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From Supremacy to Complementarity:
The Evolution of Platonic Time

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Abstract

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Theology and classical philosophy's emphasis on the soul's permanence have given rise to metaphysical structures that are steeped in dichotomies, which have engendered the unfortunate consequence of lessening the appeal of the temporal, earthly life in favor of an everlasting life. It is exactly this sentiment—that temporal life or time is inherently less meaningful, noble, or valuable than eternal life or eternity—that I examine and eventually reject in my thesis. In order to do so, I analyze time's unique contribution to the wholeness of reality by tracing the philosophies of four Platonic thinkers: Plato, Plotinus, Immanuel Kant, and Alfred North Whitehead. If time offers possibilities that eternity alone cannot, and if temporality adds to the perfection of the universe, then surely our temporal lives must be an integral part of the beauty and goodness of the world.

Plato's *Timaeus* reveals that the birth of temporality marks the completion of the universe as the Demiurge creates time and humans to perfect the universe. Plotinus' *Ennead* highlights the creative urge within the soul to be the origin of time, thereby suggesting that temporality renders us potent agents that participate in the creation and renewal of the world. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* defines time as the inner form of intuition that makes self-knowledge and autonomy possible, and as the medium through which freedom manifests its significance, temporality endows our moral decisions with potency. Whitehead's *Process and Reality* contemplates an organic structure of reality in which every actual entity perpetually perish *and* achieve objective immortality through creative advance; eternity and time thus emerge as interdependent and complementary modes of being. Ultimately, Plato, Plotinus, Kant, and Whitehead's metaphysics of eternity and time, which all trace back to the *Timaeus*, suggest that time's significance stem from the fact that our decisions and creativity continue to mold the nature of the cosmos. It is our assured relationship with temporality that makes our experience a vital part of the essence of the world, for the flow of process and the finality of reality are harmonized in time.

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"Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

– William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

Introduction:

King Solomon, who in the Abrahamic religions is believed to have been the wisest

human to live, writes of God, time and eternity: "He has made everything beautiful in its time.

He has also set eternity in the human heart."[1] Eternity, which is a state of being that no human

can have empirical knowledge of, is divinely revealed to the human heart. If philosophy truly

begins with wonder as Aristotle had said, then the divine inscription of eternity into man's hearts

and minds brings us to wonder that gives birth to philosophy. King Solomon's treatment of time

is also insightful in that it suggests what is beautiful can only emerge out of time—and not just

any time, but its own unique, appointed time. With time thus comes not only beauty but also

particularity, the novel opportunity to express individuality.

Many of John Keats' poems address time and eternity through contemplating art's ability

to transcend time. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the speaker admires the urn for its beauty while

feeling envious of the figures on the urn, for they are forever frozen in their perfect state of

longing; they are above the human passions and sorrow. However, further contemplation of the

figures introduce new paradoxes to the speaker, and he thereby begins to question the nature of

temporality, eternity, and our relation them.

In the poem, the speaker beholds the various figures on the urn and contemplates their

perplexing immortality. The urn, which the speaker calls "the foster child of silence and slow

time," "teases [him] out of thought/ As doth eternity" because the figures within it lead a

paradoxical existence.[2] While they are outside of time, and therefore seemingly immortal, they

are also forever bound and frozen in time and space. "On the literal level," Earl Wasserman

writes, "the urn has existed in the physical world, in which all things are mutable. . . and yet, by

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[1] Ecc 3:11a NIV.
[2] Lines 2, 44-45.

enduring long. . . it has become related to their dimensional negatives: quietness, silence, and slow time."[3] The speaker, perhaps in an attempt to comfort the figures of their tragically paradoxical existence, consoles the youth for never being able to kiss his lover for "she cannot fade" and forever will be their love.[4] Never having to go through time means that they can always remain in the perfect metaphysical state of longing.

However, the speaker is cognizant of the fact that it is impossible for one to lead a perfect existence while also having the freedom to live one's life through time. The fact that "all the sense of transient action. . . is carried by nouns and adjectives rather than by verbs" stresses the always-approaching yet never consummated nature of the figures' existence.[5] Wasserman shares that "the apparently transitory movement does not take place; it is named or described as though it were captured and held rigid. . . . We do not hear the tune, but see the instruments; the men do not pursue, but there is pursuit; the maidens are not struggling, but there is struggle."[6] The speaker reasons that the price of retaining the almost-perfect state for eternity means being robbed of any dynamic existence. This dichotomy between the perfect, eternal life and the life of human reality continues throughout the poem, eventually leading the speaker to reject the perfect existence that the urn presents as reality.

The bias in favor of eternity or everlastingness over time is called into question within the poem. The repetitive use of the word "ever" and the emphasis on the eternal qualities of the figures also present an overwhelming aspect of being in a perfect state forever. Consider all the phrases that point to eternity: "thou cannot shed/ Your leaves, nor bid the Spring adieu," "For

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[3] Earl Wasserman, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn," in *Keats: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Walter Jackson Bate. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 115.
[4] Lines 11-12, 19-20.
[5] Wasserman, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn," 116.
[6] Wasserman, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn," 116.

ever piping songs for ever new," "for ever warm," "forever panting," and "forever young."[7] Though the conditions seem pleasant, a closer examination shows the opposite to be true; having to play new songs on the pipe for all eternity, holding onto leaves forever, and even forever longing after one's lover seem burdensome. Again, the speaker uses the aforementioned phrases to suggest that remaining in a perfect state forever might, after all, not be all ideal.

The speaker in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" eventually realizes that a dynamic life is possible only in time, and it is in the spirit of the speaker that I trace the philosophies of four Platonic thinkers: Plato, Plotinus, Immanuel Kant, and Alfred North Whitehead. Religion and classical philosophy's emphasis on the soul's permanence have given rise to metaphysical structures that are steeped in dichotomies, which have engendered the unfortunate consequence of lessening the appeal of the temporal, earthly life in favor of an everlasting life. "Classical Christian theology, with its subordination of biblical temporality to the atemporal eternity of Greek philosophy," David Griffin writes, "implied that temporal existence is, if not illusory, somehow less than fully real, having a merely derivative, secondary type of reality."[8] Similarly, in *Comus* John Milton describes death as "that golden key / That opes the palace of Eternity" suggesting that eternity should be desired over temporality.[9] After all, the key that provides access to eternity —death— is "golden" despite the fact that it puts an end to the earthly, temporal life. It is exactly this sentiment—that temporal life or time is inherently less meaningful, noble, or valuable than eternal life or eternity—that I set out to examine in my thesis. In order to do so, I analyze temporality's unique contribution to the wholeness of reality. If time offers possibilities that

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[7] Lines 21-27.

[8] David Ray Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for its Contemporary Relevance* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 109.

[9] John Milton, *Comus and Some Shorter Poems of Milton*, edited by E.M.W Tillyard (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1953), 76. Lines 13-14.

eternity cannot, and if temporality adds to the perfection of the universe, then surely our temporal lives must be an integral part of the beauty and goodness of the world.

Ultimately, inquiring after time and eternity reveals more about ourselves because our relationship to temporality defines the very kind of being we are; finitude has always been regarded as one of the most important traits that make us human. A deep understanding of time and eternity sheds light on the order of the world because we would then perceive time and eternity's constructive roles in the cosmos. If time is as vital as eternity, then the temporal nature of human life should not be considered tragic; instead, our finitude should be seen as an opportunity for participation and agency. Charles Sherover writes that "the mystery of time is thus the mystery of the existence of real individuals," and so in an attempt to better understand my own existence, I delve into the mystery of eternity and time. [10]

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[10] Charles M. Sherover, *Heidegger, Kant and Time* (Philadelphia: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 1988.), 3.

I. Plato's *Timaeus*: Time and the Completion of the Universe

 "And so he began to think of making a moving image of eternity: at the same time as he brought order to the heavens, he would make an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity. This image, of course, is what we now call "time"."

- Plato, *Timaeus*

Inspired by the beauty and order he observed in the universe, Plato offers a creation account in which the Demiurge, or the divine craftsman, constructs the world out of pre-cosmic chaos. Because the Demiurge is guided by the idea of The Good, we are assured that the world is its best possible version; there is no other way that the world could have been that would have made for a better world. Everything within the world is thus meant to contribute to the beauty the Demiurge wished to endow upon the world, and it is the philosopher's task to observe the universe, both in whole and in part, to apprehend the inherent goodness inscribed within the world, and to discern how each fact about the world indispensably contributes to its beauty. It is with this conviction regarding the goodness of the Demiurge, the beauty of the world, and the role of the philosopher that I wish to examine the concepts of time and eternity in the *Timaeus*. In the *Timaeus*, Plato presents through the eponymous character a majestic creation account in which time comes into being as the final act of improving the universe. I will argue that the Demiurge creates time in order to add meaning to the world by making it possible for humans to participate in the completion of the universe. In the end, we will also see that time is the metaphysical principle that allows for any discursive reasoning, including the *Timaeus,* which accounts for the creation of time.

Before I begin investigating time in *Timaeus*, there are two ways I wish to qualify Timaeus' "creation account." First, though Timaeus explains that the world results from the Demiurge's goodness, it is not an *ex nihilo* creation. "He was good, and one who is good can never becoming jealous of anything," Timaeus speaks, "so being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as possible."[11] However, the Demiurge, though divine, is not omnipotent in that he is not entirely free to act on his will; because he is "good," or at the service of The Good, he is not permitted to do "anything but what is best."[12] Thus for the divine craftsman, doing what is best includes establishing order in the universe because being organized (as a student might have to periodically remind herself) is always better than being disorganized: "The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible, and so he took over all that was visible —not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion —and brought it from a sate of disorder to one of order, because he believed that order was in every way better than disorder."[13] Timaeus is unequivocal when specifying that there was already a visible universe in chaotic movement, and therefore, the account given in the *Timaeus* cannot be *creatio ex nihilo*.[14]

Second, it may be worth our attention to remember that Timaeus, and through him Plato, claims to merely give a "likely tale."[15] I believe that Plato meant the creation account to be guided both by myth and *logos* and that his mastery is displayed in his ability to utilize both elements in his work. Both the form and content of the *Timaeus* attest to the fact that Plato wants

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[11] Plato, *Timaeus,* trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2000), 29e
[12] Plato, *Timaeus,* 30b. (Later, we will also see that the Demiurge is constrained by the necessary limitations of becoming when he attempt to recreate eternity (see *Timaeus* 37e).
[13] Plato, Timaeus, 30b.
[14] Though this argument is arguably a given one because Plato would not have even conceived of the possibility of a *creatio ex nihilo*, I believe that it is still worth examining the contextual evidence that points to a non-*ex nihilo* creation because the current understanding of the word "creation" is now associated with the Christian tradition, whose dominant theology argues for *creatio ex nihilo*.
[15] Plato, Timaeus, 29d.

the *Timaeus* to be interpreted as both a likely account and a well-reasoned philosophical

discussion. The topics Timaeus covers range from mathematics to metaphysics, which points to

his desire to cover both matters immediately practical and logical and matters abstract and

transcendental. In addition, the *Timaeus* is largely written in monologue form—a form most fit,

arguably, for story telling—unlike the usual back-and-forth discussion form of Plato's other

dialogues; its unique literary form in relation to its philosophical content renders the *Timaeus* a

creation account that is both mythical and logical, suggestive and analytical.

Timaeus, as a part of his prologue, explains that his creation story can be only so accurate

because the created world is an imitation itself: "Accounts we give of that which has been

formed to be like that reality, since they are accounts of what is a likeness, are themselves

likely. . . . What being is to becoming, truth is to convincingness."[16] Donald Zeyl explains that

Timaeus' general principle is that "the accounts we give of things should share the fundamental

characteristics of their subject matter," and indeed we see that there is an analogous relationship

between the world being an image of the Forms and Timaeus' account being an attempt at the

Truth.[17] Thus Timaeus holds that "if we can come up with accounts no less likely than any, we

ought to be content, keeping in mind that both I, the speaker, and you, the judges, are only

human."[18] It is the philosopher's responsibility to accept the limitations of human knowledge

imposed by the different epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical levels that separate men

from the Truth.

In the *Timaeus*, time is added onto the universe "after" the Demiurge had already

"begotten" the universe, set it in motion, and brought it to life: "Now when the father who had

begotten the universe observed it set in motion and alive," Timaeus speaks, "he was well pleased,

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[16] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29c.
[17] Donald J. Zeyl, Introduction to *Timaeus*, by Plato (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2000), xxix.
[18] Plato, *Timaeus*, 29d.

and in *his delight he thought of making it more like its model still.*[19] Here, though it is

suggested that the Demiurge creates time *after* the universe, this after cannot meant a *temporal*

after because there is no time yet to give meaning to the word. Instead, the universe is *logically*

prior to time, which suggests that time was not added to the universe as a literal after-thought.

The fact that the universe is logically prior to the cosmos, and not temporally after, ensures that

time is not a secondary or superfluous addition to the wholeness of the universe and that time is a

necessary component to the integrative completeness of the world.

Furthermore, the begotten universe "had come to be as a shrine for the everlasting gods"

even before time came to be.[20] The world *agalma*, which is translated as "shrine" here, has two

main meanings: "(1) object of worship, and (2) something in which one takes delight."[21] When

read in Greek, it would be accurate to understand Timaeus' description of the pre-temporal

universe as a creation worthy of worship and adoration. Therefore, we see that the universe is

holy and appreciable from the beginning—and the addition of time is meant to perfect its divine

qualities. In other words, though time seems to come "after" the universe, the creation of time is

not arbitrary or less meaningful than the rest of creation. It is important that time arises out of the

"thought of making [the universe] like its model still," because it points again to the fact that

time came to being with a definite purpose—a good purpose, for it resulted from the Demiurge's

delight and desire to improve the universe by which he is already "well pleased".

Time, then, is the Demiurge's attempt to mimic eternity the best he can with the created

world. The Demiurge, being a *good* craftsman, emulates to make his creation as perfect as

possible by following the perfect model—the Living Being—as closely as he can: "So, as the

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[19] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d.
[20] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d.
[21] Francis Macdonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1937), 99.

model was itself an everlasting Living Thing, he set himself to bringing this universe to completion in such a way that it, too, would have that character to the extent that it was possible."[22] Adding time "completes" this universe by ensuring that this world shares the characteristic of the Living Thing to its maximum ability. At the same time, the Demiurge must *settle* for time, for though "it was the Living Thing's nature to be eternal," "it isn't possible to bestow eternity fully upon anything that is begotten."[23] A created thing by definition cannot partake in eternity because it has a finite beginning, and so the Demiurge does the next best thing to making an exact replica: making something *like* it—an image. Thus "at the same time as he brought order to the heavens, he would make *an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity.*"[24] This image of eternity that moves according to number, *Timaeus* clarifies, is what we now call "time."

In this manner, time becomes relevant and necessary only when the Demiurge contemplates how to best confer the eternal Form's characteristics on the created world. It arises out of the relationship between infinitude and finitude, and hence the analogy between the two ideals plays an important thematic role in helping us understand the essence and function of time in the world. More specifically, time arises out of the occasion of the unlimited making contact with the limited in the *Timaeus*. It is finitude itself that preconditions the coming-to-be of the world since finitude or boundedness is the Receptacle—confining space—that makes the ordered universe possible. Similarly, Timaeus' creation account begins with the unbounded becoming bounded since it is nothing other than disorderly pre-cosmic motion that precedes the birth of the cosmos. "There were materials already in existence, but subject to chaotic movements," Sorabji writes, "and the creator's task was to instill order . . . . It is made clear that God's creative work

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[22] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e.
[23] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d.
[24] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e, emphasis added.

took the form of imposing order on a pre-existing order."[25] If the Demiurge creating the heavens

led to the creation of time, then it is really the imposition of structure on chaos that produces

time as we know it—*orderly* time.

Given that Plato writes time to be an image of eternity, it is curious that he chooses to

discuss the image before expounding upon the model itself. Seeing the need for an explanation,

Cornford suggests that "Plato wished first to define Time in order to contrast the temporal

existence of even the everlasting gods with the unchanging duration of the eternal model."[26]

This is to say that the Platonic metaphysical system includes at least four different levels of

temporality: *aion*, the eternity of Demiurge ("is" being); *diaiōnia* for all eternity, sempiternity of

the Forms (has being for all eternity); *diaiōnia* for all time, everlastingness of the gods and of the

whole cosmos (has being for all time); and *chronos,* temporality of the things in the cosmos

("becoming").[27] Though the same word *diaiōnia* is used to describe both the sempiternity of the

Forms and the everlastingness of the gods and the cosmos, it is the different contexts of eternity

and time that give rise to the different modes of being. Plato philosophically bridges the gap

between eternity and time by using a common middle term that can be found in both realms of

eternity and time, and we thus see that eternity and time are to be integrative, not dichotomous.

