this leaves divine agency in need of particular instantiation. Without it, the idea of a divine Agent remains logically under-determined. Like "Absolute Being," a category that includes absolutely everything is logically indistinguishable from one that includes nothing at all. Simply put, if everything instantiates divine agency, then nothing actually does. Hence, Conti's warning: "Unless . . . God stands out with sufficient clarity in some event, God is particularly manifest in none" (*Metaphysical* 6).[27]

This only sharpens Strawson's point. When the question of action itself is in doubt, the concept of "ownership" is all the more important. Cosmological theism is theism as construal. It depends on conceiving the world as Creation, as the expression or realisation of some "Agency." The coherence of this conception depends on our willingness to extend the notion of "ownership." The extension (of both concepts) may inevitably be analogical, but it is vital nonetheless.

However, the Whiteheadian shift from the personal to the cosmological lacks the means to identify the particular act or class of acts that require theistical explanation. And without the "act" (of Creation) we cannot even conceive the "Agent" (as Creator). For Whitehead, *all* actual occasions (including God) are actualized in and as the process of act-enactment. This brings us full circle, since from this premise alone, it follows that no actual occasion could own actions in the sense required. Actual occasions cannot stand in unique relation to an activity as persons do to theirs. This is because actual occasions cannot transcend, or be distinguished from, the activity that is their actualization in order to instantiate that relation.

Like behaviorism and existentialism, process theology yields no adequate account of possessive pronouns, personal or cosmological. And, as Strawson pointed out, it is not as though the explanation could get by without the word "my." Without a coherent conception of possession or ownership, all three failed to overturn psychophysical dualism. Instead, "no-ownership" theorists were forced to re-formulate that dualism. Worse still, according to Strawson, they did so "paradoxically . . . [as] a dualism of one subject—the body—and one non-subject" (98). Whitehead located his "subject"—the actual occasion or nexus of occasions—exclusively at the physical pole, in concrete actuality. But he left a non-subject at the mental pole: actually deficient primordial potentiality. Descartes' enduring ego or "I" is an "eternal object": no actuality, but a "pure potential."[28] This preserves the mind/body disjunction intact. Clearly the reasoning has taken a wrong turn; and Strawson identified it.

> [B]oth the Cartesian and the no-ownership theorist are profoundly wrong in holding, as each must, that there are two uses of 'I', in one of which it denotes something which it does not denote in the other. (98)

For Whitehead, the (mistaken) suspicion is that the transcendent subjectivity implied by the "owner-I" denotes far more than primordial potentiality. It appears to be the mental pole fully actualized in abstraction

from its physical enactment. Claims of deficiency notwithstanding, process theologians paradoxically assert precisely that in "Primordial Being." Such concepts, however, open the door to ontological priority and absolute transcendence.

The driving force behind process theology was the desire to resolve the dichotomy between the "being" that is prior to, and the "being" that *is in* action. For Whitehead, the claim that God chose to create is equivalent to the claim that God chose to become. But choice is a phase of concrescence, however deficient it may seem. The Whiteheadian God could not *choose not* to become in concrete relation to world-process. However, if God could not choose not to create, then Creation is no genuine choice. Creation is not chosen, and (on theistical premises) it cannot be arbitrary since that would defeat the cosmological connection. (A world that is arbitrary is a world of brute fact, no theistic qualification required.) Therefore, we must assume either that the world is necessary, or that God is contingent—i.e., dependent or co-dependent on the existence of the world. But a necessary world begs the question. The world could only exist necessarily if it is necessitated by the co-existence of God.

Like many of his contemporaries, Farrer regarded the concept of Necessary Being as a "logical monstrosity" (*Faith* 120).[29] Whether the "being" in question is God or Creation, the idea is unlikely to gain much currency in the philosophical marketplace. Necessity is a propositional or linguistic predicate. It reflects the ways in which we use language, the relation between certain concepts. Assert necessity as an ontological predicate, however, and we empty out the only concrete meaning it had. Hence, the real monstrosity is "the very suggestion that it [necessity] is a description for which any reality could conceivably qualify" (120). Pressed into ontological service, that alleged description is transformed into *a priori* definition. Pressed into theistical service, that *a priori* definition merely revives the notion of "existence" absolutely apart from, or prior to, its enactment.

For those averse to the idea of "being" by definition, a contingent God may seem the safer option. It certainly seems closer to Whitehead's "creature of creativity": Consequent "Being" as a derivative of equiprimordiality. However, this empties out the God-construct altogether. Divinity is circumscribed by the world-process, limited to the act of Creation. Where scholastic ontology lacked the particularity to provide predicable possibility, Whitehead opted for the opposite extreme. Divine Agency,

not just expressed in some "act," but defined by this particular "act" of creation. "[T]he world's nature is a primordial datum for God; and God's nature is a primordial datum for the world" (*PR* 348). This "bold retention of mutual immediacy" (as Conti dubbed it [*Metaphysical* 211 n9]) does more than bridge the gap between finite and infinite. Equiprimordiality eradicates all conceivable and experiencable difference. It supplies God, not just *with* Creation, but *as* the enactment of world-process. And if there is no demonstrable difference between God and Creation, then, as Ayer pointed out, we have indeed failed to give meaning to the terms of our metaphysics. Divine Subjectivity is obscured by the concrescence of all Creation. Reduced to natural event, God is obscured by the endless flow of *natura naturans*.

Despite these difficulties, it is worth noting that Farrer was alerted to the significance, and the extent, of the demand for action-concepts by process theology (*Faith* 162). He himself notes that he had read Whitehead and Bergson as a young man. Moreover, it was in response to Hartshorne (whose books John Glasse sent him) that Farrer rewrote his 1964 Deems Lectures, publishing them as *Faith and Speculation*.[30] Writing to Glasse a year later, Farrer agreed that Hartshorne had "clarified certain issues in a way that can never be gone back on. He has shown that the Aristotelian hyperbole about the divine *autarcheia* is irreconcilable with Christian Theism" (*Metaphysical* 267). Thus (as Conti has demonstrated) it was Hartshorne who provided Farrer with "support for the cosmological format of *Finite and Infinite*." This is because Hartshorne, like Farrer, conceived God in "the effectual mode, as a 'causeological' Being" (*Metaphysical* xx).

Ultimately, however, Farrer could not accept the fullest implications of equiprimordiality and the naturalism it entailed. It seemed to him that the Whiteheadians had taken the Logical Positivists' critique too much to heart. In a lecture delivered to students of Schubert Ogden, he identified the "uneasy compromise" which resulted.

> The metaphysician in us pushes so far as to insist that the 'principle of concretion' is at root the operation of an actual mentality of some mysterious or cosmic sort. The positivist in us reminds us to keep talking about events in the world, and the way they go; if we must mention a divine mind, it must be as a purpose exhaustively displayed in finite occurrences. (*Reflective* 187)

Positivism is intrinsically reductive, so undermines metaphysical speculation. Abandon transcendence altogether, however, and we have,

at best, "a piece of transparent mythology: the world-kaleidoscope shifts *as though* [it embodied] a principle of creative choice" (Farrer, *Reflective* 187).[31] Metaphysics, in turn, seeks to overcome that positivist reduction. In doing so, it seems to point beyond all possible experience, back to the glacial heights of that "frigid first cause."

Constrained by the empirical conditions of "events in the world, and the way they go" (*Reflective* 187), process theologians can only offer a mirror image of that old onto-theology. They too recognize only one side of the problem as either legitimate or coherent. Like existentialists and behaviorists, process theologians have resolved the contradistinction of transcendent mind "over" immanent physicality by dismissing the more troublesome aspect. In equiprimordiality, that is, Farrer discerned a reductivist tendency which posits God as the "mind" of the world. More than the contiguous concrescence of discrete entities, process cosmology describes a single event, a "co-becoming." Theologically, it offers the perpetual realization of God-in-the-world-and-the-world-in-God. This pressed the activist point too far. At worst, God is reduced to the cumulative effect of natural events. At best, Farrer argued, equiprimordiality defines God as "the creative Mind of cosmic process, *and he is nothing more*" (*Reflective* 186).

Process and the playwright

This brings us to the crux of the matter. Is Whitehead's formulation necessary to make sense of the God-construct? Is it philosophically sound to insist that agents are *defined* by their acts, however complex and infinitely extended those acts may be? Farrer thought not. "Has God no other action than what is relative to a creation he makes, governs or saves?" he demanded (*Reflective* 179-80).

To answer these questions, Farrer presented Ogden's students with a literary analogy in two acts, as it were. In the first, a playwright's life is minimized by "some fantastic magical curse." This curse allows the playwright "no other active existence than what consists in producing plays" (*Reflective* 179-80). Moreover, the act of play production is itself circumscribed by an improvised performance.

> [The playwright] is condemned to produce them [his plays] by no other method than that of getting his actors on the stage and leading them to extemporise their characters and to weave up the plot as they go along. (179)

Farrer resisted the temptation to overplay his hand here. An agent who remains circumscribed by one particular mode of activity (such as writing plays) may still claim some priority, he argued. "[T]he playwright's action may be said to have prior actuality in respect of the creation of his plays, for everything springs out of his initiative; apart from which the actors would not be actors nor their parts parts nor the plot a plot" (*Reflective* 180).

Nevertheless, this playwright exists only in his immediate responses to his theatrical environment. "[H]e has no actuality, no existence as a playwright . . . prior to his work upon the actors and their responses to him" (*Reflective* 179). There is, then, no opportunity for him to review or overview the narratives he constructs, either of himself or for his actors. He is defined exhaustively by his onstage activities, entirely constrained by them. Apart from this creative outlet, Farrer's curse "allows him no active existence whatsoever" (179). But a personality reduced to a single modality is no personality. So Farrer dubbed this story an "absurd hypothesis."

Contrast this with the second, maximal version of the playwright's life. Notably, Farrer argued that maximality "is not to be so maximal as to constitute a return to the scholastic absolutism" (*Reflective* 179). In fact, constrained as it is by a distinctly negative emphasis, the maximized playwright offers the minimum of positive information. "[A]ll we need for the maximum we are prepared to defend is a restatement of the minimising allegory without the witches curse" (180). Eschewing orthodox hyperbole, then, Farrer provided his playwright with a life outside the theater.

