INTRODUCTION: CONSTRUCTIVE POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY

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I. POSTMODERNISM AND RATIONALITY

As mentioned in the foregoing introduction to the series, at least two very different types of philosophy are currently being called "postmodern." In the one type, the accent is on deconstruction; in the other type, considerable deconstruction is carried out, but the accent is on construction. This latter type of postmodernism perhaps should have been officially dubbed "reconstructive" to indicate more clearly that a deconstructive moment is presupposed. In any case, the two types of postmodern philosophy differ not on the need to deconstruct various notions that were central to modern and in some cases premodern worldviews, but on the necessity and possibility of constructing a new cosmology that might become the worldview of future generations.

Which of these two types of philosophy is more legitimately called "postmodern" is a point of contention. On the question of priority of usage, each side can make claims. On the one hand, in philosophical circles the term "postmodern" has thus far been most heavily associated with deconstruction, and this usage has been closely related to the use of "postmodern" in literary-artistic circles. But if the question is actual priority, rather than preponderance, of usage, the constructive type can probably claim priority, as the term "postmodern" was used in reference to Whitehead’s philosophy as early as 1964. But the question of priority is trivial. Much more important is the question of which movement is more truly postmodern.
On this issue, however, there is no neutral standpoint from which to make a judgment. Each side has its own view as to what modernism—or, more specifically, modern philosophy—is, and especially as to the objectionable aspect(s) of modernism that a properly postmodern philosophy seeks to move beyond. To the extent that these judgments diverge, each type of postmodern philosophy will see the other as still modern, because still accepting notions regarded as belonging to the objectionable core of modernism. To the extent that one sees the other as not only accepting these notions but also carrying them to their logical conclusions, the former will judge the latter to be ultramodern, hypermodern, mostmodern.

For example, John Cobb points out in his essay below that the ideal of rationality is such a contested notion. Deconstructive postmodernists typically regard it as part and parcel of the objectionable core of modernism. Such philosophers, accordingly, regard the philosophies of Whitehead and Hartshorne—insofar as they regard them at all—as quintessentially modern, because these philosophies seek to provide a metaphysical cosmology that meets the rational criteria of self-consistency and adequacy to all the facts of experience. But Whitehead, by contrast, regards modern philosophy, including modern science, as an essentially antirational movement. From this perspective, accordingly, recovering the ideal of rationality can be viewed as postmodern, whereas those who urge us to become even more antirational than is modern thought can be viewed as hypermodern, as simply carrying a central tendency of modernism to extremes.

In this introductory essay, I write from the perspective of the constructive type of postmodern philosophy. More particularly, while seeing Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne as all having enough in common to be dubbed constructive postmodern philosophers, I primarily take Whitehead's position as the standpoint from which to characterize the commonalities. That is, although these five philosophers did indeed have much in common, they were all very different in temperament, they held differing views on a wide range of issues, and—most important—they each had different central intuitions and aims. So, whereas any of them looking at the other four would have seen that they all had much in common, each one of them would have identified the commonalities in more or less different ways. Whereas all of them might have agreed that the five of them could be grouped together as a distinct movement in philosophy, and might have even happily accepted "constructive postmodernism" as a name for this movement, they each would have described the nature and the most crucial aspects of this movement somewhat differently. My own characterization of this movement, in taking its primary orientation from Whitehead's philosophy, should be only slightly less adequate from a Hartshornean point of view because of the considerable overlap between these two philosophies (and also because my reading of Whitehead has been influenced by my reading of Hartshorne, as well as
vice-versa). My characterization of constructive postmodern philosophy will be increasingly less representative, I suspect, of the Jamesian, the Bergsonian, and finally the Peircean perspective.

Having indicated the stance from which this introductory essay is written, I now continue the line of thought begun two paragraphs above. The next point is that the formal difference concerning rationality discussed there is related, in turn, to substantive differences concerning ontology and epistemology. From a (Whiteheadian) constructive postmodern perspective, the two fundamental flaws in modern philosophy have been an ontology based on a materialistic doctrine of nature and an epistemology based on a sensationist doctrine of perception. The sensationist doctrine of perception said not only that all knowledge is grounded on perception (with which constructive postmodernists agree), but also that perception is to be equated with sense-perception (with which they do not agree). The materialistic doctrine of nature—whether part of a materialistic ontology of reality in general or of a dualism between "mind" and "nature"—said that the ultimate units of nature are, in Whitehead's phrase, "vacuous actualities." That is, they are actualities (contra Bishop Berkeley), but they are completely devoid of experience. The materialistic ontology of nature also generally says that the ultimate units of nature are devoid of spontaneity or self-motion—the capacity to initiate movement of any sort. Most of the difficulties of modern philosophy are seen to result from its doctrine of perception, its ontology, or the combination of these two doctrines.

