CHAPTER TWO

A Universal Mannerism

The theory of events that Whitehead sets out in *The Concept of Nature* allows only for a localized going-beyond of bifurcation. This is why it is unsatisfactory. The decision to stick only with immediate perceptual experience and to reconstruct a concept of nature on this basis has its limits: it requires the rejection of any position on the real, the relations between events in themselves, the plurality of modes of existence in nature, even the sources of knowledge. Even more serious: it runs the risk of only being able to go beyond bifurcation by focusing on one of its branches, namely, secondary qualities. It should be noted that Whitehead does not later contradict the theory of events that he developed in *The Concept of Nature*, but recognizes that it needs to be deployed at a new level, as not just phenomenal but also genuinely metaphysical. It is now a matter of dealing fully with all those questions that *The Concept of Nature* refused to take up: What are the conditions of existence of events beyond perceptual experience? Where are the relations that animate them situated? How are these able to constitute the plurality of the orders of nature and mark themselves out within the domains of physics, biology, and anthropology?

I will start with a proposition that the following pages will attempt to give its full speculative scope. This proposition is first formulated by Whitehead in his magnum opus *Process and Reality*: "Apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare noth-

ingness."[1] This is a rather strange statement, in both its style, so unusual for Whitehead, and its content. Without doubt, it is intended to be radical. Its emphatic character, compelling and repetitive, leads one to believe that when making this pronouncement Whitehead had the feeling that he was introducing a new thought, a tipping point in the field of contemporary philosophy. Why else would he have presented it in this particular way, if he had not felt that it expressed a rupture with those philosophical movements to which he himself had been attached and of which he had been one of the principal agents since the time of *Principia Mathematica*?

However, this proposition has not had the impact that Whitehead envisaged. Most readers of Whitehead, when they have lingered upon it, have paid little attention. How could it be otherwise? Does it not signal a return to a rather outdated philosophical question, the question of subjectivity? Everything in Whitehead's philosophy seems opposed to such a revival: his speculative and metaphysical approach clearly signposted in the first pages of *Process and Reality*, which has the subtitle *An Essay in Cosmology* and whose first chapter is titled "Speculative Philosophy"; the importance of the concept of process whose meanings go well beyond any notion of subjective change; the recurrent, insistent critique of all forms of substantialism (the importance of which has already been partly seen in the previous discussion of scientific materialism); and finally, the very function that Whitehead grants to philosophy, that of an "assemblage" of different modes of existence within nature. Given all this, how could he declare a return to the notion of subjectivity in his most radically antisubjectivist work? Perhaps, it could have become only a limited question, one that treats subjectivity as a particular domain of experience in nature. Thus, Whitehead would have been able to have left a place for subjectivity, alongside the classic questions of cosmology that are taken up within *Process and Reality*, such as the constitution of space-time, the difference between physical and biological existence, and the internal and external relations between the ultimate constituents of reality. This would have posed no problems to the overall coherence of Whitehead's avowedly cosmological project. But this is clearly not the case. The proposition goes much further, and those readers who are accustomed

to the particularly technical style of *Process and Reality* will well know that he was not looking to grant such a place to subjectivity, despite all else, and at the risk of undermining the coherence of his system, but that this problem was inscribed within the cosmological ambition of his project. This has led to a false alternative: either the question of subjectivity is a local one, though the emphatic character of Whitehead's statement clearly does not lead in this direction, or it is to do with something more profound, something that bears upon the very dynamic of this new cosmology and, hence, should be ignored—but at what price?

As a result, the proposition remained dormant. In the following pages, I will try to grant it a more central position, making it a metaphysical hinge for subjects, and I will mobilize the principal concepts to be found in Whitehead's work in order to consolidate it. The reason that this task is important today is not simply to do with a point of interpretation of Whitehead. Although several important readers of Whitehead have been mentioned, this was not to point up their inadequacies but was an attempt to understand the uneasiness that has accompanied this proposition, in order to stress the fact that this proposition cannot be taken for granted. My aim is not to pass judgment on readings of Whitehead's work, nor is it to offer a better way of taking on his thought. My motivation lies elsewhere, as partially outlined in the previous chapter. If bifurcation affects all aspects of the cosmology of the moderns, an alternative will be coherent only if it redistributes all the elements of experience that have been divided and confined to overly specific and constricted domains. Thus, what would happen if primary and secondary qualities, far from being separated, were articulated differently and became the internal aspects of all existence? What experience of nature would we have if all secondary qualities, in the broadest sense—that is to say, colors, sounds, aesthetic tones, gradations of importance, values, ends—were all introduced, on an equal basis, within beings themselves? Does our contemporary experience not force us to quit a purely anthropological paradigm in order to elicit the centers of experience, manners of being, multiple relations that existents have with each other, and which make up a nature that has become essentially plural? What is important, following William

James, is being able to give sense to a nature composed "of personal lives (which may be of any grade of complication, and superhuman or infrahuman as well as human), variously cognitive of each other [. . .], genuinely evolving and changing by effort and trial, and by their interaction and cumulative achievements making up the world."[2] My interest in Whitehead's proposition, which will now be referred to as "the metaphysical principle of subjectivity," should be taken in this context. This proposition could become the first principle in the construction of a speculative scheme whose aim is to give sense to the multiplicity of manners of having an experience, a veritable panexperientialism.

The Metaphysical Principle of Subjectivity

Without doubt, we are, today, in a better position to understand the unease of more attentive readers of Whitehead's work regarding the proposition that we are discussing. The main impression, supported by the context of contemporary philosophy, is that the question of subjectivity necessarily refers, despite all due care being taken, to an anthropological subjectivity with which it has been necessary to break. This is the heart of the problem. Either the notion of subjectivity mobilizes categories such as intentionality, mind, and the capacity to represent, which link it to a theory of principally human faculties, and which cannot be the basis of a more general metaphysics; or it is emptied of all its features but therefore becomes an empty shell that can easily be dispensed with. The metaphysical principle of subjectivity must therefore respond to a double demand: to pertain to all beings, that is, not to exclude any of them, and, at the same time, to be coherent enough for it to make a genuine difference.

Whitehead grants a central component to the notion of subjectivity, one that is able to respond to this double demand: feeling. Before turning to the implications and transformations involved in this concept when it is taken up in a metaphysical context, I will first look at its current usage in order to draw out certain elements whose meaning will be clarified later on. Whitehead uses the word "feeling" as both a noun and a verb, and retains the ambiguity between these usages. Thus, he talks of "sensation," a general sense, a mood, or vague aware-

ness of a situation, that is, the affective tonalities, the act or action by which something is properly felt.[3] Whitehead retains the ambiguity of the word "feeling," as he wants to merge its two aspects. It would be a pure fiction to place sensations and impressions on one side and the manners and tonalities in which they are experienced on the other. When an animal "feels" a danger, when it is alert, can we really separate its individual impressions from the vague sense of dangerousness, of which all its surroundings become an expression? Does each impression not have its own particular hue, according to the general sense that accompanies the situation? But this more general sense has no real modality of its own if it is not linked to ongoing actions, to the "awareness" of other opportunities. Thus, even in its everyday usage, the two meanings of the word "feeling" come together: sense and impressions, the modalities of experience and the data that they convey.

Against all expectations, Whitehead locates the source of his conception of "feeling" in Descartes's *Metaphysical Meditations*: "The word 'feeling,' as used in these lectures [*Process and Reality*], is even more reminiscent of Descartes."[4] For those who hope for a definitive end to, or at least a reduction of, the ambiguities that have been listed above, notably that of the overbearing attachment of the notion of subjectivity to an anthropological project, this reference is somewhat unwelcome. But we should not go too quickly. What exactly is the legacy that Whitehead draws on when he says that it all concerns the question of feeling? How did Descartes describe this notion of feeling? The passage in question is to be found in the second *Meditation* and is to do with appearances:

> I am the same who feels, that is to say, who perceives certain things, as by the organs of sense, since in truth I see light, I hear noise, I feel heat. But it will be said that these phenomena are false and that I am dreaming. Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling [*sentire*]; and used in this precise sense that is no other thing than thinking.[5]

Whitehead provides only a brief commentary on this passage. He writes that "in Cartesian language, the essence of an actual entity [sub-

ject] consists solely in the fact that it is a prehending [feeling] thing."[6] I will now try to provide a possible reading of what Descartes is saying. Two things are worth noting in the context of this thinking about feelings. First, Descartes outlines the certainty of the act of feeling. All may well be illusory with regard to simple appearances or chimeras, but the act itself cannot be an illusion. It has a special status; at each moment this act affirms its own reality for itself, it arises in its own existence, independently of any position regarding the reality of the things that support it. The source of heat and the objects from which visual impressions emanate may well be illusory, pure fantasies or projections, but the act of feeling is incontestable, real for itself, it needs no other justification than its activity. Second, Descartes places feeling on an extremely broad plane: seeing light, hearing a sound, sensing heat, up to the final identification of feeling and thought. Whether it is an ambiguity within the text itself or not, Descartes identifies the act of feeling with thought itself. There is no doubt that Whitehead ultimately wants to take this relation further by highlighting the primacy of feeling over thinking, but the possibility of such an identification is already sufficiently clear for it to be remarked upon. The important point of this unexpected affiliation is that it allows Whitehead to establish feeling as a *constant* activity, which involves *all aspects* of a subject, and whose reality is in the *activity* itself.

