

On Value and Values in later Whitehead

(Or – Where did all the eternal objects go?)

Michael Halewood – University of Essex.

Introduction

In order to compare *Process and Reality* with Whitehead's later works so as to suggest that *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought* complete his metaphysics would seem to require, as a starting point, some kind of a summary of this bold cosmological vision. I intend to duck this task and instead to come at the problem from an angle. As a result, I will focus on a limited range of concepts and, more selfishly, I will frame the questions in such a way as to respond to that area of thought which I am most interested in, and about which I am supposed to know the most – namely social theory, or sociological theory. Clearly, this is not the place to discuss the niceties of the distinctions between social theory and sociological theory. Nor is it the place to discuss the different conceptions of sociology that persist within the UK, USA, and in Europe. Instead, for me, one of the earliest and continuing problems of social theory is that of the status of value. This is often rendered in terms of the fact-value distinction – and to put it at its most basic the position is as follows: science deals with facts, the humanities with values, social theory has to decide whose side it wants to be on. This would seem to be an example of Whitehead's bifurcation of nature and so the question becomes, how far can Whitehead's work help us in thinking through or beyond this specific problem? It is in these terms that I wish to re-approach the question of value within Whitehead, more specifically in the promotion and then subsequent disappearance of eternal objects between *Process and Reality* and his later works. Before proceeding to this analysis, and so that any eventual conclusions will be as meaty as possible, I will start by putting some flesh on the bones of the fact-value problem as envisaged within social theory.

Fraser (2006) has addressed some of the history of the fact-value distinction and its importance to the development of modernity and of science. There are many and varied aspects of such a modernity, most of which involve some notion of separation: the natural world from the cultural world; reality from fiction; truth from falsehood or, more interestingly, artifice. However, generally, within sociology the rather complex theoretical status and development of the tension between fact and value has often been somewhat forgotten if not over-simplified.

However, in order to reappraise the dichotomy of fact and value which now lies as a forgotten but operative dualism throughout sociology, some historical and philosophical work is necessary so as to both situate the analysis and to later enable Whitehead's work to act as a response to question and problem of the status of fact and value.

An overly brief history of value

At the risk of being over-schematic, it is perhaps possible to suggest that within Greek philosophy value was real and although separate from fact was not defined in opposition to it. For Plato, value, insofar as it resided in the Forms, preceded fact; these forms made sense on their own terms and so they had their own value, indeed they were value. The separate reality of value is also true of Aristotle's notion of value as virtue. For him, the virtues themselves were not generated from within humans but were that which was aimed at by humans to make humans all that they could possibly be (and as 'happy', in the sense of *eudaimon*, as they could be) – it is in this way that the virtues had value. In this way, values, in the sense of virtues, were examples of “that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else” (Aristotle, 1954: 11 - Book 1 Chapter 7) and were separate from humans. Values were not seen as creations of, or elements of humans as

“Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.” (Aristotle, 1954: 28 – Book 2. Chapter 1). As will be seen, there is much that Whitehead borrows, remoulds, rejects, and returns to within these two approaches. However, the context that he is writing in is not Greek but that modern, post-Kant world where fact and value have become specifically separate in that they are now resolutely opposed. At the same time, there are some nuances and subtleties to the development of this neo-Kantian or post-Kantian distinction that are worth dwelling upon before turning to Whitehead on value.

Neo-Kantians and The Problem of History

According to Oakes (1986) it was the 19th century German historiographer Windelband (1848-1915) who posited the problem of value and the study of history as in need of clarification in light of Kant’s critiques. In contradistinction to the axiological approach of Plato and Aristotle where values inhabit a specific realm or kind of reality, the problem of value for the modern West was located in the need to identify and explain the very individuality of the value of each specific phenomenon. And this modernity is specifically Christian. “The Christian idea that values can be ascribed only to individual phenomenon has its origin in the conception of the Creation, the Fall, and the events of the life of Christ as unique events endowed with unprecedented significance” (Oakes, 1986: ix). In this sense, value comes precisely from the uniqueness and unrepeatability of a phenomenon rather than its being a particular example of a more general case or class. More generally, this bled into the notion that the role of history is to identify and explain the very particularity, meaning and value of specific historical events rather than to explain different events as mere examples of a more general term, form or value (such as revolution, democratisation, decline, or decadence). In this way individuality became the bearer of value as opposed to the Greek conception of value as inhabiting its own realm or logical arena.

The neo-Kantian aspect of this derives from the manner in which Rickert (1863-1936) took up Windelband's proposed approach to historiography. For Rickert sees both the problem and the solution in terms of the distinction and relation of concept and reality. For Rickert, concepts are prerequisites for knowledge - but unlike Plato's they are not ideas or images of reality – rather concepts “recast and transform reality in such a way that its complexity is reduced” (Oakes, 1986: xx). Hence, the knowledge which natural science produces is an abstraction which moves from individual phenomenon to the laws which explain such events and then wider and wider (more and more abstract) so that the individual details and phenomena become less and less important as the laws which explain them become more and more general and more and more ‘scientific’. In this way science “brackets the unique and nonrepeateable properties of reality” (Oakes, 1986: xxi) – and is less and less concerned with matters of perception and, in this sense, is more and more divorced from reality (that is, from reality thought of as an empirical experiential realm). History, however, *is* interested in the peculiarities of concrete, perceptual reality. It selects those elements of reality which are important to, or relate to, our theoretical values and therefore point up the latter and differerentiate them from the mere inessential elements of that individual reality.