Indeed, one strand of modern philosophy gave up, at least in "theory," the materialistic doctrine of nature in favor of phenomenalism because of the tension between the ontological claim that the perceived world is comprised of vacuous actualities and the epistemological claim that that perception gives us nothing but sense-data. That is, the sensationist theory of perception entailed that we have no perceptual knowledge of the existence of actual things beyond ourselves, let alone any knowledge of their nature (such as whether they are vacuous or not). Given that view of perceptual experience, the desire to be rigorously empirical led Hume and others to reject ontological claims about what things are in themselves in favor of phenomenalism—the view that we cannot go beyond merely describing phenomena as they appear to us. (This shows that modernism's epistemology has been more fundamental than its ontology—that the sensationist theory of perception is even more basic to modern philosophy than the materialistic doctrine of nature.) A more accurate statement would, accordingly, have to characterize modern ontology not as an affirmation but as a rejection—namely, a rejection of the view that has generally been called "panpsychism" but is more helpfully called "panexperientialism." Panexperientialism is the view that nature is actual and that the ultimate units of nature are not vacuous but are something for themselves in the sense of having experience, however slight.
Thus modified, so as to combine a sensationist theory of perception with a rejection of panexperientialism (whether by affirming dualism, materialism, phenomenalism, or personal idealism), the characterization of modern philosophy given here applies equally well to Mersenne, Descartes, Malebranche, Guelinck, Locke, Berkeley, Hobbes, Newton, Hume, Reid, and Kant. Leibniz and Spinoza would be the two great exceptions in the early modern period—although even they were fully modern in their affirmation of the determinism that generally follows from the materialistic view of nature.

In any case, the difference between deconstructive and constructive (or reconstructive) postmodern philosophers can be stated in terms of the aspects of modern philosophy on which they set their deconstructive sights, and the assumptions they employ in carrying out their deconstructions. The differences here are closely correlated with the difference between recommending a new candidate for a worldview and recommending an antiworldview—an overcoming of all worldviews, all attempts to characterize the “totality.” Deconstructive postmodernists deconstruct various notions—such as rationality, empirical givenness, and truth as correspondence—without which a worldview is impossible. And the assumptions used in the deconstruction of these and other notions—such as self, history, and the physical world—are such as to reinforce the impossibility of constructing, or even holding, a worldview. Constructive postmodernists, by contrast, take aim just at those notions—such as vacuous actuality and the equation of perception with sense-perception—that they see as making impossible the construction of a self-consistent, adequate cosmology, and that thereby have contributed to the antirationality of modernity, which finds its logical conclusion in deconstructive postmodernism.¹

II. THE MODERN MIND-BODY PROBLEM
AND ANTRIRATIONALITY

The connection between the substantive assumptions of modern philosophy and its antirationality can be illustrated in terms of the mind-body problem. Descartes' division of the world into completely different types of actualities—matter, which is extended but devoid of experience, and spirit, which experiences but is devoid of extension—made interaction between spiritual mind and material body, which he affirmed, seem impossible. Descartes attempted, feebly, to overcome the difficulty by reference to the pineal gland and “animal spirits,” but eventually admitted that he could give no solution to the problem.² Malebranche, Guelinck, Berkeley, and Reid all appealed to God to solve the problem—the first three by denying that any real interaction occurs, and the latter by simply saying that God, being omnipotent and therefore deterred by none but logical impossibilities, could make unlikes interact. This
latter solution was probably, in fact, the implicit solution of Descartes (who doubted whether even logical possibilities could constrain the divine omnipotence). Later philosophers, however, rightly resisted this appeal, in Whitehead’s words, “a *deus ex machina* who was capable of rising superior to the difficulties of metaphysics.” But, once this type of answer was forsworn, no answer could be given as to how experiencing and nonexperiencing things could interact. This led, on the one hand, to various phenomenalisms and idealisms, which denied the independent (from experience) existence of what we normally call the physical world, and, on the other hand, to various versions of materialism, which denied that what is normally called the “mind” is an actuality. While each of these moves involves inadequacy to obvious facts of experience, and thereby a contentment with an irrational position, I will focus first on the even more obvious irrationality accepted by modern dualists.

Karl Popper provides one example. In an early book, he assumed that a solution to the problem of dualistic interaction was both essential and possible, saying: “What we want is to understand how such nonphysical things as purposes, deliberations, plans, decisions, theories, tensions, and values can play a part in bringing about physical changes in the physical world.” But by the time he and John Eccles wrote *The Self and Its Brain*, he had evidently decided that a solution was not possible, and accordingly declared it not essential. He still affirmed ontological dualism, even accepting Gilbert Ryle’s pejorative characterization of it as belief in the “ghost in the machine”; and he still affirmed interaction—the subtitle of the book, indeed, is *An Argument for Interaction*. But when he finally faced the question of how to understand interaction between ontologically different types of actualities, Popper dismissed the issue by saying: “Complete understanding, like complete knowledge, is unlikely to be achieved.” This contentment with mystery is an example of the antirationalism of the modern mind.

There is a type of mystery, to be sure, that we must accept, at least provisionally. This is the mystery that is made inevitable by the finitude of our knowledge. There are all sorts of things that we simply do not know, and there may be various things that no finite mind will ever know. Popper is correct to say of “complete knowledge” that it “is unlikely to be achieved.”

But Popper’s comment about “complete understanding” points to another type of mystery, the type that is exemplified by the problem of how mind and body, understood as entities of ontologically different kinds, can interact. This “mystery,” unlike that of, say, how the universe originated, is not given to us by the universe, but is entirely of our own making. It is an artificial, not a natural, mystery. It is created by the decision to think of mind and body as ontologically different types of things. Contentment with artificial mystery represents an antirational frame of mind. The rational thing to do, when confronted by this “mystery,” would be to ask if one had misunderstood the nature of mind, or of body, or perhaps of both.
If it be thought that Popper, being primarily a philosopher of science rather than a philosopher of nature, is not a good example, we can look at the position developed by Keith Campbell in *Body and Mind*. Campbell rehearses the well-known problems of dualism: How could spirit and matter interact? How could spirit emerge out of a wholly material universe? How could one specify a nonarbitrary time for this emergence? But then he indicates that, although he once found central-state materialism adequate, he no longer does. In particular, he believes that phenomenal properties, such as the feeling of pain, cannot be properties a material object can have. This leads him to affirm “a new epiphenomenalism.” According to this doctrine, we do have a spiritual mind, which is produced by the body. But it does not act back upon the body: all human behavior is caused by the purely physical central nervous system, so a purely physicalist, deterministic account of human behavior is preserved.