This question must now be widened. Descartes's example, even if it highlights the fundamental features of feeling, is too limited. Indeed, it starts from a specific case, a very unusual and particular situation, that of a subject that is in full possession of its resources, capable of conscious reflection on the operations that stimulate it. It is a conscious subject that, in some way, manages to intensify the activities of feeling that stimulate it, such as the sensation of heat, in order to finally say that these feelings are "other than thinking." Is it possible to take up this example in less exceptional, less artificial situations, such as those of completely habitual behavior or where the question of what is being done has no direct relevance, as in the case of Dewey's walker who is only aware of walking when an obstacle arises? The question of feeling needs to be applied to all the features of the subject in Descartes's example, not only the experiences of the senses but also those of a dream,

reflex actions, altered states of consciousness, so that all aspects of a subject are dependent on the logic of feeling. Furthermore, are directly equivalent experiences not to be found in realities of another order, microorganisms and primitive forms of life? If the artificial way in which Descartes presents his example is excluded, then is it not possible to take what he says of feeling and say it of all forms of life? This would constitute the first stage in the construction of what I will call a metaphysics of feeling: the generalization to all forms of life. "But animals, and even vegetables, in low forms of organism exhibit modes of behaviour directed towards self-preservation. There is every indication of a vague feeling of causal relationship with the external world, of some intensity, vaguely defined as to quality, and with some vague definition as to locality."[7]

The Cartesian subject distinguishes itself—especially from primitive forms of life—by the fact that it benefits from multiple centers of experience and a range of modes of perception (vision, hearing, touch) that might well be completely lacking in other living things. These enable the Cartesian subject to identify and locate, more or less clearly, the regions of its experience and, thus, to experience the "sensation of heat" in its hand. The difference between Descartes's thinker and microorganisms, as well as plants, is not the presence or absence of feelings (they all have these) but their different capacities to locate them and to modify them. The capacity to say "I feel heat in my hands," far from being primary evidence of life, is the product of an evolutionary history through which the faculties of experience have differentiated themselves. But, ultimately, the absence of distinct percepts in plants and microorganisms does not signal the absence of all feeling. It is not the feeling of this heat localized in a particular region of the body, but the "fuzzy" feeling of a causal relation with the surrounding environment. Whitehead gives several examples, trying to expand the realms of existence in which it is possible to identify analogies of feeling. "A flower turns to the light with much greater certainty than does a human being. . . . A dog anticipates the conformation of the immediate future to his [*sic*] present activity with the same certainty as a human being. When it comes to calculations and remote inferences, the dog fails. But the dog never acts as though the immediate future were ir-

relevant to the present."[8] Plants do not have percepts that enable them to state, to point, to show where, exactly, the light that causes their modifications is situated. However, there is undoubtedly a feeling of a change of environment involved as the plant turns toward the light. It is possible to say, with Descartes, that the source of the light may be only a total illusion, a chimera, nevertheless the activity of the feeling cannot be doubted, as it has its own reality. Something has been felt, even if in a very diffuse manner.

Against all odds, this passage from Descartes has enabled a thinking of feeling as a *constant activity that touches all aspects of the experience of a subject*. This is a crucial moment in the setting out of a metaphysics of feelings, as it allows for a determining of the space of existence as well as a widening of the boundaries within which Descartes's example was confined. Yet, even if the form of feeling has been clarified, this is not the case with regard to what comprises it. This raises a question: What, exactly, is this activity of feeling that has been described as being involved in both the Cartesian thinker and plants or microorganisms? The previous quotation from Whitehead gives us an indication. When he talks of a plant, a dog, or a human being, he locates a common activity under the various modes of experience that he calls a "sense of conformation." It is this that constitutes the primordial form of feeling. In the examples that Whitehead gives, it expresses a multiplicity of manners, of which the most important are the anticipation of a conformation of the future to the present, the adjustment of the present to the immediate past, and, more generally, the sense of the continuity of events. Santayana talks of "animal faith,"[9] which he finds at all levels of nature, a sort of minimal belief—it would almost be possible to say "physiological" if the term did not already connote too complex a mode of experience—in the fact that current events conform to the immediate past and that the future is not entirely disconnected from the prevailing course of nature. This sense of conformation might well appear abstract, but it has a real simplicity when situated in immediate forms of experience. As Whitehead writes at the end of the passage that was cited above, "The dog never acts as though the immediate future were irrelevant to the present."[10] This is the key aspect of a concrete

instance of time that may, retrospectively, be sorted into dimensions such as past, present, and future but that actually overlap and form one movement whose irruptions are all linked to the sudden emergence of a reality that actively breaks through. This "sense of conformation," this primary aspect of feeling, is, above all, a sense of time: "Succession is not pure succession: it is the derivation of state from state, with the later state exhibiting conformity to the antecedent. Time in the concrete is the conformation of state to state, the later to the earlier; and the pure succession is an abstraction from the irreversible relationship of settled past to derivative present."[11]

When Whitehead talks of conformation, this clearly has nothing mechanistic about it; it is not at all deterministic with regard to the manner in which the present conforms to the past. In the examples that Whitehead gives, it is certainly not a matter of defining this living activity as the simple implementation of a program whose terms have been provided by previous events. When the plant turns toward the light, it is effectively conforming to the events of its immediate past, notably the rays that linger in its present experience, but neither the light nor the previous states of the plant unilaterally define the present action. It is the activity of conformation, an activity *in the present*, with which it is always necessary to start. It is this that defines what will be inherited, this local taking-up of the past, and the events that are anticipated.

This is the opposite of the position in which we suppose there to be distinct sequences that we then try to link up to provide some kind of continuity. Whitehead, like Bergson, establishes a genealogy of this reversal and considers such a view to be not an illusion but an exaggeration that, nevertheless, has its roots in a vital experience. The reversal of the characteristics of time, through which the discontinuity of abstract moments are replaced by the continuity of experience, by conformation, is not, as Bergson thought, the unique product of an intelligence that projects what are really its own characteristics onto nature. This inversion is more organic and primitive. It appears at specific moments in the organism, when "either some primitive functioning of the human organism is unusually heightened, or some considerable part of our habitual sense-perception is unusually enfeebled."[12]

Feeling is a *present activity* of integrating the past. To clarify his point, Whitehead uses a technical term: prehension. There is no real difference in nature between the terms "feeling" and "prehend," but the latter outlines an important element of the activity of feeling. The term's primary origin is that of cognitive activity, an operation of knowledge, the act of "the intelligence seizing something." There is a prehension, in this primary sense, when the mind integrates, seizes, or makes its own a proposition, information about the world, a state of affairs, or a theory. The mind prehends, that is to say, it appropriates something for itself, a knowledge that was previously external to it. Only later is the term modified into diverse forms of the action of taking, while still retaining its cognitive status, notably, seizing an object by the hand; arresting a person, in the legal sense; or appropriating something. I will retain this general meaning of prehension: the capacity to take, to seize, or to capture something.