Furthermore, Zeyl writes that *diaiōnia* is "an exotic word, possibly Plato's own invention."[28]

That Plato might have coined the word *diaiōnia* himself suggests a deliberate attempt to bridge

the gap between eternity and time.

According to Plato, the only ones that live in the realm of eternity—whether in divine

singularity or multiple manifestations—are the Demiurge and the Forms. "It must be explained

[25] Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 273.
[26] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 117.
[27] Plato, *Timaeus*, 38c.
[28] Plato, *Timaeus*, 24.

that all these living creatures, even the heavenly gods themselves," Cornford states, "are

endowed with temporal life that moves in time and lasts throughout all time, but is not the eternal

unchanging duration proper to the model."[29] The eternity appropriate for the Demiurge and the

sempiternity appropriate for Forms, which "enjoy a kind of being utterly immune to any sort of

becoming" are strictly separate from everlastingness which fails to be eternal because it is

temporally extended.[30] Zeyl seems to agree with Richard Patterson's timeless view of Plato's

eternity when he writes, "Plato's account of the model's eternity follows from his determination

to exclude all becoming from that which truly is, and so the eternity in question cannot be

temporal everlastingness, duration without beginning or end, but must be timeless eternity."[31]

This concept of eternity traces back to Parmenides, to whom Plato is indebted. In his poem, *The

Way of Truth*, Parmenides discusses the concept of duration without change and a being that

utilizes this conception as its *mode* of being: "Nor was it ever, nor will it be, since it now is,/ all

together, one, continuous."[32] Sorabji explains that "it is the denial of 'was' and 'will be' which

expresses some concept of eternity."[33] It being "all together, one" points to its mysterious nature

of encompassing everything temporal within its atemporal essence, analogous—in an extremely

limited, spatial sense—to a condensed point that has within itself every line imaginable.

Similarly, its virtue of being "continuous" reveals another paradox regarding sempiternal

eternity; it is a perpetual oneness but without extension or duration, a mode of being that is not

divided in parts yet unending. In this formulation the concept of eternity is immune to any sort of

change.

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[29] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 102.

[30] Richard Patterson, "On the Eternality of Platonic Forms," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 67.1 (1985): 27-46. 35.

[31] Zeyl, Introduction, xlii.

[32] Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, fr. 8 DK, 1.5 and the first half of 6, 99

[33] Sorabji, Time, *Creation, and the Continuum*, 99.

If the very essence of eternity is to lack extendedness, it seems paradoxical that time would be an image; after all, what could time have to do with eternity if the definition of eternity is to be timeless? Perhaps the analogy would make more sense if we were to take the word "image" to suggest a special kind of relationship rather than a likeness per se. Patterson suggests that instead of focusing on the supposed trait the image and the model share, we should inquire after the nature of the *connection* between the two that permits the comparison in the first place. "The image analogy illustrates an *association*, and a *priority* in being and naming, between image F and model F," Patterson writes, "where image and model do not resemble one another with respect to being F, but where there is a *relationship* (being an image of) that connects the two and justifies calling the one after the other."[34] Describing time to be the image of eternity and setting up an elaborate structural analogy of eternity, sempiternity, everlastingness, and temporality show that time and eternity cannot be simple dichotomies, but two modes of being in a certain connection—and this connection is not merely a relationship of oppositions that provide meaning for each other, but a relational *harmonia*, a concept that traces back to Pythagoras' notion of a harmonious relationship based on proportion. Such an understanding of the connection between time and eternity is also consistent with the existence of the middle term, *diaiōnia,* for it is *diaiōnia*'s ability to function in the context of both time and eternity that links the two, just as the concept of the Least Common Multiple allows for two distinct sets of integers to be related to each other in a certain order.

An important element featured in the connection between time and eternity is a sense of completion. The only reason time may be justified in being described as the image of eternity is that time always seems to return to its starting point with a teleological drive. Patterson writes that "the positive association by virtue of which time does qualify as an image of eternity has to

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[34] Patterson, "Eternality," 31, emphasis added.

do, as all accounts agree, with changelessness or regularity of some sort."[35] Timaeus explains

that time "imitates sempiternity" and makes the world as close to the Living Thing as possible by

bringing periods to completion:

> "so people are all but ignorant of the fact that time really is the wandering of these
> bodies, bewilderingly numerous as they are and astonishingly variegated. It is
> nonetheless possible to discern that *the perfect number of time brings to*
> *completion the Perfect Year at that moment when the relative speeds of all eight*
> *periods have been completed together and, measured by the circle of the Same*
> *that moves uniformly, have achieved their consummation. This, then, is how as*
> *well as why those stars were begotten which, on their way through the heavens,*
> *would have turnings. The purpose was to make this living thing as like as possible*
> *to that perfect and intelligible Living Thing, by way of imitating its*
> *sempiternity*"[36]

Even the diction suggests a sense of completion as Timaeus uses words such as "perfect,"

"completion," "uniformly," and "consummation." Just as eternity is continual in its oneness, time

is perpetually flowing in its specific form—one year, one day, one hour. It is "one" in the sense

that it is contained within very specific measures that repeat themselves once hit upon their limits,

which suggests a kind of singleness, unity, or wholeness that is not arbitrarily extended.

At the same time, the brilliance of Plato's analogical treatment of time and eternity lies in

its flexibility to account for both their closeness and their absolute distinction. Though the most

important word within the analogy—image—seem to focus on the affinity shared between time

and eternity, it also highlights the thorough dissimilarity that is insurmountable. "The image

analogy indicates further that the sort of changelessness common to all separate intelligible

Forms . . . does not apply even approximately, or in one respect rather than another, to sense

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[35] Patterson, "Eternality," 42.
[36] Plato, *Timaeus*, 39d.

objects."[37]   Though time's flow seems continual like eternity, each passing second is distinct and

different from the last, a breach in all-togetherness that eternity cannot tolerate. The association

between time and eternity is one governed by the Same and the Different: "The image analogy is

well suited to illustrate at once a positive link between the eternality of the created world and that

of the Forms, as well as an unbridgeable gap between the two, due to the fact that utter immunity

to becoming cannot be achieved in any respect by our cosmos, or even a frozen particular that, as

we would say, never changes."[38]

Forever unable to attain eternity's wholesome oneness, time compensates by imitating

eternity's changelessness by returning to its beginning point over and over again. Considering

Cornford's commentary in the context of Patterson's explanation may provide further insight

into the nature of time's consistency:

> The hands of a perfect clock would regain at every moment the position at which
> they were twelve hours before. Since the celestial clock was never set going at
> any moment of time, there was never any original position to serve as starting-
> point. The period, whatever it may be, is beginning and ending at every moment
> of time. This perpetual recurrence, as the concluding sentence remarks, is the
> nearest approach that the visible world can make to the eternal duration of the
> unchanging model[39]

In this way, we see that what makes time and eternity so similar—their mutual occupation with

wholeness—is also what makes them different from each other. Perhaps this partial

disintegration of the seeming dichotomy between the Same and the Different is what allows for

the analogical relationship between time and eternity hinted at by Plato. Time is never just like

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[37] Patterson, "Eternality," 42.
[38] Patterson, "Eternality," 42.
[39] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 116.

eternity, nor is it ever separate from eternity; as its image, it enjoys a certain relation to eternity that cannot be captured by an either-or framework.

Plato poses the circle as the transition image between eternity and time. If eternity is like a point, then time is like a circle—and insofar as a circle is related to a point, time contains a likeness of eternity. Cornford explains that the ancients considered regular circular locomotion the best unit of measurement because it is the most easily counted: "this also explains the common saying that *human affairs form a cycle*, and that *there is a cycle of all other things that have a natural movement and come into being and pass away.*"[40] Within the *Timaeus*, the divine craftsman reinforces a cyclical understanding of life when he commands the gods, regarding the humans, to "give them food, cause them to grow, and when they perish, receive them back again."[41] The circle, in both a literal and poetic sense, captures the natural order of things familiar to the ancients: the repetition of seasons; the cycle of birth, procreation, and death; the revolution of the stars. Thus it is logical that time itself would be thought of as a sort of circle. Unlike the modern conception of time governed by linearity, time was circular for the ancients. Aristotle writes in *Physics,* "Time is the measure of this kind of locomotion and is itself measured by it; so that to say that things which come into being form a cycle is to say that there is a circle of Time, which means that it is measured by circular movement."[42] Following the tradition of Greek thought, Plato held a mythic notion of the cosmic cyclicality, and it is not difficult to see that the cyclical nature of time—always coming back to the same point—and the continual oneness of eternity—not going anywhere—would share a certain association in his mind.

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[40] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 103.
[41] Plato, *Timaeus*, 41d.
[42] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 103.

Though I agree with Patterson that Plato's analogy highlights the virtue of unchangingness that connects time and eternity, I disagree with his interpretation that the image analogy also illustrates a *priority* in being and naming. The philosophical Greek reading of eternity, which Plato would have held, is one informed by Parmenides' idea that change is metaphysically unreal and Xenophanes' idea that there is perfection that is outside of human grasp. It is this understanding of eternity—that it is a mode of being higher, better, and exclusive—that I wish to reject. Eternity should not be considered nobler than temporality; there should be no inherent hierarchy built into the relationship between the two. Time and eternity are mutually inclusive concepts that depend on each other for meaning, and both time and eternity contribute to the goodness of the cosmos in their unique ways. Given the above discussed premise that the connection between time and eternity pertains to their mutual occupation with a sense of completion, I wish to propose that time and eternity relate and participate in teleology differently, which is precisely what allows them to contribute to the beauty of the universe in their own ways. That the Good and the Forms belong to the unchanging realm of eternity is a well-emphasized idea, and this understanding has contributed to the idea that eternity is more important than temporality in its ability to house the perfect models of which this world is simply an image. Therefore, I will focus on the unique way temporality comes to add meaning to the world as discussed in the *Timaeus*.

Timaeus establishes an important association among rationality, order, and time when he explains that it was men's observation of the stars that gave rise to the notion of time, knowledge, and even philosophy: "For before the heavens came to be, there were no days or nights, no months or years. But now, at the same time as he framed the heavens, he devised their coming to

be. These all are parts of time."[43] The concepts of days, nights, months, or years are utterly

dependent on the revolution of the stars, and because the ancients' first meaningful temporal

distinction would have centered around the lightness of day and the darkness of night, Timaeus

claims that the very concept of countable, regular time arises from men's observation of the

planets. Time, as a feature of the order of the universe, is thus inherent in the rational structure

of the cosmos.[44] One might go even farther to argue that the purpose of heavenly motion was for

the Demiurge to teach humans about mathematics: "The purpose of the Demiurge is that

mankind shall learn to count and develop mathematics by the exercise of reckoning periods of

time, days, months, and years. The unit for this reckoning is the shortest division of time

produced by the celestial revolutions, the period of day-and-night marked by the daily revolution

of the whole heavens."[45] That with the heavenly bodies came time *and* men's ability to do

mathematics is significant because learning mathematics is one of the preconditions of doing

philosophy for Plato, who subscribed to the Pythagorean view in which the universe is governed

by the beautiful structures of geometry: tradition has it that the phrase, "Let no one ignorant of

geometry enter," was engraved at the door of Plato's Academy. The geometric regularity of the

stars' movements thus opens up the possibility for philosophy. Cornford sums up the

significance of the Demiurge creating the planets as instruments of time:

> Before proceeding to the creation of all the everlasting heavenly gods who are to
> be enshrined in the system of revolutions already prepared, Plato takes first those
> among their number, namely the Planets, whose special utility to mankind lies in
> their marking off the periods of time and so treating men to count and calculate.

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[43] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e.
[44] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 103.
[45] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, 115.

He remarks later (47A) that the observation of these regular periods led to the discovery of number, to all inquiry into nature, and to philosophy itself [46]

Time instantiates regularity, and mankind come to apply this regularity to a myriad of observations, including the calendar, mathematics, and eventually philosophy, which comes full circle to comment on the Beauty and Goodness of the universe governed by the harmony of mathematics.

The cosmos thus comes into being with the regulative function of the heavenly bodies, and this orderly function is inseparable from time, if not time itself. "What fills time is movement" Cornford says, "and above all, the movement of life: the very word *αἰών* means both 'time' and 'life'."[47] Indeed, among the translations of the word *αἰών* are 'lifetime,' 'destiny,' 'age,' 'generation,' and 'era.'[48] The etymology of *αἰών* reveals that time and life—at least life as *we* know it—are interconnected in their essences, and understandably so since "soul is the origin of all *purposive* and *orderly* motion," the same elements that give rise to time.[49] This is why the chaotic pre-cosmic motion, which is "inherent in the Receptacle and the 'raw material' out of which the cosmos was made," is indicative of the "absence of the regulative function of soul."[50] Timaeus explains that "the soul is a mixture of the Same, the Different, and being. . . bound together in various proportions," and likewise, time is divided up yet bounded according to proportion (e.g. sixty minutes to one hour) and constituted by an orderly element that governs its movement.[51] The connection between soul and time is emphasized when the Demiurge adds the

[46] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* 105.
[47] Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* 103.
[48] Liddell, Scott, and Jones Greek-English Lexicon with Revised Supplement 1996.
[49] Zeyl, Introduction, xxiv.
[50] Zeyl, Introduction, xxiv.
[51] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37b.

same ingredients used for the creation of soul—the Same, the Different, and being—to instruments of time:

> "When he had finished this speech [regarding the gods' creation of mortals] he turned again to the mixing bowl he had used before, the one in which he had blended and mixed the soul of the universe. He began to pour into it what remained of the previous ingredients and to mix them in somewhat the same way… and when he had compounded it all, he divided the mixture into a number of souls equal to the number of stars and assigned each soul to a star… then he would sow each of the souls into that instrument of time suitable to it"[52]

Time and soul are closely linked, and later Plotinus in the *Ennead* makes more explicit the integral relationship between time and soul. With soul comes time, and with time comes soul, because time allows for philosophy, which is the activity of the soul.

It is also meaningful that time comes to be "at the same time" the heavens come to be because the stars cooperate in the formation of time.[53] The Demiurge creates time *through* creating the heavens. Timaeus explicitly emphasizes the stars' participation in the creation of time by referring to them as "bodies that were to cooperate in producing time."[54] In fact, it is only when they "had been begotten with life and learned their assigned tasks" that they "began to revolve," which suggests that they came into being and began moving for the sake of producing time.[55] Celestial motion, in turn, could be understood as a broad symbolism for order since astronomical regularity had always been a wonder to the ancient world. If the stars came into being for the sake of participating in the creation of time, then for Timaeus, time comes with order, or rather, with order comes time—there is no way to separate the two. "Time, then, came to be together with the heavens so that just as they were begotten together, they might also be

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52 Plato, *Timaeus*, 41d.
53 Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e.
54 Plato, *Timaeus*, 39.
55 Plato, *Timaeus*, 39.

undone together, should there ever be an undoing of them . . . . These are called "wanderers," and they came to be in order to set limits to and stand guard over the numbers of time."[56] Though the heavens and time are ostensibly separate entities that come into being, we see that in reality they are metaphysically inseparable because they were "begotten together" and will be "undone together."

  The thematic importance of the idea of co-creation is emphasized once again when Timaeus explains that the heavenly bodies—the gods—and not the Demiurge, create mortals. The Demiurge speaks to the gods:

> But if these creatures came to be and came to share in life by my hand, they would rival the gods. It is you, then, who must turn yourselves to the task of fashioning these living things, as your nature allows. This will assure their mortality, and this whole universe will really be a completed whole. *Imitate the power I used in causing you to be. . . . I shall begin by sowing that seed, and then hand it over to you. The rest of the task is yours*[57]

Timaeus' deliberate choices of words such as "imitate," sowing," "handing over," and "task" make it clear that the gods' contribution to the co-creation of the universe is an integral process of the coming-to-be of the world. The organic image running through the passage adds to the sense of the dynamic vision of the universe Timaeus might be appealing to. Indeed, the cosmos only "really" becomes a "completed whole" once the celestial bodied-gods create mortals. It is interesting to remember that the stars were "bodies that were to cooperate in producing time" before they were called to also create humans.[58] That the entities responsible for time's emergence should also be the ones to create humans is consistent with the fact that the word αἰών means both 'time' and 'life'; the creation of time and life thus are linked not only in so far

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[56] Plato, *Timaeus* 38c.
[57] Plato, *Timaeus*, 41d, emphasis added.
[58] Plato, *Timaeus*, 39.

as they are from the same agents, but also thematically in the suggestive fact that the creation of

time and life may have happened "at the same time," or may even refer to one single event.[59] In

the end, for Timaeus, and thereby Plato, one of the most foundational *ēthos* of the creation of the

world is that of agency and participation. Our world is one that invites co-creation, and it is only

when different forces contribute to the reality of the universe that the cosmos becomes a

completed whole. Thus time serves as a reminder that participation remains an essential feature

of the creation and continuation of our world.