In order to substantiate such selection Rickert makes a distinction between ‘individuality’ and ‘in-dividuality’ – the former is the boring version where that entity could be replaced by any entity (one piece of coal is as good as another) – there is nothing unique about it. This is as opposed to the individuality of say a diamond in a ring – which has in-dividuality. However, not everything can have such level of specificity or value – for this would make action impossible – we would be over-acting! – there would be no meaning. To put it another way, if there were only individuals then there would be no perception – just a flow of either concepts or experience. So, he argues there must be real historical individuals and we must be able to know them. That which distinguishes in-

dividuals is their value, necessarily. On this view, knowledge comes from concepts, concepts themselves are not derived from reality rather reality is recast through concepts. Hence reality-as-it-is is not open to rationality – it is therefore ‘irrational’. This is referred to as the *hiatus irraionalis* which precludes any direct correlation of appearance and reality – of reality and truth. Because reality is irrational – it cannot be given *in toto*. “The domain of values is not existence but validity. Therefore existence or non-existence cannot be ascribed to values; only validity or invalidity can. This is because values are ideal, not real” (Oakes, 1986: xviii).

This is, according to these neo-Kantians, the legacy of Kant’s epistemology when applied to the analysis of value and meaning. Concept formation is a logical relation and construction of reality whereby values are lifted out from the physical world and the philosophical world and firmly planted a strange domain of validity (and not existence) where they seem to occupy the role of defining the specificity of human experience.

Dilthey

Another, distinct, post-Kantian attempt to account for values was made in the *Lebensphilosophie* of Dilthey (1831-1911) which also had a direct influence on sociology and social theory. In response to the problem of the status of history, and value and meaning, he argued that in addition to Kant’s categories (which furnish us with scientific knowledge), more categories (in the Kantian sense) are needed for a full understanding humans, history and life. Dilthey’s categories include – ‘of part and whole’, ‘of means and end’, ‘of power’, ‘ of value’. “While Kant’s categories provide us with the means of knowing the physical world, Dilthey’s enable us to grasp the meaning in human life. Things become meaningful to us because we see them as parts of a whole, goals we desire or means for achieving them, physical manifestations of mental states, products of human efforts, or sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. *What* they mean is, of

course, a matter of empirical investigation” (Rickman, 1976: 17). So, Dilthey argues that the categories which constitute knowledge are not fixed and can change. Unlike Kant’s they are not strictly *a priori* and indeed they can be accessed via experience – and constituted (changed) via human experience. “We interact with the physical world because we are physical creatures, evaluate things because we have feelings and purposes, understand history because we are ourselves historical beings and we are able to understand the expressions of others because we produce them ourselves” (Rickman, 1976: 21). For Dilthey, the need is to develop categories of understanding (in the Kantian sense of category) that will enable us to develop historical knowledge and grasp the meaning in human life. So, he argued that there are 2 types of explanations. On the one hand science explains particulars as instances of general laws. On the other, there is *understanding*. The method which enables such understanding is that of ‘Hermeneutics’ – the treatment and interpretation of history and social life as if it were a text where wholes and parts are inter-dependent. Both are needed for understanding and interpretation is needed to understand fully. Hence understanding as *Verstehen* – as empathetic understanding - and as a legitimate source of knowledge become the basis for the social and human sciences (Dilthey, 1976: 226-8, 260). The study of value through understanding becomes the cornerstone of social theory. But in order to accomplish this, social theory has dislocated value from their Greek heights and reduced them to mere creations of human subjectivity.

That is to say, both Rickert and Dilthey both seem to assume that humans are value giving entities. That is, it is just a part of being human that we assign values and act on them. This thereby limits value to the realm of humans, and to being creations of humans. As will be seen, Whitehead attempts to construct a system which enables a wider conception of value.

Marx

Marx does not see value in neo-Kantian terms and, as Karatani (2005) has argued, Marx's approach to value has been much misunderstood. Throughout his work he attempted to explain how value comes to be in capitalist society. Rather than simply assume that humans are value-giving and value-following (as Rickert and Dilthey seem to), Marx starts with the cold 'facts' of political economy and contemporary social organization, of reality as it is. However, he argues that a full understanding of such a reality *requires* the ability to see the role of value within this reality and within the physical creation of commodities. Hence, the importance of labour, labour value, surplus value etc. This value may seem to be posited in terms of value in terms of worth (that is, in terms of 'price'). But this is only one aspect of Marx's account. Marx is also concerned with uncovering the inherence of value in the objects of the contemporary world (commodities). As opposed to the neo-Kantians, Marx is concerned with the *creation* of value. And, as Karatani (2005: 223ff.) insists this involves not just a simple economic question or concern. It an investigation into how the *form of value* comes to be and is promulgated. It also posits the possibility that **more** value may be created; hence value is not involved in a zero sum game of morality but is an exemplum of the possibility of an enlargement of value. My feeling is that Whitehead's work on facticity and value might help illuminate aspects of Marx but there is not space here to follow these thoughts through here. For the moment, I am simply indicating some of the ways in which value has been conceptualised within social theory.¹ Indeed, it is not my intention here to assess the relative worth of any of the above debates. Rather it is to point out their centrality to the theory and