In the chapter devoted to Whitehead's philosophy in *The Fold*, Deleuze deploys the logic of prehension across all levels of existence: "Everything prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and, by degrees, prehends a world. The eye is a prehension of light. Living beings prehend water, soil, carbon, and salts. At a given moment the pyramid prehends Napoleon's soldiers (forty centuries are contemplating us), and inversely."[13]

The act of prehending is to be found everywhere, from primitive forms of plant life to Descartes's thinker, passing through the most insignificant perceptions. Past beings are taken, captured in a new existence, in a new act of feeling. It is as if each being had a double existence: one from its own perspective, its present activity, and that of its being taken up in later acts of feeling. Napoleon's soldiers, in their actions, appropriate the prior history that made them possible, and are appropriated by the world that comes after. It is in this sense that Whitehead invokes a genuine philosophy of possession,[14] of capture, taking up, prehensions. A subject is not a substance; it is a taking. Following Gabriel Tarde, it is possible to state that "possession is . . . the universal fact"[15] and that if philosophy "had been based on the verb

Have, many sterile debates and fruitless intellectual exertions would have been avoided,"[16] and that "for thousands of years, thinkers have catalogued the different ways of being and the different degrees of being, and have never thought to classify the different types and degrees of possession."[17]

We are now in a position to provide a fuller explanation of conformation. It has been shown how the reasons for the continuity of experience are to be found in actions-in-the-making and not in the realization of some mechanistic program, of which current actions would be only moments or expressions. Everything plays out in actions *in the present*. When it was stated, in the previous example, that the flower turns toward the light, it is because it has captured or integrated the previous act of the light. Nevertheless, some might want to argue that the light is the contemporary of the flower, and that its reaction occurs in parallel with the continuation of the ray of light. If such a position were to be adopted, it would make no sense to talk of the capture of something that has passed, rather, it would be better to regard this as the impact of present events. Similarly, with regard to vision, it would appear that it is solely concerned with things in the present. As a result, would it not be absurd to state that we see only things that have passed? This is not Whitehead's position, and we need to examine his position more closely.

It is always past events that are prehended, and even if this past might be infinitely close to the present act, the events that constitute the prehension are nevertheless prior to this present act. The flower prehends the ray of light that has just occurred, and we perceive an event that has just happened, but if this ray continues and if the event that we perceive extends for the length of our perceiving, then the continuity we observe is that of a repetition of acts of feeling. There are two parallel series of acts that are always out of phase: the series of the prehension of light and the series of the repetition of the ray of light. It is possible to say of any act of prehension that it is the capture of a prior event, and if this event endures it will be apprehended in a series of acts of feeling. Thus, the content of each act is provided by past acts, but these certainly do not define *how* they will be felt. That is part of a decision that is always in the present: the act of capturing hic et nunc.

It is possible to identify the metaphysical elements that are implied by feelings. I will start with a series of questions to which the examples already given, as well as the way in which feeling has been described, inevitably lead. When it was said that it is always past acts that are felt, prehended, or captured, how far into the past does this go? Is it a question of acts that form the immediate past of any feeling, or do they also involve, by degrees, a more distant past? Where are the limits? Are there only feelings in adjacent spaces, in neighboring acts, or do we need to make sense of feelings that have no contacts, no direct connections? Finally, from a metaphysical perspective, what is it that distinguishes acts that are important or significant, with regard to a specific feeling, from those that are trivial or inconsequential for the present act? Such questions could be extended infinitely, but they all come back to the same thing: what constitutes the act of feeling?

If nothing is added to what has already been set out, then the answer imposes itself: it is the entire antecedent universe that is captured in an act of feeling. Whitehead makes this the ultimate principle of his philosophy: "The many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively"[18] or "The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction."[19] This principle should be taken in line with the vocabulary that has been set out in the preceding pages. Thus, each new act of feeling is the capture of the multiplicity (disjunctive plurality) of the previous acts that comprise the universe. Hence, in each act of feeling, it is the prior universe in totality that is felt. This might seem like an extravagant proposition, especially with regard to the examples given previously. It means that in an occasional act of thinking, in visual perception, in the conformation of a microorganism to the variations in its environment, it is always a matter of the universe in its totality. That which we think, perceive, or experience physiologically is always, from the viewpoint of the metaphysical principles implied here, an occasion on which the past universe in its entirety is contracted into one single act: *this* perception, *this* sight, *this* sensation. It is as if the universe ceaselessly contracts into a multiplicity of points that are so many centers of experience, perspectives of all that exists. It is important to

note that these perspectives are not perspectives *on* the universe, but *of* the universe, immanent to it; they form its ultimate material. Thus, it is possible to say that they are vectors, "for they feel what is *there* and transform it into what is *here*."[20]

The metaphysical principle of subjectivity is therefore a way of revitalizing a monadological project. Following Leibniz, it is a matter of affirming that each act of feeling, or, in Leibniz's terms, a perception, is "like an entire world"[21] in which all previous acts are reflected. But, unlike Leibniz, there is no preestablished harmony that defines the acts and their relations, nor can any act of feeling exceed the limits that have been outlined, namely, that it is no more than a taking up of the past. Thus, when Leibniz writes that when "we carefully consider the connection of things we see the possibility of saying that there was always in the soul of Alexander marks of all that had happened to him,"[22] this is a general proposal that can certainly be situated at the heart of this metaphysics of feelings, but is quite different from that which Leibniz adds, namely, when he locates within this soul "evidences of all that would happen to him and traces even of everything which occurs in the universe, although God alone could recognize them all."[23] It is the impossibility of finding in a feeling anything but past acts that marks the difference between Whitehead's neo-monadological proposition and Leibniz's theory of expressions. The activity of feeling is always a taking of prior events, but tells no more beyond itself. As Deleuze puts it, in Whitehead "bifurcations, divergences of series, incompossibilities, and discord belong to the same motley world *that can no longer be included in expressive units*, but only made or undone according to the prehensive units and variable configurations or changing captures."[24]

In stating that all the antecedent universe, without exception, is feeling, that each event, no matter how insignificant it might first appear, leaves a trace that will mark all others, this theory of feeling seems to go too far. However, even this unprecedented broadening of scope is not enough, in Whitehead's eyes. Strangely, it still limits feeling too much. Saying that all the universe is feeling, is captured or possessed, according to a perspective, is not enough. It lacks a fundamental dimension that, as will be seen, will become the condition of the importance of these acts: the trace of all the possibilities that accompany feeling: "A

feeling bears on itself the scars of its birth; it recollects as a subjective emotion its struggle for existence; it retains the impress of what it might have been, but is not. It is for this reason that what an actual entity has avoided as a datum for feeling may yet be an important part of its equipment. The actual cannot be reduced to mere matter of fact in divorce from the potential."[25]

What might have been, the choices made, and the selections that have taken place, are constitutive of feeling. Feeling carries with it all that "could have been," the eventualities that it had to avoid in its effective existence, all the alternatives that were presented to it. Hesitation in a particular action shows that possibilities are envisaged, ones which form so many routes of existence that are left in suspense, in favor of one specific route. Even if they are effectively excluded, they nonetheless remain determinants for the acts that are accomplished. Thus, all positive feeling, all capture, is always accompanied by a constellation of feelings of avoidance and denial, and rejections of possibilities, which amplify their importance. This is what Whitehead means when he writes, "The actual cannot be reduced to mere matter of fact in divorce from the potential." I will provide a fuller account of this in a later discussion of the status of speculative propositions.

Nevertheless, the importance of the possible worlds that are associated with each feeling should not be exaggerated. Contingency, hesitation in choosing, and the traces left by the rejection of a possibility have reality only for those acts that are actually realized. There is a real ontological primacy to the experience of actual feelings over potential feelings, of efficient acts (*engergeia*) over power (*dunamis*). Whitehead's proposition entails a genuine actualism. Although Whitehead does not directly lay claim to such a tradition, he intends to replace the principle of sufficient reason with another principle which lies at the centre of all explanations. He calls this the "ontological principle," and it appears to be an expression of the principle of all actualist thought: "The search for a reason is always the search for an actual fact which is the vehicle of the reason"[26] and "To search for a *reason* is to search for one or more actual entities."[27] This principle certainly does not negate realities such as the virtual, the possible, or abstraction itself, but it expresses the conditions of their existence. Each act must be "referable to one or more

actual entities, because in separation from actual entities there is nothing, merely nonentity—'The rest is silence.'"[28] Thus all effective feeling carries the scar of the fact that it might not have taken place, and that this possibility does not hover in some ethereal world of abstractions but is inscribed, bodily, within that feeling.

The Subjectivity of Feelings

Feeling is the primary activity [operation] of all existence. Does granting such importance to feeling mean that we strayed from the initial aims of this book? What is left of the notion of subjectivity that was previously said to be central? Does it mean, as with those who were critiqued for their lack of interest in subjectivity, that this notion will be granted only a limited place, its existential relevance restricted, and it will be reduced to a specific domain of nature? Where is subjective experience itself to be situated in relation to feeling? Does "subject" now refer not only to the anthropological subject but to all forms of existence, as the subject designates anything than can be said to feel, to experience, to be affected by the world? Or, on the contrary, is feeling a primary activity that does not require any subject at all?