> Quite apart from, and prior to, his activity as a producer-playwright, he has a personal life of his own. Indeed, if the playwright had not lived outside his plays he would have nothing to put into them. It is the content of the life he has lived offstage that moves him to make the dramatic representation. There is no need for him to make it, he could live his life and be himself without making it. In fact he chooses to make it, and it is very intelligible that he should so choose. In so far as he puts himself into the play-business, he relativises his actions to the being and performance of his actors, just as in the other story, no more and no less. (*Reflective* 180)

In other words, playwriting presupposes a social and cultural stage setting. This is the playwright's "life exterior to [his play]; a life out of which flows his creation of it" (*Reflective* 180). Without it, the play would not be recognizable as an expression, or a reflection, of personal agency. Without it, the playwright lacks not only the ideas, but also the most basic logical tools needed to make a representation. At the very least, he

must have learned the language in which he presents his stories. Offstage, then, the playwright participates in personal relationships. Only this sort of experience could supply the material to dramatize. His relationships are the substance of his drama.

These are the logically basic grounds of Farrer's philosophical theology: persons are connatural. "Mentality as we know it is a social product. Thought is the interiorisation of dialogue. We should not think at all, were we not mutually aware" (*Faith* 126). Conceive of a playwright, or any creative agent, and we inevitably presuppose a matrix of personal interactions to underpin him or her. Theologically, that is, analogically extended, the social setting of personal identity finds concrete reference in the Trinity.

> The doctrine of the life of God in God, above and before all worlds, can be thought, and by Christians commonly is thought, in purely personal terms; it is the fellowship of the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity is the substance of personal being and the pattern of personal relation. (*Reflective* 180)

This is evidently problematic. Seemingly overstated, "God in God, above and before all worlds" has certainly induced philosophical nervousness in empirically minded Farrerians (like Conti). So much priority seems to conflict with, rather than reconcile or even complete, that basic sociality.

In fact, Farrer insisted that the prior actuality afforded by maximal existence is still only "prior actuality in respect of the play." A life offstage has meaning and purpose only in respect of, and in relation to, the playwright's life *onstage*, *with* his actors. Hence, his life offstage is not equivalent to self-sufficient plenitude. And nor is his life onstage borne out of sheer independence from playwriting activities, as Whiteheadians might suspect. Ontological independence issues in logical and causal disconnection from the agent's life outside the theater, and, from the *nexus* of activities within which his theatrical life, must be enacted. This breach would make the theatrical choice entirely unintelligible. Both the choosing and the choice only make sense because the agent has been given the logical and epistemological tools with which to make choices like these. The playwriting choice is grounded in, and therefore a function of, the context which legitimizes just these sorts of activities.

Pressed to its ontological limits, prior actuality locates God far beyond our epistemological reach. For finite explorers, the God-construct will remain an empty abstraction. God is only recognizable in some (putative)

act. To conceive of God is to conceive of the "Personal Agent" capable of exercising the intimate relation of Creation. And if God creates and relates as a "Personal Agent," then, in some sense, God must observe the conceptual constraints this entails. Concede as much, and the hyperbolical excesses of scholastic realism are fatally undermined.

It does not follow that we must surrender the notion of transcendence altogether. *Esse* and *operari* are not ontologically equivalent. Neither one provides a complete definition of the other. Rather, each supplies the adequate—but not the necessary—logical conditions for thinking the other. Acts do not necessitate agents; they presuppose them. The difference is subtle, but vital. Acts do not point unequivocally to agents. There is always room for doubt regarding both the nature and the provenance of any event. Construe an event as an act, however, and we presume the existence of the agent "behind" it. Hence, even at the limits of maximal expression, the inferential connection supplied by person-concepts does not define or determine any "being." Critically, however, the connection simultaneously reminds us of the modalities connected. In short, it allows us to distinguish the agent from the act without generating the kind of clear-cut logical breach entailed by Cartesian realism.

That distinction re-admits transcendence on agential, not ontological, grounds. It marks the priority of *esse* over *operari*, the prior actuality of an agent who acts and, in acting, is actualized as the owner of those acts. To make sense of action as physically extended and consciously—that is, deliberately—intended, requires the briefest hiatus between agent and act. Farrer drew that hiatus delicately.

> The intending is ahead of the intended, though it be but a hairsbreadth. We intend further steps of what is already initiated, or the continuance of what is already in operation; but it is the continuance, and further steps, that we intend, not anything that already is. (*Freedom* 48)

This "hairsbreadth" focuses agency beyond the immediate act, on consequences intended. The project enacts the projection. Intentional action instantiates the continuum of transcending agency and immanent act. Otherwise put, the agent projects himself (as the agent of some act) into desired effects. In doing so, he enacts the aspiration which bridges the gap between the "self" prior to enactment, and the "self" after desire is fulfilled. This avoids the logical atomism entailed by Whitehead's "perpetually perishing" (*PR* 29)[32] moments of experience.

Farrer first made the point in *Finite and Infinite*. There, he located the emergence, the very possibility, of consciousness *between* awareness and response.

> If I become conscious only of the circumstances to which my vital pattern of operation reacts, and only in its reacting to them, consciousness has neither sense nor function. The reaction which the consciousness should direct takes place in the occurrence of consciousness. (235)

Without a "hairsbreadth" between awareness and response, we are left with nothing but automatic or reflex reaction. Analogically extended, that is theologically, that reaction represents the sheer act-event, (as Conti has dubbed it) the "pure distillate" (*Metaphysical* 184) of act-actuality devoid of performative agency. But *sans* performative agency, action lacks informative potential.[33] It identifies no actual agent.

Nota bene, the location of that "hairsbreadth" is crucial. Refusing to separate intention and action, Farrer instead placed "[t]he *intending* . . . ahead of the *intended*" (*Freedom* 48). The deliberate repetition of "intend" indemnifies the essential continuity of *esse* and *operari*.[34] One precedes the other, not as causal antecedent to causal consequent, but as a phase in the same operation. Indeed, the cause of action is not the intention that precedes it, but the stimulus to which the agent chooses to respond.[35] In contrast, intending is incipient action, awaiting physical expression, delivery into the world, as intended. Thus, intended acts are the extended expressions of the intention to act.

Otherwise put, just as acts without intentions are no acts—they are events, something that occurred, as opposed to something deliberately done—so too, intentions without actions are no intentions. Echoing the sentiments of J.R. Lucas, Conti would remind his students that, when the intention to write an essay fails to flower into activity, we have no grounds for claiming that an essay was ever intended. Elsewhere, he would use this insight to draw Farrer's reintegration of intending mind and bodily acts intended into sharper relief. "[W]e do not intend without an *operari*, nor plan without a forward looking *esse*. Neither do we act without a body, nor 'mean' without a mind. Intending depends as much on the means as on the motive" (*Metaphysical* 185).

Profiting from the ambiguous language of personal action, Farrer, too, explicitly denied the possibility of a radical breach.

> 'Will' is action itself, in the full personal sense of the verb to 'act'. But if so, why do we bother to have two words 'act' and 'will', and why when they are set side by side, do we resist the suggestion that they are synonymous? Because they denote a single fact under different aspects: 'act' emphasising what I perform, and 'will' my choice, energy or interest in the performance of it. (*Freedom* 109-10)

No room for ontological priority here. After all (Farrer consistently argued) *esse est operari*. But here, *esse* and *operari* are equated, not equivalent. Therefore, the "hairsbreadth" must represent a "looser" kind of logical distinction. It is the presuppositional conjunction of *operari* and its directive *esse*. The role of *esse* is simply to "abstract the focality of an agency from the fact and mode of its activity" (*Faith* 114). To preserve, in other words, some identifiablity for the doer of the deed.

For finite agents, this issues in a more perfect realignment of *res cogitans* with its bodily instantiation than Whiteheadian metaphysics can account for. Writes Farrer:

> [We] are bound to interpret the cognitive shadow by the executive substance, to regard it simply as the shadow of that substance. The shadow of doing, which is thought, must be interpreted by full blooded doing, a doing concerned with itself, and pointing to its own bodily enactment. (*Freedom* 39)

The description of thought as a "cognitive shadow" is particularly telling. So ephemeral a conception effectively undermines the Cartesian myth of self-substance.[36] Reflexive interest allows this shadowy agent sufficient priority over its actions to identify them, thereby claiming ownership of them. As a logically basic description, this must be the case for *all* conceivable agents. Thus, Farrer rejected the scholastic demand for that Being who enjoys maximal independence, and its corollary, that to intend divine acts, God must transcend them utterly. Instead, he conceived God as Agency. "If 'God's will' means 'God's voluntary action,' then it is a synonym for God's himself; for what is a person but his voluntary action?" (*Faith* 57).[37]

Theologically, Farrer reinforced the conjunction when he distinguished between human and divine agency. The difference between finite and infinite lies not in the degree of transcendence experienced by God, but in the imperfect integration of finite persons with their acts.[38] Finite agents "are not wholly in their acts;"—as the divine Agent is, concludes the (agency) implication. Moreover, Farrer resisted any attempt to

distinguish between the "Will," or "Intention," of God and the "Being" of God. Indeed, by making this distinction "bad and heedless men may [claim to] fulfil God's will while intending the very opposite." Distancing himself from duplicitous over-simplification, Farrer insisted that "the engagement with God's will that we are attempting to describe, is not of this exterior kind" (*Faith* 57).

Philosophically, prior intending supplies the minimum distinction needed to make sense of both "act" and "agent." Theologically, it functions as a corrective to the act-agent equivalence of process metaphysics. Any agent must transcend its actions *at least* enough to own them as deliberate, as directed. This, Conti suggests, is what co-defines act and agent in the first place, requiring both "intentions and extensions to make any act [and any agent] what it is" ("Appeal" 35).