1 . My analysis here is in tension with the more 'humanist' aspects of Marx which describes the moral 'values' of exploitation and alienation, and I think it preferable to subsume these as descriptions within the wider form of the creation of value. That is to say, Marx cannot really explain why exploitation or alienation is bad. For the value lies elsewhere. I am aware that I am straining Marx here, conflating and deliberately mis-representing (and mis-understanding?) his work so as to prioritise his discussion of value form. This is not to emphasize the economic aspect of Marx or of value. Indeed the aim is the opposite, that is to rescue Marx from over-simplistic readings which see his notion of value as limited to expressing dissatisfaction with capitalism.

practice of the instantiation of modern sociology. That is to say, the problematisation of the relationship of fact and value is one which accompanied the rise of sociology as a discipline and continues to do so today, even if this distinction is either forgotten, ignored, seen as trivial, or as of little interest, and is to be reduced to a lecture on a core course in the second year for undergraduates but not to be taken too seriously after that. My contention is not so much that the fact-value distinction is a condition of possibility of sociology, but that historically speaking it is an essential factor in how it came to be what it is today (I am being Foucauldian rather than Kantian). The problem is not to establish the truth of the matter; to judge which position is correct. Nor is it simply to reconcile fact and value. Rather, it is to re-think and re-approach the whole question.

And I will argue that this is what Whitehead does throughout his work and that different approaches and stances to the question of value can be located throughout his later metaphysics, indeed from *Process and Reality*, to *Modes of Thought*.

Eternal Objects and Value in *Process and Reality*

Whilst it is well-known that Whitehead envisages *Process and Reality* as a return to "pre-Kantian modes of thought" (Whitehead, 1978: xi), this statement is not generally considered in terms of a return to pre-neo-Kantian modes of thought in terms of the fact-value distinction as discussed previously. However, I will argue that to view *Process and Reality* in such a way sheds new light on Whitehead's outlook. The first thing to notice is that the term "value" appears (according to the index) only four times in *Process and Reality* (Whitehead, 1978: 84, 104, 185, 228). On the first two occasions it is actually the word "values" that occurs and is presented by Whitehead in single inverted commas to signal that he is not directly affirming the sense of the word at that point. The third use is

synonymous with that of the term 'worth' ('price') and it is only on the last occasion that the term has any of the sense of quality which tinges those discussions which like to separate that term from the bare world of facts. Despite this lack of reference to value, there are many references to valuation throughout the text. And, it would clearly be a fundamental error to maintain that Whitehead's cosmology was not interested in accounting for value in some sense of quality and worth (the latter not indicating price). Indeed, I would argue that it is precisely because of his desire to account for the very inherence of value, in the widest sense, that Whitehead does not use the term in *Process and Reality*. On the one hand, Whitehead is clear that he wants to avoid the problems associated with following Plato in separating off a static realm of value, from which present imperfect reality is derived. "Plato found his permanences in a static, spiritual heaven, and his flux in the entanglement of his forms amid the fluid imperfections of the physical world" (Whitehead, 1978: 209). Rather, Whitehead wants the process to be the reality. But, note that Whitehead also wants to argue against the neo-Kantian position (as also evidenced in various forms of realism) where concept and reality are seen as separate so that facticity falls under the purview of science and value becomes limited to being at best a epi-phenomenal realm fabricated by and for humans or, at worst, a subjective creation of individual humans which merely expresses unfounded sentiment and holds back science. For Whitehead, value and facticity must not be shorn apart. Indeed accounting for their co-habitation is one of the major tasks he sets himself. How to account for a non-deterministic process wherein stubborn fact is both an attainment and a ground for novelty and where experience is constitutive of subjectivity and objectivity. This is the role of value in Whitehead's universe. And in order to account for it he has to explain it, not simply label it as 'value'. Hence he introduces his eternal objects.

What is an eternal object?

This will be very difficult to answer, given that Whitehead makes it clear that “eternal objects tell no tales as to their ingressions.”² So, in one sense, this question is impossible to answer, in that eternal objects are never encountered on their own but only as aspects of those occasions in which they find ingression into a particular entity; and, to make matters worse, actual entities themselves are never encountered as such. That eternal objects do not exist in their own terms or in a separate realm, but only in the moments that they ingress into an actual entity may distinguish them from Plato’s static forms but it also makes them nigh on impossible to indicate in language (in the sense of pointing to them, giving examples of them). This is why, although Whitehead does not state this quite so plainly, he would seem to hold that it is not possible to define or give names to eternal objects (and hence value). When he does try to give examples, he either quotes someone else (usually Locke), refers to colours, or alludes to the role of poetry.

The occasion on which Whitehead comes closest to a definition of them, is through a discussion of Locke’s philosophy:

“These ‘eternal objects’ are Locke’s ideas as explained in his *Essay (II, I, 1)* where he writes: *Idea is the object of thinking*. – Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks, and that which his mind is applied about, whilst thinking, being the ideas that are there, it is past doubt that men have in their mind several ideas, such as are those expressed by the words, ‘whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness,’ and others.” (Whitehead, 1978: 52).