In order to respond to these questions, it is necessary to distinguish between two senses of the word "subject," ones that draw upon two distinct traditions in the history of philosophy: a subject can be thought of either as *subjectum* or as *superjacio*. It is important not to see these as opposed, nor to take up a position for or against either of them, nor to trace their respective limits. Each term demonstrates different aspects of the notion of subjectivity, aspects that could be seen as complementary in the metaphysics of feeling that is being offered here. Clearly, they are in opposition when confronted one with the other, but this opposition might well disappear if they are viewed as two distinct moments of feeling. I will argue that there are phases of feeling to which different aspects of subjectivity correspond. The characteristics associated with these two origins of the notion of the subject need to be outlined, as they express important dimensions of experience; they then need to be placed within the framework of the metaphysics of feeling.

I will start with the first sense. The subject first originates in the no-

tion of *subjectum* that has imposed itself throughout modern philosophy. This term highlights the idea of being placed below, being thrown under something. The subject is thus thought of as that which, underneath all appearances, all varying attributes, changing impressions or superficial qualities, withholds itself and forms the support or basis from which these emanate. In his lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger provides a description that might serve as a basis for identifying these qualities and reformulating them:

> The *subjectum*[29] is what is placed and thrown under in the *actus* and can then be joined by other things. In this joining, in the *accidens*, presencing-along-with in presence, that is, a manner of presencing, can no longer be heard. What underlies and has been placed under (*subjectum*) takes over the role of the ground upon which other things are placed so that what has been placed under can also be conceived as what stands under, and this is constant *before* everything.[30]

This question of *subjectum* needs to be placed within the metaphysics of feeling, as this is our present concern. To what experience, to what dimension of feeling, does this notion refer? If we follow Heidegger in the passage just cited, and translate it in terms of feeling, the *subjectum* is that withdrawn reality that forms the support, the constant base, and is the origin of feeling. The metaphysics of feeling, as set out so far, certainly does not fit with such a vision of the subject. Nevertheless, I will try to identify that which, in this statement regarding the subject as *subjectum*, is identifiable in experience in general. If this view of a subject that is in possession of its own feelings has markedly imposed itself on modern philosophy, it is because it evidently bears witness to certain fundamental traits of experience. It expresses the idea that all experience is focused, oriented toward a central subject from which expressive qualities emanate: affective tones, sounds, colors, tactile sensations, and so on. In so far as feelings seem to indicate a subject toward which they tend, then this subject might effectively appear to be the support from which they originate. But this appears only retrospectively. Only after the fact, when the activity of feeling has already taken place, can we attribute a source or a purpose beyond it. The order needs

to be reversed or, rather, reestablished, and the relation of feeling and subject given its real genesis. The appearance of a support or a foundation of feeling, namely, that there is clearly a subject from which feelings derive, might appear to be a general and indisputable idea that various philosophies of the subject have tried to make their theoretical bedrock, but it is the *effect* of a process and not its goal. Let us return, once more, to Descartes, "Descartes in his own philosophy conceives the thinker as creating the occasional thought. The philosophy of organism [Whitehead's philosophy] inverts the order, and conceives the thought as a constituent operation in the creation of the occasional thinker. The thinker is the final end whereby there is the thought."[31]

This subject that is in full possession of itself and, hence, of its feelings (or, in Whitehead's example, of its thoughts), and that seems to be below its alterations and to act as a support for them, should not be considered as a primary reality but, quite the opposite, to be retrospective. The subject is the outcome of a "chain of experiences"[32] from which it becomes fully itself and acquires its own completeness. The subject appears at the moment that its feelings crystallize into a unified experience, a complex of feelings becomes a singular experience. Most of the time, a thought does not need to be tied to a subject, but if, retrospectively, we try to retrace the steps of its development, we can add a subject to it, when it is actually derivative.

This reversal can be generalized and assigned to all centers of experience within nature: an animal, for example, is composed of a multiplicity of centers of experience, "the various parts of its body,"[33] with their own feelings, their particular ways of being affected and of relating to the wider environment of their experience. But these multiple centers of experience, which are the parts of its body, are nonetheless linked to "one centre of experience"[34] that makes these multiple bodily centers communicate and form a complex unity, which lives and manifests itself as *this* feeling animal. Each center of experience of a body is a subject, in the sense that it expresses a plurality of feelings situated in one point of experience,[35] but the collection of these "centers of experience," in so far as they converge into a superior unity, also form a subject that is the animal, in that it comprises a complex unity of experiences. Ruyer, in a clear reference to Whitehead, uses the phrase

"'superimposed' subjectivities"[36] to describe these entangled multiplicities. Thus, according to Ruyer, we should not hesitate to "grant to physical beings a subjectivity akin to that of a field of consciousness."[37] The articulation of these local subjectivities is the condition of the composition of the body. This will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter. For the moment, I would like to point out that the question of feelings can be posed at quite different levels of existence, but on each occasion it is a matter of a local unity of experience. A higher level of unity, a kind of dominant monad, is not always necessary, according to Whitehead. For example, "In the case of vegetables, we find bodily organizations which decisively lack any one centre of experience with a higher complexity either of expressions received or of inborn data."[38] There is certainly a multiplicity of small centers of experience, but these do not have to be subordinate to a higher center; this is why Whitehead states that a "vegetable is a democracy; an animal is dominated by one, or more centers of experience. But such domination is limited, very strictly limited. The expressions of the central leader are relevant to that leader's reception of data from the body."[39] Thus, this view of the subject as *subjectum* bears witness to an important element of the experience of feelings, but it needs to be seen as a consolidation of the latter,[40] as the endpoint of a process in which, step by step, a unified experience coalesces, into an experience of self: *this* portion of the body, *this* animal, *this* thinker.

Nevertheless, on its own, this view of the subject is not complete. It is liable to fall inexorably into a vicious circle. Whether the subject is situated as the origin of feeling, as in the classic conception, or at the end, as the outcome of a process of consolidation, as has been suggested here, it is as if there is a jump in the explanation that, at the same time, closes it off. If feeling were not already in some way subjective, or at least *capable of subjectivity*, how could it become? If subjective experience really were situated only at the end of a process, in its final phase, how could there be a passage from nonsubjective to subjective? This moment could be placed where one likes, at the start, the end, or the middle; but to talk of an amplification of the subjective dimension leaves us in the dark as to how this actually functions. If there is not already the germ of subjectivity at all levels of feeling, how could there

be the question of a particular moment? It is here that Whitehead's adoption of another meaning of the notion of subject, taken from another tradition, makes its full force felt: the subject as *superjacio*. This could be translated in a variety of ways: "to throw above," or "to hurl toward." It no longer refers to a fully realized subject but rather to a tendency: "The aim is at that complex of feeling which is the enjoyment of those data in that way."[41] It is in the interior of feeling itself, in its forms, that this latent subjectivity is situated. It is, as Whitehead puts it, the manner in which feeling deploys itself. This subject is essentially a *manner*, the manner in which an experience is fashioned, the manner in which something is felt, the manner of witnessing. Each feeling is characterized by its *own manner*, a tonality that distinguishes it from all other feelings.[42] There is no need to postulate a subject that is both autonomous and the possessor of its experiences to realize that thoughts, that sensible impressions, already implement many particular ways of being linked to the data that their environments procure for them. This manner is the aim, the orientation wherein that which is felt is engaged or mobilized. Thus, it is possible to state, "The feelings are inseparable from the end at which they aim; and this end is the feeler. The feelings aim at the feeler, as their final cause."[43]

As stated previously, the two meanings of the term "subject"—*subjectum* and *superjacio*—are not opposed; instead, they can be taken up in a renewed thinking of the subject that is not limited to an exclusively anthropological context. If we start with the question of feelings, it becomes clear that there are two moments of a feeling that correspond to two subjective phases. First, in its initial stage, a feeling is mixed with that which is felt, that is, data, sensations, ideas, and general impressions. But a subjective form already inhabits this immanence of the feeling of data. Second, the feeling, in its first phase, may be almost indistinguishable from that which is felt, the manner, the focusing of data, is already the expression of a virtual subjectivity (*superjacio*), an immanent *style* of feeling. It is at the end of the activity that an experience of self emerges, which Whitehead calls *self-enjoyment*. It then becomes a subject in its own right (*subjectum*), the possessor of itself across the data from which it arises. Deleuze provides a summary that places Whitehead's project within a neo-Platonic lineage:

> *Self-enjoyment* marks the way by which the subject is filled with itself and attains a richer and richer private life, when prehension is filled with its own data. This is a biblical—and, too, a neo-Platonic—notion that English empiricism carried to its highest degree (notably with Samuel Butler). The plant sings the glory of God, and while being filled all the more with itself it contemplates and intensely contracts the elements whence it proceeds. It feels in this prehension the *self-enjoyment* of its own being.[44]

In this way, Whitehead's gesture consists in making feelings the most fundamental characteristic of nature, rather than a supplement added onto it. The aesthetic becomes the site of all ontology; it is the plurality of manners of being, manners of doing, capacities to be affected, in a word, the modes of "feeling" that are at the center of a theory of the subjects of nature. This is not to revive the opposition between "reality" and "perception," "being," and "aesthetic value," in order to attempt to unify them, for nature can be directly envisaged as a multiplicity of centers of experience, each of which is directly expressive.