Otherwise put, agential priority means activist premises do double duty as ontological truths. Acts indemnify agents, supplying a logically basic criterion of identity. In biblical parlance, "by their doing-deeds ye shall know them." For Conti, then, action supplies theology with a concrete predicate-principle. There is, he reminds us, "no entity without identity and no identity without describability; *no entia non grata*" (*Metaphysical* xxii). In short, no *there* or *that* without *where* and *what*. And *where* and *what* are functions of real relation, known interactively. Having borrowed Quine's *lingua franca* to press the philosophical point, Conti makes the theological application explicit. The "saving knowledge of God lies, act-essentially, in the descriptive or predicate mode, performatively; not in formal definitions *per se*" (xxii). Cashing out abstract divinity in personal terms offers an Other to whom we might relate. Personal Agency answers the basic theistical demand for cosmological intimacy without compromising the "Otherness" of the Agent. "God is 'revealed' as a personal agent, as 'person-for-us'; the 'man for others' (in Bonhoeffer's memorable phrase)" (xxii). Hence the need for personal pronouns and the pronoun trouble which inevitably besets any theology seeking to become psychologically enlightened.

This is the *via analogia* that Farrer and Conti followed. It re-opened the lines of communication between the once austere God of absolutes and ultimates, and those who seek communion with God. In Buberian terms, only in genuine meeting, where I and Thou are disclosed to one another, can the "self" hope to become a "self" at all.[39] This underwrites a retroductive inference back to the agency disclosed in acts experienced.

Construing the world in theistical terms means analogizing "up" to the "Act" of Creation. This, in turn, prompts the inference to an "Agent" of sufficient efficacy, not just to be capable of, but to be *responsible* for, that Act. Cosmologicality presupposes an "Agent" of sufficient actuality to intend a world of agents.

This takes the Whiteheadian insight a stage further, or rather back. It realigns the cosmological inference with the anthropological roots of faith. We cannot conceive of any "being" in abstraction from revelatory action. "God alone," Farrer reminds us, "has access to the life of God in God; his creatures will scarcely claim to know anything of him, but through the part he plays in creaturely existence." This predicates knowledge on concrete interaction. "God cannot be known simply as God" (*Saving* 27).[40] If God is known at all, it must be in response to practical requirements: actual facts interpreted as implicatory acts. On the cosmological scale there is all Creation, the universe construed as the expression of divine will. Closer to home, the believer's life is construed, that is, lived, as an expression of grace. For theologians and believers alike, then, "the disclosure of God must lie in the exercise of a relation with God" (*Faith* 36).

Pushing the logic of personal agency harder, prior actuality instantiates the moral and social implications of action. As an expression of authorial intent, transcendence is qualified (in both senses) by socially impacting consequences. Agency is both learned and enacted offstage, in the presence of others. Socially instantiated agents own their acts, taking responsibility for the consequences. The *cogito* (debunked by Farrer in the first chapter of *Freedom of the Will*) is thereby chastened and drummed into metaphorical service. No metaphysical abstraction, no ego bound and gagged by ontological isolation. The *cogito* becomes an analogy for authorial intent. According to Conti, "It is the 'owner-occupier' of deeds done; the 'performer-director' of the drama of its life" (*Metaphysical* 184). It is the "I" of the act, the "self" listening to itself before speaking, or more often, reprised through its "moral 'playback' function." Registering aftershock in the face of the other, the "self" seeks to make amends, resubmitting acts for review in the hope of qualifying intentions, mitigating unintended effects. "We gather the rosebuds of experience in daily reflection so as to remove the thorns of further disgrace" (187). These are the lessons the "self" invests in proceeding.

Further, the aspirational charter of personal agency is expressed as the "self" projects itself into its own future, constructing a narrative of

personal identity from ambitions won and lost. In devising a project, my intending circumscribes a lacuna, a conceptual gap between the experienced present and the desired future. Doing so points me towards a "self" actively conceived as *other* than myself. This dialectic is the story of a person's life, simultaneously written and enacted. As such, it represents an "otherness" we carry with us, a narrative of possible and probable future self-conceptions. Projecting itself into this lacuna, the "self" constructs itself, so emplots itself in the narrative of its own lifetime. "Narrativity" supplies a natural sense of transcendence for the finite agent. It is the context out of which we act and into which we project ourselves. Theologically, this dynamic allows sufficient room for the divine will, transcending both the world as created and the human agencies through which that will is expressed. This, Farrer insisted, allows the Creator to "see an inch ahead of the creature" (*Faith* 160).

Process and praxis

At the beginning, I suggested that Farrer located the theologian's point of departure in the practice and traditions of religious belief. Active faith charters theology as a guide to its own most serious metaphysical experiments. Most serious, because the stakes are inevitably the highest. W.H.V. Reade (a contemporary of Farrer's at Keble) also saw the profound and necessary interrelation of *praxis* and *theoria*. "[T]he two tasks, the doctrinal and the practical, are inseparable," he said. "[O]n Christian truth depends Christian practice, while conversely, without the practice, the truth cannot be discerned" (191). In practice, then, Christian truth finds the conditions for its application. Personal interaction supplies the basic criterion of conceivability.

The social and, critically, moral implications of intentional agency represent a pragmatic demand for any theology that aspires to being thinkable *and* liveable. If, that is, the metaphysical project is to bear any relation to the faith that, on some level, it claims to describe. Whitehead introduced consequences into a logically and causally arid system of abstractions. Undeniably, doing so reinvigorated cosmological thinking. He gave expression to the concrete connection of finite and infinite on which our theologizing and, if theologians are correct, our very existence, depends. However, the quasi-mechanistic[41] vision of Creation as a procession of mutually conditioning actualities left no room for a Creative Agent. For Whitehead, intentionality remained an impurity, a derivative of natural

process with no role in the creative interplay of actual occasions. Worse still it was an empty concept. If, as Whitehead insisted, "no thinker thinks twice" (*PR* 29), then no conscious continuity with act-events will be discerned. Discarding the Cartesian ego, Whitehead permitted no intentional consciousness to "own" acts, either cosmological or personal. Whitehead's universe is home to no perduring subject, no agency other than, or prior to, enactment. Actual occasions are (absolutely, i.e., ontologically, *are*) their own enactment, and, Whitehead maintained, what we imagine is consciousness is really a product of this integration (*PR* 23, 56).

Out and out activism leaves process theology unprepared to meet the logically basic conditions of religious *praxis*. By aligning God exclusively with the world-process, Whitehead vitiated the "personal" reality who creates. God is reduced to something like the *animus* "behind" nature. Except, for Whitehead, there is no "behind" nature. That is why Farrer rebuked process theology as "pious atheism" and wondered whether Whiteheadians "believe in God, or in something kind-of-nice on the backside of the world" (Farrer, *Faith* 48; Conti, *Metaphysical* 267).

Philosophically, process theology is driven back onto the realist ontologizing it claimed to correct. Whitehead's metaphysic offers a conception of reality in abstraction from the subjective interferences of consciousness. He thereby stakes his claim to absolute objectivity, a description of reality with no room for describing agents. By doing so, however, Whitehead left himself without the means to account for the mode of exploration by which his own metaphysical revision was conducted. Take exploring agents out of the picture, Farrer pointed out, and we fatally undermine "the whole assumption of logical study, by denying that meaning governs the formation of discourse" (*Freedom* 79). The meaning of Whitehead's Gifford Lectures, for example, cannot be incidental to the language in which they are expressed. "Anyone who holds that when we think or talk the meaning is a by-product, is maintaining a paradox" (*Freedom* 79). They leave consciousness unable to explain itself or anything else. Thus, instead of purging out the ontological tendencies of scholastic theology, Whitehead's search for a metaphysically basic description of reality led him to construct his own ontology on activist premises.

The other side of this philosophical coin is Whitehead's conception of reality. The grounding presupposition of process cosmology is the unity, or identity, of the created universe. That unity must be sufficient to embody divine Act. The Whiteheadian claim depends upon there being

an objectively real world; as Hartshorne might have put it, a world with which "God's Body" can be identified. This, too, is symptomatic of realist ontology. More obviously, perhaps, such a conception fails to conform to either the experience, or the evidence, of active exploration.

> The universe we know isn't *a* system, still less *an* organism; it's a free-for-all of a million million million bits of system, interacting as they can and largely with irrelevance to one another, according to a few rules of the game controlling their mutual collisions and mutual exploitations. (Farrer, *Reflective* 187-88)

Elsewhere, Farrer referred to the world-process not as *a thing* but rather as "one damn thing after another" (*Reflective* 174). But he did not deny the value of that objectified construct. For practical purposes we regard the world-process as a particular entity, an existent in its own right. However, we must remember that the "thing" we imagine the world to be does not correspond to an independent reality. That "thing" is a "diagrammatic fiction." It may be a diagram that we cannot do without, but it is a diagram nonetheless. On activist premises, the world is made up of mutually conditioning forces. It is an "unimaginable free-for-all of numerous bits of organism, system, process" (173).[42]

The conception of the universe as a unified process will remain as important to theology as it is to any mode of inquiry. We cannot help but think, Farrer suggested, that "God acts as the soul of the world" (*Science* 85).[43] Natural processes do appear to be working themselves out in the "mutual collisions and mutual exploitations" of nature. Inevitably, perhaps, our explorations will find their finite limits. As long as we remain within the system of nature, explanations of brute fact will themselves offer up only brute fact. From here, the metaphysical question seems a reasonable step. Faced by the apparently arbitrary nature of any particular thing, we ask why all things are as they are. (Deny the legitimacy of doing so and we deny the spirit of investigation which drives *all* exploration.)[44] Theology may find room just here to locate God as a viable explanation, identifying the guiding hand behind the process. But this cannot help process thinkers, since (as we have seen) process premises allow no room "behind" nature in which to situate the divine hand. If the hand is equiprimordial with the effect, then the very guided-ness of nature, which theistical explanation presupposes, is lost.

To conceive of God is to conceive an Agency capable of supplying the existential foundations for *all* other agencies. Prime Creative Agency

cannot be identical with the natural agencies "It" creates. Within the system of nature, the mode of active existence is (*ex hypothesi*) arbitrary. It is dependent on the action of other, causally connected, existents. Pursuing those explanations, Farrer observed, "one comes to realise that the state of the case will not be altered if one hunts the trail *ad infinitum*" (*Faith* 114-15). The "system" of nature cannot supply an explanation for itself, for *how* and, more importantly, *why* it is. In short, natural existence is non-self-explanatory.