Whitehead does not stop to analyse or explain this passage, he seems to take it as self-explanatory and simply moves on to a discussion of how Locke’s work can help explain his notion of nexus. This leaves a rather peculiar feeling that ‘man’ and ‘elephant’ and ‘drunkenness’ are eternal objects! It is clear from the rest of *Process and Reality* that Whitehead does not intend this to be the case. It

² Whitehead, 1978, p. 256

simply indicates his reluctance (indeed inability) to name eternal objects but his desire to elucidate nevertheless.³

I am certainly not saying that throughout *Process and Reality* Whitehead does not make it clear as to the role, purpose, status, manner of inter-relation of eternal objects. They have various roles. Eternal objects are 'logical variables' which underpin the whole notion of process: "each sensum shares the characteristic common to all eternal objects, that it introduces the notion of the **logical variable**, in both forms, the unselective 'any' and the selective 'some'" (Whitehead, 1978: 114. Emphasis added). Eternal objects as *sensa* thereby perform the role of guaranteeing, at a metaphysical level, the principle of process, via the notion of potentiality (and hence value), within a general system of becoming punctuated by divergent moments of individual subjects. It is this sense that they are 'logical' rather than actual. This is not to say that they do not occur, rather that they are never encountered.⁴

Eternal objects also grant definiteness to an entity by enabling pure potentiality to be actualized on given occasions (eg. Whitehead, 1978: 149). And importantly they express the dipolarity of existence (eg. Whitehead, 1978: 239):

3 Another intriguing 'example' of an eternal object which I find difficult comes in a discussion of Descartes where he says: "each time he pronounces 'I am, I exist,' the actual occasion, which is the ego, is different; and the 'he' which is common to the two egos is an eternal object or, alternatively, the nexus of successive occasions." Whitehead, 1978: 75.

4 There is also a crucial distinction between eternal objects considered as *sensa* and complex eternal objects are linked with some notion of sense-data through their relations with conceptual feelings. More complex eternal objects are referred to by Whitehead as 'relational': "qualities, such as colours, sounds, bodily feelings, tastes, smells, together with the perspectives introduced by extensive relationships, are the relational eternal objects" (Whitehead, 1978: 61). The distance of such definitions from any kind of 'thing' is furthered in that the terms 'senum' and 'sensa' are intended by Whitehead precisely to differentiate them from the notion of sense-perception (as in his own examples of colours, as given above). Even more complex eternal objects, and more complex relations between them are to be found in Whitehead's account of propositions (especially in Whitehead, 1978: 184-208, 256-265).

Thus an actual entity is essentially dipolar, with its physical and mental poles; **and even the physical world cannot be properly understood without reference to its other side, which is the complex of mental operations.** The primary mental operations are conceptual feelings. (Whitehead, 1978: 239. Emphasis added).

As opposed to the neo-Kantian separation of concept from irrational reality and the subsequent relegation of value to a mere consequence of the human mind, Whitehead allows conceptuality to suffuse existence. This is a crucial aspect of eternal objects. “A conceptual feeling is feeling an eternal object” (Whitehead, 1978: 239). The mental and the physical are two aspects of the concrescence and the existence of a material entity. So, concepts do not find their origin in thinking; concepts are that element of the exterior (public) realm which constitutes the definiteness of an individual. “An eternal object considered in reference to the privacy of things...constitutes an element in the private definiteness of that actuality. It refers itself publicly; but it is enjoyed privately” (Whitehead, 1978: 290). In this way Whitehead avoids the *hiatus irrationalis* between reality and concept because the conceptual is an integral aspect of reality. Admittedly, this is a very different definition or notion of the concept and the conceptual from that of Kant (or of many others). And I am not wishing to assert that this is a simple answer to the question of conceptuality (as the term is usually understood) in the work of Whitehead. Indeed many of the later sections of *Process and Reality* are taken up in elaborating his account of thought, abstraction, the role of propositions, and the status of consciousness. However, this is not of direct concern here. What is important at the moment is that Whitehead insists that conceptuality and potentiality are integral elements of all existence. That is to say, valuation and value are integral, indeed essential aspects of all existence. To attempt to separate fact from value is to rip reality apart. Now, this may be possible, indeed desirable on occasions, in order to produce worthwhile or interesting abstractions. But to assert that fact and value are separate in existence, or inhabit separate realms is to make a rather serious error. To sum up, eternal objects, though unnameable, for Whitehead, express how value is inherent in actuality. They are a vital aspect of his philosophy of organism, of his metaphysics.

So, why does he not mention them again in *Adventures of Ideas*, or *Modes of Thought*, when he does retain very similar terminology for other crucial aspects of his work (such as actual occasions)? One simple answer might be that he found that the very term itself had been unhelpful for readers.

“There is one point as to which you - and everyone - misconstrue me - obviously my usual faults of exposition are to blame. I mean my doctrine of *eternal objects*. It is an endeavour to get beyond the absurd simple-mindedness of the traditional treatment of Universals.⁵ (written on Jan 2nd 1936)

However, I will argue in this paper that Whitehead felt that the problem of the unnameability of eternal objects in his speculative system was not, ultimately, an adequate response to the needs of the world and of actuality as a contemporary and a historical realm. He needed to do more work to substantiate his claim that philosophy must explain everything. “Philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of the world – the fairies dance, and Christ is nailed to the cross” (Whitehead, 1978: 338). Despite the unnameability of eternal objects, there is still a requirement to describe how value operates and has operated in the world (historically speaking). It is to this that he turns in his ‘sociology’ at the beginning of *Adventures of Ideas*.