A Platonic Mannerism

There is no distinction between subject and manner. This statement, which has been arrived at while trying to remain as close as possible to the metaphysical principle of subjectivity, now raises new questions: Where, exactly, is the origin of these *manners of being*, which have been described as constitutive of all subjectivity, be it human or nonhuman, to be located? Are they only ever localized, only existing in a precise place, in a unique subject, or are they ubiquitous, finding themselves in a multiplicity of subjects that, therefore, have a common trait or quality? Are they transmitted, like a legacy that passes from one subject to another, or do they disappear with the subjects from which they seem, at first sight, to be derived?

These questions confront us with one of the most difficult and controversial aspects of Whitehead's philosophy. It has been seen that Whitehead does not subscribe to one school of thought but to a range of disparate affiliations, without losing coherence: the principal axes

are empiricism, principally that of Locke; the pragmatism of James and Dewey; and the philosophy of Bergson. However, Whitehead also readily claims a heritage of a quite different nature: "The train of thought in these lectures [*Process and Reality*] is Platonic."[45] Without doubt, in Whitehead's eyes, the reference to Plato is not secondary or narrow but concerns the very principles of his system. He confirms this in numerous remarks, and leaves no doubt as to their importance: "If we had to render Plato's general point of view with the least changes made necessary by the intervening two thousand years of human experience in social organization, in aesthetic attainments, in science, and in religion, we should have to set about the construction of a philosophy of organism."[46]

Having chosen to situate Whitehead's philosophy within the perspective of a new theory of metaphysical subjects means that it is necessary to take a position with regard to the Platonic aspect of his thought, to identify its importance and current relevance. I will not look to diminish or reduce the extent of its application but, on the contrary, will follow this claiming of Plato as closely as possible, not out of a faithfulness to Whitehead's intentions or his texts, but because it is fundamental for the metaphysics of feeling. Taking up this aspect of Whitehead's thought is certainly not straightforward. How can Whitehead situate his project within both an empiricist lineage, under the marker of a superior or radical empiricism, and yet declare and take for granted, with no hint of provocation, that Platonism is one of his major reference points? Was it an unforgiveable ignorance of the oppositions, of the explicit and mutual rejections that these positions have made of each other? Was the relation to Platonism only a limited one, linked to a particular domain (for example, —abstract forms, logic, or mathematics), which could be added to the other domains of his philosophy, where the empiricist heritage is more appropriate? These questions take a very particular turn when they are asked from the perspective that has been set out in this book. We are looking to go beyond the modern bifurcation of nature by starting from a metaphysics of subjects, but if too fundamental a role is given to Platonism, is there not a risk of falling back into bifurcation through the introduction of a new dualism?

But what, exactly, is this Platonism that Whitehead claims? One will not find in the work of Whitehead any description, portrayal, or synthesis, as such, of the thought of Plato, as is also the case with the work of Bergson. The references are dispersed, and if they are to be given their due importance, it is necessary to take up these explicit references and draw out this strange Platonism. It will then be realized that this is a Platonism that is purified to the extreme, reduced to its simplest form, rid of "the systematic scheme of thought which scholars have doubtfully extracted from his writings."[47] Whitehead's Platonism aims to be the most authentic and direct, set out prior to the later interpretations to which it has been subjected. It is a Platonism reduced to its primary intuitions. Whitehead finds his basis in the *Timaeus*, the cornerstone from which he will develop the lines of inheritance that he envisages. He recognizes that "considered as a statement of scientific details . . . [it is] simply foolish,"[48] but nonetheless, it remains the case that a profound impetus runs through it, a cosmological idea that needs to be given its current context.

It may seem surprising that Whitehead formulates a purified Platonism, in that it appears to correspond to the most classical and the most familiar form of Platonism, in the general sense. Yet, what Whitehead essentially takes from it is the canonical difference between "first, the class of things which are unchanging, uncreated, and undying, which neither admit anything else into themselves from elsewhere nor enter anything else themselves, and which are imperceptible by sight or any of the other senses"[49] and, second, "the class of things that have the same names as the members of the first class and resemble them, but are perceptible, created, and in perpetual motion, since they come into existence in a particular place and subsequently pass away from there."[50] It is a matter of rendering this Platonic dualism in its initial state, without any unnecessary ornamentation or complex elaboration. Nothing should be added to this difference. The Platonism in question is clearly that of a distinction between two realms of being: those that "are unchanging, uncreated, and undying" and those that become. It is a matter of intensifying this difference to its maximal point. The hiatus between two realms of beings rules out any relation of resemblance or belonging. It is a matter of taking literally the idea developed in the

Timaeus, according to which the beings of the first order are inaccessible to "any of the other senses," separated from all sense experience. Whitehead calls these "eternal objects. In order to understand the contemporary importance of Platonism, it is this question of "eternal objects" that needs to be sought, as it is they that justify this lineage: "I use the phrase 'eternal object' for what . . . I have termed a 'Platonic form.' Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities [subjects] of the temporal world is called an 'eternal object.'"[51]

There are two stages to Whitehead's elaboration of the concept of "eternal objects." First, he establishes a primordial and ontological opposition between "eternal objects" and "actual entities." The notion of actual entity was met with previously, in the discussion of the question of feelings arising from Descartes's example. It is a notion that is absolutely central to Whitehead's speculative work, but to avoid the unnecessary proliferation of neologisms and technical distinctions, I will not provide a definition but will stick to the general sense that Whitehead gives to this term, namely, that of an existing subject. It is possible to state, using the terminology that has been developed up to this point, that anything that is not an effective feeling, a taking, a capture, an act of becoming is, therefore, an eternal object. Whitehead's procedure of defining "eternal objects" through an opposition appears to be appropriate. However, it presents a major difficulty. Indeed, the contrast is radical and allows for no accommodation: what exists is either an "eternal object" or a subject. Whitehead's proposition may have the appearance of a simple distinction, but it constitutes a bold decision. It literally excludes these objects from any relationship of belonging to ordinary subjects. They seem to float in a parallel world, without any "necessary reference to any definite actual entities," that is to say, to an everyday effective reality. But, have the previous pages not insisted, indeed, gone so far as to make it a metaphysical principle, that "apart from the experiences of subjects, there is nothing"? How then, is it possible to understand the status of these "eternal objects" if they are established in opposition to subjects? If, at this point, they are seen as opposed to that which forms the condition and basis of all existence, are they not reduced to nothing? This is not simply a matter of White-

head's methodological stance. If it were, then it would be possible to limit the problem by stating that his method was not fully adequate, as it posits a separation at this point, when the rest of Whitehead's scheme denies any such thing. The problem is even more fundamental than this, as it concerns the very status of "eternal objects." Indeed, Whitehead confirms this duality of existence, leaving no doubt as to the difficulty of the problem that it poses: "The fundamental types of entities are actual entities, and eternal objects; and . . . the other types of entities only express how all entities of the two fundamental types are in community with each other, in the actual world."[52]

I stated previously that I wanted to follow the metaphysical principle of subjectivity as closely and as literally as possible, and not to pose anything as existing beyond subjects, but we are now confronted with a notion that totally contradicts this. There is another type of entities that are just as fundamental as subjects, which do not arise from them, which are certainly not derivative expressions of them, but which have a status in existence that is equal to them. These difficulties are neither accidental nor secondary; they are, as will be seen, a part of the instauration of "eternal objects."[53]