In this way, Plato's metaphysical system sees time as something positive, something that

opens up possibilities. It is a meaningful addition to the world that results from the divine

craftsman's attempt to further perfect the features of the world; it is part of the goodness and

order in the world that *Timaeus* accounts for.[60] Furthermore, because the gods who create

humans come into being with time and create time through their revolution, there is a sense in

which time is a necessary condition and precursor to human existence as we experience it. The

heavenly bodies' participation in the order and goodness of the cosmos—through both their

regular movements and their creation of humans—is what gives rise to time. However, it is not

only the Demiurge's or the gods' agency that time highlights; time, in both a metaphysical sense

and an everyday sense, allows us to lead a dynamic existence. It is something given to us so that

we can live an active life, replete with changes, choices, and variations. It allows for order,

growth, memory, expectation, and hope. Because discursive reasoning can only arise when the

thinking subjects' thoughts are extended through time, time is also that which allows us to

rationally account for the universe. After all, it is only the temporal beings that can achieve

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[59] Plato, *Timaeus*, 37e.
[60] Strange, "Double Truth," 27.

something; with time comes contingency, which brings the unexpected element, which gives rise to creativity, which allows for the process of learning.

In the end, Plato wishes to give meaning to this world, and this leads him to account for the meaning and purpose of both eternity and time. If time were to be considered meaningless, unnecessary, or even fallen, then the cosmos would not be beautiful. Zeyl states that Plato believed "that the observable phenomena are not adequately explained and hence understood unless in terms of their place in an economy designed 'for the best' [and] in the *Timaeus*, Plato offers just such an account of the world."[61] The divine craftsman, though working with the inherent limitations of necessity, for the most part is able to "turn these constraints to good advantage, to serve in the production of things that are good and beautiful."[62] Time is the coincidence of opposites of nothingness and being—what is in time *is* only for a while, and its unique kind of being is a be-ing that is perpetually progressing towards a perishing.

It is important to realize that this distinct metaphysical level of being was necessary for the Demiurge to create the best universe possible: "Before the coming to be of time, the universe had already been made to resemble in various respects the model in whose likeness the god was making it, but the resemblance *fell short* in that it didn't yet contain all the living things that were to have come to be within it."[63] The Demiurge explains that "there remain. . . mortal beings that have not yet been begotten; and as long as they have not come to be, *the heaven will be incomplete*"—in a mysterious way, it is the assured mortality of humans that makes the whole universe a real completed whole. [64] The Bury translation treats the same passage to mean: "if

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[61] Zeyl, Introduction, xxxiv.
[62] Zeyl, Introduction, xxxiv.
[63] Plato, *Timaeus*, 39e, emphasis added.
[64] Plato, *Timaeus*, 41c, emphasis added.

[mortal kinds] come not into being the Heaven will be imperfect."[65] This translation emphasizes

the significance of human creation more explicitly because the lack of earthly humans render the

Heaven *imperfect* —a state of being arguably worse than being incomplete, because imperfection

suggests defect or blemish. The Bury translation shows that because the divine craftsman is

himself at the service of the Good, creating finite humans is an integral part of completing and

perfecting not only this world, but the divine realm as well. The Demiurge needs humans, as

humans need the Demiurge. This fact is demonstrated by the simple truth that without the

philosopher participating in the recreation of the universe in the *Timaeus*, we would not have

conceived of the Demiurge at all. Time, in so far as it allows for discursive reasoning—and thus

philosophy—allows for Plato's demiurgic activity of conceiving a Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. Out

of the participation of the Demiurge and the gods comes time, and in turn, time allows for further

participation of the humans by enabling the Philosopher to recount the beauty and order of the

world—we have come full circle.

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[65] Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Robert Gregg Bury (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1929), 41c.

II. Plotinus' *Ennead* iii 7: Time and the Activity of the Soul

"But since there was a nature eager *to be involved in many things* which wanted to be in control of itself and to belong to itself, and chose to seek more than what was present, this nature moved, and time moved too."

- Plotinus, *Ennead* iii 7

In *Ennead* iii 7, Plotinus offers a theory of time that develops out of Parmenides' timeless eternity. Though his treatment of the relationship between time and eternity is heavily influenced by Plato's *Timaeus*, Plotinus' conception of the nature of time and eternity is unique in that he articulates time and eternity to be *lives* that exist either in a timeless or temporal fashion. Furthermore, because time is to be understood as the activity or the life of the soul, for Plotinus, the metaphysics of time necessarily sheds light on the human condition. In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate that though Plotinus seems to suggest that time is the result of the soul's "descent" from eternity, he nevertheless redeems time's metaphysical significance by highlighting the unique contribution time makes in completing the universe by opening the possibility of mortal life and intellect. Plotinus' conception of time accounts for our creative, imaginative, and interpretative faculty, and we will come to see that it is only in time that anything truly new can come to be.

Plotinus begins *Ennead* iii 7 with the assumption that one or more philosophers before him must have found "the truth" regarding time and eternity. "Now we must indeed think that some of the ancient and blessed philosophers have found the truth," Plotinus writes, "but who among them most attained to it, and how we might gain an understanding of these things for

ourselves, needs to be investigated."[66] The chief aim of his work, then, seems not to be about developing an original description of time and eternity but investigating their natures through analyzing the views of his predecessors. As a committed Platonist, Plotinus begins with the Platonic concept of time and eternity. However, he treats this "in a non-dogmatic way within the dialectical framework of his inquiry" and thus avoids the pitfall of commencing his philosophy with unwarranted presuppositions.[67] Because Plotinus takes a dialectical approach to studying time and eternity and considers every notable theory of time available, his assumption that "Plato's doctrines about these matters can serve as a reliable guide for investigating the nature of reality" is one that he puts to a fair test.[68] Andrew Smith asserts that "Plotinus's discussion of eternity is a dynamic exploration," for "although the entire discussion centers on Plato and in particular the *Timaeus* and to that extent is clearly circumscribed, there is nevertheless a strong element of open enquiry."[69] Thus Plotinus takes Plato's central formulation of time from *Timaeus*—that time is the "moving image of eternity"—as the starting point and writes his own philosophy consistent with this analogical relationship.[70] If time really is a type of an image of eternity, then the *characteristics* of time must also be a type of reflection or imitation of the *properties* of eternity.

From the beginning, Plotinus displays an interest in the difference and relationship between time and eternity. After stating that we must assume one or more prior philosophers' success at reaching the truth, Plotinus argues that "we should inquire first about eternity, what

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[66] Steven K. Strange, "An Annotated Translation of Plotinus *Ennead* iii 7," *Ancient Philosophy* 8.2 (1988): 251-271. [1.15]

[67] Strange, *Ennead*, 251.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Andrew Smith, "Eternity and Time." In *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, by Lloyd P. Gerson, 196-216. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 198

[70] Plato, *Timaeus,* Zeyl, 37.

those philosophers think it is who claim it is something different from time."[71] It seems logical that Plotinus would wish to consider eternity first, because one would study the model before attempting to understand the copy. This is especially the case if one were to attempt to *account* for the coming-to-be of something; while it would be expected that an architect would study the blue print in an attempt to understand the building's structure, it would make less sense if he or she were to examine the structure itself to explain how the blueprint came to be. Indeed, Plotinus believes that "when we have grasped that which stands as the paradigm, perhaps also the nature of its image, which they say is time, will become clear."[72] In addition, Plotinus has more to say about eternity than Plato does, and since his account imagines time to be more explicitly reliant on eternity, it makes sense that he would want to describe eternity before giving an account of time's beginning.

Plotinus' notion of eternity, like Plato's, derives from Parmenides. Parmenides had first conceptualized what seems to be eternity in *The Way of Truth* by addressing a duration without change and an entity who inhabits this duration without change: "Nor was it ever, nor will it be, since it now is,/ all together, one, continuous."[73] The similarity between Parmenides' eternity and Plotinus' eternity is evident from the way the latter first describes eternity:

> He [the philosopher] will see eternity, in seeing a life which remains always in the same state, always having the whole present to it—not one thing now and then another, but everything at once, and not different things now, and afterward different things, but a partless completion, as if all things existed together in a single point, and never flowed forth, but remained there in the same state, and did not change, but were always in the present, because none of it has gone by, nor shall it come to be, but it is just what it is[74]

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[71] Strange, *Ennead*,.253 [1.15].
[72] Strange, *Ennead*, 253 [1.20].
[73] Sorabji, fr. 8 DK, 1.5 and the first half of 6, 99.
[74] Strange, *Ennead*, 255 [3.15].

Plotinus' description of eternity, like Parmenides', denies that the past or the future can be a part of eternity; Plotinus writes regarding eternity that "none of it has gone by, nor shall it come to be, but it is just what it is," which corresponds to Parmenides' description "nor was it ever, ever will it be, since it now is." Both philosophers postulate eternity to be a durationless present, evidenced by the fact that Plotinus describes eternity to be "always in the present" and the fact that Parmenides only wishes to associate the verb "is" with eternity. They also both emphasize a divine oneness that accompanies eternity; Plotinus calls eternity a "partless completion, as if all things existed together in a single point," while Parmenides simply describes eternity as "one." Plotinus' phrase, "not one thing now and then another, but everything at once, and not different things now, and afterward different things," sounds much like Parmenides' simple "altogether." Lastly, eternity for both philosophers consistently occupies its oneness in a full yet non-extended sense, as Plotinus writes that eternity "never flowed forth, but remained there in the same state, and did not change," and Parmenides, "continuous." Interpreted this way, Plotinus' account of eternity reveals its descent from Parmenides' poetry.

In trying to fathom Plotinus' debt to Parmenides, we have overlooked the opening phrase, which is arguably Plotinus' most original formulation of what eternity really is: "he will see eternity, in seeing a *life*."[75] Eternity is not simply a mode of being for Plotinus. There is a concept of life, or a being, that always accompanies eternity: "so it turns out that the *life* that belongs to the essence of being, is all at once, and is everywhere full yet unextended, is what we are seeking, that is, eternity."[76] Eternity is a life, and not just any life, but a life that "belongs to the *essence* of being"—life at the top of the metaphysical and ontological hierarchy. However, eternity and this life are *not* one and the same. Plotinus further writes that eternity is "not the

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[75] Strange, *Ennead*, 255 [3.15, emphasis added].
[76] Strange, *Ennead*, 255 [3.35, emphasis added].

substrate (a layer that underlies something), but is that which, as it were, shines forth from the

substrate itself, in virtue of that sameness that is proclaimed as belonging to what is not going to

be, but already is, that is, that it is just the way it is and not otherwise."[77] Eternity is thus a

manifestation. Smith argues that the emphasis is "expressing its separate but dependent nature"

on the life: "It is "around" (*peri*) Being and is seen *in* it. It manifests itself *from* Being, like light

caused by something else, dependent on and attached to its cause but different from it."[78] Indeed,

Plotinus continues: "eternity could well be said to be a god manifesting himself and revealing

himself to be what he is, a being that is imperturbable, the same, and so also has the property of

being stable in its life. . . . If someone were to speak of eternity in this way, as a life that is

unlimited in virtue of being actually complete and expending nothing of itself. . . he would be

near to defining it."[79] Plotinus' admission that this definition is still only a *near* definition

speaks to the difficult and elusive nature of the topic.

     Though Plotinus, like Plato, associates eternity with a god, Plotinus cannot be talking

about the heavenly bodies, because the world is not eternal. It is the universe's non-eternal status

that explains its movement: "It is necessary that the universe, too, have a future in which it will

be in this same way. So it too hastens toward what will be, and wishes not to stand still, and it

draws being to itself in performing one action after another, and moves in a circle on account of

a sort of aspiration toward essence."[80] Because the universe has a future toward which it

constantly moves, it cannot be said to be eternal. Motion must be admitted even at the level of

the Forms, because it is within the nature of the Forms to be "touched" by us, given that sensible

objects in the world are constantly "participating" in the Forms. And that which has a

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[77] Strange, *Ennead*, .255 [3.25].
[78] Smith, "Eternity and Time," 201.
[79] Strange, *Ennead*, 256 [5.25].
[80] Strange, *Ennead*,.256 [4.30].

relationship with a temporal being must include temporality as a part of its essence, meaning that

only the One enjoys eternity in its true sense, marked by absolute unextendedness or oneness.

"Since eternity is the life of real being and real being is from, in, around and directed toward the

One," Smith explains, "eternity too is related to the One in the same way. The very activity of

abiding by the One is eternity."[81] Put this way, eternity is more a verb than a noun — an activity,

a way of being, or a manifesting.

Plotinus recognizes that eternity's absolute intolerance of unextendedness presents

difficulties in the philosophy of time and eternity, for human understanding requires thought and

language, both of which are mediums extended through time. Plotinus asks: "Do we say these

things [about eternity that is life] as if we were bearing witness for others, and about things that

are foreign to us? How would we? For how could we have any comprehension of them unless we

were in contact with them? And how could we be in contact with things that were foreign to us?"

[82] It would seem impossible that we have any grasp of what eternity is, lest eternity be corrupted;

Plotinus had argued that eternity is and must retain utterly separated from time, that "it ought not

to be in any way in contact with anything temporally extended, so that its life does not become

something divided and thus destroy its pure partlessness."[83] However, it *is* the case that we have

some ideas—albeit still in progress. For example, we have a conception of eternity that is

sophisticated enough to be able to distinguish eternity and the "source" of eternity that is the One.

Since we seem to have comprehension about some facts about eternity, it must be the case that

we are "in contact" with it. Plotinus relies on "a principle, common to some fifth-century natural

philosophers (e.g. Empedocles), that "like is known by like": in order for a knowing subject to be

able to know a given object, the subject must possess some of the same or similar characteristic

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81 Smith, "Eternity and Time," 203.
82 Strange, *Ennead*, 258 [7.1].
83 Strange, *Ennead*, 257 [6.50].

as the object."[84] This way of reasoning leads Plotinus to conclude radically that we must already be familiar with eternity, that "we too must participate in eternity."[85] Our ability and desire to learn about eternity arises from our participation in it, and a philosophical analysis of time and eternity is meant to help us understand things that we are already familiar with, but are unable to define adequately for ourselves without reflection.

Plotinus immediately recognizes the difficulty and weight of his claim that we must experience eternity, for he then asks: "But how can we [participate in eternity], if we are in time?"[86] He suggests, perhaps counterintuitively, that learning about time helps understand how we could dwell in both time and eternity. "How it is possible for us to be in time and how it is possible for us to be in eternity can be understood," Plotinus continues, "if we first find out what time is."[87] Therefore, he transitions into his discussion of time in chapters 11-13 with the claim that "accordingly, we must descend from eternity to the investigation of time and to time."[88] It is interesting and noteworthy that we "descend" from eternity to time and to the contemplation of time, as we will soon see that his inquiry itself mimics the way Plotinus imagines time to have separated and "descended" from eternity. This doubleness is similar to the one we had seen in the *Timaeus*, for Plato recounts the Demiurge's creation of the world by engaging in the demiurgic activity of writing the *Timaeus* himself.

The first thing to notice about Plotinus' account of time is that time seems to have always existed. "Before, when it had not yet generated this 'before' or felt a need of the 'after,'" Plotinus writes, "Time rested along with Eternity in Being, but was not yet Time, but it too was at rest in

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[84] Plato, *Timaeus*, Zeyl, 23.
[85] Strange, *Ennead*, 258 [7.5].
[86] Strange, *Ennead*, 258 [7.5].
[87] Strange, *Ennead*, 258 [7.5].
[88] Strange, *Ennead*, 258 [7.9].

Eternity."[89] Time, or what will come to be time, has always existed as a separate entity apart from eternity. But how could this make sense? How could time, something that is extended, rest in eternity, which is durationless? In order to make sense of Plotinus' logically puzzling claim, I believe that the statement "time rested along with Eternity" must be understood as a statement that deals with time as *potentiality* or *possibility*. In other words, it is not *actual* time itself that rested along with eternity, but *potential* time. Richard Gale's translation of the same passage supports this interpretation: "Time at first—in reality before that 'first' was produced by desire of succession—Time lay, *though not yet as Time*, in the Authentic Existent together with the Cosmos itself."[90] It is time "not yet as time," with an "active principle . . . set on governing itself and realizing itself," which have rested alongside eternity until it finally "stirred from its rest."[91]

Plotinus hints early on that what jolts time out of its rest is its "*need* of the 'after.'" A need is felt only when there is a gap between the status quo and the desired state, and we see that with a gap or an interval comes the possibility of time. Time's "need" for an "after" springs from an impulse that has always been there; it is this very impulse of wanting to transfer and unfold—an impulse that Plotinus considers synonymous with time—that have rested in eternity before time came to be. Thus there was always a possibility of time because the desire to rule oneself has always existed. Plotinus expounds upon the impulse's contribution to bringing time out of its rest in eternity:

> But since there was an officious nature that wished to rule itself and belong to
> itself and that chose to seek for more than it presently had, this nature moved, and
> time moved with it, and in always moving on to what came next, to what comes

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[89] Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.14].
[90] Richard M. Gale, *The Philosophy of Time: A Collection of Essays*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 31.
[91] Ibid.

after and is not the same, and having made progress in this journey, we produced time as the image of eternity[92]

Time, then, comes out of the desire for freedom and participation. The "officious nature," in wanting more than its allotted share of agency, "moves" to express its desire for more. The possibility of time arises from difference; only when there is a gap (created by desire in this case) can there be time. Kevin Corrigan's translation of the same passage highlights the manifestation of desire in the birth of time: "But since there was a nature eager *to be involved in many things* which wanted to be in control of itself and to belong to itself, and chose to seek more than what was present, this nature moved, and time moved too."[93] This ancient nature wanted to be involved—active and relevant—and this desire manifests in and through time, because time is the medium through which successive difference is created.