Campbell realizes that this doctrine has all sorts of problems. It faces, for one thing, the same “equally embarrassing” questions as did dualism: “If, among the properties of the brain, are some which are not purely physico-chemical, at what point, and how, do such properties first make their appearance?” With regard to the “how” question, Campbell says: “Epiphenomenalists must just accept . . . that the existence of nonmaterial properties is a fact for which they have no explanation.”

Campbell admits, furthermore, that epiphenomenalism’s account of the causation of behavior is counterintuitive:

> To preserve the completeness of the physical accounts of human action, it must hold that, contrary to common belief, it is not the hurtfulness of pain which causes me to shun it . . . Whether we suffer or enjoy can be a sign that a given state is aversive or attractive for us, but cannot be a cause of aversion or attraction.

Besides being contrary to our experience, Campbell’s doctrine is arbitrary: while denying “the action of spirit on matter,” it affirms “the action of the material on the spiritual.” Recognizing the arbitrariness of the fact that the epiphenomenalist theory “rejects only one half of the interaction of matter and spirit,” Campbell says that

> one who holds to the theory must just grit his teeth and assert that a fundamental, anomalous, causal connection relates some bodily processes to some nonmaterial processes. He must insist that this is a brute fact we must learn to live with, however inconvenient it might be for our tidy world-schemes.

But “untidiness” is surely a mild term for this arbitrariness.
Finally, besides being counterintuitive and arbitrary, his theory is, Campbell admits, unintelligible. Having affirmed that “our awareness by phenomenal properties” is “caused by changes in sense organs and brain,” he says:

How this is done we do not know. . . . I suspect that we will never know how the trick is worked. This part of the Mind-Body problem seems insoluble. This aspect of humanity seems destined to remain forever beyond our understanding.14

Having found himself led to such a conclusion, he adds a Popper-like justification of contentment with mystery: “Philosophers ought to dislike skeptical conclusions, but . . . [w]e cannot guarantee in advance that the whole of human nature is open to human comprehension.”15 The same reply that was given to Popper applies: The issue is not whether the whole of human nature can be comprehended. The issue is whether, when we confront artificial mysteries—ones that were created solely by our own premises—we should rest content, declaring the problem permanently insoluble. Surely not. As Peirce said, we should not block the road of inquiry.16 The rational response is to revise one or more of the premises that led to the cul-de-sac.

This is the approach taken by constructive postmodern philosophers. The idea of vacuous actuality is rejected; panexperientialism is affirmed. Both Popper and Campbell do consider this option; but it cannot be said that they consider it seriously. They deal only with its older and weaker forms, and then only in a cursory and, in Popper’s case, a caricatured, fashion.17

III. MODERNITY’S ACCEPTANCE OF A MECHANISTIC NATURE

It is, of course, understandable that modern philosophers find it difficult to take panexperientialism seriously, because part of the defining essence of modern philosophy is the rejection of panexperientialism. This rejection is, one could say, part of the enculturation into modernity. The acceptance of a nonanimistic, mechanistic nature was, in fact, the central feature in the worldview with which what we call “modern science” came to be associated in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Although this association has been so close that many have thought science and mechanism to be mutually implicated, so that the mechanistic view of nature was both presupposed by science and in turn scientifically verified, historians of science are now showing otherwise. Good science has not always presupposed a mechanistic worldview, which an examination of the thought of Copernicus, Kepler, Gilbert, and even Newton would show. As Jerome Ravetz says:
The great historical myth of this [mechanistic] philosophy is that it was the necessary and sufficient cause of the great scientific progress of the seventeenth century. This was a central point in its propaganda, for itself at the time and in histories ever since. Yet the results of historical inquiry . . . contradict this claim.18

Rather than being the virtual beginning of real science, the so-called scientific revolution was, Ravetz says, "a campaign for a reform of ideas about science . . . injected into a continuous process of technical progress within science. . . . [The] scientific revolution was primarily and essentially about metaphysics."19

The new metaphysical idea was that the ultimate units of nature are completely devoid of both experience and self-motion. And this metaphysical idea, rather than being derived from empirical evidence, as propaganda would have it, was based primarily upon theological and sociological motives. It was used, for example, to support belief in God, miracles, and immortality, and to justify the exploitation of (nonhuman) nature. I will briefly describe the relation between the mechanistic idea of nature and the defense of each of these beliefs.

The mechanical philosophy supported belief in the existence of an external creator of the universe, over against pantheistic and atheistic philosophies, by pointing to the need for a first mover: if nature’s basic units are essentially inert and yet are now in fact in motion, there must have been, argued Boyle and Newton among others, a supernatural being who put them in motion.20 Newton also used another aspect of the mechanistic philosophy, the denial of an inherent capacity for action at a distance in nature’s units, to prove the existence of God: the fact of universal gravitation shows that there must be something outside of nature that accounts for the apparent attraction between bits of matter.21 This aspect of mechanism, its denial of an "occult" capacity for action at a distance, was also used by Mersenne to support the belief in genuine miracles. Some naturalists were arguing, on the basis of their animistic philosophies, that action at a distance is a purely natural, if extraordinary, capacity of minds and other things, and that, accordingly, the Christian "miracles" (which were used by Christian apologists to support the divine endorsement of Christianity as the one true religion) did not really require supernatural intervention. Boyle and Mersenne preferred the mechanistic philosophy of nature to all others, in part, because it said that all natural causal influence is exerted by contact; accordingly, the miraculous events in the New Testament and (for Mersenne) the later lives of the saints did betoken supernatural intervention.22