The second stage of Whitehead's elaboration of eternal objects is that, since an opposition has been set up between "eternal objects" and subjects, it is now possible to use this to identify some examples of the former. The difficulty with such an exposition comes from the fact that "eternal objects" can never be traced, in their changes of form or in generalizations of empirical data, and cannot be dealt with in themselves, in their pure form. We can indicate them only through a concrete example. Returning to Cleopatra's Needle, it was explained how this is an event that appears inalterable, at the level of our perception. But, by changing scale, either by inserting ourselves within its most fundamental constituents or, alternatively, by locating the Needle in the breadth of a history that it inhabits, including where it was created and how it has been modified over the centuries, we can certainly come to see the Needle as a singular event, caught in a becoming that is unique when compared to any other. Each event is singular, each moment is particular, nevertheless we never stop recognizing something within events: "As you are walking along the Embankment you suddenly look up and

say, 'Hullo, there's the Needle.' In other words, you recognize it."[54] That which is recognized is not the change that affects the Needle, nor its singularity, but the entities that compose it: its particular color, its geometrical form, its particular texture, all those elements that persist in experience as being "here again" and that make the Needle comparable to thousands of other experiences, each equally singular in their effective existence. The experience of the Needle indicates those factors in its existence that repeat themselves, that are transposed from one existence to another, located in distinct moments. We never have an experience of a color in itself, nor a given geometric form, a pure sound, only their "ingression" in particular events: this variation at this moment and this place. Thus, it should be said of a color that it is eternal: "It haunts time like a spirit. It comes and goes. But where it comes, it is the same colour. It neither survives nor does it live. It appears when it is wanted."[55] We then see emerge categories and classes of eternal objects that can be found spread throughout the work of Whitehead: "sensa" such as "green" and "blue," but also shades of color; universals of quality; "sensa" functioning as qualities of emotion; qualities of form and intensity; the objects of objective space, such as mathematical forms; "patterns" and "relations."[56]

How can we account for these "eternal objects" in terms of a theory of subjects? Why is it so important to grant them a real status and to follow Whitehead when he says that the movement of his thought is Platonic? What place can they occupy in the metaphysical principle of subjectivity? The question with which we have been confronted until now is that of the *manner* in which a subject prehends the anterior world, *how* it captures it, integrates it, and constitutes itself via this prehension. As has already been stated, this manner is at the heart of subjective existence. But where does it come from? What is its origin and its source? It is tempting to reply by stating that the manner in which a subject inherits the anterior world derives from this anterior world since this is composed of nothing other than subjects themselves. At each "moment," the universe contracts into a multiplicity of points of perspective that are these new subjectivities, as has been discussed throughout this book. The process continues to infinity: each new subjectivity adds itself to the infinite multiplicity of the others in order

to form the material from which a new subjectivity will be forged. But, if the *manner* in which this new subjectivity is derived comes entirely from the past that it inherits, where does the novelty come from? Thus, the introduction of eternal objects presents us with two clear alternatives. Either the manner in which a subject inherits the past is entirely defined by this past, that is to say, by other subjects, and, in this way, the universe repeats itself indefinitely, transferring given forms of existence from subject to subject without addition or subtraction. Or we need to admit that the *manner* does not derive from the past but is a condition of novelty beyond any inheritance and is therefore independent of subjects. I want to argue that eternal objects are, against all expectations, the conditions of this novelty. This is in full agreement with Deleuze when he makes "eternal objects" pure virtualities that come to define the novelty that they carry within events. What follows is a long quotation from *The Fold* in which Deleuze synthesizes all the relations between subjects—in terms of Leibniz's monads—as prehensions and virtualities, and explains these through the example of there being a concert tonight:

> It is the event. Vibrations of sound disperse, periodic movements go through space with their harmonics or submultiples. The sounds have inner qualities of height, intensity, and timbre. The sources of the sounds, instrumental or vocal, are not content only to send the sounds out: each one perceives its own, and perceives the others while perceiving its own. These are active prehensions that are expressed among each other, or else prehensions that are prehending each other [. . .]. The origins of the sounds are monads or prehensions that are filled with joy in themselves, with an intense satisfaction, as they fill up with their perceptions and move from one perception to another. And the notes of the scale are eternal objects, pure Virtualities that are actualized in the origins, but also pure Possibilities that are attained in vibrations or flux.[57]

Thus, eternal objects become the fundamental condition of novelty, "their eternity is not opposed to creativity."[58] This is the full meaning of a cosmological mannerism: manners are not derived from anything, but they never cease to vary according to the local conditions of exis-

tence. The subject does not project onto nature, onto its experience, the manners that it will make its own, on the contrary, it is the local manners of prehending, of capturing and integrating, that form the conditions of individuation for an experiencing subject. Manners are therefore immanent to novelty, they are required for the production of a new subject.

But, if eternal objects are not derived from subjects, is there not a risk that by reversing the poles of the argument, the ontological importance of subjects is reduced as their particularity is located within eternal objects? In the more classical terms of metaphysics: if the potential—eternal objects—cannot be explained by the actual—the subject—are we not inevitably led by what Whitehead has set out, to explain the actual as arising from the potential? Potential, which Whitehead says is eternal, changeless, and with no origin, risks becoming a form, a principle of individuation, from which the actual will be derived. It is this issue, I would argue, that led Whitehead to criticize an approach that he considers to have been derived from Platonism: the theory of participation. He sees in it the temptation, which runs through Greek philosophy, to give to mathematics a scope that exceeds what might legitimately be expected. "Plato in the earlier period of his thought, deceived by the beauty of mathematics intelligible in unchanging perfection, conceived of a super-world of ideas, for ever perfect and for ever interwoven. In this latest phase he sometimes repudiates the notion, though he never consistently banishes it from his thought."[59]

The Platonic model of participation is not wrong, as such, and certainly remains a relevant way of explaining certain realities, but its metaphysical generalization is inappropriate, according to Whitehead. This is a criticism that is often to be found in his writing: a method associated to a particular domain of experience, such as the model of participation, and, more generally, the method of deduction, cannot have their relevance generalized and they cannot be transposed, as such, to other domains. It is in this confusion of which methods are appropriate for mathematics and which for philosophy that Whitehead locates the exaggeration involved in the importation of the model of participation, and the risk that accompanies constructing an ontology on this

basis: "The primary method of mathematics is deduction; the primary method of philosophy is descriptive generalization. Under the influence of mathematics, deduction has been foisted onto philosophy as its standard method, instead of taking its true place as an essential auxiliary mode of verification whereby to test the scope of generalities."[60]

This is why Whitehead counters the model of participation with what he calls ingression: "The term 'ingression' refers to the particular mode in which the potentiality of an eternal object is realized in a particular actual entity, contributing to the definiteness of that actual entity."[61] Ingression is the process by which an "eternal object" is actualized within a new subject. It is not possible to think beyond the existing world, which is already composed of other subjects that determine the fields of possibility, and, hence, the actualization of this eternal object rather than another. Eternal objects are neutral with regard to the subjects in which they are actualized: "An eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world. 'Potentiality' is the correlative of 'givenness.' The meaning of 'givenness' is that what *is* 'given' might not have been 'given'; and that what *is not* 'given' *might have been* 'given.'"[62]

As opposed to participation, ingression is a genuine inversion, for it highlights the dependence of "eternal objects" on the world in its immanent process. These eternal objects neither account for the world nor do they provide its reasons, on the contrary, it is the world and its existents that solicit what is relevant and what is possible with regard to the state of the world in which they find themselves. It is as if the universe, in its creative advance, never ceases to create new constraints, which are the existents themselves, canalizing how they inherit what is possible, in a new way. If eternal objects did not have a formal existence and if they were not solicited by the world in which their local incarnations continuously vary, then subjects would be only mechanical repetitions. It is here that the essential demand of empiricism that runs throughout Whitehead's metaphysics is to be found: "Eternal objects [. . .] tell us nothing about their ingression in experience. In order to see them, there is only one thing to do: adventure in the domain of experience."[63]

Eternal objects, these manners of feeling, raise new questions: How does one manner of feeling transfer from one act to another? If all acts are different, new in their own way, and cannot be compared one with another, how is it possible to explain the persistence of a being over a longer or shorter period of time? If the universe is never twice the same, if creativity and the production of novelty are radical, how is it that we can have experiences of different orders within nature, of duration and persistence? In short, how does an eternal object or, more accurately, a complex of eternal objects, transfer from one moment of existence of an entity to another?