As we have thus observed, the idea of desire and, more specifically, the desire for participation, is closely associated with the birth of time in the *Ennead*; we had previously seen this phenomenon in the *Timaeus*. Just as time comes to be in the *Timaeus* with the Demiurge's wish for the heavenly gods to participate in the co-creation of the universe, time begins to move in the *Ennead* when the soul wishes to act upon its creative desires. The soul's "officious nature" that wanted to belong to itself also wanted an expression of its own: "For since the soul possessed an unquiet power, which always wished to transfer what it saw in that realm to something else, the soul did not wish to have all of it be present to it at once."[94] Gale translates the same passage with more emphasis on the soul's desire to share the fullness acquired from abiding in eternity: "For the Soul contained an unquiet faculty, always desirous of translating

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[92] Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.15].
[93] Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism* (West Lafayette, IN: Pursue University Press, 2005), 20, emphasis added.
[94] Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.24].

elsewhere what it saw in the Authentic Realm, and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession."[95] This "unquiet power" or "unquiet faculty" is the power of creativity, the desire to share, to replicate, and to re-create. The soul wanted to "transfer" or "translate" what it saw in the realm of eternity; it desired to re-present what it experienced in the realm of eternity, just as the early humans aimed to re-create the images of animals they had seen during the day on their cave homes.

However, with every translation, both literal and metaphorical, comes limitations—and the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* and the soul in the *Ennead* are no exceptions in facing the restraints of re-creation. As Socrates declares in *Republic* X, re-creation, no matter how skillfully made, is still separate and different from the original. Just as the Demiurge's inability to model perfectly the sensible world after the Forms gave rise to time in the *Timaeus*, the soul's inability to perfectly reproduce the eternal cosmos gives rise to time in the *Ennead*. Plotinus compares time's emergence out of eternity to a sprout coming out of a seed:

> Just as a *logos* unfolding itself from a quiet seed makes an advance, as it thinks, toward largeness, but actually destroys largeness by making it to be divided, and instead of maintaining its unity within itself expends its unity outside itself by going forward into a weaker extension, so also the soul in making the sensible cosmos imitates that other cosmos, moving with a motion that is not the Motion of the intelligible realm, but is like the Motion of that realm and wants to be an image of it[96]

The analogy between the soul's movement from eternity and a plant growing from a seed is significant in that it renders the soul's desire for advancement natural. Just as a seed is meant to grow towards largeness, the soul is meant to move, to seek to rule itself. However, the soul is

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[95] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*, 31.
[96] Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.25].

unable to maintain its "largeness," or undivided wholeness, for two reasons: first, as discussed above, to be desirous of something is to create a gap—a division between the present and the desired state—and this gap introduces the concept of separation or distinctness that can only be understood in extended time; the soul by virtue of wanting to rule itself, renders it impossible for itself to remain in eternity. Second, to move is to introduce extension because every motion must last through time. Therefore the soul's movement makes it impossible for the soul to recapture perfectly the eternal mode of being and makes it necessary for the soul to lead an existence that is temporal extension.

The soul forgoes resting alongside eternity for the sake of imitating the eternal cosmos in the sensible cosmos; it breaks away from eternity because it wishes to gain agency for itself. Gale translates *Ennead* 11.25 to emphasize that the soul produces the sensible world in an attempt to create for itself a realm that mirrors the divine world: "It is so with this faculty of the Soul, when it produces the Cosmos known to sense—the mimic of the Divine Sphere, moving not in the very movement of the Divine but in its similitude, in an effort to reproduce that of the Divine."[97] Aiming to be the image of the eternal realm, it "temporalizes itself" or "puts herself into time."[98] The soul's creation and journey into time was a necessary step for the world to come into being, for "to bring this Cosmos into being, the Soul first laid aside its eternity and clothed itself with Time."[99] This necessary condition also explains why our world had to begin and remain in time: the physical world cannot help but be in time because time resulted from the soul's creation of the physical world.[100]

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[97] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*, 31.
[98] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 21 [11.30]
[99] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*, 31.
[100] Strange, *Ennead*, 253.

It was necessary for the soul to have temporalized itself while attempting to create the sensible world because time is the *life* of the soul. Time is another kind of *life* opened up by the soul's movement. Strange explains that "time *is* the activity or life of soul, the extended and changing image of the fixed and durationless life of eternity."[101] If eternity is the partless life of the One, then time is the life of the soul that has extended itself. Plotinus thus writes that "instead of the life of the [eternal] intelligible realm, one ought to say that there is another life, the life of this power of the soul, which is homonym of that [eternal] life."[102] Here, he recognizes that both eternity and time are lives and that they represent unique modes of being that pertain to different metaphysical levels. The main difference between eternity and time is that time results from and requires difference, while eternity cannot tolerate any dissimilarity within itself. Time is unable to remain the same, and thus only emulates sameness by repetitions:

> instead of sameness and always being and remaining the same, that which does not remain in itself, but produces one act after another, and instead of that which is unextended and a unity, there is the image of that unity, that which is one in continuity, and instead of that which is an actually unlimited whole, that which is unlimited in the sense of a constant succession, and instead of a whole that is all together, a whole will always be coming to be part by part, and which will always be[103]

Time, though it breaks away from eternity, does not sever ties with eternity completely. Instead, it *adapts* the qualities it shares with eternity so that they are compatible with the sensible world. It is crucial to note that time is still whole, united, and unlimited; it is a whole that is merely "always coming to be part by part," a unity that is "one in continuity," and an unlimited thing in its "constant succession." Corrigan's translation of the same passage reinforces the idea that time

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101 Ibid.
102 Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.50].
103 Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.50].

has its own sense of fullness; time is "that which does not remain in the same but *activates* one thing after another" and a "*progression* to infinity always moving to what comes next in turn."[104] The passage suggests that time is an active agent that propels and catalyzes.

All this leads us to conclude that for Plotinus, time is inherently something positive, something that opens up possibilities. Time is the Soul itself, and because it is a life, it has the desire to be autonomous. It wants to be involved, and because it had the audacity to move away from eternity, it created the physical world that, too, constantly moves. Because time is what allows for *this* life—that is, life as *we* know it—it should not be seen as something fallen or unnatural. Corrigan asserts that the movement of the soul was for betterment of the world: "The deviation of intellect and soul and the descent of soul to make, organize, and care for the physical world are good and for the perfection of the whole."[105] Just as Timaeus' Demiurge created time to make the world a reflection of the Intelligible realm, the emergence of time and the physical world in the *Ennead* is an occasion that adds to the fullness of the world as a whole.

Specifically, this "descent" of the soul, which results in the soul's break from eternity, is a necessary condition for human knowledge and intellect; nothing —change, knowledge, progression, memory and expectation—would be comprehensible without time. Plotinus asserts it is time that allows for any kind of acquisition when he writes that "time will imitate that which is already a whole and is all together and actually unlimited, that is, by wanting always to be acquiring new being."[106] Time, as the activity of the soul, possesses the inherent and constant desire for novelty and generation, and it is this desire that enables the soul to lead a dynamic existence. Plotinus writes: "What sort of succession could there be, given that all things remained in a unity? What could be before anything else? What could be later than anything else,

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[104] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 21 [11.50], emphasis added.
[105] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 46.
[106] Strange, *Ennead*, 263 [11.57].

or in the future? What could the soul any longer attend to, other than that in which it was? Rather, it could not even attend to this, for it would first have to separate itself from it so that it could attend to it."[107] Because time makes possible the notions of succession, before, after, or change, it can be understood as an iteration of eternity that is demonstrated, disclosed, and expressed:

> [Soul's] action and production are the unfolding of intense contemplation…. This way of thinking (regarding action and production) is very much connected with Plotinus' views of eternity and time, which he develops in relation to Plato's *Timaeus* as well as with reference to the theories of Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Epicureans. . . . *Time is the "image of eternity," and this means that in generating the sensible world soul unfolds in successive stages what is completely present without extension in the intelligible world. Soul's production of time is like unfolding a single strand of reality reflected from an immense totality and unfolding that trajectory into a sequence of tenses: a "this after this"*[108]

In the above excerpt, Corrigan suggests time to be a different expression of reality; it is the "unfolded" version of totality that is represented in an unextended form in eternity. It is this very ability to articulate the same reality as eternity, but in an expanded way, that renders time metaphysically fundamental. Only when we accept the reality represented by time to be complementary to the reality encapsulated in eternity can we begin to understand the unique contribution time makes in perfecting the universe.

Philosophically, time provides the redemptive chance for reason to retrace reality because reasoning always comes after the fact. Eternity is supremely rational, but the proper—that is, human—level of rationality exists only in time because only through discursive reasoning can we construct ideas and reconstruct them to resemble reality. Reflection is a type of returning, and thus in a metaphorical sense, time's constant return to the "starting point" or "beginning," which

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[107] Strange, *Ennead*, 263 [12.15].
[108] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 47-48, emphasis added.

is its imitation of eternity, analogically reflects reason's desire to commune with reality. Time, then, is a dimension that makes possible the unfolding of reality that makes it comprehensible to us, partly because it allows for this kind of returning circular motion of the intellect and the soul. In regard to time's ability to create the possibility for something new, it is helpful to compare it to eternity: "If, then, what is in this state is eternal and always is, that is, what does not turn away in any respect toward another nature, and has a life which it possesses already as a whole, and has not received and does not receive and will not receive any addition, what is in this state will be eternal."[109] As opposed to eternity which "does not turn away" "toward another nature" because it is "already" "a whole", time is the result of the soul's wanting to have a different nature—a nature that is self-governed. More importantly, whereas eternity "does not receive and will not receive any addition," time is open to receiving because it is not self-contained; it is able to interact with different natures and hold diversity. While time is necessarily extended, it also "can never be broken apart, any more than Eternity" because "time is in every Soul of the order of the All-Soul, present in like form in all."[110]

Another way of understanding the emergence of time from eternity is to see temporality as the life of the soul in a movement of crossing over from one mode of life to another. We have already explored the idea that time's motion reflects soul's continual movement, and that time arises out of the soul wanting to have an autonomous life of its own. "So extension of life brings with it time," Plotinus writes, "and the fact that life is always progressing bring with it that there is always time, and life that is past brings with it past time."[111] Time seems to change when life itself changes. Gale further explains that "life is changed and that change carries with it a change of Time. Time, then, is contained in differentiation of Life; the ceaseless forward movement of

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[109] Strange, *Ennead*, 256 [5.15].
[110] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*, 37.
[111] Strange, *Ennead*, 262 [11.40].

Life brings with it unending Time; and Life as it achieves its stages constitutes past Time."[112]

Life's extension or progression is concurrent with time's flow, and it is past life that brings past time, which suggests that the different tenses—past, present, and future—are all different kinds of lives differentiated by time.

Thus, the life we live in the physical universe is inseparable from time: "If then, when the soul departs from this activity [of moving] and returns to unity, time is done away with. It is clear that the beginning of the soul's motion toward the objects of this realm and toward this life is what generates time."[113] Plotinus' claim that it is the soul's movement that sustains time is similar to Plato's explanation that when the heavens go out of being, so might time; both accounts rely on a kind of movement—whether it be a circular movement or a movement away from eternity. However, time ceasing to be when the heavens and the soul go out of being is not only because time is dependent on their movements, but also because—if not *more* so because— without heaven or soul, *this* side of life, or life as we experience it, would be impossible. And this life having gone extinct, time would lose its being, since there would be no more activity or life of the soul. For both Plato and Plotinus, the end of the stars' movements or the soul's motion would signify the end of time because such a situation would translate into a kind of end that would no longer sustain mortal life. Thus, time distinguishes between an eternal being and a temporal becoming because it is the medium that separates the soul's distinct life from that of eternity. Different lives—the life of the One manifesting itself as eternity and the life of the soul manifesting as time—involve and require different dimensions.

Time is special in that it allows the soul to encounter eternity, or reality, in a progressive and dynamic way. Plotinus asserts that time is energetic: "Time is the activity of a soul that

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[112] Gale, *The Philosophy of Time*, 32.
[113] Strange, *Ennead*, 263 [12.20].

always exists, an activity that is not directed towards the soul itself nor in it, but is involved in making and generation."[114] Inherent within time is the creative desire that always exists, and thus the world goes through an everlasting creation, renewal, and refashioning through the movement of the soul that gives rise to time. Put another way, it is time that allows the world to go through an eternal renewal and refashioning according to the movement of the soul. In the following moving passage, Corrigan explains that each new second that time brings forth is really the world being created anew each moment:

> There is no deliberation in the making of the world, for deliberation would indicate deficiency; and there are no mechanistic pulleys or levers. Instead, everything is timelessly and silently generated from within the creative contemplation of nature, and whole soul, and intellect, so that all forms of existence are actually living forms of contemplative thought, no matter how finished some of them may be or how unaware of their own deeper significance they actually are. The world, therefore, is eternally created at each moment and. . . . it is not generated in time so much as it springs out of soul together with time itself, which is "the life of soul in the movement of passage from one way of life to another"[115]

We thus see that Plato and Plotinus' philosophy continually offers the possibility of the new; their conceptions of time relate all existence back to eternity, which informs the reality that is being recreated and reexpressed each moment of time. Time, in this way, lets us get close to eternity while living temporally, because it gives us a glimpse of eternity.

Ultimately, eternity should not be put in a privileged position over time because time offers possibilities that eternity can not. Moreover, because we—our lives and our soul—are essential parts of time, learning about the nature of time helps us learn about the nature of

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[114] Strange, *Ennead*, 263 [12.9].
[115] Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus*, 97 [11.43-45].

ourselves. Plotinus had mentioned that we are able to make statements about eternity because we have a share in eternity ourselves. Smith asserts that the understanding of time and the understanding of ourselves are connected because time and soul are intimately linked: "we, individual souls, are "part" of the Hypostasis Soul. Thus time, the life of soul which is to be identified with discursive reason (*dianōia*), is very much our life. Understanding what time is helps us to understand what we are, at least at the level of discursive reason."[116] Because time is the movement of soul, which is eternal in its existence, it is not to be understood as the antithesis or dichotomized half of eternity but merely another way of looking at the same reality contained by eternity in a certain way. In so far as it contains the same "stuff" as eternity, it is the image of eternity because it just manifests the same content in a different manner. "Time may be adequately described only in the context of eternity," Smith writes, "[and] Plotinus' interest in time then ends. . . with the nature of the soul, its activity and destiny, which are central concerns of Plotinus' philosophy as a whole."[117] The metaphysics of time is not a study of an abstract system, but a process of philosophical reasoning that has implications for the "activity and destiny" of individuals. Because Plotinus' theory of time is one that accounts for the soul's relationship to the Intelligible realm and the physical realm, it is "rooted in and serves experience."[118] In the end, his metaphysical system offers an understanding of time and eternity that illuminates the inherent meaning within our own lives, and within it, time invites us to be active participants in the creation and continuation of our world.

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[116] Smith, "Eternity and Time," 209.
[117] Smith, "Eternity and Time," 197-198.
[118] Smith, "Eternity and Time," 203.

III. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*: Time and the Moral Agent

"It [time] is therefore to be regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object."

- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant sets out to examine the proper boundaries and faculties of reason. Dismayed by the position into which empiricism had cornered itself—represented by Hume's skepticism—while also disdainful of the fanciful idealism in which the whole world is mind-dependent—represented by Berkeley's idealism—Kant contemplates whether any knowledge can arise independently of experience, for such knowledge would help us determine what we can truly come to know and how we can go about attaining such knowledge. Kant argues that for human consciousness, space and time are *a priori* intuitions that shape all *a posteriori* perception; the phenomenal world of our experience is necessarily constituted by the inner and outer forms of intuition, space and time. Thus Kant's critical philosophy, which shows strong Platonic tendencies, is an appropriate place to look when questioning time's significance, because in it time unifies all our subjective experience as to give rise to selfhood. By opening to us the phenomenal world, time impacts our attainment and experience of self-knowledge and free agency, especially as we know them through phenomenal experience. In addition, only in time does freedom manifest its meaning and effects, because any free decision needs a temporally extended, unknown future for its effects to show. In the end, time in Kant's critical system makes knowledge possible and endows subjects with the ability to experience lasting ramifications of free will over time: thus Kant echoes and develops the *Timaeus'* sentiment that time is an indispensible part of moral experience.