The mechanistic view of nature was also used to support belief in immortality against those who were arguing for "mortalism" on the basis of animistic philosophies according to which all things are self-moving. The body is made of self-moving things and yet it obviously decays, said these heretics, so the fact
that the mind or soul is a self-moving thing provides no reason to believe that it will not decay too. One reason to recommend the mechanistic philosophy is that it defeats this argument, said Boyle among others: the fact that we are obviously self-moving things shows that there is something in us that is, by being self-moving, essentially different from our bodies, and that may be presumed, therefore, not to share the fate of our bodies.23

All of these theological beliefs were of extreme importance sociologically, of course, because the “stability” of society—which, translated, meant the maintenance of the monarchy and the hierarchical society—depended heavily upon the authority of the church; and the church’s authority, in turn, depended upon the belief in God, in God’s having authorized Christianity as the true religion, and in God’s granting to the church the “keys to the kingdom,” meaning the power to consign people to heaven or hell.

A final theological-sociological reason for favoring mechanism was the support it gave to the growing desire—which has been central to modernity from the outset—systematically to dominate nature for human benefit. Descartes’ absolute dualism between spirit and matter, and his account of all (nonhuman) animals as sentient machines, was used, with Descartes’ blessing, not only to justify believing that humans alone are immortal,24 but also to justify practices such as hunting and vivisection.25 Boyle argued that a proper respect for the “divine excellency” would prevent us from attributing any power of self-motion, which is a divine prerogative, to nature; but this theological nicety was not unrelated to a sociological concern. Boyle, who was for a time in charge of mining in the New World,26 said, in criticizing the “vulgar” notion of nature, which sees it as having life and power: “The veneration, wherewith men are imbued for what they call nature, has been a discouraging impediment to the empire of man over the inferior creatures of God.27"

The mechanistic view of nature, then, arose more out of motives of this type than out of empirical evidence. Some features of nature, to be sure, such as the locomotion of Galileo’s steel balls, were completely explainable on the assumption that they were wholly devoid of all “final causation” in the sense of self-determination in terms of an end. But the supposition that the ultimate units comprising these steel balls are themselves analogous to the balls was pure supposition, based on wishful thinking rather than empirical evidence. Once this modern “paradigm” was established, the view that the ultimate units of nature are devoid of both experience and self-motion could be maintained apart from the motives on which it was originally based. The late modern worldview of atheistic materialism, accordingly, is simply a decapitated version of the early modern worldview. That is, God and the soul are lopped off, but the mechanistic view of nature is maintained.28

Given the fact that the mechanistic view of nature has been integral to the modern worldview from the outset (at least insofar as any realistic—as distinct
from phenomenalistic or idealistic—view of nature has been affirmed), one should not be surprised—even if one cannot help being disappointed—to see how superficially, how unphilosophically, pan experientialism is treated in modern philosophy. Most philosophers do not even give it as much attention as do Popper and Campbell. When not simply ignored, it is usually dismissed as ridiculous, quaint, or sentimental. Philosophers who in one breath tell us that we cannot know what things are in themselves will, in the next, tell us that, of course, we do know that things in themselves are devoid of experience. Philosophers who debate endlessly about whether we can know for certain that the desks on which we are writing really exist seem to assume that, if they do exist, we can be certain that their constituents are devoid of experience.

IV. PANEXPERIENTIALISM AS POSTMODERN HYPOTHESIS

Constructive postmodern philosophers do not claim, to the contrary, that they know that all actualities do have experience. But they offer pan experientialism as a hypothesis, a hypothesis that will enable philosophers to overcome the inadequacies and apparently insoluble mysteries that seem otherwise inevitable. One of these apparently insoluble mysteries is how to do justice to the interaction between body and mind that we all inevitably presuppose in practice. Given the pan experientialist hypothesis, which is affirmed by all five of our authors, one can affirm both things needed to make interaction between mind and brain intelligible: mind and brain are (numerically) distinct; but mind and brain cells are not (ontologically) different types of entities.

Besides having trouble with the mind-body relation, modern philosophers have had an equally difficult problem with the closely related issue of freedom and determinism. It is closely related because, in Peirce’s words, “the distinction between psychical and physical phenomena is the distinction between final and efficient causation.” Some dualistic interactionists have affirmed the freedom not only of the human mind but also, through the mind’s influence on its body, of human behavior. But having the dualism between spirit and matter include the dualism between free and unfree only increases the unintelligibility of the interaction of mind and body. How can that which has freedom, by exercising final causation or self-determination, interact with that which is wholly unfree because completely determined by efficient causation from others? Central-state materialism, whether it takes an identist or more functionalist form, avoids this problem by denying human freedom—or, more characteristically, by redefining it so that it is compatible with complete determinism by physical causes. There can be no freedom in the sense of what Campbell calls “metaphysical choices,” meaning choices that are not fully determined by prior physical causes and are thus partly self-determined. “If
there is metaphysical choice,” Campbell says, “Central-State Materialism is false.” And the same would be true of Campbell’s epiphenomenalism; more precisely, he could allow metaphysical choice by the mind, but he could not allow this choice to influence bodily behavior. The problem with this solution, however, is that everyone, including the central-state materialist and the epiphenomenalist, presupposes in practice that we do exercise what Campbell calls (perhaps pejoratively) “metaphysical choices”—namely, choices in which an element of self-determination and hence genuine freedom is involved—and that these choices influence our bodily behavior. There is thus an inconsistency, in this case an inconsistency between the explicit doctrine of the philosophical theory and the implicit presupposition of the philosopher’s practice.