The Transmission of Feelings

Up to this point, the instauration of a metaphysics of feelings has necessitated an intensification of the individual dimension of the act of feeling: this particular *manner* of capture, at this moment. The examples that have been provided—a microorganism, a plant, an animal on alert, or even Descartes's thinker—cannot be reduced to simple acts. An animal's slightest sensation of the environment, in its most spontaneous bodily movement, or the most ephemeral thought, are never only simple and unique acts. Thus, when Whitehead writes that a "flower turns to the light with much greater certainty than does a human being," this should be understood as an intertwined multiplicity of acts of feeling—a genuine democracy—in which all are interconnected. Looking from the outside, it may seem that a more or less simple, although slow, action has taken place: the flower has turned toward the light. But a change of perspective, through the use of imagination or via technical means, can place us within this apparently simple act and enable us to see that it encompasses a multiplicity of small actions in each of the parts that compose the flower, of transfers, of transmissions from one moment to another throughout the duration that forms the specific time of this movement. Can the same not be said of the persistence of Cleopatra's Needle over centuries or of a flash of thought? Are these not also multiplicities, entanglements of acts of feeling that appear simple and homogenous from the outside? Is it not better to say, with Butler, that "each individual may be manifold in the sense of

being compounded of a vast number of subordinate individuals which have their separate lives within him, with their hopes, and fears, and intrigues being born and dying within us, many generations of them during our single lifetime."[64]

I will refer to these collective existences, these arrangements (*agencements*) or articulations of feelings, as "societies." Whitehead's description of the life of a man takes up these ideas:

> The life of man is a historic route of actual occasions which in a marked degree [. . .] inherit from each other. That set of occasions, dating from his first acquirement of the Greek language and including all those occasions up to his loss of any adequate knowledge of that language, constitutes a society in reference to knowledge of the Greek language. Such knowledge is a common characteristic inherited from occasion to occasion along the historic route.[65]

In this example, Whitehead deploys a fundamental notion—that of "historic route." The life of man is a historic route in which acts of feeling succeed each other, forming a long and uninterrupted chain of transmissions and reprises. Each act takes up the acts that came before and transmits to those that follow. Whitehead describes a somewhat mundane aspect of the existence of this life, namely, knowledge of a language, such as Greek, in order to demonstrate that this historic route does not consist of one dimension, of one movement. Indeed, what would the life of man be if it were composed only of a simple succession of purely biological or bodily acts? Would it really be possible to envisage a life without granting it dimensions of a different order, such as learning a language, with its first steps, its developments and intensifications, its own manners of existing, up to the final moment when the language is forgotten? Does this learning, with its expectations, its hopes and failures, not also constitute a genuine history, a historic route that, in numerous ways, seems to live a life that is different and parallel to other dimensions of the existence of man? If this is allowed for the knowledge of a language, then how can it be denied for other dimensions of man's existence? Is not the life of each organ also a historic route that could have its own biography, similar to that of the knowledge of Greek? This life has become much more complex.

Clearly, it is made up of acts of feeling, but these range in multiple directions, forming many trajectories that might, at first sight, appear independent.

Nevertheless, it is always a matter of *a* life, of the *same* person. These historic routes can be unfolded to infinity, multiplying the perspectives in which they are engaged, showing that the times that compose them are plural, and it would be in vain to try to submit them to a common form. At the same time, it is impossible to escape the impression that this is a matter of one continuous reality. Does such an idea come from the illusion of a representation that projects its own categories onto the real and only finds what it has put there? Or, on the contrary, is it the affirmation of a fundamental dimension—identity—that the plurality of aspects of existence mask without being able to completely erase? The question of the "historic routes" of feelings, of the social organizations that are to be found at all levels of existence, does not mean that we have to choose between these two options. That it is a matter of the *same* life need not be reduced to any simple model of representation. This experience of the same and of unity genuinely expresses something that is real. But it does not entail the need to postulate a form of substantialism from which acts of feeling that compose this life would be derived. Beyond the acts of feeling, there is nothing. Yet identity is real. Whitehead clarifies what he means as follows: "A more important character of order would have been that complex character in virtue of which a man is considered to be the same enduring person from birth to death. Also in this instance the members of the society are arranged in a serial order by their genetic relations."[66]

It is the historic route that is the identity of this person. The history of the acts that compose this life do not determine the context in which it is deployed; it forms the most fundamental substance within it. This history is that of the manner in which one act follows another, inheriting it, and bequeathing its own legacy to those that follow. In this way it establishes the "genetic relations" or the individuation of these acts. Of course, no act of feeling can provide the reason for being inherited in one manner rather than another; inheritance is entirely free. However, the fact that it has occurred, that it was this act rather than another, means that the route in which it is engaged takes a spe-

cific turn. Thus, it is possible to say that such acts canalize becoming.[67] For example, an alert animal may not be in the immediate presence of a predator. Nevertheless, it feels a vague and unsettling presence as indicated by the signals of its environment. Evidently, its present action, its current attention, follow from past impressions, such as an unusual noise, an odor, or the sudden movement of other animals. It might move toward or away from that which seems to be the source of this danger. Whatever decision is made, each new act will take up the inheritance of this history to which it conforms, without this being in any way a mechanical repetition. The key point is that this account has not involved the positing of the existence of memory, of a mind or of habit, in order to establish the connection between these heterogeneous acts. It is within the act itself, in its deepest reality, its very constitution, that this history is established. It is as if each act is a memory that replays the entire history from which it emerges. This example can be taken further. The fear that an animal manifests in the particular moment that it senses danger is not reducible to a collection of sensations or perceptions. These realities could have been experienced very differently by another living being, with other affective modalities, such as empathy, sadness, or curiosity. The fear is nowhere, and yet it affects each action. It is only by pure convention that we say that an animal *has* a fear, as it is clear that the fear is in each of its actions and, more often than not, has taken possession of the acts before the animal is aware of it. We should say, rather, that the animal is possessed by fear and this possession is not something general, as it is situated in particular acts. Each action is inhabited by a modality of fear. It is the particular *manner* in which the past is integrated. It is within each act. It arises from nothing, although everything in this particular history, in this historic route of the alert animal, becomes the occasion of the existence of this fear. These characteristics of fear—the fact that it has no particular origin, that it is to be found in a multiplicity of acts of feeling, in distinct moments and places, that it displays a *manner*—remind us of the strange form of Platonism that was discussed earlier. Whitehead was always very careful in his use of examples, especially those regarding eternal objects, but one way of thinking about them would be to see them as this inheritance of fear from act to act along a historic route.

Hence, that which is transferred from one act to another is not only the content of the act but the conditions by which a certain affective tonality (eternal objects) ingress into a particular situation. While it always varies, intensifies, or, on the contrary, dissipates, fear is transmitted from act to act, forming the history of this particular route, which is the concern that has appeared in the life of this animal. To be precise, it is not so much fear that is transmitted as the conditions that enable fear's appearance.

Nevertheless, even if the identity of a society is to be found in the historic route that makes it exist, in the history of the acts that are taken up and transferred, a society is not isolated. The animal on alert responds to solicitations that come from everywhere and that intrude on each part of its being; the plant prehends the light and thereby demonstrates its attachment to the variations of its environment; even Cleopatra's Needle is continuously modified by its being affected by concomitant events.