Kant's distinction between *phenomena*, the realm of everyday life, and *noumena*, the realm of pure intelligibility, seem to closely mirror Plato's theory of the Forms. After establishing that every inner and outer experience is filtered through time and space, Kant stipulates through critique that there must be a noumenal world whose entities and events do not include temporal extendedness.[119] This separation between the quotidian reality and the more excellent, truer, otherworldly reality is Platonic in character. The difference lies in the fact that Kant considers *noumena* to be entirely unavailable to humans, while Plato considered philosophy the attempt to gain a better grasp of eternal Forms. However, Kant's claim that we cannot have any knowledge of the noumenal world is self-defeating in one sense, because through philosophy he is at least able to say that there exists a noumenal world and that it is separated from our everyday consciousness. This is to say that through philosophy we must have *some* knowledge of *noumena* in order to make meaningful assertions about its nature, our nature, and our relationship to it. Thus philosophy plays a bigger role in making sense of the *phenoma-noumena* distinction in Kant's philosophy than Kant acknowledges, and this renders the role of philosophy in Kant's epistemology similar to the role philosophy played in helping to grasp the eternal forms in Plato's epistemology.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant denies the legitimacy of any knowledge that transcends experience. "There is no doubt whatever," Kant writes, "that all our cognition begins with experience."[120] This is an empiricist claim, one that clearly demonstrates Kant's intention to reign in reason's desire to venture into the fanciful realm of speculative metaphysics. Kant

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[119] Kant actually pushes the argument farther than it needs to go in arguing that the objects in the noumenal world are not subjected to temporality, because to advance such a claim would be to directly go against his ultimate claim that we have no access to the noumenal world. It would have been more appropriate for him to state that we simply do not know whether time would exist in the noumenal world.

[120] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason,* ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), [B2].

then qualities this statement with temporality—"*as far as time is concerned*, then, no cognition in us precedes experience"—because we can claim that no cognition comes before experience only if we were to put cognition and experience in some sequential order.[121] In other words, Kant acknowledges the implicit temporal notion within his statement so as to not take for granted the concepts of before and after present within his claim. Furthermore, when he writes "although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience," Kant is careful to distinguish that cognition only necessarily commences *with* experience and not necessarily *from* experience, because he does not wish to suggest that cognition is somehow *caused* by experience.[122] Instead of causality, then, it is the idea of possibility that Kant wishes to advance; with experience comes the *possibility* of cognition, and it is only through experience that we may know anything at all.

Time, then, is what makes knowledge possible because it is the medium through which we experience anything. As the form of inner sense, time is innate to us in that it is inseparable from our way of cognizing. Kant appeals to our ready ability to comprehend certain temporal phenomena as proof that time is not a learned concept; "time is not an empirical concept that is somehow drawn from experience," he argues, "for simultaneity or succession would not themselves come into perception if the representation of time did not ground them *a priori*. Only under its presupposition can one represent that several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively)."[123] Thus time is a "presupposed" concept, the mechanism through which our mind seeks and structures its content. Because our mind has an active role in cognition, the way in which we experience things is already determined, though the object of experience may be undetermined; though *what* we experience may be new every

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[121]Kant, [B2], emphasis added.
[122] Kant, [B2].
[123] Kant, [A 30/ B46].

time, *how* we experience things is constituted the same. Bryan Hall explains that for Kant, "appearances have a *matter* that is given *a posteriori* but a *form* that is given *a priori* by the subject. Whereas sensation is the *matter* of appearance. . . space and time are the *a priori forms* of appearance."[124] As the "essential cognitive contribution of the subject to her own experience," time's objectivity is purely relative to phenomenon.[125] Time has no absolute status because it is merely a subjective condition of experience—it is empirically real but transcendentally ideal and metaphysically unknowable.

It thus seems that time says more about our condition as perceiving subjects than its own metaphysical structure. In fact, time is the most essential and foundational construction of my subjectivity because through it the self persists and becomes a lasting self. After all, it is time that makes it possible for us to experience things—including ourselves. Kant is clear in asserting that without time, no perception would be possible:

> Time is a necessary representation that grounds all intuitions. In regard to appearances in general one cannot remove time, though one can very well take the appearances away from time. . . . In it alone is all actuality of appearances possible. The latter could all disappear, but time itself (as the universal condition of their possibility) cannot be removed[126]

Again, Kant explicitly states that time is a necessary and universal condition for representations, and he goes as far as to say that it is *only* in time that appearances become possible. Because time is the most basic lens through which we intuit anything, time could be said to be more fundamental than space. Space is the *a priori* outer intuition through which we perceive external objects as existing simultaneously, whereas time is the *a priori* inner form of intuition through

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[124] Bryan Hall, Mark Black, and Matt Sheffield. *The Arguments of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011), 17.
[125] Hall, 20.
[126] Kant, [A31/ B46].

which representations exist successively. And since "everything the subject perceives is incorporated into the stream of consciousness in inner sense," time is the "form of all appearances whatsoever."[127] This is to say that time permeates throughout our entire internal *and* external cognizance. Time therefore could be understood as a kind of self-awareness, for it represents our ability to become aware of empirical selves *and* the world outside of us. Only through time does the concept of the *knowable* self arise because it is the "intuition of ourselves and our inner state."[128]

It is only after he describes the role of the unknowable transcendental unity of apperception that Kant distinguishes the knowable empirical self that comes to cognize itself through time. Kant writes that the transcendental unity of apperception, or the transcendental "I think," is a necessary condition for any experience because it unifies all our experiences in a way that makes objectivity possible: "Now no cognition can occur in us, no connection and unity among them, without that unity of consciousness that precedes all data of the intuitions, and in relation to which all representation of objects is alone possible. This pure, original, unchanging consciousness I will now name transcendental apperception."[129] As pure subjectivity that grounds all representations of objects, this transcendental "I" can never itself be an object of knowing, but only a *precondition* for knowledge: "the **I think** must be able to accompany all my representations. . . [and because it] must be able to accompany all others and which in all consciousness is one and the same, [it] cannot be accompanied by any further representation."[130] The "I" is thus comparable to Thales' water or Aristotle's law of non-contradiction; it is the subjective first principle through which all of our experience and knowledge are accounted for,

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[127] Hall, 19.
[128] Kant, [A33/ B50].
[129] Kant, [A107].
[130] Kant, [B132].

yet it itself cannot be accounted for. When I know what something is, I, as the subject, make the something into an object; however, the "I" in "I think" cannot be objectified because it is the condition for objectification. I as the subject cannot make myself an object, and thus the conceptual "I" in "I think" is purely representational, and thus unknowable. And it is this impenetrable transcendental unity of apperception that orders all experience by the categories of space and time.

Consequently, there is no such thing as pure self-cognition or rational self-transparency, because ultimate subjectivity can never be truly known. To a degree, I am and will remain enigmatic to myself because I will never have absolute knowledge of myself. Our reason cannot have direct knowledge of itself, but can only have indirect, interpretative, and relational knowledge of itself:

> I am conscious of myself not as I appear to myself, not **as** I am in myself, but only **that** I am. This **representation** is a **thinking**, not an intuition. . . . My own existence is not indeed appearance (let alone mere illusion), but the determination of my existence. . . . *I therefore have **no cognition** of myself **as I am**, but only as I **appear** to myself. The consciousness of oneself is therefore far from being a cognition of oneself* [131]

There is an inevitable limitation to self-knowledge because I do not have access to myself as noumenal. I can be conscious of myself but never cognizant of myself; all I know is *that* I am but not *what* I am. Even our knowledge of ourselves is conditioned by space and time because we cannot get rid of this mediated nature of knowledge of ourselves. Our general subjective being is thus out of our cognitive reach.

However, we *do* have a sense of self, and this self that we *are* able to cognize is our empirical selves. This fact is consistent with Kant's claim that all knowledge arises with

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[131] Kant, [B 157], emphasis added.

experience—even knowledge about us must arise with our experience of our selves. Because we know ourselves only as we appear to ourselves in space and time, we are able to recognize our empirical selves that order experience spatially the outside world and temporally internal experience. Kant calls *inner sense* or *empirical apperception* this consciousness which "can provide no standing or abiding self in this stream of inner appearances" because it is "in accordance with the determinations of our state in internal perception."[132] In other words, our knowable selves are "merely empirical" and "forever variable" because we can only know them as they appear through the manifold of space and time.[133] More specifically, it is only as we appear to ourselves in time that we know ourselves: "[the empirical self] can only produce an intuition of itself in such a way, whose form . . . determines the way in which the manifold is together in the mind in the representation of time;[134] "there it then intuits itself not as it would immediately self-actively represent itself, but in accordance with the way in which it is affected from within, consequently as it appears to itself, not as it is."[135] Our empirical selves, by virtue of being knowable, are "affected from within" in that they become objects of knowledge to our transcendental unity of apperception. It is conditioned by the same forms of intuition with which itself encounters the world.

  At the same time, it would not be fair to prioritize or somehow consider the transcendental unity of apperception as better than our empirical perception because all knowledge and experience must come from the empirical self that experiences sensible stimulation**.** "But all thought, whether straightaway (*directe*) or through a detour (*inderecte*)," Kant posits, "must ultimately be related to intuitions, thus, in our case, to sensibility, since there

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[132] Kant, [A 107].
[133] Ibid.
[134] Kant, [B 69].
[135] Kant, [B 69].

is no other way in which objects can be given to us."[136] If all thought must be related to sensibility, and if the empirical self is our consciousness that makes it possible for us to cognize a self that experiences objects in time, then it follows that our empirical self is ultimately that which allows us to have knowledge or experience as subjects. In addition, time is not an entity but a condition, the 'how' of our perceiving the world. Kant therefore writes that time "is therefore regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object."[137] Self-consciousness is the determination of the self in time.

Time, then, as our mode of being of an experiencing subject and an objectified empirical apperception, conditions knowledge of any kind**.** Charles Sherover argues that Kant "has shown us that temporal factors pervade all human knowledge" because it is time that allows for a relationship between a subject and an object.[138] Time provides our consciousness with a thought-structure:

> There is no mere intuition: we "look at" nothing in advance of thought. . . . All human awareness is thought-structured *a priori*, from the beginning. Thus to intuit even a pure triangle, for example, I have to *think* the concept of a figure enclosed by three lines, and *I* simultaneously have to think it: a determinate concept and its unifying subject[139]

Whenever we apprehend anything, the representations are given to us temporally—that is, successively. In this way, "time, as the formal condition of the manifold of inner sense," is thus "the connection of all representations."[140] Because we are phenomenal beings, our understanding must function discursively—and time is the part-by-part medium through which

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[136] Kant, [A 19 B/ 33].
[137] Kant, [A 37/ B 54].
[138] Sherover, 131.
[139] Eva T. H Brann, *What, Then, Is Time?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 66.
[140] Kant, [A 139 / B 178].

the understanding functions in the phenomenal world. Time is the medium through which I give meaning to the objects I encounter through experience.

It is also important to note that it is only through the medium of time that I can become aware of the external world as it appears to me. In time, our inner form of intuition, every spatial object outside of me carries the possibility for an inner experience through which I may come to cognize the object. It is the empirical ego that becomes aware of the phenomenal objects through experience in time; the consciousness of my own existence helps me cognize the objects outside of me. At the same time, it is this awareness of the world outside of me that, in turn, contributes to my self-consciousness. Kant argues for the inseparability between consciousness of one's existence and consciousness of the external world when he writes that "the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself" and that "the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me."[141] This goes back to Kant's distinction between the transcendental unity of apperception and the empirical apperception—that any part of ourselves that we know is necessarily the part that we perceive through the manifold of time.

Consciousness of one's own existence and the awareness of the phenomenal external world are radically interdependent not only on each other but also on experiences over time. Only the awareness of our existence accrued in and through time makes it possible for us to become aware of objects outside of us. If time could be understood as "the capacity for affecting one's own self," it becomes clear that time is what holds together the relationship between my cognizance of myself and my consciousness of the external world.[142] For Kant, then, a correct

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[141] Kant, [B 276].
[142] Sherover, 202.

understanding of what time is and what time enables presents itself as a possible solution to the problem of solipsism; time makes it possible for us to break out of the prison cell of our own minds and open ourselves up to the possibility of the external world. In addition, because time is an intuition that gives us a sense of who we are, it follows that only through it can we become subjects capable of will, thought, and action. Sherover comments on time's unique role in fostering selfhood: "Time, therefore, as the structure of our capacity to receive, unify, order, and interpret separable sense reports, to integrate these into a coherent experience, to enable us to investigate these into a coherent experience, to enable us to investigate and resolve difficulties, to undertake actions, is the ground of the *possibility of our selfhood.*"[143] With time, we create an empirical self that is capable of acting.

Time, in its ability to allow for an experienced life that is conscious of its own existence and the existence of the world around it, renders the human subject capable of knowledge and action. It is easy to see that only time can in earnest make knowledge possible because all knowledge begins with experience, an occasion that is necessarily indebted to time. Similarly, the inseparability of human consciousness and temporality points to the fact that time is the most important tenet of subjectivity. Kant's conception of the self—that we exist in active self-responsiveness—renders time necessary for any possibility for a dynamic self because it is only in time that our empirical selves can be self-active. Sherover asserts that the subject's reliance on the intuition of time is what makes selfhood possible:

> Rooting this temporal horizon in inner sense tells us a good deal about the nature of the beings we are. It tells us that time-projecting—the capacity and its necessity—is an essential constituent of the structure of the kinds of selves we are. It tells us that this capacity, which is the root of any apprehending at all—

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[143] Sherover, 206, emphasis added.

including apprehending of our own be-ing and thereby our own self-consciousness—is thereby crucially fundamental to our own selfhood[144]

If temporality is the most fundamental element of our consciousness, then it follows that our ability to act according to our free will is also an integral component of what makes us human. Because the nature of our being and the nature of time—through which all experiences are made possible—are interrelated, it becomes the case that what is consequential of the essence of time is also consequential of our make-up. "If we take seriously Kant's grounding of time in the nature of the cognitive self," Sherover argues, "it is reasonable to anticipate some kind of mutuality between the structure of the self which produces time and the nature of the time that is produced."[145] Sherover's expression of the mutually informing relationship between the self and time brings to mind Plotinus' conception of time whereby time simply *is* the life of the soul. Because time is to be understood as the activity of the soul, the metaphysics of time necessarily sheds light on the human condition for Plotinus. For example, time is the medium through which difference is created, and thus time's continual movement is seen as a metaphorical manifestation of the soul's desire to be active and relevant. Similarly, for Kant, time's inclusion of an open future has implications for the kind of life we are meant to live.

Implicit within the notion of time is the future, the uncharted, undetermined time yet to be actualized—and through temporality the subject comes to experience the future, in which the significance of freedom is revealed. Here, our being towards the world that is both active and passive is crucial because freedom itself is self-active. Eva Brann argues that the future is an important precondition for agency when she writes "the future is understandably absent from the realm of natural necessity, [but] one might expect to find it in the realm of personal freedom, in

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[144] Sherover, 203
[145] Sherover, 201.

the *Critique of Practical Reason*. . . for the future would seem to be the phase of freedom, the phase in which the "will" expresses the very meaning of its name."[146] It is in the future that the subject's ability to will and act according to that will "expresses" the "meaning of its name."

Since future is a form of time, consequently it is time that gives freedom, action, and free action their proper meanings. To be sure, the *concept* of freedom does not necessitate time, for it is a noumenal concept which, by definition, is independent of phenomenal determination. Kant explains that "reason therefore acts freely, without being determined dynamically by external or internal grounds temporally preceding it in the chain of natural causes."[147] Reason's ability to act in freedom is bound neither by time nor by causal necessity, because the concept of freedom itself does not need time for it to make sense. However, freedom's *effect* begins in phenomena, and our inner form of intuition that finds all phenomena is time. Though the freedom with which the subject *acts*—the intelligible self-cause—is not necessarily in time, its *effects* are encountered in time: "In reason itself nothing begins, but as the unconditioned condition of every voluntary action, it allows of no condition prior to it in time, whereas its *effect begins in the series of appearances*, but can never constitute an absolutely first beginning in this series."[148] The self-determining will is thus conditioned by time because it would fail to affect our lives in any meaningful way were it not somehow unfolded through time. For freedom to move beyond its theoretical constitution and hold any practical value in our lives, we need time.