Another way to avoid this problem of explaining the interaction of the experiencing and the nonexperiencing, the free and the determined—one of the currently most prevalent ways—is simply to deny that the mind has freedom and, in fact, that it even exists as an actuality. The mind is said to be identical with, that is, ontologically reducible to, the brain, and the activities of the brain are said to be as fully determined by efficient causes as any other activities of nature. The attempt to defend this position has led to “eliminative materialism,” the doctrine that we can and should learn to describe human behavior exhaustively without using any subjective terms, such as “feeling,” “pain,” and “purpose.” Other materialists, recognizing the idenist program to be a failure, have endorsed functionalism, which involves the claim that what we call our mind is, while not strictly identical with the brain, entirely a function of it. Although this is a slightly weaker and thereby apparently less indefensible hypothesis, it still denies ideas that we all, including the philosopher in the very act of proposing the hypothesis, presuppose in practice—namely, that our experience (including the act of formulating and evaluating hypotheses) is partly self-determining in the moment, not wholly determined by antecedent events, that we make partly free choices in the light of ideal ends we want to bring about, and that our purposive, partly self-determining experiences influence our bodies and thereby the world beyond.

The materialistic approaches to the mind-body problem illustrate the other type of antirationalism Whitehead finds typical of modern philosophy (besides that of resting content with inconsistencies): “Failure to include some obvious elements of experience in the scope of the system is met by boldly denying the facts.” With regard to scientists whose system excludes anything not explainable in terms of physical and chemical laws, Whitehead comments: “Scientists animated by the purpose of proving that they are purposeless constitute an interesting subject for study.” That statement would apply equally well to many modern philosophers. “The rejection of any source of evidence,” Whitehead says, “is always treason to that ultimate rationalism which urges for-
ward science and philosophy alike." This ultimate rationalism involves the drive to be adequate as well as consistent:

A cosmology should above all things be adequate. It should not confine itself to the categorial notions of one science, and explain away everything which will not fit in. Its business is not to refuse experience but to find the most general interpretative system."

On this basis he lifts up for special praise a philosopher who was, he knew, sometimes criticized for being anti-intellectual, William James: "His intellectual life was one protest against the dismissal of experience in the interest of system."

It was because he saw that materialistic idealism and functionalism could not do justice to human experience that Keith Campbell rejected materialism in favor of epiphenomenalism. But epiphenomenalism suffers from both inconsistency (like other forms of ontological dualism) and inadequacy, as we have seen.

The inconsistencies and inadequacies of dualism, epiphenomenalism, and materialism can be avoided by constructive postmodern philosophers on the basis of panexperientialism, which attributes to all individuals, including non-human individuals, some degree of real (self-determining) freedom, and says that different grades of individuals have different degrees of freedom. In Peirce's words, "all phenomena are of one character, though some are more mental and spontaneous, others more material and regular. Still all alike present [a] mixture of freedom and constraint." The interaction of mind and brain cells is, accordingly, not that between the free and the unfree, but between the more and the less free. Further explanation is given in the chapters herein, especially those on Whitehead and Hartshorne.

Their positions, like that of James before them, built upon Bergson's insight that the reason modern science has seemed to make freedom impossible is that it has tried to reduce duration, which we experience, to the "spatialized" time of modern physics. Bergson led the way in showing this "time" to be an abstraction. The way to reconcile duration, which we experience internally, with the time of physics is not to eliminate duration from our system of thought but to recognize the abstractness of the time of physical theory, and to say, accordingly, that the concrete actualities with which physics deals also, like us, enjoy duration.

This brings us to yet another difficulty for modern philosophy, that of making intelligible our presuppositions about time. On the one hand, most philosophers accept the evolutionary story of our universe, according to which billions of years passed before the rise of life. On the other hand, most philosophers who have thought about the nature of time—such as Adolf Grünbaum—
say that time as we experience it, with a present "now," which separates past and future, and with an irreversible direction, cannot exist apart from experience. Philosophers who are willing to attribute experience only to human beings obviously have an enormous problem. But even those who, more reasonably, attribute experience to all forms of life have almost as great a problem insofar as they refuse to attribute experience to "inanimate nature." Assuming that life emerged about 4 billion years ago, and yet that the universe is about 15 billion years old, they must say that 11 billion years of evolution occurred before time existed!

An example is provided by J.T. Fraser. In a book entitled *The Genesis and Evolution of Time*, he suggests that there are six kinds of time: atemporality, prototemporality, eotemporality, biotemporality, nootemporality, and sociotemporality. These six kinds of time correspond with six periods of cosmic evolution. Although he refers to them all as kinds of time or temporality, it is hard to see how there is any real temporality in the first three levels. Even in the third level, the eotemporal, Fraser says that there is still no "now" and therefore no past and future. A "now" arises first in the biotemporal realm, meaning, of course, with the rise of life. Fraser's assumption seems to be that experience, which is required for a "now" separating past and future, arises first with the emergence of life. And this leads to the problem I referred to above. "Creation was neither followed nor preceded by other instants, because the relationship future-past-present had no meaning in the atemporal, or even in the proto- or eotemporal worlds." Accordingly, because prior to life there could be no "relations among events corresponding to the notion of before and after," all those events we think of as occurring over 11 billion years must have all been "contiguous with the instant of Creation." Fraser adds that we are free to speak of that period as if it were a temporal process, provided that we realize this to be only a convenient way of speaking.  