Whitehead’s Sociology

On a first reading, the opening section of *Adventures of Ideas* was, for me, frankly, disappointing. I felt that Whitehead had somehow strayed into the area of sociology and deployed his philosophical approach rather carelessly. I was, of course, wrong. This is not to say that I am now enamoured of this element of this text. But I certainly see its place within his work. That is to say, if *Process and Reality* has systematically outlined the philosophical case for a universe being comprised of the facticity of value and the value of facticity, Whitehead is aware that this is just the first, abstract step. What is now required is an account of

⁵ Whitehead, from a letter to Charles Hartsthorne, cited in Kline, 1963, p. 199

precisely how such potentiality and facticity have played themselves out. This is what he means by 'sociology' in this text. And, it is perhaps telling that he chose to call this text *Adventures of Ideas*, for, in many respects, in contradistinction to *Process and Reality*, there is a definite focus on the role, status, and activity of ideas within it. That is to say, now that Whitehead has completed his abstract systematization in which value was unnameable, he now goes about, with zeal, the outline of how value has actually operated and, toward the end of the text, how value might proceed. In this respect, *Adventures of Ideas* would seem to represent Whitehead at his most Platonic.

Adventures of Ideas is clearly not a repudiation of *Process and Reality*. As stated above, it is an attempt to put flesh on the bones of his systematic speculative philosophy and to account for the development and production of changing ways of living, being and thinking. In order to do this, Whitehead differentiates between "senseless agencies" and "intellectual agencies".

"Steam and Barbarians, each in their own age, were the senseless agencies driving their respective civilizations away from inherited modes of order" (Whitehead, 1933: 6).

"The intellectual agencies involved in the modification of epochs are the proper subject of this book" (Whitehead, 1933: 13).

In this way Whitehead attempts to account for the introduction of novelty into history, into the social world, through the introduction of two kinds of agency. One is 'physical', although not in the usual sense of the term (Steam and Barbarians) in that they enable or compel new forms of technology, response to external stimulus and so on, which are direct and immediate. The other is conceptual but again in the more Whiteheadian sense, in that they are not simply ideal. But they do have to do with the creation, transmission and influence of ideas. Ideas certainly have agency and effectivity for Whitehead here. Indeed, they have adventures. But there is always a good dose of materiality or even Marx to counter any attempt to liberate ideas, concepts, or values from their production in activity and practicality ("We have been considering the emergence

of ideas from activities, and the effect of ideas in modifying the activities from which they emerge” (Whitehead, 1933: 127) and “practice precedes thought; and thought is mainly concerned with the justification or the modification of a pre-existing situation” (Whitehead, 1933: 140).

So, I am not arguing that Whitehead, in this text, has gone over to the dark side of idealism. It is clear that physical purpose and prehensions still hold sway. But there is a shift in his account of that which enables there to be a difference between the mere physical and the mere conceptual. That is to say, as discussed above, whilst he does not want the realms of fact and value to be distinct he certainly does not want to reduce one to the other. In *Process and Reality*, it is God’s one-off conceptual valuation “infinite” in Spinoza’s sense....[which is] an inescapable condition characterizing creative action” (Whitehead, 1978: 247). But, at the same time, he is clear that “God....does not create eternal objects; for his nature requires them in the same degree that they require him” (Whitehead, 1978: 257). In *Adventures of Ideas*, this role is explicitly given to Eros: “the valuations involved in the Primordial Nature of God, here also termed the Eros of the universe” (Whitehead, 1933: 326), “Eros...which endows with agency all ideal possibilities” (Whitehead, 1933: 270). In one sense this Eros is no more than another expression of the innate creativity which characterises all existence in *Process and Reality*, but in this text there is more of Spinoza’s conatus about it. There is more of an urgency, more of a striving . But there does also seem to be a different slant to the term as deployed here; a definite Platonic stance. Not only is it, after all, one of the seven factors which Whitehead borrows from Plato and the inter-weaving of which he claims “All philosophical systems are endeavours to express” (Whitehead, 1933: 203) – the others being The Ideas, The Physical Elements, The Psyche, The Harmony, The Mathematical Relations, The Receptacle. But, perhaps the ultimate question that Whitehead wants to answer is posed in terms of this Eros, namely: “we have to ask whether nature does not contain within itself a tendency to be in tune, an Eros towards perfection” (Whitehead, 1933: 323). Or, to put it another

way, does the universe, does existence have a purpose? And here, Whitehead wants to answer yes.

In this way, the question and status of value has shifted with *Adventures of Ideas*. Having completed the difficult philosophical task in *Process and Reality*, of outlining the actuality of potentiality and the potentiality of actuality, and thereby placing value at the centre of all existence, he uses this text to provide a history of the development of such values. In the first section (Sociology) this traces the development of Western 'civilization'. In the final section he addresses the possibility that values, whilst not inhabiting a prior, separate realm, may come about, may be created. There is a feeling within this text that Whitehead wants to invert the historicity of Plato's forms. That is to say, values will come to exist, subsequent to their creation as a result of the actualizations of the universe as an on-going process. In this way, the universe has a purpose, a genuine teleology. This purpose is not the maintaining or passing on of value (the vector character of feeling which dominates *Process and Reality*) but creation of a more 'harmonised' value, which Whitehead appears to maintain is, in and of itself, more valuable.

This Platonic stamp is evident throughout *Adventures of Ideas*. For example, in Part 1 and especially in Chapter V's title 'From Force to Persuasion': "The creation of the world – said Plato – is the victory of persuasion over force. The worth of men consists in their liability to persuasion. They can persuade and be persuaded by the disclosure of alternatives, the better and the worse" (Whitehead, 1933: 105). This would seem to sit well with Whitehead's previous insistence on eternal objects and propositions as having the role of presenting potentiality in terms of alternatives and real possibilities. But, there also seems to be a much more traditionally Platonic aspect of *Adventures of Ideas*, perhaps best summed up as follows:

"After all, societies of primates, of animals, of life on the earth's surface, are transient details. There is a freedom lying beyond circumstance, derived from the direct intuition that life can be

grounded upon its absorption in what is changeless amid change. This is the freedom at which Plato was groping” (Whitehead, 1933: 86).