In the end, because time makes freedom potent by allowing it to reveal what free will is capable of accomplishing, time opens up the possibility of a moral life; morality is impossible without time because time is what substantializes any free decisions we make. Time manifests freedom's effects in our lives and makes actions meaningful. Sherover emphasizes that morality

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[146] Ibid.
[147] Kant, [A 554/ B 582].
[148] Kant, [A 554/ B 582].

would be meaningless without time because it is only in "the temporal world in which all moral dilemmas appear, in which they must be resolved, and to which the moral law itself must be applied in order to attain meaning" that we can begin to contemplate obligations.[149] Similarly, temporality is necessary for a moral life because it is at the root of our possibility to know and to act upon what we know. "The possibility of morality and of knowledge, of the employment of knowledge in action and the cognition of that action," Sherover illustrates, "both arise from and illuminate the structure of this one unified self, an autonomous person, whose essential nature in any aspect of his be-ing is to be pervasively temporal."[150] This is to say that the way our minds are constituted—namely, our essential tie with temporality—is what makes us moral beings. After all, "it is a temporal being, not an a-temporal intellectual formula, that experience moral dilemmas, formulates moral judgments, and undertakes morally motivated acts."[151]

By shedding light on who we *are*, time plays an important role in dictating how we *should* be. In the metaphysics of time, the *is* and the *ought* should not be separated, because we have seen how the metaphysical contemplation of time leads to moral philosophy. Time develops to be more than a mere theoretical concept or even a mere form of intuition through which we perceive all experience, because it has a vastly tangible effect on our lives. Anthony Winterbourne asserts that "there are no theories of space and time which are isolated from wider philosophical concerns," because big metaphysical questions concerning the true structure of the universe cannot help but go beyond themselves to deduce their implications: "Newton, for instance, was both an empirical scientist and a committed Christian [while] Leibniz, carrying a rationalist banner, was driven to find indubitable metaphysical principles from which everything

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[149] Sherover, 159.
[150] Sherover, 170.
[151] Sherover, 160.

that may be known could be deduced."[152] For Newton and Leibniz, learning about the true

nature of reality was motivated not only by the hope of making scientific claims but also

deducing religious and epistemological ramifications. Similarly, for Kant, learning about the

nature of our consciousness is motivated by the belief that knowledge about ourselves will reveal

knowledge about the moral life. To this effect, Heidegger astutely points out that "perhaps it is

no accident that Kant determined the fundamental principle of his ethics in such a way that we

call it formal," that "he perhaps knew from a familiarity with *Dasein* itself that it is its *'how'*."[153]

Our existence and the way we are constituted are not mere objects of knowledge but also the

'how' of existence, a clue into how we act and how we should act.

Ultimately, time, in making knowledge—especially empirical self-knowledge—possible

and in serving as the medium for free will's lasting consequences, shows us to be moral beings

who find meaning in the consciousness of ourselves, the world around us, and our free

undertakings. To have consciousness is to encounter things and to experience them in a temporal,

sequential way that endows our lives with meaning, memory, progress, and creativity. Ṣādiq Al-

Azm suggests that "Kant's philosophy is really a 'metaphysics of experience,' because it begins

from experience and returns to experience by providing meaning and imperatives." [154] Indeed,

the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in its contemplation of the epistemological limits of reason and the

transcendental structures of space and time, ultimately opens up the possibility of a moral life,

and by showing time's ability to endow our free decisions with potency, adds to the Platonic idea

that time invites humans to participate in the making of the Beautiful in the world.

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[152] Anthony Winterbourne, *The Ideal and the Real: An Outline of Kant's Theory of Space, Time, and Mathematical Construction* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1988), 35.

[153] Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time* (Oxford, UK: B. Blackwell, 1992), 13E, emphasis added

[154] Ṣādiq Jalāl Al-Azm, *Kant's Theory of Time (*New York: Philosophical Library, 1967), 38.

IV: Whitehead's *Process and Reality*: Time and the Coincidence of Opposites

"So long as the temporal world is conceived as a self-sufficient completion of the creative act, explicable by its derivation from an ultimate principle which is at once eminently real and the unmoved mover, from this conclusion there is no escape: the best that we can say of the turmoil is, 'For so he giveth his beloved—sleep'."

- Whitehead, *Process and Reality*

In *Process and Reality*, Alfred North Whitehead presents a system of speculative metaphysics that posits process and organism to be the most fundamental aspects of reality. According to Whitehead's philosophy, the unfolding of reality is constituted as a series of creative decisions undertaken by actual entities; these entities transform the potentiality embodied by eternal objects to the tangible actuality of the world, a creative advance from concrescence to satisfaction and back again. By arguing that the seemingly paradoxical notions of continual progress and completed reality are interdependent, Whitehead opens up the possibility for a philosophy of complementarity that harmonizes opposites. One coincidence of opposites that Whitehead integrates is time and eternity, and in the philosophy of organism, time and eternity pervade each other because the process of reality is actualized by the continual interaction between actual occasions and eternal objects. An actual entity, though perpetually perishing, achieves objective immortality because its decisions have lasting consequences that engage every other actual entity and occasion in the world. Thus in Whitehead's philosophy, each act of creative advance—or decisions made by actual entities—is lifted beyond the immediate process to achieve timeless significance, and in this way Whitehead endows every existence in the world, from the level of atoms to the level of human subjectivity, the self-expressive power to make the universe continually one and discretely new.

Early on, Whitehead states that his project—the philosophy of organism—is the inversion of Kant's philosophy.[155] Kant's metaphysics, which could be understood as a Platonist response to Hume's skepticism, argues that the only thing we can know for sure is that the phenomenal world we observe reveals our modes of thought with which we constitute experience. Kant is a Platonist in that he makes a distinction between the unseen noumenal world and the experienced phenomenal world, and also an empiricist in that he does not think there is any knowledge that transcends our experience. Whitehead writes, "*The Critique of Pure Reason* describes the process by which subjective data pass into the appearance of an objective world," meaning that Kant's philosophy focuses on how subjective facts—such as the fact that we necessarily perceive everything in space and time—give rise to objectivity. For Kant, "the world emerges from the subject," and this is where Whitehead's philosophy begins to diverge from Kant's philosophy, because "for the philosophy of organism, the subject emerges from the world—a 'superject' rather than a 'subject.'"[156] "Thus for Kant," Whitehead writes, "the process whereby there is experience is a process from subjectivity to apparent objectivity," but in Whitehead's philosophy, objectivity is not a product of subjectivity but the data in which subjectivity arises.[157] The philosophy of organism "explains the process as proceeding from objectivity to subjectivity, namely, from the objectivity, whereby the external world is a datum, to the subjectivity, whereby there is one individual experience."[158]

By rendering the objective world to be a mental construction, Kant suggests that there is nothing to know metaphysically apart from the concepts that build the objective world.[159]

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[155] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 88.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 156.
[159] Ibid.

Within Whitehead's philosophy, however, every act of experience is an object for knowledge; in fact, Whitehead writes that "apart from the inclusion of intellectual functioning in that act of experience, there is no knowledge."[160] Analyzing how the two philosophers account for time in their own respective systems reveals how their differing views on subjectivity and objectivity influence the way they understand scientific and everyday experience. For Kant, time has no metaphysical reality because it is merely a subjective *condition* of experience—it is empirically real but transcendentally ideal and metaphysically unknowable. Time is not an entity but a mode, the "how" of our perceiving the world. Kant therefore writes that time "is therefore regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object."[161] However, there is no such thing as a *thing-in-itself* for Whitehead; the really real is the actual, and there is nothing outside the actual. The only reason the subject would "represent" itself as an object would be to achieve objective immorality—that is, lasting influence—and thus representation is very much tied to temporality and actual reality. William Hammerschmidt writes that "the unique features of Whitehead's philosophy of time derive from his belief that the analysis of nature should start with its perceivable properties, and proceed from them, rather than starting with any purely mental abstractions or with intuited or *a priori* data."[162] Whitehead puts greater weight and value in our day to day experience because he "believes that the fundamental properties of space-time may be perceived in an immediate empirical experience."[163]

Whitehead's discontent with Hume and Kant stems from the fact that their philosophies fail to attribute significance to everyday experience. He takes issue that "neither side [of Hume or Kant] conciliates philosophical conceptions of a real world with the world of daily

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998), [A 37/ B 54].
[162] William W. Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 3.
[163] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time,* 4.

experience."[164] Hume's extreme skepticism reduces the coherence of our everyday experience to little more than an illusion that arises out of unjustified habitual thinking, and Kant's philosophy is not much better in that it attributes *true* reality to a world to which we have absolutely no access. "The theories of order rejected by Whitehead are not only Hume's and Kant's," Paul Grimley Kuntz explains, "but any theory that the order of nature is merely our observation of a mind-imposed regularity."[165] And for this reason, we will see that Whitehead's philosophy attributes significant meaning and reality to the everyday experiences we perceive and live through.

Whitehead is also influenced by Plato, and he sees his work as a remaking of Plato's metaphysics. In fact, he argues that the entire history of western philosophy may be interpreted as a response to Plato: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."[166] Whitehead's philosophy is meant to be a twentieth-century rewrite of Plato:

> If we had to render Plato's general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experience in social organization, in aesthetic attainments, in science, and in religion, we should have to set about the construction of a philosophy of organism. In such a philosophy the actualities constituting the process of the world are conceived as exemplifying the ingression (or 'participation') of other things which constitute the potentialities of definiteness for any actual existence. The things which are temporal arise by their participation in the things which are eternal[167]

Process and Reality, then, is a reinterpretation of *Timaeus* in light of modern science, especially evolutionary biology and theoretical physics. Something about the Platonic forms—eternal

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164 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 156.
165 Paul Grimley Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 31.
166 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 39.
167 Ibid.

models being used and applied in the temporal world—must have resonated with Whitehead, for Whitehead's eternal objects are very similar to the Forms in that they become the ideals with which temporal objects work toward their own actualities. For Plato, "the process of the actual world has been conceived as a real incoming of forms into real potentiality, issuing into that real togetherness which is an actual thing."[168] The philosophy of process imitates that design as it tells of actual entities rendering eternal objects relevant by incorporating them into the subjective process of concrescence. For both the *Timaeus* and *Process and Reality*, "the creation of the world is the incoming of a type of order establishing a cosmic epoch," the "incoming of a certain type of social order."[169] Just as Timaeus tells of the origin of the universe which traces back to an aboriginal disorder, the evolutionary doctrine of Whitehead's philosophy of organism tells a story of the world's developing orderliness and complexity. In other words, both Plato and Whitehead explore how the cosmos and reality at large, is a progress constantly actualizing itself.

In *Process and Reality*, reality just *is* a series of participations—or a process of participation—of actual entities constantly deciding on how to make themselves. Process is the *arché* because reality is made up of processes. Thus, as the title suggests, the two concepts are inseparable because the harmony of process *and* reality capture the essence of the ongoing existence of the universe. The actual world, according to Whitehead, is the process of becoming of actual entities or actual occasions.[170] "Process is the becoming of experience" and satisfaction is the being of experience.[171] This is to say that every actual occasion or entity is a drop of experience—the experience of a new combination of old data being used in a new way to form a

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[168] Donald W. Sherburne, ed., *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (*New York: MacMillian Company, 1966), 163.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22.
[171] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 166.

unique subjectivity; "*experience* involves *becoming*," "*becoming* means that *something becomes,*" and "*what becomes* involves *repetition* transformed into *novel immediacy.*"[172] By emphasizing that reality is comprised of events or experiences, Whitehead endeavors to give metaphysical importance to our subjective experience: "Each actual entity is conceived as an act of experience arising out of data" where the "act of experience" is process and the "data", reality.[173]

Though Whitehead considers his philosophy to be in the Platonic tradition, he also transforms Plato in his treatment of eternal objects, especially if they are to be viewed as analogues of Platonic forms. In the philosophy of organism, it is the eternal objects that undergo change, altered to fit whatever role they must play in the temporal world in order for an actual occasion to take definite form. Whitehead seems to be deliberately inverting the ancient Greek distinction between timeless being and changing becoming when he writes that "every actual entity is what it is, and is with its definite status in the universe, determined by its internal relations to other actual entities."[174] Patrick Shade argues that "Whitehead's treatment of eternal objects is consistent with his organic philosophy's emphasis on the interweaving of elements, which secures a processive but interconnected world."[175] Change, then, is not a sign of instability endured by finite becomings in the world but "the description of the adventures of eternal objects in the evolving universe of actual things."[176] In Whiteheadian metaphysics, change is closely associated with what *is*—an inversion of the traditional ancient Greek conception of the changeless being. In *Process and Reality*, eternal objects undergo 'change'

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[172] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 136.
[173] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 39.
[174] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 59.
[175] Patrick Shade, "Spirit and Eternity in Whitehead and Santayana," in *Whitehead's Philosophy: Points of Connection*, ed. Janusz A. Polanowski and Donald W. Sherburne. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 62.
[176] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 59.

because they represent the "pure potentials of the universe," where as the actual entities "differ from each other in their realization of potentials."[177]

Whitehead also diverges from Plato's metaphysics in his belief that every actual entity contributes to create a complete account of the universe; this would be comparable to Plato arguing that the everyday objects that participate in the eternal forms add to the reality of the world. When Whitehead writes that "actual entities 'perpetually perish' subjectively, but are immortal objectively," he signifies that every actual entity becomes a permanent fact of the universe that adds to the complexity of reality.[178] This is to say that all actual entities actualize an aspect of the world in their own relational, perspectival way. They all have their own correlated actual worlds, and these worlds come together to form an interconnected and cohesive account of reality; each realm becomes "an irreducible perspective which emphasizes unique features of our world and experience."[179] It is important that actual entities ultimately come to reflect the unique features of their own experiences because they simply *are* experiences. David Griffin argues that the two most unique elements of the Whiteheadian view are "the idea that enduring things are really temporally ordered societies of momentary events and that each event is an experience with memory and anticipation."[180] Indeed, Whitehead developed actual entities from his earlier concept of actual occasions, making entities types of events. His willingness to give individual, subjective events a fundamental metaphysical status points to how and why his philosophy is one of process and evolution: "Whitehead proposes a realism of events that, because of organic relations, has all the advantages of stating how nature is a whole."[181] Framing reality to be a complex interrelationship among experiences or events— which are, from the

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[177] Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 21.
[178] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 29.
[179] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 68.
[180] Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy,* 135.
[181] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead,* 54.

perspective of the actual entity, activity—allows Whitehead to develop a metaphysical account

that is dynamic at the most fundamental level.[182]

It is also important to note that each actual entity's process from concrescence to

satisfaction is not an individual and isolated endeavor but one that engages the whole universe.

Each participation necessarily affects every other entity: "Each task of creation is a *social effort,*

employing the whole universe. Each novel actuality is a new partner adding a new condition.

Every new condition can be absorbed into additional fullness of attainment."[183] Thus, it is not

only the *result* of the creative process but also the creative *proceeding* itself that leads to a full

account of the universe. Kuntz explains that "this *activity* is also a source of information about

the world," and the prominence attributed to activity relates back to Whitehead's desire to

consider each actual entity's experiences to be the driving force of the process of creative

advance.[184] Even the diction within Whitehead's language—social, employing, whole, partner,

absorbed, and fullness—reflect the holistic and inclusive metaphysical view Whitehead holds.

He creates "an interactive world in which we are intimate contributors," a world where "our

conscious experience adds to the novelty and complexity that condition the actual world."[185]

Because the world is constantly welcoming new experiences into its matrix, we see that

creativity or creative advance of actual entities is the underlying principle of reality. "In

all philosophic theory," Whitehead writes, "there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its

accidents. . . . In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed 'creativity.'"[186] Using

something "old"—not in the sense of temporal agedness but in the sense of givenness—to create

an unpremeditated result is by definition creative: "To derive the more complex from antecedent

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[182] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead,* 63.
[183] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 233, emphasis added.
[184] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead,* 63,emphasis added
[185] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 62.
[186] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 7.

states of the less complex requires an organic conception of creative advance."[187] Since every

actual entity is engaged in the activity of taking in data to create a novel experience, "no entity

can be divorced from the notion of creativity" because "an entity is at least a particular form

capable of infusing its own particularity into creativity."[188]

      In addition to newness, the creative advance of each entity also promotes unity because it

ties in seemingly disparate pieces of information to form a cohesive individual subjectivity.