A milieu is always a theatre of intense activity such as the "Castle Rock at Edinburgh," which exists "from moment to moment, and from century to century, by reason of the decision effected by its own historic route of antecedent occasions,"[68] continues, changes, and finally disappears. These examples, and the logic of feelings, demonstrate that a milieu is never a simple spatial framework in which actions unfold, or in which events gain corporeality. The fact that two individuals are spatially proximate does not guarantee that they share the same milieu. The entanglement of societies is such that the same spaces can imbricate different modes of existence, forms of experience, and levels, which do not necessarily meet. Following Gilbert Simondon, it is better to talk of "an associated milieu," to indicate the deep attachment and vital interest that an individual has to and with its environment.[69]

> The doctrine that every society requires a wider social environment leads to the distinction that a society may be more or less "stabilized" in reference to certain sorts of changes in that environment. A society is "stabilized" in reference to a species of change when it can persist through an environment whose relevant parts exhibit that sort of change. If the society would cease to persist through an

environment with that sort of heterogeneity, then the society is in that respect "unstable."[70]

It is in light of this deeply pragmatic question, regarding the difference between the stability and instability of societies, that it is possible to establish the emergence of the differences between "physical" and "living" societies. The problem of the distinction between the physical and the vital clearly goes well beyond the framework of this book. In large part, this distinction is a legacy of the bifurcation of nature; for allocating beings according to whether they manifest more physical or more living elements usually involves a new form of reductionism: either physicalist or vitalist. This is a similar gesture to that of bifurcation, now deployed at a new level. This gesture, which consists in extracting the essential qualities of beings, which are for the most part constructed, in order to set them in opposition to purely phenomenal, secondary qualities, now gains a new level of effectiveness. It is possible to use the relations between societies and their environments, as just discussed, to offer a change of perspective. Rather than start from a purely hypothetical division between those beings that principally demonstrate either physical or vital characteristics, in order to then establish connections between them, or to reduce one into the other, it is more accurate to envisage the effects of distinct responses to variations in the environment. What alternative view of the differences between physical and vital forms of existence would emerge if they were seen as different ways or manners of relating to similar changes?

A change of environment could give rise to at least two possible responses: indifference and transformation. I will start with the first. Indifference characterizes "material" or "physical" bodies. "These material bodies belong to the lowest grade of structured societies which are obvious to our gross apprehensions. They comprise societies of various types of complexity: crystals, rocks, planets, and suns. Such bodies are easily the most long-lived of the structured societies known to us, capable of being traced through their individual life-histories."[71]

Clearly, all societies are continually affected by their environment—exchanges, destructions, metamorphoses—but physical societies are characterized by their capacity for indifference. Everything affects them.

They are at least as subject to alterations, most often imperceptible, as "living societies," but they seem able to ignore them. That which allows them to maintain a certain stability, that which is the condition of their survival, is that they demonstrate "*grossness*." Whitehead uses this phrase humorously, in order to indicate a particular aspect of this response to changes. This somewhat unusual term can perhaps be understood as expressing the quasistatistical character of physical societies. These function according to an average or "mean," of change or alteration, reducing the majority of factors of transformation to simple details that can then be ignored. The sole aim, the sole goal of a "society," is to maintain its historic route, the movement of its inheritance, the taking up, the transmission of the acts of feeling that comprise it. In the case of societies such as crystals or rocks, this possibility of persisting requires the power of the average that allows for relevant details to be excluded. At certain moments, when changes of environment become as great as their modes of experience, these changes can impose themselves, no longer leaving any room for the average ignorance that had been maintained up to that point; not being able to transform themselves, these societies are unable to maintain the route that defined their identity.

The stability of living societies, however, is not due to indifference but, rather, to the relevance of their *partiality*. They are essentially, even vitally, *interested* in their environment. It is here that the details of the changes that might appear insignificant for "physical societies" gain their full importance. For living societies, to be interested means "orienting themselves," "choosing," "searching";[72] essentially it is a matter of an activity in relation to a specific environment. Living societies are not simply passively affected by what happens in their environment; they actively reach out to be affected. This is why they form the most fragile of realities within the orders of nature. The environment is not an indifferent succession, overwhelmed by some kind of average, but a collection of questions which will lead the living society to transformations that are internal (changes in its form) or external (changes in elements in the environment). If a society is defined as the endurance of a social order, it is possible to state that living societies are capable of modifying this social order. This capacity is the very

condition of their continued existence. Their past is not something that imposes itself but is a virtuality that they will actualize differently on each occasion, depending on the changes in the environment. Living societies allow themselves to be transformed by that which lurks in their interstices and which, in turn, they take up in their historic route.

The question that is to be asked of "living societies" is that of their *consistency*. The consistency of a being can be defined as having "the capacity to conserve its identities across the vicissitudes which result from its relation with other beings."[73] Thus, "each body is provided with a certain degree of consistency."[74] Living societies maintain an order from which they emerge by continually reinvented means, by perpetuating a tradition that defines them. They share a common aim with physical societies, namely, that of persisting, but living societies differentiate themselves from physical ones through the means by which they achieve this. For them, everything happens at the interstitial level, in the empty places in which life lurks,[75] in the intervals between blocks of becoming, and in the zones that separate the several series that are engaged in one persistence. If an individual is a living person, in the same way as a cell is, this is because between the acts that constitute them, and are taken up within them, certain transformations insert themselves, thereby changing their mode of being. These living persons and cells reinvent, in part, the manner in which they inherit themselves.

Physical societies, rocks, or crystals, "are not agencies requiring the destruction of elaborate societies derived from the environment; a living society is such an agency. The societies which it destroys are its food. This food is destroyed by dissolving it into somewhat simpler social elements. It has been robbed of something."[76] Its conditions of existence involve theft and the destruction of elements of its environment. That which is stolen could well be another inferior organism, but "whether or no it be for the general good, life is robbery."[77] What differentiates a crystal from what is living is the interested activity that defines the living. The crystal is indifferent to what it produces and to the effects of the environment in the short term; a "cyclone does not seek out the most heavily populated zone to feed on the ravages it causes. It goes where it goes."[78] But the living require "means for lo-

cating, grasping, seducing, capturing, trapping, and pursuing";[79] the history of a living being is the history of "ever more effective modes of destruction"[80] that enable the living being to endure. All the metaphors that can be used to compare the physical and the living risk forgetting what differentiates them: indifference and detachment on one hand, interest and attachment on the other.

Following Stengers, I will refer to this collection of interested and dependent relations between a living being and the environment as "dynamics of infection."[81] They are dynamic because the relations are variable, never established once and for all: what was once an actor later becomes or is, from another perspective, an effect of process. There is no other point of stability than these dynamics themselves, the changing, negotiated relations between the living being and the environment. This leads to a minimal definition of a living being: it is that which *infects* and lets itself be *infected*. I am using the term "infection" in its etymological sense: *in-facere*, to make within, to act in the interior, and more generally, to impregnate, or be impregnated, without, of course, the solely negative connotation of being pathological. Here, the term "infection" is taken in a speculative sense, that is to say, as neutral regarding its consequences for this or that particular living being. Infection can designate both the destruction *and* the transformations of which living beings are capable. It is a matter of designating all those relations of dependence, of activity, of contamination, and the processes of integration—acts of feeling—through which the living being appropriates the elements of its environment—"life is robbery"—and, in turn, transforms them.

Everything happens in encounters. The capacity of a society is relative to its environment and vice versa. It is not possible to get beyond a form of empiricism where that which counts are the interactions in which living beings are engaged. "The point to be emphasized is the insistent particularity of things experienced and of the act of experiencing. Bradley's doctrine—Wolf-eating-Lamb as a universal qualifying the absolute—is a travesty of the evidence. *That* wolf ate *that* lamb at *that* spot at *that* time: the wolf knew it; the lamb knew it; and the carrion birds knew it.[82]

A different wolf, a different environment, a different encounter would

entail a different event and different powers. The wolf's power is relative to the power of the lamb and to the place in which their meeting has occurred. None of these terms has any a priori primacy in explaining what has happened. Such dynamics involve a genuine ecology of relations. The analysis so far has remained at only one level—the meeting of one organism with another—but it needs to be generalized to all levels. Each organism, in so far as it is a society, is itself an ecosystem. This generalization of the relations of infection is very close to an idea that can be found in the work of the French biologist Pierre Sonigo. In *Neither God nor Gene*, Sonigo writes, "Cells form a society which resembles that which we find at other levels, in ecology or economics."[83] These are not metaphors but another manner, another way, which is nevertheless also technical, of accounting for the modes of existence of living societies. Hence, "the relations between cells rely on exchanges of resources which are comparable to those which structure ecosystems (food chains) or human societies (economic cycles)."[84] And an entire ecosystem can be found "in each one of us, composed of billions of microscopically small animals, which we call our cells. They live for themselves and not for us. They do not know that we exist."[85]

In opposition to Bradley, Whitehead states that the relation between the wolf and the lamb can be taken up at the level of the billions of cellular societies that constitute an organism. In so far as they are living societies, they take, capture, and destroy other living societies and try, like all the others, to prolong their existence, to endure. Even cells are interested in their environment. That which we think with regard to more complex organisms, we must also think of living beings at the infinitely small scale. They are affected and they affect. Any consciousness that a living being can have of these dynamics is an outcome of such dynamics, and certainly not their origin.