Here, there is a definite attempt to outline, to name, a value, that value, *the* value which is beyond the mere facticity of the contemporary (physical) social world. This search for and willingness to name values which are beyond our immediate experience is distinct from the approach to value exhibited in *Process and Reality* and takes up the final section of *Adventures of Ideas*..

It is that in the final section of *Adventures of Ideas*, titled ‘Civilization’ that Whitehead strives to put a concrete name to some values beyond those which he believes characterize contemporary civilization and as detailed in Part 1 (some of which are: freedom, persuasion, christianity). I will not provide an exhaustive account or evaluation of all these terms. Rather, my discussion is aimed at outlining the main aim and the main difficulty of Whitehead in this section. So, “a society is to be termed civilized whose members participate in the five qualities – Truth, Beauty, Adventure, Art, Peace” (Whitehead, 1933: 367). And ‘definitions’ are offered by Whitehead for at least two of these **qualities**: “Truth is the conformation of Appearance to Reality” (Whitehead, 1933: 309). “Beauty is the mutual adaptation of the several factors in an occasion of experience” (Whitehead, 1933: 324). I will return to Whitehead’s discussion of truth below. For the moment what is to be noted in the definition of beauty is that is an outcome of the physical arrangement; it does not precede the arrangement. It is not a pre-existing category or class. However, “The teleology of the Universe is directed to the production of Beauty. Thus any system of things which in any wide sense is beautiful is to that extent justified in its existence” (Whitehead, 1933: 341). So here Whitehead has invoked the ‘teleology of the universe’ to underpin his definition of beauty. Indeed, it transpires that he needs to invoke another quality namely, harmony, in order to develop this account: “the whole heightens the feelings for the parts, and the parts heighten feelings for the whole, and for each other. This is harmony of feeling; and with harmony of

feeling its objective content is beautiful” (Whitehead, 1933: 344). So, there is a slippage here, as there is throughout this section, with one value being defined in terms of another and each remaining unclear. Indeed, it is here that Whitehead invokes the hermeneutic circle (as did Dilthey) as a mode of explanation of the value of experience. I am perhaps being unfair on Whitehead here, in that he is being consistent with his contention that value does not inhabit a separate, exterior, prior realm, and as such is extremely hard to define, or name. As such, the quality of peace is “hard to define and difficult to speak of” (Whitehead, 1933: 367). Furthermore: “The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a gift” (Whitehead, 1933: 368).

So, why does Whitehead want to shift from the philosophic refusal to name value in *Process and Reality* to an insistence on naming them?

One answer might be that Whitehead was aware that philosophy itself was a limited description and response to the needs of thought, experience, life and the world. That is to say, that history intervenes in our speculations and demands that we respond and attempt to understand. “The crash of the Great War marked its [the 19th century’s] end, and marked the decisive turn of human life into some new direction as yet not fully understood” (Whitehead, 1933: 358); “the misery of the great war was sufficient for any change of epoch” (Whitehead, 1933: 359). Without wishing to personalise the matter, Whitehead’s loss of a son in World War I would have been one factor which sharpened his awareness to the need to account for the technological, social, economic, and political upheavals which surrounded him. In this sense, his attempt to name values is an honest a rigorous response both to the demands of his philosophy and to the demands of the world. However, it is also clear from his philosophy that any such naming will of values will fail. This is what makes the last section of *Adventures of Ideas* so poignant. Whitehead seemed to know that he had set himself a necessary but impossible task. He carried on with it despite knowing he was doomed to fail. Perhaps this is why, he introduces the new terms of Youth and Tragedy in the last lines. Not as final explanations in themselves. But as the final explanation

that there are no final explanations or values. But we must nevertheless strive to describe them. If we do not we will fall back into the passive reception and repetition of vegetal life.

“At the heart of the nature of things, there are always the dream of youth and the harvest of tragedy. The Adventure of the Universe starts with the dream and reaps tragic Beauty....The immediate experience of this Final Fact, with its union of Youth and Tragedy, is the sense of Peace. In this way the World receives its persuasion towards such perfections as are possible for its diverse individual occasions” (Whitehead, 1933: 381).

Yet, to describe *Adventures of Ideas* as a failure, is too strong. And I would like to pick out one of the most interesting advances that is made within the text. And this is the introduction of the other as constitutive in self-identity which mirrors the intense interest that Whitehead displays in the relation of past, present and future in this text.