> [W]e come up against a brick wall, so far as explanation goes. We can hope to explain any state of the universe, or any detail in it, from the previous history of the universe, and from the way the world runs. But if we ask why it has the sort of history it has, or runs as it runs, there is no answer within the scope of science. (*Science* 33)

Not there, nor any other naturalistic description of the world. On process premises, however, *Causa Sui* is defined as a mode of arbitrary existence, or the sum total of arbitrary existents. But this strips the God-construct of any explanatory yield. The explorer is left with nothing but arbitrary nature, still "in face of brute fact."

As one thing among others, God is reduced to "a limited agency with its own little range of effects" (*Science* 17). This contravenes the logical grammar of religious thinking. To understand the meaning of the concept "God" is to understand that the "explanation of what he is lies in himself. To look for an explanation behind or above or outside him is senseless" (35). Thus, we cannot coherently conceive of God as a non-self-explanatory agency or "brute fact," because "God" means "the most basic, most self-explanatory of beings there are" (17).[45]

In contrast, it seems Whitehead has pulled the rug from beneath our theological feet. Taken in themselves, brute facts do not cry out for theistical explanation of this or any other sort. This is not to suggest that our conception of a personal God is not also the God of nature. As a matter of fact, Farrer pointed out, we cannot *know* that nature isn't underwritten by divine insurance (*Faith,* 71, 78). *Ex hypothesi*, if God is the God of anything—or rather anyone—then God is the God of everything. The problem, however, is that the *esse* of nature is not sufficient by itself to invoke divine *operari*. Assign divine governance the same logical status as *natura naturans*, then, and we concede that "theism adds nothing to naturalism" (70).[46]

> [I]s it not obvious that talk about God can add nothing to a story about the world and its constituents? If you mean by 'God' just things being things and men being men, then why not be content to talk about men and things? What is added to the picture by talking about God at all? What can the name of God still serve for but a piece of slang, an appreciative noise? (Farrer, *Reflective* 172)

Farrer was not the first theological pragmatist to make this point. Nor was he the first to hinge the religious defense on voluntarist premises. William James also saw the theological bottom line drawn between theism and naturalism:

> The whole defense of religious faith hinges upon action. If the action required or inspired by the religious hypothesis is in no way different from that dictated by the naturalistic hypothesis, then religious faith is a pure superfluity, better pruned away, and controversy about its legitimacy is a piece of idle trifling, unworthy of serious minds. (734 n47)

More recently, Conti has sought to draw a balance just here. Unlike many commentators, he has readily acknowledged both the influence of process thinkers on Farrer and the "admirable corrective to static or abstract theological explanations" which Whitehead supplied (*Metaphysical* 17). Nevertheless, he argues that process theology lacks the principal theistical advantage of Farrer's personalist metaphysic. "[In] order to convince of a Personal God, it requires a higher organising principle; of intending Mind, carrying thought beyond creativity itself, mere generic of 'godness'" (17). This "higher organising principle" is Conti's holdout for a divine "overplus": prior actuality, qualified by that which it chooses to organize.[47] The physical model which grounds process naturalism fails because it can not supply this "organising principle." More seriously, perhaps, it cannot fulfil the central theistical requirement: the need for involvement, for intimacy, with a conscious, personal Other.

Ultimately, then, Whitehead's almost seamless alignment of God-and-the-world is a psychological, and therefore a theological, liability. Without the reflexive or self-referential aspects of personal action, the Personal God is obscured by the flux of natural activity. God is lost amid the creative press. Equiprimordiality issues in something like Spinoza's *Deus sive natura*. As it does so, the focus and force of the (divine) subject is undone.

> The physical model reveals its inadequacy by blotting out the very subject we came to study, the divine. For we challenge anyone to tell us what middle position is tenable between serious personalism in religion, and that pious atheism which has no other God than the backside of human nature. (Farrer, *Faith* 48)

The personalist model is no methodological option then, no philosophical "lifestyle" choice. Farrer insisted that the relation of God to persons is fundamental to lived faith. It is fully constitutive of the meaning of religious language and action.[48] "The only God who can mean anything to the human mind is the God about whom the human will has something to do" (*Faith* 70). Once again, personal interaction supplies the basic criterion of conceivability. The Christian religion concerns the relation between God and Creation, expressed particularly in Incarnation. As this relation is metaphysically downgraded, the process claim upon religious *praxis* begins to look dubious. Denying the agent "behind" the act, process theology also denies the fullest meaning of the life and death of Christ. It has no room for the full-blooded relation God extends to God's creatures in becoming human. This runs against the salvific grain of this relation. How can the believer hope without a personal other before whom she might stand in supplication? In the end, if impersonal process replaces personal God, it is difficult to see what sense can be made of a life of faith as dialogue between finite selves and some Other.

> [T]he God of nature can be worshipped in a dumb and distant sort of way; but how can he be prayed to? And how can he be trusted? If we pray to him, what can we ask him to do? And if we trust him, what can we trust him to perform? Is not he committed by his own consistency to the rules of the system he has created? How can we ask him to act out of order, that he may answer our prayers? How can we rely on him to save our children from disaster, if the disaster is coming to them? (Farrer, *Celebration* 146)

The impersonality of process naturalism puts too great a strain on the relation between creature and Creator. It threatens to cut the lines of communication so recently reopened on activist premises. With conceptual and epistemological weight placed *in toto* on consequences, the experiencable difference of a *personal* God is vitiated. Philosophically speaking, act-agent equivalence deprives the act of its logical antecedent, the intention that "drives" or informs it; literally in-forms it. Only intending can make an event an act. And only an agent can make a conscious, a creative choice.

Despite his failure to properly realign physicality with the conscious decision to act, Whitehead still marks a critical turning point in modern theology. His demand for a God of concrete consequences counteracts the Aristotelian urge to project divine Mind up the glacial slopes of high abstraction. The physical conditions of his activist revision remind us that consciousness is not any kind of *thing*. Intentionality may be essential, but it is no essence.

For Farrer, on the other hand, even supposing "the things in this world of ours constitute the whole field of God's activity and the whole sphere of his being" could not tempt him to declare for ontological independence (*Reflective* 172). His answer offered agents sufficient priority to indemnify the *owner* of action and experience, not enough to transcend them utterly. In the finite case, he insisted, we are compelled to lay claim to our interactions just because the knowledge and experience they give rise to expresses "a different actual existence in you and me." In short, my actions are "inalienably mine, and yours yours" (172). Here is the theological key: "So too with God." We can only attribute prior actuality to God because it is meaningfully attributable to God's creatures: prior actuality is a critical component of *any conceivable agent*. Therefore we may *only* predicate of God as much priority as is sensibly predicable of God's creatures. Simply put, God's "living of our world must be his, and not ours, even if it is our world and no other that he focuses" (172). That is enough to meet the theistical case and ensure that theology adds something to naturalism.[48]

So Farrer would first reflect Strawson's critique of "no-ownership" theorists and then provide the theistical extension. The conclusion of this *Auseinandersetzung* with process metaphysics is strictly limited by the presuppositional logic needed to defend the concept of a personal God. No room for necessitarian definitions of Absolute Being. "[T]ranscendentalism receives negative support from the inhospitality of the world we know towards a world-soul theology"(*Faith* 175). (This is not quite the decisive affirmation of orthodox doctrine some commentators have claimed for Farrer.) "Negative support" has concrete consequences for the believer's relation. That is, when theology turns, not to natural process or supernatural causality, but to a personal Other. Hence, despite his allegedly extreme interpretation of Farrer, Conti refuses to surrender prior actuality precisely because it "allows one to be a theological minimalist while getting sufficient transcendence from the consequent nature of God" ("Appeal" 31). Priority

is strictly qualified by the demands of that personal relation and the inevitable analogicality of its projection. It is a two-pronged attack on traditional and limited conceptions of transcendence and immanence. It uses intentionality and the moral will to undermine the clear-cut distinctions of classical and neo-classical theology.

Ultimately, then, prior actuality, and its social implications, supplied Farrer with the means to overcome the disjunction between transcendence and immanence. He re-conceived finite and infinite, not as objects, or independent modes of reality, but as co-referents. The former provides the only logically coherent access to the latter. This is a step forward in philosophical theology as significant as Whitehead's earlier demand for concrete consequences. As Conti shows, abandoning *a priori* speculation meant:

> He could argue along with process metaphysicians that any 'being' worth conceiving and any *operari* capable of being actively known is known 'in and as' becoming. And he could remind us, with the most ardent of biblical theologians, that Christ is the becoming of God in the swaddling clothes of event. (*Metaphysical* xxii)

Farrer himself described it as steering a course between the Scylla of scholastic orthodoxy and the Charybdis of process revisionism (*Faith* 70). Deploying the same activist premises used by process theology, he found a route that was both theologically and psychologically basic. This offered the believer a more human, and in that sense more natural, route of inference to a God who is "*sensible au coeur*" (Faith 48). Farrer followed it back to an Agent with sufficient priority to enact Creation as the personal relation of the human and the divine.

NOTES

1. Whitehead's Gifford Lectures; hereafter *PR.*

2. Quoting John Glasse. Cultural relativism is a burning issue for theology, especially in orthodox circles. It has been raised repeatedly by Pope Benedict XVI. See, for example, the *Angelus* delivered in St Peter's Square on 4 December 2005; and the "Homily Delivered by the Holy Father" at a Mass in Warsaw on 26 May 2006. This issue is also referred to in numerous papal addresses, for example, to the German Bishops (21 August 2005); the Writers of the College of *La Civiltá Cattolica* (17 February 2006); and the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Canada-Ontario on their "*ad limina*"visit (8 September 2006). Transcripts of these can be found at: <www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi>.

3. See also *Faith and Speculation*, 4-5. Here, Farrer suggests that religious consciousness owes its continued existence to a pragmatic sanction. "[I]t has continually been knocked into shape by the pressures of existence. It has been retained because it works, it has been changed so as to work better." See also Farrer, ("Starting" 11), and D.Z. Phillips' *The Concept of Prayer*, Chapter 1, for an explicitly Wittgenstinian approach to religious philosophy.