There is even, Fraser recognizes, a self-contradiction built into the very title of his book, *The Genesis and Evolution of Time*. His thesis is that "time itself has developed along evolutionary steps," and yet he admits that "there is no noncontradictory way in which to state that time evolved in time." He seeks to mitigate this difficulty by blaming the limitations of "prevailing linguistic customs." But the problem surely runs deeper (assuming, of course, as constructive postmodernists do, that there is something deeper than language).

The solution suggested by panexperientialists is that we need not speak of a "genesis" of time. If the ultimate units of the world are experiencing events, if some such experiencing events have always existed, and if each experience involves a reception of influences from past events, an element of spontaneity (so that the experience is not simply a product of prior events), and a contribution of influences to subsequent events, then time has always existed. This insistence on the fundamental reality of temporality is signalled by the fact
that these constructive postmodern philosophies are generally called "process philosophies." Bergson's protest against the spatialization of time lies at the root of this aspect of the movement; closely related is Whitehead's idea that the denial of the ultimate reality of (asymmetrical, irreversible) time on the basis of physics results from the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness.""

Modern philosophers will, of course, consider outrageous the suggestion that to do justice to our presuppositions about time we must affirm panexperientialism. But if panexperientialism is the only intelligible way to avoid either denying the reality of prebiological evolution or resting content with self-contradiction, then we seem faced with the question: Which are we more willing to give up—the validity of the law of non-contradiction, the existence of evolution and thus of time prior to the existence of living things, or the belief that nonliving things are wholly devoid of experience? It is interesting, given the amount of attention showered by modern philosophers on the question of what we can know, how little attention is given to the assumption that they know, at least beyond reasonable doubt, that nonliving things are devoid of experience.

V. Rejecting the Sensationist View of Perception

I have thus far focused on panexperientialism as an ontological doctrine, showing how it can avoid several insoluble problems that have resulted from what Whitehead called "the disastrous metaphysical doctrine of physical matter ... [as] devoid of self-enjoyment"—the problems of mind-body interaction, of interaction between free and determined things, of the emergence of experience from nonexperiencing matter, and of the emergence of time in the evolutionary process. Each of these problems has resulted either in a contentment with an inconsistent position or in the denial of something that cannot be consistently denied, or, at the very least, something that we have more reason to have confidence in than the belief that nonliving things are wholly devoid of experience.

I turn now to the epistemological side of panexperientialism. This epistemological side involves the idea that sensory perception is not our only means of perceiving the world beyond our present experience. Even more, the claim is that sensory perception is not even our primary means of perception, that it is derivative from a nonsensory mode of perception. In Whitehead's words: "Sense-perception, despite its prominence in consciousness, belongs to the superficialities of experience." This derivative nature of sensory perception is suggested by panexperientialism: If all individuals, not just those with sensory organs, experience, there must be a nonsensory mode of perception; and if sensory perception has evolved out of nonsensory perception, it is likely that creatures with this derivative form of perception still retain the more basic
form as well. The relationship between panexperientialism and the reality of nonsensory perception goes the other way as well: evidence for nonsensory perception in ourselves, by showing that nonsensory perception is possible, provides some reason to think that individuals without sensory organs may have the capacity for perceptual experience.

In any case, from the point of view of constructive postmodern philosophers, this question should be given serious attention. As Whitehead says: “If we discover . . . instances of non-sensuous perception, then the tacit identification of perception with sense-perception must be a fatal error barring the advance of systematic metaphysics.” Of course, many modern philosophers are not interested in “systematic metaphysics” in general. But they are interested in that aspect of it called epistemology, which is what Whitehead here primarily has in mind. And the recent obituaries for epistemology written by deconstructive postmodernists, it can be claimed, have resulted primarily from the “tacit identification of perception with sense-perception.” That this identification is generally tacit is indeed the case. For example, in a recent anthology entitled *Perceptual Knowledge*, it is asserted unproblematically in the first paragraph of the editor’s introduction that perceptual knowledge is the sort of knowledge we get by “using our senses,” and I did not find a single place in the remainder of the anthology where this identification was questioned.

This identification has been questioned, however, by constructive postmodern philosophers, and not simply a priori, as above (as a deduction from panexperientialism), but also in terms of Whitehead’s question of whether we can actually discover “instances of non-sensuous perception.” Most intellectuals know William James’ comment to the effect that it takes only one white crow to prove that not all crows are black. But few seem to know the issue James was discussing when he made this statement, which was just the issue at hand: “the orthodox belief that there can be nothing in any one’s intellect that has not come in through ordinary experiences of sense.” To undermine this belief, James says, we need only one clear counterexample:

If you will let me use the language of the professional logic-shop, a universal proposition can be made untrue by a particular instance. If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black, you mustn’t seek to show that no crows are; it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white.

And then James announces that, for him, the counterexample has appeared: “My own white crow is Mrs. Piper. In the trances of this medium, I cannot resist the conviction that knowledge appears which she has never gained by the ordinary waking uses of her eyes and ears and wits.” James does not say, incidentally, that everything Mrs. Piper said was to be believed, or even that she
was indeed serving as a "medium" between people in this world and the spirits of the dead. He remained, as Marcus Ford points out, agnostic to the end about life after death. His claim was only that Mrs. Piper seemed to know things that she could not have learned through ordinary sensory means.