It will be remembered that Whitehead is clear that eternal objects (which also import value) are concerned with offering variables as alternatives. What is red could have been blue. What is hot could have been cold. In *Adventures of Ideas*, this metaphysical character of value does not disappear but is given a new slant. It becomes a question of the other. Hence: “it belongs to the essence of each occasion of experience that it is concerned with an otherness transcending itself” (Whitehead, 1933: 231). However, perhaps more importantly this also introduces the question of the temporality. “Yet the present occasion while claiming self-identity, while sharing the very nature of the bygone occasion in all its living activities, nevertheless is engaged in modifying it, in adjusting it to *other* influences, in completing it with *other* values, in deflecting it to *other* purposes. The present moment is constituted by the influx of *the other* into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past within the immediacy of the present” (Whitehead, 1933: 233). This may not be a huge metaphysical shift in terms of Whitehead’s philosophy. But this terminological shift is an important

one. For here Whitehead would seem to offer himself a way out of the conundrum that he placed himself in, when trying to name those values which expressed the purpose or teleology of the universe (be it in terms of creativity or Eros). For the introduction of the other into self-constitution is an introduction of the ethical, in that responsibility for being a self, refers to other selves. “Thus its own constitution involves that its own activity in *self*-formation passes into its activity of *other*-formation. It is by reason of the constitution of the present subject that the future will embody the present subject and will re-enact its patterns of activity” (Whitehead, 1933: 248). And it is this necessary implication of the other within the past and future self which is manner, purpose and morality of existence. Hence: “the occasion arises as an effect facing its past and ends as a cause facing its future. In between there lies the teleology of the Universe” (Whitehead, 1933: 249). And here lies its value. I am aware that I have not made a full argument here but have just made some suggestions for what could be seen as the most important development of *Adventures of Ideas*.

In these terms, it could also be argued that *Adventures of Ideas* should not be read as Whitehead’s most Platonic work. But as his most sustained engagement with Kant (in terms of ontology, self-identity, and morality). For, as Whitehead himself remarks toward the end of the text as to the possibility of accounting for teleology can be rendered in terms of a version of truth which counters that of Kant:⁶

“The question for discussion is whether there exists any factor in the Universe constituting a general drive towards the conformation of Appearance to Reality. This drive would then constitute a factor in each occasion persuading an aim at such truth as is proper to the special appearance in question. This concept of truth, proper to each special appearance, would mean

⁶ It should be noted that my discussion of Whitehead, teleology and Kant is building on work and ideas which I have developed from reading Shaviro’s *Beauty Lies in the Eye: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics* and Karatani’s (2005) *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*. However, this is not a replication of their positions, nor would they agree with my points. But I am indebted to their work for the development of my thoughts such as they are.

that the appearance has not built itself up by the inclusion of elements that are foreign to the reality from which it springs. The appearance will then be a generalization and an adaptation of emphasis; but not an importation of qualities and relations without any corresponding exemplification in the reality. This concept of truth is in fact the denial of the doctrine of Appearance which lies on the surface of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*....It is at least the introduction of guarding limitations, which Kant explicitly in that work does not introduce." (Whitehead, 1933: 378).

To sum up this section. If *Process and Reality* is mostly an account of the value ridden character of existence which does not mention value, then *Adventures of Ideas* is an attempt to name those values which have and will characterise human social life. However, technically speaking the un-nameability persisted and what was left was witness to Whitehead's developing insistence on the need for philosophy to explain more than just philosophy. As such, there is a focus on purpose and teleology which interestingly could be developed around a conception of the other of the past and future as involved in the present. However, this is not an other of Hegel, Levinas or Žižek. And there is no annoying dialectic here. The final task is to see if this is the final position of Whitehead's metaphysics or whether *Modes of Thought* offers fresh insights.

Modes of Thought

As opposed to *Process and Reality*, this text commences by claiming that systematisation can only follow from a more basic analysis – what Whitehead terms “assemblage” (Whitehead, 1938: 2). Interestingly, and as opposed to *Adventures of Ideas*, this involves an attempt to outline some values immediately, that is, to start with some general terms which encapsulate the primary factors of experience. “We should appeal to the simple-minded notions issuing from ordinary civilized social relations” (Whitehead, 1938: 17).

The procedure here is different from the naming of historical values and values which are to become. In this instance, Whitehead is simply trying to catch hold of that which, ultimately, matters. In order to accomplish this, Whitehead fixes on the terms Importance, Expression and Understanding.

The breadth of the notion of Importance can be seen in the claim that – “‘morality’, ‘logic’, ‘religion’, ‘art’” are “subordinate species” of Importance (Whitehead, 1938: 16). Importance, as a value is thereby similar to Dilthey’s notion of in-dividuality in that it is what ensures that one thing is fore-grounded as opposed to something else. But Whitehead’s notion is broader than that – it is an attempt not so much to assign value but to emplace value within experience without reducing it to a category.

“Expression...is the activity of finitude impressing itself on the environment” (1938: 28). The salient point here, and one which is returned to throughout *Modes of Thought*, is that the emphasis of this text has shifted from the Platonic seeming sheen of *Adventures of Ideas*, to a focus on the individual. On fact. And such facticity is not limited to objects. Value is not limited to subjects. “Whatever exists, is capable of knowledge in respect to the finitude of its connections with the rest of things” (Whitehead, 1938: 58). There could therefore be various histories and what humans term history is simply “the record of the expressions of feelings peculiar to humanity” (Whitehead, 1938: 37).