4. This quotation is from the preface to the second edition, 1959.

5. See *PR*, 345ff for Whitehead's description of God as "poet of the world." For Farrer on the descriptive power of poetry and analogies in general, see his essay "Poetic Truth," in *Reflective Faith*, 24-38. See also Stuart Hampshire on the Italian philosopher Giovanni Batista Vico in *Innocence and Experience*, 45-46. Vico (we are told) was a vigorous opponent of rationalism, and Descartes' philosophical psychology in particular. According to Hampshire, Vico argued that the development of consciousness "begins with poetry, with the great fictions of Homer's epic and of classical drama." In other words, consciousness first sees the reflection of itself, of its own potential, expressed in the process of myth making. However, it seems the dialectic of consciousness inevitably "matures into the cool, analytic prose of Cartesian philosophy, so thin and inert in content that the mind has finally to renew itself once again with a revival of poetic imagination, with fiction and with myth." For the religious implications of this dialectic, see Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, especially the preface and introduction. Feuerbach describes the development of consciousness as a reflection of images, moving from the literal, or anthropomorphic, to eventually become a projection of theologically, and psychologically arid abstractions. However, push the dialectic further, as Feuerbach urges, and it culminates in the "revelation of religion to itself, *the awakening of religion to self-consciousness*" (xxi). That awakening is the "renewal" of consciousness as self-consciousness, as it reflects itself in and through religious symbolism.

Writes Hampshire, Vico "exalted the faculty of the imagination as the creative aspect of the human mind, which generates new forms of language, new images and metaphors, and new cultures." And he regarded "the intellect, the power to put thought in tidy order" as a "fading coal which survives in periods when the creative imagination has sunk low" (46). Similarly, the Freudian psychologist Adam Phillips has suggested that consciousness as order and pattern is really a defense mechanism, guarding us against our deepest libidinal (i.e., existential) desires. Phillips' interest lies in "what is said by the way, what is said as aside from the matter in hand, what is said 'off topic.'" This, he suggests, is where "the action of meaning and feeling is" (xi). For Phillips, pattern and order are expressions of determinism. And determinism is another word for paranoia (269). The defensive ordering of consciousness

is a response to the scientific drive to abandon divinely ordained hierarchies. "The modern paranoiac has realised that since God is dead someone has got to be god. Someone has to know what's going on, and there has to be something going on" (268). This realization issues in the belief in plots and narratives, which provide a more or less sinister structure to our lives. Hence, Phillips suggests, "Paranoia is the self-cure for insignificance" (265); and the "paranoiac is at the centre of a world that has no centre" (270). The question, then, is whether we can still talk coherently—i.e., in a structured way—about selfhood and the development of consciousness. Not within the rationalist's artificial and abstract schematics, perhaps. But, as Vico and Feuerbach suggest, it may be possible if we return to the mythologies and the symbolism in which consciousness first discovered itself.

6. This "rational path" bears little resemblance to the one followed by most rationalists. Indeed, one of the most important aspects of Farrer's pragmatic theology was his rejection of the traditional combination of reason and revelation as conduit for unparalleled knowledge of divinity. Belief founded on the force of reason, faith in the "promises [God] gives us through accredited channels of revelation," Farrer argued, did the theist's case little, if any good, since it means "accusing all well-informed atheists of either mental imbecility or intellectual dishonesty or both" (*Saving* 16).

7. "Concrete," of course, does not simply mean "solid" or "well-founded." Much of its value as a philosophical and theological term stems from its meaning 'mixed' or "combined." I am particularly grateful to Dr Andrew Chitty for pointing this out.

8. For the term "onto-theology," (most famously borrowed by Heidegger) see Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity,* 38.

9. The other "great cosmological document" is, according to Whitehead, Plato's *Timaeus*.

10. For these expressions, see *Finite and Infinite*, 235, and Conti's essay "Austin Farrer and the Analogy of Other Minds," 56.

11. See also *The Freedom of the Will*, 52: "Energy, rather than stuff, is our ultimate."

12. Note the use of substance/accident terminology, drawn from the same scholastic tradition Whitehead rejected.

13. See also *Saving Belief*, 67: "The old definitions accepted by Sir Isaac Newton and his followers were not merely incorrect, they were nonsensical. It is not merely that Einstein's very special and advanced physical

observations proved that this isn't a Newtonian world. You couldn't have a Newtonian world. It is no blasphemy to say that God himself couldn't have created such a system."

14. This "primordial fact" is "limited by no actuality which it presupposes. It is therefore infinite, devoid of all negative prehensions. This side of his (sic) nature is free, complete, primordial, eternal, actually deficient and unconscious" (*PR* 345). See 346-47 for the "infinite patience" of God and "the primordial permanence of God." See also 348 for primordiality, the conceptual pole, as appetition: "For God the conceptual [appetitive] is prior to the physical," and the "priority of appetition."

15. "[W]e shall want to know whether such a way of talking represents a limitation of procedure or a metaphysical decision" (*Reflective Faith* 186).

16. See also "[W]e can scarcely hope to guess the mind of our Creator, beyond establishing the visible nature of His creations" (Farrer, "Revelation" 84). Since the principal instance of "action" available is Creation, this is a notion that would seem inescapable for any cosmological thinker. Not all agree, however. Some philosophers, such as Henderson and Richard Swinburne, persist in the attempt to reason from other possible worlds and, on occasion, none at all. This approach simply cannot provide the ontological springboard hoped for, since it is only from the fact of a world that we can begin to reason at all. "Explanations hang upon facts. You cannot offer an explanation unless you have some facts on which to base it" (Farrer, *Science* 33). And of course, for Whitehead, the "final facts are all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent" (*PR* 18).

This conflicts significantly with Henderson's interpretation of Farrer. *Contra* an explicit commitment to cosmological thinking, Henderson claims that Farrer continued to "make implicit use of Anselm's formula" ("Supremely" 106-07). Indeed, he insists that, for Farrer, ontologicality remained a "regulative principle . . . part of the grammar of thought about God." Cf. Farrer's assessment of what he called "the heretical argument of Anselm":

> It is not surprising to find this to be an exception, since it is not an argument. It claims that we have a self-authenticating apprehension of God in and by Himself. Were this an appeal to a mystical Ineffable, it might convince those who are privileged to enjoy it; but as it attempts to prove its case from a description or definition of God which can be stated, it fails immediately because the description is in terms of the creation and manifestly defines God through a function which He exercises relatively thereto. To make the proof good we must scrutinise this function, and so we fall into an analysis of the cosmological idea after all. (*Finite* 12)

Ultimately, Henderson is less concerned with cosmological connectedness than with ontological difference and the absolute fulfilment of the divine life *in se:* "a God who is fully God in God and apart from the world" (Henderson, "Divine" 67).

17. This idea was first suggested by Hartshorne in *The Divine Relativity.*

18. See Chapter 1 of *Faith and Speculation*, "The Believer's Reasons," for a strikingly similar emphasis on the pragmatic value of our beliefs. For Farrer —like that other pragmatist, William James—a belief must be liveable. The "truth" of religious belief is not independently definable. It is expressed, that is, achieves concretion, as an effect in the believer's life. Hence, Farrer would argue, "The gospel offers God to me as good, not simply as fact. In embracing the good, I am convinced of the fact" (*Faith* 10). Consequently, the question of transcendence is, for Farrer, not an orthodox or ontological matter. It is a pragmatic one. "[T]he question I ask is not, how truly God corresponds to my idea of him; it is 'What shall I do to be saved?'" (11).

Hartshorne also recognized that a pragmatic foundation affects the way we understand and respond to the atheist's charge. Equally, that is why Feuerbach refused to engage in the tit-for-tat between scholastic theology and reductive empiricism. Recognizing the pragmatic value of atheism, he assigned it a vital place in the development of religious consciousness. For Feuerbach, that is, atheism is "the necessary therapeutic, transitional stage from the empiricist concept of God as an external object (of the sort to which the vulgar [realist] question 'Does God exist?' is relevant) . . . to the concept of the Godly" (Volume V, 210-11, *Feuerbach's Collected Works*; quoted in Wartofsky 132). So atheism represents the hermeneutic tendency of the project to return to its anthropological grounds. The dialectical shift is from divine "Subject" (conceived as Real Object) to the enactment of divine predicates. It is literally the search for God *in* action.

The "French tradition" (as Hartshorne termed it) clearly owes a significant debt to Hegel and Feuerbach. It is not surprising, then, that Sartre and Camus may have come "somewhat closer to finding the remedy [to the abstractions of classical theism] than other traditions." According to Hartshorne, this is "thanks to its stress on creativity." Nevertheless, he concedes that "For one reason or another Sartre was unaware of a great opportunity." Hartshorne put this failing down to a combination of Sartre's own temperament, the horrifying and brutalizing effects of two World Wars, and the "many centuries spent worshipping power more than love (and being more than creative becoming)." (See *IOGT* 336).

19. Cf. *Reflective Faith*, 179-80, and *A Science of God,* 76-78ff, for Farrer's description of God as a Playwright and an Author.

20. See *No Exit* (58), particularly, Inez: “You are—your life, and nothing else.” See also Conti: “Author” 92, 96, and *Metaphysical* 155, 197.

21. The use of personal pronouns, especially in the masculine gender, is undeniably a contentious issue. It is brought into even sharper focus by the demand for person-concepts which underpin Farrer’s philosophical theology and the present discussion. Considering Farrer’s sensitivity to the nuances of thought and language, it is unfortunate that he himself did not address this issue. Conti, on the other hand, considered it so important that he attempted to diffuse it in *Metaphysical Personalism* “even at the risk of tampering with quotes.” As ever, Conti’s first loyalty was to the spirit of Farrer’s work. “[N]o one as sensitive as Farrer was to personalist metaphysics would wish his humanizing methodology in theology to be discredited by unwittingly offending modern sensibilities” (212 n12). Equally, when theology becomes philosophically enlightened, it must recognize the relation between modes of exploration and the “reality” experienced. That psychological investment might prove highly profitable to theology. Promoting self-awareness (as Feuerbach knew) supports the development of religious consciousness as a mode of self-consciousness. But a one-sided psychology will issue a philosophical theology that remains seriously deficient.