Sherburne explains that Whitehead's doctrine of creativity "introduces novelty into the content

of the many, which are the universe disjunctively."[189] The process of the universe is one that

continually unifies itself: "The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to

conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The world

expands through recurrent unifications of itself, each, by the addition of itself, automatically

recreating the multiplicity anew."[190] Because actual entities are constantly creating something

new and strengthening the inner connections among different actual occasions, the universe

grows in complexity. This is why Whitehead asserts that "nature is never complete," for its

creative advance entails it "always passing beyond itself."[191] It is crucial that Whitehead sees

reality to have been made up of units of experiences because "the creative action is the universe

always becoming one in a particular unity of self-experience, and thereby adding to the

multiplicity which is the universe as many."[192] The ever-evolving sets of experience that unfold

the creative advance and the experiences' continual generation of both novelty and unity point to

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[187] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead,* 58.
[188] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 213.
[189] Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 33.
[190] Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 34.
[191] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 289.
[192] Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 33.

the important claim that everything in the world—including God—"are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty."[193]

Thus actuality, apart from which nothing exists, amounts to be the process of actual occasions' creative advance into novelty; reality is composed of a series of active decisions. Whitehead writes:

> It [decision] constitutes the very meaning of actuality. An actual entity arises from decisions *for* it, and by its very existence provides decisions *for* other actual entities which supersede it. . . . 'Actuality' is the decision amid 'potentiality'. . . . The real internal constitution of an actual entity progressively constitutes a decision conditioning the creativity which transcends that actuality[194]

Decision is what conditions creative advance, and since creative advance is the principle of actuality or reality, decision is what generates the progression of creative advance. Since each actual entity is responsible for choosing from a pool of potentials what will be actual in the world, in a certain sense, decisions and the ramification of decisions are all that exists. Kuntz supports this Whiteheadian view when he defines actuality to be "a selection and unification of the possibilities open for actualization."[195] In addition, the more complex the actual entity or organism, the stronger the subjective awareness of the decision making process. Each actual entity's decisions are made with a purpose of its own. "The emergence of organism," Whitehead writes, "depends on a selective activity which is akin to purpose."[196] Though each organism must necessarily rise from the already-existing data of "the general state of the universe," the organism can also said to be "emerging for its own sake" since it decides on its own being with a

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[193] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 349.
[194] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 43.
[195] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead*, 57.
[196] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 156.

purpose.[197] Nathaniel Lawrence emphasizes the subjective element in each decision when he states that each choice is motivated by certain values: "Whether choice be habitual, critical, or somewhere in between, it exhibits the self. . . . *But whenever choice appears, it is directed toward some conceived value and proceeds from a conceived or accepted self*. Finally, *every act of choice, from the most habitual to the most reflectively considered, is self-building and self-defining*."[198] Every choice in the process of creative advance is both informed by self-knowledge *and* contributes to self-definition. Whitehead is unequivocal when he asserts that "self-realization is the ultimate fact of facts"; there is a reciprocal relationship between self-realization and actuality because "an actuality is self-realizing, and whatever is self-realizing is an actuality."[199] An actual entity is "at once the subject of self-realization."[200]

Just as important as creativity and purpose in the decision-making process of each actual entity is necessity. In fact, the notions of freedom and determination arise from the choices that must arise from the apparent fixedness of data. Because the quality and essence of an actual entity are determined by its process of becoming—that is, the self-creative process that generates reality—there is considerable freedom and flexibility in every process. When Whitehead writes that an "actual entity's 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'," he means that "*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity is."[201] With the possibility for creativity also comes possibility for freedom, for "each concrescence is to be referred to a definite *free* initiation

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[197] Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 157.
[198] Nathaniel Lawrence, "Time, Value, and the Self," in *The Relevance of Whitehead: Philosophical Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Ivor Leclerc. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1961), 153.
[199] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 222.
[200] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 222.
[201] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 23.

and a definite *free* conclusion."[202] Thus "the concept of 'creativity' is closely related to that of

freedom, being in one of its aspects identical with it."[203]

 At the same time, this is not to say that each actual entity has the absolute freedom to

fashion itself into whatever being it wants to. The very fact that it has to work with tangible data

available to it through the rest of the world implies that it has to work with necessity. Whitehead

writes: "There is no such fact as absolute freedom; every actual entity possesses only such

freedom as is inherent in the primary phase 'given' by its stand-point of relativity to its actual

universe. Freedom, givenness, potentiality, are notions which presuppose each other and limit

each other."[204] Just as a specific medium's form, strength, or limitations does not hinder the

artist from producing creative work, there is freedom in the way actual entities transform data

into new satisfaction despite the limited pool of general data with which they must work.

Another way of expressing this idea would be to argue that in the philosophy of organism,

subjective actualization prevails over efficient causation. While efficient causation may decide

the starting point, it is the organism's creativity that has the final word:

> The doctrine of the philosophy of organism is that, however far the sphere of
> efficient causation be pushed in the determination of components of a
> concrescence. . . . There always remains the final reaction of the self-creative
> unity of the universe. This final reaction completes the self-creative act by putting
> the decisive stamp of creative emphasis upon the determinations of efficient
> cause[205]

The fact that creativity is decisive emphasizes the actual occasion's ability to determine its own

essence in its specific situatedness. Whitehead, by considering each organism's creative urge to

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[202] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 47.
[203] Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 110.
[204] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 47.
[205] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 47.

be the most influential factor in the becoming of the world, asserts that freedom is meaningful and that "there is always a contingency left open for immediate decision."[206]

If every actual occasion—the smallest unit of actuality or reality—is a result of a series of creative decisions, then physical time results from the extension that is required of the decision-making process partaken in by each actual entity. Whitehead therefore calls "the temporal world" a "self-sufficient completion of the creative act."[207] It is interesting to note that Whitehead considers the temporal world not as a realm or container *in which* the process takes place, but as the result of the act or process *itself*. Thus, time is not to be seen as an external measurement but a particular way of observing the process between concrescence and satisfaction; "all actual things are momentary events" and they are called actual occasions "to emphasize their spatiotemporal extensiveness."[208] Creativity generates time because creativity generates newness; it everything were determined, there literally would not be anything new, which would render invention impossible. And time is constantly bringing "newness" with it, each second being entirely separate, new, and different from the last. One way to explain the origin of time would be to claim that time emerges from the process, supported by the fact that the unidirectional nature of time derives from the directional nature of each concrescence. The advance of time, which is irreversible, can be ascribed to the fact that events are "unique, particular [and] unchangeable."[209] Thus time, by formally streamlining the actual occasions into a serial progression, bounds what is unbounded, makes specific what is specific, and makes

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[206] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 284.
[207] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342.
[208] Griffin, Whitehead's *Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 133.
[209] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time*, 4.

actual what is possible; "it limits boundless, abstract possibility into the particular real potentiality from which each novel concrescence originates."[210]

Time helps us understand how the process of actualization, which is not necessarily temporal, relates to memory, decision-making, and legacy—the uniquely human forms of perceiving the general structure of creative advance. Since it not an external measurement but "a set of relations which is internal to fact," time highlights and facilitates the connections among different actual entities.[211] Shade comments on the relationship among time, consciousness, and memory in the philosophy of organism:

> All consciousness rests on memory, and memory bridges physical time, drawing together in one present consciousness the significance of past events. The significance of past events is indeed grounded in their completeness, their having subsided; but their significance also depends just as firmly on what use present consciousness puts them to. The way in which memory expropriates the past is one species of what Whitehead calls the 'objective immortality' of completed events[212]

Here, Shade specifically discusses the way in which time helps us understand how past events—past actual occasions or past entities—become a part of the new data when it enters into the realm of memory. As a vector expression of the metaphysical process that is always around us, time could be seen as a construction that helps us break down the structure of reality in terms that we can understand.

Temporality, then, is the transition from one event to another, the link between one entity and another that renders them a coherent whole. It must be understood that the actual occasions or entities themselves are not in time, but that what connects and binds them must be temporal;

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[210] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 220.
[211] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time*, 7.
[212] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 162.

"time is the conformation of the immediate present to the past," meaning that time is what makes

the latest activity of the actual occasion congruous and compatible to the current given data.[213]

The traditional understanding of time, which renders the past, the present, and the future merely

different tenses of the same time, is incompatible with *Process and Reality* because for

Whitehead, time is "a succession of extended presents which constitute real extended "strata" of

nature. There is a sharp distinction between the reality of a present and the reality of a past or

future. And no present can be instantaneous; its existence requires its temporal extension."[214]

Whitehead dismisses the idea of a flowing time that advances from past to present to future at a

uniform rate regardless of any surrounding activities. "There has been time," Griffin explains,

"as long as atoms, or even subatomic enduring individuals such as photons and quarks, have

existed. The idea that time exists wherever such entities exist is built into Whitehead's

description of them as "temporally located societies."[215] Instead of a solid body persisting

through a period of time, Whitehead proposes different *events* of a solid body existing or acting

to be the most fundamental description of reality—and space-time is what connects these distinct

events into a complex matrix.

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead therefore rejects Newton's absolute time where time

is conceived as a container that holds certain objects or events. Hammerschmit explains that

Whitehead "repudiates with vigor the Newtonian theory of absolute time as a real flowing

container of facts" because Newton's view "regards time as a reality instead of an aspect of

reality," which "makes substance of a shadow."[216] Time is not a free-standing structure for

Whitehead. Instead, he understands time to be a relational measure that arises out of an

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[213] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 238.

[214] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time*, 4.

[215] Griffin, Whitehead's *Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 136-137.

[216] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time*, 7.

atemporal process. It is the subjective experience of bringing forth actuality through creative advance that pushes time along, and this is why Whitehead writes that "no thinker thinks twice" or that "no subject experiences twice."[217] Newton's absolute time which exists and flows on its own is incongruous with the philosophy of organism, because time is measureable: "The passage of something without spatial extension is not directly measureable. Therefore the passage of that which is not spatially extended is not in time in Whitehead's sense."[218] In other words, time without change is an inconsistent concept for Whitehead; because time is "the relational and logical aspect of change," "in order to completely understand time, we must go beyond time and consider the reality of change (which Whitehead takes to be axiomatic)."[219]

This is not to say that time is entirely dictated by change or relations. Whitehead's conception of time must also be distinguished from Leibnitz' time—which is entirely relational and relative—because in the philosophy of organism there *is* a real advancement of actual entities forming more and more complex interrelationships among themselves. If he vigorously rejects Newton's absolute time, "equally vigorously he rejects the theory which considers time to be a set of relations" or "passive endurances which are in fact timeless and could not possibly explain or yield temporal advance." [220] In the philosophy of organism, it is the ongoing satisfaction of actual entities—that is, the subject combining data to create its own unique being—that gives rise to time. "Physical time makes its appearance in the 'coordinate' analysis of the 'satisfaction,'" and since the process reaching satisfaction has a flow and a creative passage, it is necessary that time also has flow and a creative passage in its essence.[221]

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[217] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 43.
[218] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time,* 4.
[219] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time,* 7.
[220] Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time,* 7.
[221] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 283.

Because Whitehead rejects Newton's static, absolute time and Leibnitz' entirely object-reliant, relational time, he is able to create an account of time that is both dynamic and closely associated with actual entities. Whitehead's unique conceptual evolution that claims actual *entities* to be really actual *occasions* makes the traditional distinction between "time" and "eternity" difficult, because reality is not to be seen as a linear progression of extended bodies persisting through time. If the more widely held understanding of extended objects—the entire body extending through different periods of time—is willing to acknowledge that the whole complete body exists at once, Whitehead's philosophy of process gives reality to the whole complete body of *time* existing "at the same time"; in addition to the "atomic unity of the world, expressed by a multiplicity of atoms," there is also the "solidarity of the extensive continuum."[222] Whitehead's concept of the extensive continuum, which is informed by Einstein's theory of relativity, suggests that time is not to be seen as something that always, or necessarily, flows. Kuntz explains that "the concept of temporalization is not of complete continuity because there are the permanences [or "reality"] of events."[223] The extensive continuum-view of time, which is supported by the relativity theories, reveals itself as a model of time that is perfectly compatible with Whitehead's understanding of reality, because the philosophy of organism requires distinct atemporal actual occasions forming relationships each other.

Because temporality is both fixed (complete already) and flowing (unfolding successively), we ultimately see that time, eternity, and even everlastingness interpenetrate each other in Whitehead's philosophy; temporality is one manifestation of the fact that only the *conjunction* of process and reality adequately captures the true metaphysical arrangement of the world. His very conception of actual occasions requires time that is already all there: "If an atom

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[222] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 286.
[223] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead*, 60.

is not an insentient piece of matter that remains numerically one through (what to us is) time, but a series of occasions of experience, each of which includes its predecessors in itself and projects itself into its successors," Griffin writes, "*then time in the full-fledged sense exists already for a single atom.*"[224] This is to say that time and eternity pervade each other in the process of creative advance. In relation to the classical thought where being is timeless while becoming is temporal, Whitehead's statement, "it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming,'" deliberately undermines the strict dichotomy between eternal being and temporal becoming.[225] Instead, what is "eternal" seems to apply to both eternity and time since eternal objects are constantly being used by actual entities in the temporal realm: "Whitehead describes eternal objects as universal, in the sense of being repeatable, since an essence may have ingression in any number of actual entities without thereby altering its character."[226] Eternal qualities are thus both universal and individual because "each entity bears a relation to the eternal insofar as eternal objects are relevant to it."[227]

There is a certain timelessness in the way that actual entities and eternal objects both become a part of the consortium of data that could be used after an actual entity's satisfaction. They are capable of recurring, and they are capable of being re-presented—and therefore persist—through other entities. "To account for our experience of 'witness,' to explain our knowledge of the external world, and to adequately describe the solidarity of the world," Shade clarifies, "the organic philosophy grants that actual entities—as well as eternal objects—are 'repeatable' and 'present in' the constitution of other actual entities."[228] The creative advance persists only through actual entities becoming timeless upon their subjective satisfactions and

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[224] Griffin, Whitehead's *Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 136.
[225] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22.
[226] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 67.
[227] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 74.
[228] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 72.

achieving objective immortality. Time is what captures the "perpetual perishing" of the actual entity which "perishes *and* is immortal."[229] "In the organic philosophy an actual entity has 'perished' when it is complete," and "the pragmatic use of the actual entity, constituting its static life, lies in the future."[230] Each creative advance leaves an everlasting legacy: "Each entity, once complete, becomes available as an ingredient for all future entities through its objective immortality."[231] Creative process, because it "combines the actuality of what is temporal and the timeless of what is potential," serves to mediate between "the two sets of temporal actual occasions and the eternal potential objects."[232] Regarding the relationship between time and eternity (which could be generalized as the relationship between flux and permanence) Whitehead writes:

> But in truth, the two lines [regarding the 'metaphysics of 'substance'' and the 'metaphysics of 'flux''] cannot be torn apart in this way; and we find that a wavering balance between the two is a characteristics of the greater number of philosophers. Plato found his permanence in a static, spiritual heaven, and his flux in the entanglement of his forms amid the fluent imperfections of the physical world. Here I draw attention to the word 'imperfection.' In any assertion as to Plato I speak under correction; but I believe that Plato's authority can be claimed for the doctrine that the things that flow are imperfect in the sense of 'limited' and of 'definitely exclusive of much that they might be and are not'[233]

Objects and events that are temporal are not imperfect, but limited—not limited in the sense of flawed, but limited as to have a boundary that allows each actual occasion to give itself a particular shape which makes it unique.

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[229] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 81.
[230] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 82.
[231] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 75.
[232] Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, 25.
[233] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 209.