However, it is the notion of understanding (which again recalls the work of Dilthey) which is perhaps the most novel or even surprising of these factors, when considered in relation to Whitehead’s previous works. For here he claims that: “self-evidence is understanding” (Whitehead, 1938: 66). It is not proof which causes understanding. Proof may be one way of the ways in which self-evidence is obtained. But it does not have priority. Instead, Whitehead links understanding to self-evidence, with no mediation. “Unless proof has produced self-evidence and thereby rendered itself unnecessary, it has issued in a second-

rate state of mind, producing action devoid of understanding. Self-evidence is the basic fact on which all greatness supports itself. But 'proof' is one of the routes by which self-evidence is often obtained" (Whitehead, 1938: 66). This seems a strange position for Whitehead, as a mathematician, to adopt. But it is clear that he is now (1938) writing post-Gödel. "Today, even Logic itself is struggling with the discovery embodied in a formal proof, that every finite set of premises must indicate notions which are excluded from its direct purview (Whitehead, 1938: 2). Yet philosophy must provide meaningful answers which are more than mere systems or over-elaborate abstractions. Indeed, the point is, for Whitehead, at some level, not to abstract. Hence the task he sets philosophy, and himself in *Modes of Thought* is to provide *one* self-evident truth: "philosophy, in any proper sense of the term, cannot be proved. For proof is based upon abstraction. Philosophy is either self-evident or it is not philosophy. The attempt of any philosophic discourse should be to produce self-evidence" (Whitehead, 1938: 67). So, Whitehead has now shifted his focus to attempt to name that which is obviously valuable. And it is this lack of abstraction, this attention to facticity and the individuality of facticity which permeates *Modes of Thought*. For example: "The potentialities in immediate fact constitute the driving force of process" (Whitehead, 1938: 136-7). And: "Fact includes in its own nature something which is not fact, although it constitutes a realized item within fact. This is the conceptual side of fact. But, as usual, the philosophic tradition is too abstract. There is no such independent item in actuality as 'mere concept'" (Whitehead, 1938: 168). In this manner, *Modes of Thought* does represent a shift away from *Adventures of Ideas* as it seeks to disclose that which is self-evident. This is now the point of philosophy. And it would seem that the kernel of this is the value of value:

"There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise everything experienced would be merely a barren detail in our own solipsist mode of existence. We owe to the sense of Deity the obviousness of the many actualities of the world, and the obviousness of the unity of the world for the preservation of the values realized and for the transition to ideals beyond realized fact" (Whitehead, 1938:

140). What is novel in this approach to Deity is that it is not the Deity which produces, supports or clarifies the world (as with creativity in *Process and Reality* or Eros in *Adventures of Ideas*). But the **sense** of deity. That is to say, the ultimate value is that there is more than just an individual 'I'. There is something beyond us. But this beyond is not the deity, it is not a prior realm of forms, nor is it a realm of forms or values to come. This is a move which resonates with the notion of the other as developed in *Adventures of Ideas*. "We are essentially measuring ourselves in respect to what we are not" (Whitehead, 1938: 141). As opposed to some of the more extravagant claims of phenomenology, the only conclusion that Whitehead can draw from experience is that: "Our enjoyment of actuality is a realization of worth, good or bad. It is a value-experience. Its basic expression is – Have a care, here is something that matters!" (Whitehead, 1938: 159). From the whole edifice of *Process and Reality*, through the historical sweep of *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead finally fixes on his point. "Something matters".

Conclusion

This statement – 'something matters' may seem like a small, indeed a weak point. But it is not. Given the history and influence of the fact-value distinction, as outlined above, which has dogged sociology and social theory, it was never going to be as simple as just declaring that fact and value are not really separate. The bifurcation of nature (as exemplified in the fact-value dualism) cannot be rectified or healed simply by saying it is not so or 'it isn't like that'. In this way, Whitehead's 'something matters' is that moment of condensation of his philosophy to the inclusion of fact to value and value to fact. . As has been alluded to, but not fully discussed in this paper, this might involve some kind of a return to the concept of teleology as purposiveness. But this purposiveness is not based on that which precedes existence and establishes its purpose (Forms or God) or as that ultimate value to which we or the universe aims (communism, peace etc.). Purpose becomes simply that there is something beyond our-selves

as we are now. There is a future and a past and there are other things. This is the value of matter and the matter of value. Such would seem to be the essence of Whitehead's philosophy and it is from these tentative premises that social theory might re-start its approach to a world considered as fact in value and value in fact.⁷

However, to suggest that this was Whitehead's final point would also be in error. If *Modes of Thought* were all that he wrote, I doubt we would be here discussing him today. What I have tried to show in this paper is not so much that Whitehead's metaphysics changes or that new elements are added but nor am I suggesting that *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought* simply restatements of his basic philosophical premises. They are further explorations with different emphases and points of departure. And different conclusions can be drawn from them. I would suggest that these two latter texts provide a more robust, a fuller account of Whitehead's work. And they bear witness to the importance of the concept of value for him. However, they also indicate the very slippery character of the term, in that it as soon as it is posited it seems to lay claim to more than was originally intended. However the importance of value is evident from the manner in which Whitehead re-approached this concept again and again. And he indicates a range of ways in which social theory can re-stake and refine its position on facts and values and develop a more coherent yet politically engaged approach.

To conclude: "The basis of democracy is the common fact of value-experience, as constituting the essential nature of actuality. Everything has some value for itself, for others, and for the whole." (Whitehead, 1938: 151).

⁷ And, as stated earlier, a Whiteheadian reading of Marx could be very fruitful in this respect. Pomeroy (2004) and Kleinbach (1982) have both made important moves in this direction although the former tends towards humanism and the latter focuses on an explanation of the historical development of consciousness.

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Fact and value are not to be seen as distinct, after the event. That is there are not facts first which have value second, or primary values which become effective and hence take on a facticity. Nor is that that there is a realm of fact and a realm of values and us poor humans have to live as dual beings torn between the two (this is one element of Durkheim's Kantian moment when he defines humans as dual). Instead, as Whitehead points out, the event is the outcome of fact and value. It is precisely his elaboration of this position which is involved in his discussion of eternal objects.