However, we should be wary of easy solutions. Exchanging pronouns, “She” for “He,” would inevitably, and perhaps rightly, be seen as an attempt to court controversy. This would detract from Farrer’s vision and the philosophical and theological questions I am pursuing. More importantly, the value of substitution depends on the underlying analysis. After all, Simone de Beauvoir’s concerns remain unresolved. The “feminine” category still appears to lack positive content. It represents no real subject, but only “negation”: an “other” that is “defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity” (15). If de Beauvoir’s suspicions are correct (and it is hard to deny them), then exchanging one pronoun for another cannot resolve the matter. So Conti warns us, “matronising feminists is no more flattering that patronising them; moreover, one cannot assuage blind prejudice by a mere swing to the female pronoun” (*Metaphysical* 212 n12).

Equally, gender neutrality cannot solve our pronoun trouble. This is Farrer’s central point with regard to process theology, as we shall see. Briefly, substituting of “It” for “He” or “She” undermines the personalist point of theology. Impersonal pronouns undermine the moral and social claims which religious practice embodies. “It” depersonalizes the relation “it” allegedly underwrites. So Conti offers another warning: impersonal pronouns offer “scant personal possessiveness such as would ground the divine predicates in human intelligibility; so to speak of God’s love in the neutral or neutered sense is a near-contradiction in terms” (*Metaphysical* 212 n12). Hence, personal pronouns are logically indispensable for conceiving God.

It seems, then, that all our options are equally unacceptable. "It" destabilizes the logical grammar of religious thought; while sensitivity to the philosophical and theological context rules out simplistic pronominal substitution. "So," Conti argues, "although the ear has been lulled into male stupor over the years, "it" grates on grammatical expectations and seems disrespectful by implication, whereas "she," written by a male, betokens mock equality" (*Metaphysical* 212 n12). The upshot of which is that, far from dismissing or ignoring the problem, I confess that I do not feel able to answer the question here.

This article represents the first steps in an attempt to overcome the limitations such polarized thinking represents. My intention is to push Farrer's realignment of those poles further. My hope is to relocate them within a more basic description of personal connections. Like Conti, I regard the language of an enlightened religious practice as eminently suitable for this task. "[T]he anthropomorphic predicates advocated [by personalist thinkers] . . . as crucial to the ontology of God—e.g., love, care, providence—are non-gender specific" (*Metaphysical* 212 n12). Otherwise put, person-concepts ground theology in an experience which is fundamentally *human*. This experience co-opts both male and female. It enabled Farrer to privilege a pragmatic concept of the "self" as co-opted by loving others. Critically, this conception cannot deny sexual difference without reducing Farrer's philosophical anthropology to an abstract diagram, which offers no concrete notion of persons in a situation. This charge is still levelled at personalist thinkers who allegedly avoid the particularities of concrete relation. That is the basis of Marx Wartofsky's critique of Feuerbach (25, 337, and 337-38). To avoid any risk of offense, however, I have been persuaded to relinquish the male pronoun on the grounds that the substituted word "God" is commonly understood as a proper name. I am particularly grateful to Jeanyne Slettom and Dan Dombrowski for this timely reminder and, perhaps, unexpectedly traditional theistical suggestion. Of course, although this usage clearly honors the personalist point, it may not be possible to precisely pin down just how the word "God" does or should function. Nor do I think it particularly desirable to do so. This preserves a certain fruitful ambiguity. It reminds us of our reliance on the descriptive resources of our language to make sense of "God-talk." It also tends to subvert deeply ingrained assumptions about the kinds of images and metaphors from which that "God-talk" is constructed. It is, after all, common currency to talk of God the Father and the personalist presuppositions of that can hardly be missed. But souls sensitive to the fertility of images might prefer a (M)Other who loves like no other. And the emotional resonance of that can hardly be ignored. Feminine, and specifically maternal, images may be more deeply ingrained. Freud certainly thought so. Alive to the psychological implications, Conti learned the philosophical lesson. "Otherness [he reminds us] is a 'motherness' on whose tender breast, or encircled by protective arms, our welfare depends" (*Metaphysical* 39). Not just a reflection of our own becoming,

however. Maternal images reach out to deeper fears: the precariousness of our very existence. At the anthropological limits of philosophy, Buber found those fears evoked in "the speech of 'primitive' peoples." "We say far away; the Zulu has for that a word which means, in our sentence form, There where some one cries out: 'O mother I am lost'" (32). This echoes the heartbeat of the human condition, so reveals the primal foundations of the religious impulse. It is a poignant reminder of the creative connections underpinning our first and most immediate experience of existence. This seems to do more than "betoken mock equality" as Conti fears. It is, I suggest, a better starting point for any metaphysics which hopes to do justice to the questions raised here.

22. By "connaturality," I mean "natural-with."

23. Hence Hartshorne's conception of dual transcendence. This represents an attempt to define a logical space in which to synthesize classical metaphysical contraries, such as immanence/transcendence, contingency/necessity, and finite/infinite. See, for example, Hartshorne's *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, *The Logic of Perfection*, and *Philosophers Speak of God*.

24. Strawson was, of course, constructing a descriptive metaphysics. The degree to which this coincides with Farrer's personalism is evident from the central chapters of *Finite and Infinite* and from *The Freedom of the Will*. (It is worth remembering that *Finite and Infinite* was first published in 1943, some sixteen years before *Individuals*, and *The Freedom of the Will* was published in 1960, only a year later.) Like Strawson, Farrer described a logically basic concept of the self as a conscious, physical agent. There can be little doubt that this conception provided both men with a metaphysical foundation. Farrer's essay "Causes" (*Reflective* 200-17) is a particularly good example of this in action. Briefly, Farrer saw causal thinking as an extension of the more immediate experience of causal, that is, agential, efficacy. The experience of being an agent, he argued, supplies the analogical clue to understanding the causal interactions which constitute the agent's physical environment.

> Causal explanation is and only can be an interpretation of natural interactions by the clue, or model, of our own interferences with our environment, and its interferences with us. To understand the world never was, nor conceivably could be, to construe it as patterns of *phenomena*. It must be construed as an interaction of real existences carrying on business as it were out there in space under their own names. But now, apart from any personal identity with my bodily performances; and apart from my experience of impinging upon, and being impinged upon by, other things or forces, I have no conceivable clue to physical existence, or physical force, or physical interaction. (210)

Cf. *Finite and Infinite,* 230-35. For further evidence, see also Conti's D.Phil. thesis, *Descriptive Metaphysics: An Examination of Austin Farrer's Use of Cosmological Inference*. Chapter 5 deals specifically with the logico-linguistic aspects of Farrer's philosophical psychology and, in the words of the chapter subtitle, "The Implications of Language/World Interaction."

As a theologian, Farrer would carry the implications of that metaphysical foundation much further than Strawson. In *Faith and Speculation*, the development of the self is located at the heart of theological reasoning from the very beginning. Reconnecting speculative *theoria* with the *praxis* of faith (as the title of the book suggests) Farrer found in the experience and expression of personhood both the empirical mandate and the model for thinking God. He also found, buried deep in the folds of consciousness, a reason for doing so. See chapters 7 and 8 in particular: "The Theology of Will" and "Justifiable Analogy."

Whether or not we agree that Whitehead, too, was engaged in descriptive metaphysics will depend on our understanding of the terms. According to Strawson, his focus was the "actual structure of our thought about the world." His objective was to "lay bare the most general features of our conceptual structure" (9). In short, Strawson was attempting to identify and understand our most basic categories and concepts. "It is with these, their interconnections, and the structure that they form, that a descriptive metaphysics will be primarily concerned" (10). Arguably, these categories and concepts, their interconnections and their structures, were no less Whitehead's concern. In *Process and Reality,* for example, he noted that "metaphysics comes about when we seek larger generalities"(4-5). Whatever else they might be supposed to represent, those generalities are first and foremost a matter of how we conceive of and describe the world. Hence, Whitehead defined metaphysics as "nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice" (13). Moreover, Whitehead's emphasis on experience as metaphysical building block would seem to place process cosmology within the descriptive metaphysician's remit.

Of course, the most important reason for introducing Strawson is the parallel—to be discussed here—between process theology and those other "no-ownership" theories, such as existentialism and philosophical behaviorism, with which Strawson was primarily concerned.

25. Cf. Conti's explanation of the term "prehension" as "Whitehead's expression for how one entity may take on the 'objectification' or goal of another" (*Metaphysical* 257 n29). Whitehead himself characterized them as "vectors": "they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*" (*PR* 87). In one sense, then, a prehension is something like the mode of participation in, or appropriation of, one actual occasion by another as a factor in its own becoming.

26. There is a further parallel between the "no-ownership" and the Cartesian realist just here as both are driven to make implicit use of the very conceptual constructs they set out to deny. Moreover, they are both broadly concerned with the same conceptual construct. This is because "no-ownership" and the Cartesian theories both represent kinds of skepticism. They are both concerned with the claim, "I cannot obtain genuine—i.e., certain—knowledge of an other existent." The Cartesian holds out for a private audience with "real being," so places the emphasis on an unknowable "other." "No-ownership" skeptics want public recognition, so place the emphasis on an unthinkable "I." In short, their arguments are constructed from concepts which derive their meaning from their social context. That context primitively instantiates both terms of the proposition: both the "I" of the argument and the "other" to whom it is spoken. For a summary of this central skeptical mistake (with specific reference to the realist-*cum-* solipsist) see Conti's essay "Austin Farrer and the Analogy of Other Minds." Taking his cue from Wittgenstein's private language argument, Conti notes "even the ability to refer to one's *own* sensations is bound over by such communal or positional concepts as are naturally inclined to carry the weight of the premises being denied" (54). Similarly, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger concluded that the skeptical question could not be asked but from within some social context. In effect, *Dasein* was qualified to question the existence of others by its very being-there-ness.