Thus we see that the process of creative advance that underlies reality arises only out of the interdependence between the eternal and the temporal. "What is eternal lacks the power of selection" because "power, value, and selectivity all belong properly to existing things and not to what is eternal."[234] Because eternal objects would be "undifferentiated nonentities" in "complete abstraction from the actual world," Whitehead is wary of trying to understand what is eternal without looking to the real entities in the temporal world.[235] Indeed, it is impossible to think of eternal objects completely independent of actual entities; by the end of both *Timaeus* and *Process and Reality*, we see that thinking or philosophizing in general has to occur before we contemplate the possible—that is, the actualization of thinking must occur before we question the nature of anything possible. "Whitehead's main concern," Shade argues, "is to adumbrate the eternal as a formative element in the order and (as we shall see) novelty of the world" and to "recognize that they are ingredients interwoven with actual entities to constitute and explain our experience."[236] The interdependence between God and the world is analogous to the interrelationship between eternity and time. Just as the Demiurge needs mortals to complete his project in the *Timaeus*—making the most beautiful world possible—Whitehead's God, who is both primordial and consequent, is dependent on the objective realities of the world for his own sense of completeness: "He is the beginning and the end. . . by reason of the relativity of all things, there is a reaction of the world on God. *The completion of God's nature into a fullness of physical feeling is derived from the objectification of the world in God*."[237] The necessary interconnection all actual entities share also applies to God and the world because the temporal

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[234] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 68-69.
[235] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 256.
[236] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 69.
[237] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345, emphasis added

world is "fulfillment of the primordial appetition which is the basis of all order."[238] In the

philosophy of organism, infinitude is completed by finitude, and time is whole only when it joins

the eternal realm: "In this way God is completed by the individual fluent satisfactions of finite

fact, and the temporal occasions are completed by their everlasting union with their transformed

selves, purged into conformation with the eternal order."[239]

Whitehead's complementary philosophy of time and eternity is informed by his belief

that there is no such thing as an isolated fact in the universe: "It is presupposed that no entity can

be conceived in complete abstraction from the system of the universe, and that it is the business

of speculative philosophy to exhibit this truth."[240] This sentiment encourages him to incorporate

every aspect of reality, including our experiences in time, to be a meaningful part of the structure

of reality. After all, Whitehead criticizes Kant for making the temporal realm a mere illusion that

fleets through the subject's mind: "[Kant] adopted a subjectivist position, so that the temporal

world was constituted in experience. But according to his form of the subjectivist doctrine, in the

Critique of Pure Reason, no element in the temporal world could itself be an experient. His

temporal world, as in that Critique, was in its essence dead, phantasmal, phenomenal."[241] As a

response to the world view that reduces our everyday experiences to something misleading and

passive, Whitehead develops a philosophy that focuses on the actual organic development of the

world; he attributes more power to the conscious entity—which, in Kant's philosophy, is

confined to the phenomenal world (and an awareness of their inner and outer intuitions if they

are philosophers)—by attributing to them objective immortality through which "they have an

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[238] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 347.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.
[241] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 190.

everlasting influence on the character of the world."[242] In *Process and Reality*, every subject or event is necessarily linked to the eternal because it appropriates eternal objects for its creative process and because it reaches timeless immortality once it itself becomes something that can be used for further concrescence. The world we perceive is not a distortion but the only relevant realm that gives us knowledge about the true state of things, because "relevance to the actual world belongs to every actual entity, whether conscious or not."[243]

If the philosophy of organism is to remain consistent, time must be viewed as something without which eternity would not have its fullness. "It is the ideal of speculative philosophy that its fundamental notions shall not seem capable of abstraction from each other," and since temporality is a fundamental notion that underlies all of our experiences, it is important to Whitehead that aspects of temporality—time, everlastingness, eternity, and even atemporality—only gain their respective meanings in relation to each other.[244] The true, eternal, infinite, and absolute reality that we pursue through the study of metaphysics cannot be conceptualized independent of the analysis of our everyday experiences. Whitehead holds that knowledge not only of the metaphysical structure of the world but of anything must come from both theoretical knowledge and appeal to the tangible, physical, and temporal experience: "In itself the eternal object evades any selection among actualities or epochs. You cannot know what is red by merely thinking of redness. You can only find red things by adventuring amid physical experiences in *this* actual world."[245]

Kuntz examines Whitehead's philosophy in relation to Plato's realism and Kant's subjectivism:

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[242] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 74.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.
[245] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 256.

> The philosophy of organism has broken with the classical Platonistic tradition of ascribing supreme good to the ideal apart from actualization in process, and it has broken also with the subjectivism that would rest value and purpose on mind divorced nature. Organicism is then somewhere in the middle between extreme value realism and value subjectivism[246]

Whitehead's philosophy seems to be one that is between Plato's and Kant's, where the "supreme good" lies neither in the unattainable ideal realm nor the inaccessible noumenal world. Instead, he attributes value and reality to each actual entities' creative process which continually generates novelty.

Given that Whitehead emphasizes elements of process and creativity, it is not surprising that he shares Plotinus' view that the world is continually creating itself new. "The actual world," Whitehead writes, "is the 'objective content' of each new creation."[247] However, the "newness" that he appeals to is not necessarily distinctness or unexpectedness, because his philosophy is informed by Darwin's theory of evolution. In other words, his notion of newness is one that relates to emerging complexities. Perhaps what is most interesting about Whitehead's philosophy is that the creator and the created are inseparable: "The world is self-creative" because "the actual entity as self-creating creature passes into its immortal function of part-creator of the transcendent world."[248] Thus in addition to new, the universe is also always one "since there is no surveying it except from an actual entity which unifies it."[249] There is no isolated fact, entity, or event in the world because new connections among them are always being made: "The atomic actual entities individually express the genetic unity of the universe," Whitehead writes. "The world expands through recurrent unifications of itself, each, by the

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[246] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead*, 58.
[247] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 65.
[248] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 85.
[249] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 232.

addition of itself, automatically recreating the multiplicity anew."[250] All actual entities create their own respective actual worlds that incorporate every other actual entity, fact, or event to become a part of a complex web of associations; "each creative act is the universe incarnating itself as one, and there is nothing above it by the way of final condition."[251]

This continual newness and oneness of the universe allows Whitehead to reconcile a series of seemingly contradictory notions within his philosophy, including theoretical and actual, rational and empirical, and temporal and eternal: "The universe is to be conceived as attaining the active self-expression of its own variety of opposites—of its own freedom and its own necessity, of its own multiplicity and its own unity, of its own imperfection and its own perfection. All the 'opposites' are elements in the nature of things, and are incorrigibly there."[252] Shade writes that it is important for Whitehead's philosophy to blur the sharp distinction between temporality and eternity because the "ideal contrast between permanence and flux" is a "contrast of opposites whose ultimate harmony is expressive of the organic interconnectedness of the world." [253] The prevalence of a harmonious coincidence of opposites within *Process and Reality* suggests that Whitehead adhered to philosophy's requirement to integrate even the most paradoxical elements of our experiences and ideas. In so far as he requires our experience's ability to inform and contribute to our knowledge, he agrees with Kant, because Kant had held that "all knowledge brings in human experience and further requires explicit reference to human experience."[254] However, Whitehead does what Kant forbids—speculative metaphysics— because he believes that metaphysics should and must be about things that we are very much in

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250 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 286.
251 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 245.
252 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 350.
253 Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 72.
254 Lawrence, "Time, Value, and the Self," 148.

touch with. Sherburne analyzes how Whitehead diverges from and inverts Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> Many postmodernists, for example, presuppose the Kantian conception, according to which metaphysics is the attempt to talk about things beyond all possible experience. Whitehead, by contrast, understood metaphysics as the endeavor to construct a coherent scheme of ideas "in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted," adding that the "elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought" (PR 3,4)[255]

The last statement—that the "sole justification for any thought" is the "elucidation of immediate experience"—is especially powerful because it communicates that any and every philosophy is illegitimate if it does tangibly contribute back to the everyday life. This sentiment explains why Whitehead makes a conscious effort to reconcile the contrast between rational philosophy and empirical philosophy in his own work, or at least to show that both schools of thought could harmoniously hold together. "This ideal of speculative philosophy has its rational side and its empirical side," where the "rational side is expressed by the terms 'coherent' and 'logical'" while the "empirical side is expressed by the terms 'applicable' and 'adequate.'"[256] Whitehead, in asserting that "the success of the imaginative experiment [of philosophy] is always to be tested by the applicability of its results beyond the restricted locus from which it originated," intends his philosophy to have a real and tangible meaning for even the most quotidian matters.[257]

One example of something abstract and intangible helping us evaluate our experience is Whitehead's conception of time prompting us to think about the beginning point and grounds for our moral life. Whitehead "distinguishes what is eternal from what exists temporally and argues

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[255]Donald W Sherburne, "Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology," in *Whitehead's Philosophy: Points of Connection,* ed. Janusz A. Polanowski and Donald W. Sherburne. (New York: State University of New York Press), 2004. 5-6.

[256] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

[257] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 5.

that it plays a significant role in the systematic analysis of our experience."[258] Facts about what

exists temporally, or time in general, as a condition for reality (*not* only a *human* condition

because it permeates all levels of ontology), makes moral inquiry important and necessary.

Whitehead's moral philosophy integrates the notions of freedom and necessity by focusing on

the idea of responsibility: "[A temporal occasion] is finally responsible for the decision by which

any lure for feeling is admitted to efficiency," and "the freedom inherent in the universe is

constituted by this element of self-causation."[259] Though each actual entity is free in its creative

activities, it still faces necessities before and after the creative process because it works from

finite data and must bear the consequences of their decisions. "The point to be noticed is that the

actual entity, in a state of process during which it is not fully definite, determines its own

ultimate definiteness. *This is the whole point of moral responsibility.*"[260]

Ultimately, because Whitehead sees truth in a series of coincidences of opposites

manifested in the creative process, his philosophy becomes a project of complementarity. His

treatment of time and eternity is an example of how he integrates traditionally paradoxical

notions to attribute timeless meaning to our everyday lives. Kuntz comments that the importance

of Whitehead's philosophy lies in its ability to accommodate both the flux and the stability of the

world:

> This world is then clearly one of becoming and passing away, a world of
> transience, like water, and classically expressed by Heraclitus: "all flows."
> Whitehead does not use the classical model of Heraclitus, who is conceived to be
> the metaphysical opposite of Plato. But if this view includes both the Platonic
> pole of forms of definiteness and Heraclitean pole of process, then the

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[258] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity," 61.
[259] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 88.
[260] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 255.

metaphysical significance [of Whitehead's philosophy] may be the conceptual integration of what had been hitherto considered incompatible[261]

Since temporality is one of the most important tenets of the human experience, Whitehead aims to account for its significance and meaning in a way that preserves the coincidence of opposites present in the universe. In fact, it might even be said that Whitehead models his entire philosophy on our experience of temporality, for he believes that ""stubborn facts"—the ones that will not go away, no matter what—should be taken as the most fundamental facts to which a theory must be adequate," and that "time or temporality is one of those stubborn facts."[262] Whitehead "neither neglects the centrality of time or change to existence, but neither thinks we must sacrifice the eternal in describing our human experience," and thus his desire for his philosophy to make sense of the least details of our lives is aptly expressed through his analysis of time and eternity.[263] In the philosophy of organism, each actual entity becomes a part of something larger than itself by contributing to the unity and diversity of the universe: "The oneness of the universe, and the oneness of each element in the universe, repeat themselves to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplifying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities."[264] "In this way," Whitehead reassures, "the insistent craving is justified—the insistent craving that zest for existence be refreshed by the ever-present, unfading importance of our immediate actions, which perish and yet live for evermore."[265] In *Process and Reality*, our immediate actions and by extension, our lives—which are really a series of immediate actions— are affirmed to retain their "unfading importance" through the perpetual perishing, because only

[261] Kuntz, *Alfred North Whitehead*, 34.
[262] Griffin, Whitehead's *Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy*, 118.
[263] Shade, "Spirit and Eternity,' 77.
[264] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 228.
[265] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

through them is the newness, oneness, and fullness of the world attained.

Conclusion

It is intuitive to correlate only change or passage to time because we seem to constantly perceive time's flow. However, Whitehead writes that both permanence and flux are manifested in time:

> In the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence, there is an element that escapes into flux. Permanence can be snatched only out of flux; and the passing moment can find its adequate intensity only by its submission to permanence. . . . The perfect realization is not merely the exemplification of what in abstraction is timeless. It does more: it implants timelessness on what in its essence is passing. The perfect moment is fadeless in the lapse of time. Time has then lost its character of 'perpetual perishing'; it becomes the 'moving image of eternity'[266]

The conjunction of permanence and flux or eternity and time underlies Whitehead's metaphysical system because actual occasions demonstrate how entities dwell in both time and eternity through concrescence and satisfaction. Even the way he describes the world's continual creative advance—process *and* reality—points to his conviction to hold onto both time and eternity as indispensible modes of the world's being, because process must necessarily span across time and reality must retain the solidity and completeness that eternity entails.

Whitehead argues that "those who would disjoin the two elements [of permanence and flux] can find no interpretation of patent facts," suggesting that in order to understand and appreciate even the simplest thought or experience, one must acknowledge both eternity and time to be present in the actualities we encounter everyday.[267] Indeed, Whitehead wishes to elucidate everyday experience through his philosophy, and thus our subjective experience becomes the

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[266] Whitehead, *Proess and Reality*, 338

[267] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 338.

beginning and ending point of his inquiry. "Whitehead's metaphysical analysis," Griffin writes,

"led him to say that our experience of actuality is "a value experience. Its basic expression is—

Have a care, here is something that matters!"""[268]

In fact, all four philosophers—Plato, Plotinus, Kant, and Whitehead—reassure that every

hour we occupy matters because it contributes to the greater whole of reality by offering

possibilities that eternity alone could not have offered. Plato's account of the emergence of time

reveals that the Demiurge had created time in an attempt to perfect the cosmos he had ordered

out of chaos. The Demiurge is bounded by the Good to create the best possible world, and since

a world with time is more complete—and therefore better—than a world without time, the

addition of time to the cosmos is to be seen as an act that enhances the goodness and beauty of

the world. If time were meaningless, unnecessary, or inferior to eternity, then the cosmos would

not be beautiful.

Another way temporality adds to the world is enabling humans to participate in the

continual re-creation of the universe through rationality, invention, and creativity. Time is the

metaphysical principle that allows for any discursive reasoning, including the writing of the

Timaeus, which accounts for the creation of time; because every human thought must necessarily

be extended through time, time is a necessary condition of a rational account of anything. After

all, it is only temporal beings that can learn or acquire something new, for with time comes

contingency, which brings uncertainty and indeterminateness, which ultimately allows for the

process of learning. Similarly, Plotinus' treatment of time in *Ennead* iii 7 highlights both the

inherent desire within us to exercise creativity and time's ability to foster the expression of our

creative urge. Conceiving time to be the life or activity of the soul, Plotinus writes that the soul

broke away from eternity in order to imitate the eternal cosmos within the sensible world; it

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[268] Griffin 6, quoting Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*. (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 116.

separated itself from eternity because it wished to gain autonomy to be involved in the re-creation of the eternal realm. Time, then, as the activity of the soul, also possesses the inherent and constant desire for something new, and it is this desire that opens up the possibility for a dynamic existence. In time the world goes through a continual creation, renewal, and refashioning through the movement of the soul that gives rise to time. Thus according to Plato and Plotinus, time is something without which eternity and reality would not be complete, both because it itself is an integral part of reality *and* because it makes us potent agents that contribute to the composition of reality.

Kant and Whitehead's philosophies show that one of the possibilities time offers includes a moral life. According to Kant and Whitehead, moral philosophy is rooted in our relationship with time, for our decisions become an important part of the arrangement of the world in a temporally extended life. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant defines time as the inner form of intuition that makes self-knowledge and autonomy possible, as it is only through time that we can access the phenomenal world in which we experience ourselves. In addition, time, by serving as the medium for a free decision to exhibit its lasting consequences, allows freedom to properly manifest its meaning and significance; temporality endows our autonomous moral decisions with potency.

Similarly, Whitehead argues that the moral life stems from the fact that we make choices that have lasting consequences. Whitehead contemplates an organic structure of reality in which every actual entity from a single electron to an amoeba to a human perpetually perishes *and* achieves objective immortality through creative advance. Because each actual entities' choices involve every other entity and occasion in the world, each act of decision-making achieves timeless significance. The most important sentence in *Process and Reality* is: "It [decision]

constitutes the very meaning of actuality."[269] The fact that actual entities are responsible for

actuality confers responsibility especially to conscious subjects, and since each decision

produces implications that last through all time, in the end it is time that renders each actual

entity morally accountable for its creative advance.

Though Plato, Plotinus, Kant, and Whitehead all attribute power, agency, and creative

ability to us, this conception of the human is not unique to Platonic philosophy; Christianity and

modern science also depict the human in the same way. Within Christian theology, arguably the

most influential school of thought within the history of Western thought, the Cultural Mandate

authorizes and encourages us to take ownership of the world around us: "God blessed them and

said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish

in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.""[270]

By calling humans to manage the earth, the sea, and the sky, the Christian God ascribes to man

not only an authoritative role, but also an inventive and visionary role. Evolutionary biology also

portrays the human to be an influential participant and enabler of the ongoing survival of our

species. The very idea of evolution requires a current generation that serves as an active link

between the past generation and the future generation, inheriting certain traits but also

maintaining the flexibility to alter them for all subsequent times. Thus we see that strains of the

most cogent and influential human thoughts all come to consider the human an active agent that

is an integral part of an on-going creative process; it is telling that our best attempts at

understanding the world and ourselves agree on this particular conception of the human.

Human creativity, as a conjunctive act, serves as an expression of both eternity and time because

it articulates the dynamic interdependence between the temporal and the eternal.

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[269] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 43.
[270] Gen 1:28, NIV.

Ultimately, to undermine time's significance and value in relation to eternity is to invalidate the dynamism that characterizes our existence. We are not passive figures stumbling through a deterministic and indifferent world, because our decisions and creativity continue to mold the nature of the cosmos. It is our assured relationship with temporality that makes our experience a vital part of the essence of the world, for the flow of process and the finality of reality are harmonized in time. We may not purely experience eternity or fully comprehend what eternity entails, but we do know that our temporal lives and eternity mutually inform each other. Perhaps this is why King Solomon writes that man "cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" even after having had eternity divinely revealed to his heart.[271] In the end, though eternity may be beyond our conceptual and empirical reach, the awareness of time's unique contribution to reality and its interdependent relationship with eternity are enough to bestow time with indomitable significance.

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[271] Ecc 3:11b, NIV.

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