One of the scandals of modern philosophy is the scant amount of attention given to psychical research or—to use the more recent term—parapsychology. James in his day cited with approval the moral philosopher Henry Sidgwick's statement that (in James' summary)

the divided state of public opinion on all these matters was a scandal to science,—absolute disdain on a priori grounds characterizing what may be called professional opinion, while indiscriminate credulity was too often found among those who pretended to have a first-hand acquaintance with the facts."51

This same polarization of opinion obtains today, approximately 100 years later. Scientists and philosophers have not performed the public service that can rightly be expected of them. But even with respect to philosophy as a search for truth for its own sake, the failure to investigate parapsychological research is a serious failure. There is much talk these days about "paradigm changes" being brought about when the old paradigm is confronted with too many anomalies. James had made this point in his own day, beginning his article on "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished" with these words: "The great field for new discoveries," said a scientific friend to me the other day, 'is always the unclassified residuum.'"52 And yet few philosophers or scientists have examined what is surely the greatest storehouse of ostensible anomalies, the records of psychical research. James continued: "No part of the unclassified residuum has usually been treated with a more contemptuous scientific disregard than the mass of phenomena generally called Mystical."53 The situation is little changed today. True, a few well-respected philosophers besides James himself, such as C. D. Broad, H. H. Price, and C. J. Ducasse, have given major attention to psychical research; but most other philosophers evidently do not even read these writings. Thousands of books and articles are written each year that presuppose the identification of perception with sense-perception, but hardly anyone takes up James' challenge to consider whether the evidence for extrasensory perception provides a reason to reject this identification.

This evidence is not examined, of course, in part precisely because of the power of the dogma that it would overthrow. One advantage of constructive postmodern philosophies is that they allow their adherents to consider this evidence more open-mindedly. Those who are strongly opposed to the existence of extrasensory perception, of course, will not consider it an "advantage" of a philosophical position that it allows this evidence to be examined open-mindedly.
This observation leads to the next point, which is that, if what is usually meant by extrasensory perception—namely, telepathy and clairvoyance—provided the only ostensible examples of nonsensory perception, there might seem to be little reason to reject the equation of perception with sensory perception. James would still be right logically: it takes only one counterexample to overturn a universal proposition. But psychologically it usually takes more. One could question the reliability of the report, or even the testimony of one’s own senses. One could suspect that the bird in question was not really a crow, but perhaps a dove. In other words, one could simply say, especially from a comfortable distance, that the anomalous results were probably due to fraud, error, or some other “normal” explanation. And this is how, of course, the evidence for telepathy and clairvoyance, when it is considered at all, is usually treated. Keith Campbell, for instance (who is unusual in devoting even a little space to the subject), uses the standard Humean argument:

The problem of fraud is that we know men can, and do, cheat and dissemble, but we do not know that they have paranormal capacities. On the contrary, the great weight of our fully attested knowledge of man’s origin and constitution makes paranormal capacities extremely unlikely. So... the explanation by fraud is the more rational one.55

This type of a priori position, applied universally, would rule out any fundamental advance, and is thus an appeal to a dubious type of “rationality.” Nevertheless, this position will generally continue to be taken with regard to psychical research as long as it is believed that “the great weight of our fully attested knowledge of [humanity’s] origin and constitution makes paranormal capacities extremely unlikely.”

Are there other types of what Whitehead calls “instances of non-sensuous perception”? In raising this issue, Whitehead, in fact, primarily had in mind not experiences such as telepathy, but issues that are more closely related to the concerns of most philosophers. In particular, he had in mind what is usually called the problem of our “knowledge of the external world.” This is one of the other areas in which the premises of modern philosophy have led it to rest content with antirational positions.

The premises in question here are that our only possible source of information about the world beyond our own experience is sensory perception, and that sensory perception gives us nothing but sense-data. Given these premises, it is hard to see how we could escape solipsism, the doctrine that we have no knowledge that a world beyond our own experience exists. Descartes appealed to the goodness of God for the assurance that our sense-data really do represent a real world beyond themselves. Whitehead sums up the attitude of most subsequent philosophers in saying that this “pious dependence upon God... is a
device very repugnant to a consistent rationality. The very possibility of knowledge should not be an accident of God's goodness. . . . After all, God's knowledge has equally to be explained.\textsuperscript{56}

But without this irrational appeal to God, what is our escape from theoretical solipsism? Hume said that there was none, that we had to be content with a radical bifurcation between theory and practice. In practice, we assume that a real world exists, although in our philosophical theory we realize that there is no justification for this belief. This is a prime example of what Whitehead means by the antirationality of modern philosophy, its contentment with an admittedly inadequate theory. He argues, to the contrary:

Whatever is found in 'practice' must lie within the scope of the metaphysical description. When the description fails to include the 'practice,' the metaphysics is inadequate and requires revision. There can be no appeal to practice to supplement metaphysics, so long as we remain contented with our metaphysical doctrines.\textsuperscript{57}

Most modern philosophers, of course, have not remained contented with Hume's dichotomy between theory and practice, at least on this point. They have sought to find a way to justify the assumption—everybody's assumption in practice—of the existence of a real world, by showing how the inference from sense-data to a real world could be justified. But to show how this inference is justified has proved extremely difficult, to say the least.