27. Hence, Christology would play a vital role in Farrer's philosophical theology. The Incarnation represents the theophanic event *par excellence*. Putting the emphasis on living images—and lived faith—Farrer insisted that it is only "by the descent of God into man that the life of God takes on a form with which we have direct sympathy and personal union" (*Saving* 112). In Incarnation we are drawn into concrete relation with God. Alternatively, and turning to the psychological roots of religious consciousness, it is precisely because the religious projection comes dressed in human garb that it can meet the cosmological requirement. Responding to a primal sense of non-self-explanatory-ness, which personalists locate at the root of the self, divine love is fulfilled in the conjunction of self and other. Just here, the cosmological act is personalized. Farrer's sermons offer a philosophically rich vein of Christology, see, for example, *A Celebration of Faith* and *Interpretation and Belief*.

Conti, too, notes Farrer's use of Christological categories to supply "epistemological access to the transcendent mysteries of Godhead" (*Metaphysical* xxx). "By instantiating the transcendent in space and time," he argues, "Incarnation provides a 'conceptual framework' for theism" [xxx]. That establishes the anthropological route: "Transcendent God is 'humanly' conceived in the personal form, as the Immanuel of 'God with us'" [xxx].

This is a prime example of retroductive reasoning by both Farrer and Conti. "We reason from divinizable effects, such as the God-man in Christ, events at hand, back to the transcendent Cause, finding 'God as the father of our Lord Jesus Christ'" [xxx].Thus, in terms both Farrer and Feuerbach would recognize and endorse, "Incarnation brought the transcendent 'down' to raise human understanding up." [xxx]. By placing the emphasis on revealing act or the *via manifestissima* Farrer, Conti argues, could relinquish "that 'thinking down' from transcendence which presumes too clear a view of the divine perfection and 'life' of God before time" (75). Instead, Incarnation and its effects represent a "specific instance of divinity," which specifically "alerts us to the idea of God as 'Infinite Love' and 'Abiding Compassion'" (96ff). These act-specifics literally bring the divine Will down to earth, expressing it as concrete, personal relation. So, with elegant simplicity, Conti notes, "In Christ, the ways of God become plainer" (96ff). Philosophically invaluable, Incarnation also instantiates the conjunction of finite and infinite. It locates the act of God in the lives of actual persons, not in Creation *simpliciter*. God is explicitly revealed in the life and death of a person who, for believers, represents the divine emissary in "action." "Christ is God in the functioning mode" (96ff). For both Farrer and Conti, this down-to-earth Deity is essential to faith *and* speculation.

Feuerbach also regarded incarnation as a vital phase in the dialectic of religious consciousness. This is because a God who is *essentially* (or perhaps, *potentially*) personal must eventually seek to become "itself" *as* person. God must re-present "*Himself*" as a subject becoming. "[T]he idea of Incarnation is nothing more than the human *form* of a God, who already in his nature, in the profoundest depths of his soul, is a merciful and therefore a human God" (51).

28. See Whitehead's "Categories of Existence" and "Categories of Explanation" (*PR* 22-23) for the definition of "eternal object" as "pure potential."

29. This essentially Kantian argument appears in Hepburn's *Christianity and Paradox* (171) and J.N. Findlay's essay "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" (54) in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*. Cf. also Hartshorne's *Anselm's Discovery.* As noted above (n23), Hartshorne's conception of dual transcendence is an attempt to resolve this question. Borrowing from Anselm, Hartshorne drew a modal distinction between necessary and contingent existence. There is, he suggested, a valid ontological difference between the fact of existence and the particular mode or activity in which it is actualized. Hartshorne drew his distinction like this: "That I shall (at least probably) exist tomorrow is one thing; that I shall exist hearing a blue jay call at noon is another" (*LP* 63). In fact, Hartshorne seems to complicate matters further by distinguishing between essence or defining characteristic, the bare fact of existence, and the mode of actualization.

Whether Hartshorne's is a two- or a three-fold distinction, it is difficult to see how it addresses the Kantian critique used above. Principally, the sheer or mere fact of existence is not modal: it is not a *way* of being or doing anything. It is just what it is by definition. And since it lacks concrete instantiation, it refers to no actual state of affairs. Moreover, the idea that an abstract statement of necessary existence simply requires more details filled in is misleading at best. The statement requires *all* the details be filled in. Sheer or mere existence offers *no details at all*. It is an empty concept. Furthermore, Hartshorne's suggestion that this distinction might have some empirical foundation is no less problematic. Apart from some active expression, essence and existence do not appear as features of ordinary experience. I have no experience of my cat's defining characteristics or his existence apart from his actual enactment of them, and I do not know what these concepts mean. My knowledge *that* other existents are, and indeed *what* they are, is dependent on concrete interaction. Simply put, Hartshorne's view of necessary existence seems as vulnerable to Quine's predicate rule as the most orthodox scholasticism. Sheer "whatness" and mere "thatness" are incomplete predicates precisely because the subject-term lacks concrete instantiation. Hence, Conti reminds us of J.L. Austin's "trenchant remarks on the Exodus Metaphysic." "[T]he proper reply to any burning bush that announces itself with 'I am that I am' is [Austin remarked] 'You are what?'" (*Metaphysical* 179). Farrer would press the point, using the predicable possibilities of real activity to locate existence in a physical—i.e., interactive—environment. "Thereness," he argued, "is only experienced as the 'thereness' of some area taken" (*Finite* 66). Ultimately, then, just what Hartshorne's revival of necessary existence adds to process theology remains unclear.

30. For this and next see *Metaphysical* 248-49, n14, and 249, n16, also Appendix 2 (265-69), where Conti has reprinted Farrer's correspondence with Glasse. The books Glasse sent were *Man's Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism* (1941); *The Divine Relativity, a Social Conception of God* (1948); and either *The Logic of Perfection, and Other Essays in Neo-classical Metaphysics* (1962), or *Anselm's Discovery: A Re-examination of the Ontological Proof for God's Existence* (1965).

31. Cf. W.H.V. Reade on the conflict between reductive naturalism and religion (as opposed to metaphysics), in *The Christian Challenge to Philosophy*. Reade argues that the believer may legitimately "complain of logicians who sometimes fail to distinguish the 'individual' from the 'particular' which is commonly opposed to the 'universal'. . . . [I]n effect it remains the ambition of every science to discover the universal in the particular, to bring a plurality of facts under one and the same law, to combine and systematise, to grapple, as the Greeks would say in a still older terminology, with the problem of the one and the many; in a word, to prove that nothing, when fully understood, is

unique" (147). Further, "science deals always with the universal and particular, never with the individual and the unique" (149). And "Observation of the 'particular' is, of course, the starting-point of most sciences, but the 'particular' is not the individual, and anything that looks like singularity is usually taken as a challenge to be met" (173).

Whitehead's response to this ancient challenge is to be found in the notion of Creativity, that is, the "principle of novelty." Creativity represents "that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity" (*PR* 12). Creativity clearly offers a significant improvement on classical, hypostatic models of reality. However, the drive to metaphysical unity or "coherence" still appears unable to account for the individuality, the uniqueness, of each actual existence. This is a serious failing in any theology, Reade argues. "The clue to such knowledge of God as is possible for man is not absorption of the particular into the universal but discovery of the individual, and it is by this route, even when it seems to pass through country remote from the precincts of religion, that the whole journey must be made" (Reade 173). Thus, "for Christians, the supreme fact in the universe is not a law, nor any stupendous concatenation of laws" (173). For Farrer too, that fact or reality is to be found in the unique individual; more specifically it is in the personal reality of agents, human and divine.

32. In a letter to John Glasse (6 June 1965), Farrer suggests that "Whitehead got stuck in the phase of logical atomism, and called in God to join what perversity put asunder" (*Metaphysical* 266). In December of that same year, he wrote to Ray L. Hart:

> About Whitehead: it seems to me to be a point of small importance, whether his actual occasions as forming entities have some duration or not. Whitehead sinned against the light by saying that a personal existence in its continuity over time is a society of entities: for our standing example of an entity is a perduring person: it is silly to say that a man is a lot of little men. Whitehead was misled by the logical atomism of his youth: and in his age he called on God to join together what he and Russell had put asunder. I don't see how a metaphysical system can ever go right when it starts so wrong. (271)

But, for Farrer, consciousness is only realized in patterns of bodily activity, and:

> A pattern of activity persists in cyclic iteration. What are we to say of the unity through time of what persists? At any moment we can say that the dying phase is, as it were, the parent of the living phase to which it bequeaths form and direction. That parent phase

> had a parent phase behind it, and so on ad infinitum. But only the immediately past phase is dynamically present in the passing phase by the fact of shaping it. (*Faith* 168)

This appears to offer a clear parallel between Farrer and Whitehead. Although, we should note, Farrer's "unity-through-time" is not obviously a feature of Whiteheadian actualities. In Farrerian terms, each new phase of the vital bodily pattern remains grounded in its ancestors because the agent is always (on some level) responding to concrete interaction. Thus the agent's field of activity is immediately experienced as a sequence of interactions. From the agent's point of view, the "world" is not simply an aggregate of existents; it is a range of actual and potential consequences. These consequences relate antecedent arrangements of this iterative, or rhythmic, pattern to future, possible arrangements. Hence, the "present phase of the rhythm 'carries' the potency of the others [past and future phases] which are latent within it" (*Finite* 208). This is why we must assume that "some voluntary activity is always proceeding in the self" (206). See also *The Glass of Vision*, 89-90, for the "vital" and perpetual motions of human mentality.

33. On one level, this was the point of J.L. Austin's analysis of the logic of excuse words. (See "A Plea for Excuses" 123-53). If the language of apology is to have any purchase at all, we must be in a position to distinguish between intentions, the actions they become, and the consequences at which they aim. When we assess our behavior (which may be at any stage) any element in the action-pattern may easily confound expectation. Austin showed that prior intending is required to dismantle "the machinery of action" (141).

34. I am indebted to Dr. Conti for pointing out the significance of Farrer's deliberate repetition here.

35. See also Mark W. Richardson's "A Look at Austin Farrer's Theory of Agency," in *Human and Divine Agency*, for what amounts to a fundamentally Humean interpretation of Farrer's agency. The inability to see beyond "billiard-ball" causality, to understand that, for Farrer, intentions *do not cause* actions but are essentially continuous with them, means that Richardson is unable to reconcile the traditional disjunction between free will and determinism. Perhaps more importantly for the theologian, this failure to align *esse* with its *operari*, simply defeats divine-human complimentarity and the notion of two wills in one. This ultimately marks Henderson's unsuccessful reconciliation of the Will of God and human freedom.