At the root of these attempts has usually been the claim that sense-data are given to experience, or at least that there is a given element in sensory perception. This claim has been made, for example, by C. I. Lewis, H. H. Price, and Roderick Chisholm, three of the best-known defenders of what has come to be called "foundationalism." All of these philosophers make their claim about givenness in terms of the sense-data provided by sensory perception. For example, H. H. Price's chief example in his chapter entitled "The Given" is the visual perception of a tomato. What is said to be given, of course, is not the tomato in its actuality, but only certain sensory data, such as redness and roundness.\textsuperscript{58} C. I. Lewis' position, which has been called "sensory foundationalism,"\textsuperscript{59} is based on the idea that sensory perception includes a noninterpreted element in experience that is simply given. In articulating his foundationalism, Lewis says: "Our empirical knowledge rises as a structure of enormous complexity . . . all [parts] of which rest, at bottom, on direct findings of sense."\textsuperscript{60} And Roderick Chisholm equates our apprehension of the "given" with our apprehension of "appearances," which he uses interchangeably with "sensations," "sense-impressions," "sensa," and "phenomena."\textsuperscript{61} As examples of objects that are given in sensory perception, Chisholm mentions sensa such as blue, noise, hot, and bitter.\textsuperscript{62} The case for givenness, then, by its most-dis-
cussed advocates, has been made in terms of sensory perception.

But, as is well known, Wilfrid Sellers has argued cogently that this idea of a given element in sensory data is a "myth," that sense-data are *constructed* by the perceiver, not passively received.\(^63\) This claim has been a central plank in the extreme antifoundationalism that is central to deconstructive postmodern philosophy. The claim that nothing is given in sensory experience is taken—on the basis of the identification of perception with sensory perception—to mean that nothing is given to experience *as such*.

But if nothing is given, then all our beliefs about the world are arbitrary, and the very idea that there is a reality beyond ourselves to which our ideas could somehow correspond is groundless. As C. I. Lewis said in an oft-quoted statement: "If there be no datum given to the mind, then knowledge must be contentless and arbitrary; there would be nothing which it must be true to."\(^64\) H.H. Price spoke similarly of the need to affirm "data *simpliciter* [in distinction from data *secundum quid*] which is not the result of any previous intellectual process."\(^65\) But, although these statements by Lewis and Price make good sense, the acceptance of the sensationist view of perception vitiates their attempt to back them up. Besides the fact that their claim that sense-data are *simply given* to experience seems false, their endorsement of the sense-datum theory of givenness means that *actualities* beyond the present experience are not even *claimed* to be given.

Some defenders of a given element in sensory experience, however, reject the sense-datum theory of givenness, saying instead that the outer (extra-somatic) world is directly given in sensory perception. A particularly good statement of the case for this direct realism is provided by Peter Strawson. In a critique of A. J. Ayer, he says that it is inappropriate to speak of the realist commonsense view of the world as (merely) "a theory with respect to the immediate data of perception."\(^66\) Rather, the immediate data *include* the reality of the world: "Mature sensible experience (in general) presents itself as . . . an immediate consciousness of the existence of things outside us." Accordingly, "the ordinary human commitment to a conceptual scheme of a realist character is . . . something given with the given."\(^67\) Besides appealing to our own experience, Strawson points out that no one can consistently reject a realist view. In speaking of "the grip that common-sense non-representative realism has on our ordinary thinking," he says:

> It is a view of the world which so thoroughly permeates our consciousness that even those who are intellectually convinced of its falsity remain subject to its power. [John] Mackie admits as much, saying that even when we are trying to entertain a Lockian or scientific realism, 'our language and our natural ways of thinking keep pulling us back' to a more primitive view."\(^68\)
We seem to be at an impasse, as there seems to be important truth on both sides of the issue. On the one hand, there are good reasons to believe, from what we all presuppose in practice (that a real world exists, that its reality is given to us in perception, and that our ideas are true to the extent that they correspond to this world), that perception must include an element that is given. On the other hand, there are good reasons to believe that sense-data are constructed by the perceiver. Michael Williams provides a concise statement of this latter point and the skeptical conclusion: “Evidence from the psychology of perception all points to there being no such thing as a state of sensuous apprehension utterly unaffected by beliefs, desires, and expectations and consequently no experience of the given as such.”

Is it possible to move beyond this impasse?

The way beyond, Whitehead suggests, is to see that sensory perception is not our primary mode of perceiving the world beyond ourselves. There is a more basic mode, a nonsensory mode, which he calls “perception in the mode of causal efficacy,” through which we directly “prehend” other actual things as actual and causally efficacious for us. Sense-perception is based upon, or includes—one can put it either way—this nonsensory mode of perception. On this basis, we can fully admit—indeed, insist upon—the constructed character of sense-data, without concluding that nothing is given to perceptual experience as such. The data of perception as such are not limited to sense-data, such as colors and shapes, but include actual entities and their causally efficacious power for our perception. On this basis, we can do justice to what Charles Peirce called “secondness,” meaning actual existence with its forcibleness, and can thereby overcome what Whitehead called the greatest weakness of modern philosophy: its failure to do justice to what William James called “stubborn fact.”

We can thereby explain what Strawson describes as our “assumption of a general causal dependence of our perceptual experiences on the independently existing things we take them to be of.” We can, that is, agree with the direct realists, who have insisted that in perception we directly apprehend other actual things beyond our own experience, while agreeing with phenomenologists that sensory perception in providing us with sense-data does not give us this direct apprehension. We can do this, again, either by saying that sensory perception is based upon a more primitive mode of perception in which that direct apprehension occurs, or by saying that sensory perception is a mixed mode of perception comprised of two pure modes, one of which provides (constructed) sense-data and the other of which provides (given) causally efficacious actualities. In either case, perception as such, in its wholeness, provides a direct apprehension of actualities beyond our present experience.

Constructive postmodern philosophy thus provides a version of givenness that has been widely ignored by advocates and critics of givenness alike. J. J. Ross pointed out in 1970, in *The Appeal to the Given*, that “contemporary discussions of ‘the given’ fail to take into consideration the fact that there are at