36. It also undermines the efforts of some commentators, notably Edward Henderson, to reason "up" to utter independence and self-sufficient Being. See, for example, "Divine" 62: "agents who see it appropriate to understand experienced events in terms of agents and their effects may reason on

empirical premises to the conclusion that there is a divine agent whose agency must be absolutely free and self-sufficient. Going further on those same empirical premises, we can say that God enjoys independently of God's involvement with the world, a full and perfect life." This, Henderson claims, is reasoning "*up to* an agent able to be and be itself without dependence upon the agency of any being outside itself" (65). Cf. Stuart Hampshire's *Thought and Action*. Hampshire, too, rejects the isolated ego, arguing instead that the very possibility of coherent self-cognition is dependent upon that "self" enacting its meaning in a world of others and objects, more accurately, co-opting its meaning from a world of others and objects. Like Farrer, Hampshire insists that it is the physical which instantiates the mental, further, makes the mental possible. Only as psycho-physical unity can the agent identify itself as distinct from other objects; first, locating itself in the world, and second, planning its own movements and manipulations in relation to that location.

> The hypothesis of the disembodied thinker supposes both of these conditions of distinguishing myself from other things as removed. If one tries to suppose, following Hume, a form of experience that consists simply of a succession of impressions and ideas, one will be compelled to ask whether the subject can direct and control at will some of his impressions and ideas. If he cannot, how will he appear as a subject, a mind, a person, at all? (*Thought* 51)

Cf. *The Freedom of the Will,* 4-16, and Strawson's *Individuals* 104-05, where he argues that both mental and physical predicates must be ascribed to the same object. Like Hampshire and Farrer, Strawson's is a concept of person-hood irreducibly defined as both the mental and the physical, a mind-body holism which enabled him to assert the concept of "person" as logically primitive.

37. See also Farrer's comments in "Revelation": "when God is conceived as a person, it is understood that He cannot be properly known except through our dealings with Him; or, to speak more religiously, through his dealings with us" (92). And: "When . . . we speak of a person, of someone to be known through personal dealings, we think of someone who exists in a series of successive actions, some of which are sampled by those who deal with him" (92). See also *Faith and Speculation* 111; also 82 and 167.

38. Cf. *Reflective Faith* 177: "It is not a question of how much or how little he transcends us; it is a question of how he has been pleased to relate his creatures to himself, and himself to them." See also *Finite* 26.

39. See, in particular, Part 1 of Buber's *I and Thou*. Here, Buber describes the distinct but related modes of dialogue between "self" and other that are

expressed in the "primary words" *I-Thou* and *I-It*. In speaking the primary "words, the "self" takes a stand in relation. Over against one another, "self' and other are essentially dyadic: "There is no *I* taken in itself but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*. . . . . The existence of *I* and the speaking of *I* are one and the same thing. When the primary words are spoken the speaker enters the world and takes his stand in it" (16). Hegel makes the same point in *Phenomenology of Spirit:* "A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it" (¶177).

40. See also *Interpretation & Belief*, 73, for Farrer's reminder that we do not "begin with the revealed knowledge of what God is, simply in himself. Of such knowledge we are not capable recipients. What is revealed is his actions, and himself *only as the agent of them*; and what he does is to create, call, redeem, promise; that is, to determine our existence and not his own" (my emphasis). See also *A Celebration of Faith* for the sociality of God as a real exchange or transaction, which constitutes "all that Christians know about the life of God" (74).

41. This is not to suggest that the "philosophy of organism" is mechanistic *per se*, or that the interconnection of actual occasions can simply be reduced to Humean causal sequencing. (See section on behaviorist assimilation.) Nevertheless, there is something machine-like about Whitehead's universe. The necessary interconnection of existents and the teleological structure of the whole—i.e., the reliance on "final causation," Consequent Being as the "lure" for actualization (see *PR* 189 and 344)—seem to suggest something *like* a biological machine. Hence, Conti's description of Whiteheadian cosmology as a "design argument by proxy" (*Metaphysical* 40).

42. Cf. Peter Byrne's contribution to this question of universal coherence in *God and Realism.* To the objection "there is no thing (the universe) which we can say the theos transcends" (132), Byrne responds by substituting the word "cosmos" for the word "universe."

> What is meant by the 'world' when it is said that God transcends the world is the cosmos. The cosmos is the collection of spatio-temporal objects thought of as forming an ordered physical whole. The things which God transcends are assumed to be all spatio-temporally related to one another and bound together by a fundamental set of physical stuffs, forces and laws. The notion that spatio-temporal things form part of a cosmos in this sense is to be found in the origins of Greek natural theology and thus forms both the historical and logical basis for philosophical thought about a theos." (132-33)

Appealing to classical authorities will simply not do. Byrne offers no meaningful distinction between the "universe-thing" and the "cosmos" qua spatio-temporal collection constituting "an ordered physical whole" (132).

43. See Reade: "Existence is supported by generalities, but for the zest of life we must strive our utmost for vision of the unique" (148).

44. Conti reminds us that, when debating with Father Copleston, Bertrand Russell did just that, accusing cosmological thinkers of a "Category Mistake": "To say that every effect in the world has a cause and therefore the world itself must be caused is like reasoning that because every child has a mother, the human race must be 'mothered'" (*Metaphysical* 2). Not only is this a "violation of that natural curiosity which prompts scientific explanation," it also "calls a superficial halt to philosophy." It is, in short, a denial of the spirit of enquiry. "It is arbitrary (it might be protested) to raise causal questions within the system of nature while precluding the origins of nature itself, and modern cosmogonists in search of 'theories of everything' do not shrink from just such speculations" (*Metaphysical* 3).

45. Cf. Byrne's attempts to define God in *God and Realism*. Byrne's defense of transcendent Godhead is fatally undermined by his own self-contradictory description of God as an essentially finite reality. For Byrne, that is, God must be "ontologically independent of us, and . . . a sacred, transcendent reality" (12). Realist credentials notwithstanding, however, it seems "the question of whether God exists or is real is just the question of whether there is a God, of whether 'This is God' is true of something" (95). Pressing the point, he insists, the central religious question is "whether the world *contains* a God which is independent of us" (36, my emphasis). So Byrne has opted for the worst of both worlds. Logically neutered by an impersonal noun, God is reduced to some*thing*; worse, a *thing contained* by the world. At the same time, however, God is ontologically exiled from real relation.

For D.Z. Phillips, the temptation to "identify the will of God with anything natural" is a common philosophical mistake (101). In analytic philosophy, it arises from the mistaken belief that there must be a standard or common measure of truth, and that this measure can be applied to "neat" in the theistical case. Writes Philips: "Because religious believers want to say that there is 'something' called God, it has been assumed that it ought to be possible to establish whether this 'something' exists, in the way in which we establish the truth or falsity of certain matters of fact when there is some uncertainty about them" (13). Further, if God is simply a (contingent) matter of fact, one *thing* among others, then the theist will be expected to concede that this matter of fact might, like any other, simply fail to obtain. It should make sense to say that God might not have existed. Few religious thinkers would be prepared to admit such a possibility.

Whether or not Whitehead would agree with them remains unclear. Caught between the logical requirements of "God-talk" and (allegedly) "objective" truth-conditions, it seems the theist must either admit defeat and recant, or submit belief to what Antony Flew called "death by a thousand qualifications" (5 [Philips quoting Flew]). For those following in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition, however, this analysis has simply missed the point. "[I]n the case of the 'something' men call God, it is clear that it will not dance to the tune appropriate to many of the ways in which we talk of things *which may or may not have been the case*" (Philips 13). *Per contra*, the theist is not concerned to show that, *as a matter of fact*, there is an object-referent corresponding to religious reference. "[M]ost believers are not prepared to say that God might not exist. The point is not that *as a matter of fact* God will always exist but that it makes no sense to say that God might not exist" (14). The failure to understand this is, Phillips suggests, a form of "naturalistic fallacy." It is an attempt to assess the truth-value of the God-construct *apart* from its primary function as a logically basic mode of explanation. And that breaches the basic logical conditions of religious thought and language (101). "The idea of God is such that the possibility of the non-existence is precluded" (14).

46. See also *Faith and Logic* for G.C. Stead's trenchant remarks on the danger of restricting our analysis to the naturalistic elements of religious language: "This is rather as if one should say of a machine whose function one does not appreciate, that all it does is to generate a little heat by friction. This is understandable, but may be misleading. It will not do to say that a roulette-wheel is really a kind of stove" (113).

47. This is also why both Henderson and Basil Mitchell are mistaken in assuming that Conti offers an "extreme process reading of Farrer." (See Henderson, "Supremely" 108; and Mitchell's review of *Metaphysical Personalism,* "Overview and Analysis.") In fact, Henderson does defend Conti from this very charge, suggesting that only agnosticism preserves him from the perils of process naturalism (50). However, this is only partially right and rather misses Conti's point. Conti does indeed reject those "specious inferences" (*Metaphysical* xxii) that claim knowledge of the life of God-in-God on the grounds that such knowledge is outside finite epistemological range. On the other hand, Conti does not reject transcendence altogether; his divine "overplus" is transcendence on a continuum with and intrinsically qualified by its own immanence. Cf. "I do not know what 'spiritual means unless it denotes the higher functions of personal activity" (Farrer, *Faith* 41).

48. The term "lived," like the term "natural," carries significant philosophical weight for the personalist metaphysician. It connotes "psychological purchase," "conceptual fit"; in other words, a notion pressed into service by persons engaged in their own self-making.

49. See also *The Freedom of the Will* (312) for the epistemological limits of that inference: "[I]n virtue of our theism, we must take the activity [of physical nature] to express the prior action of its creator." See also Farrer, *Faith and Speculation (*154): "By concerning himself with the plurality [of physical existents, God] unites it in the unity of his concern. The unity is the unity of the divine initiative."

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