Object-Oriented Ontology and Its Critics

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A Case for the Primacy of the Ontological Principle

Abstract: This paper aims at the construction of a structural coupling between object-oriented philosophy and Whitehead's philosophy of organism by making a case for the primacy of the ontological principle through the proposal of a *social object hypothesis*. The social object here differs from traditional renderings of sociology, which are centered on humans' activity and personalities, by way of recuperating Tarde's social theory of associations. This theory provides us with a non-anthropocentric reading of sociality. This hypothesis will be furthered by the introduction of the systemic category of internal/external, or system/ environment, as a self-enclosure feature of social objects. Equipped with these two notions, we will discuss Graham Harman's paper "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," while rerouting his assessments to our own social object hypothesis. The final idea is to propose an alliance through the conception of a macro-ontological approach to philosophy of organism. We intend to show that this is not only coherently feasible regarding Whitehead's own categoreal scheme, but also meets the requirements of being a real object in object-oriented ontology's directives.

1 Introduction

Before we begin,[1] I would like to state clearly that my purpose here is not to exercise a purely scholastic or exegetical labor upon Alfred N. Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, but to *speculate with* it and *beyond* it. Such is the spirit, I believe, of the experimental metaphysics Whitehead himself defends in the opening of said book. I am looking for an object-oriented philosophy that could be developed from defending the primacy of Whitehead's ontological principle as the preferred runway for our philosophical flight. This work is situated at a proposed crossroads between philosophical movements important to our research: object-oriented ontology and process philosophy. Incidentally, our discussion will also feature a few elements coming from systems theory (mainly Niklas Luhmann's) and categoreal analysis (Nicolai Hartmann). These clearly share a certain kinship with the trends of speculative realism, the complex realism in metaphysics, the ontological turn in social theory, and similar umbrella-terms.

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1 The following paper is the result of a talk I gave at the Society of Studies of Process Philosophy (SSPP) during the 116th Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Central Division). I have Professor Jea Sophia Oh to thank for the opportunity to present my work there. My presentation at the APA was just a seven-page talk, a very brief outline of this paper. I appreciated SSPP's Professor Joseph Harroff's commentaries, along with the useful suggestions of colleagues Yeon Hee and Ulysse Gadiou. I have now reworked it as a full-length article with the proper corrections and further argumentation. I also would like to thank my doctoral adviser, Dr. Hilan Bensusan, and my colleagues Fernando Silva e Silva and Luan Miguel Araújo (Luan Fene) for exchanging ideas with me while I was brainstorming for this work.

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This paper is divided into three parts: the first will provide an overview of some of Harman's main tenets on object-oriented ontology (OOO) to highlight points that I believe may be connected to Whitehead. The second part is the longest, in which I will present my take on Harman's paper entitled "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z" to compare and contrast and both philosophies. As I do so, I will concurrently build my own approach to the presented themes in an experimentally progressive way. The general idea is to show how orthodox OOO and Whiteheadian scholars could benefit from each other in the new alliance we propose in the third part of this paper: a macro-ontological approach to the philosophy of organism through the concept of the social object that, as we will see, emerges from *Process and Reality*. In conclusion, we will summarise our research by comparing it with Harman's assessments, and propose a few directives we believe may be inspiring for a contemporary global philosophy.

2 Overview of Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology

Before we enter into the specifics of how a social object concept emerges from the midst of Whitehead's philosophy of organism, we will provide a brief overview of Harman's OOO as a way to better savor his conclusions. The general tenets we will cover here are mainly to be found in his books *The Quadruple Object* (2011) and *Immaterialism* (2016), which provide a quick presentation of some key concepts. I have chosen to present Harman's version since he is recognized as the first proponent of this movement. Other figures, such as Levi Bryant, Timothy Morton and Ian Bogost are also remarkably interesting, but Harman is the one who has more extensively written on Whitehead. While all of them wrote at least *en passant* something about process philosophy in their books, they tend to associate it with some general opinions on the matter that I respectfully believe are not the case. Precisely for this reason, I will focus on Harman's contributions because he is the one who champions a differentiation with which I am fully on board: namely, that Whitehead (and Latour) ought not to be conflated with what may be known as "philosophers of becoming," specifically Deleuze and Simondon. Of course, this is only an overview, and we have no intention (if it were even possible) to exhaust a philosophical movement in a few pages.

2.1 Undermining and overmining

Given the name of *object*-oriented ontology, objects are obviously at the center of this philosophy. However, Harman notes that virtually no philosophy before had taken objects seriously enough, due to two major philosophical attitudes that clouded such an approach: the *undermining* and *overmining* attitudes. The first is an attitude which sees objects as being too basic to be "what really matters." *Undermining* positions take objects as being mere surface-effects of deeper hidden realities, such as the "One," the atoms of Democritus or Epicurus, some primordial flux of becoming, or the virtual plane of pre-individuation. There are various problems with this attitude, but Harman names one in particular in his 2016 book, *Immaterialism*: the undermining attitude does not account for emergence[2]. Since I am a Brazilian myself, we might take the example of a soccer team: it emerges from many complex realistic features of objects and possible relations

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2 Harman, *Immaterialism*, 9. The general intuition of "emergence" was arguably at work in many philosophers before, from Anaximander to Leibniz and Schelling to the dawn of evolutionary biology. It seems, however, that John Stuart Mill, in his *A System of Logic* (mainly chapter VI of the first volume) was one of the first to write about its implications for epistemology and science. It begun to permeate the scientific and philosophical communities in the first half of the 20th century due to Nicolai Hartmann's (1882-1950) popularization of this idea. Hartmann studied medicine at the University of Tartu (nowadays in Estonia) and later classical philology in Saint Petersburg, becoming involved with philosophy from 1905 on, mainly due to his interest in Plato, Proclus and neo-Kantianism (at least at first). Later, he came to be the first president of the German Philosophical Association in the post-war period. He used the terms "categoreal *novum*" or "supervenience" in his ontological works to account for the Aristotelian difference between the whole and its constituent parts (*Metaphysics*, Book H, 1045a 8–10). Hartmann, also a pioneer in the philosophy of biology, argued against reduction of biology to chemistry or physics, since the emergence of the wholeness of the organism also brings with it new categories not reducible to its parts nor exhaustible by them (Hartmann, *Philosophische Grundfragen der Biologie*, published in 1912).

– and not just Ronaldinho, or a total sum of uniforms and cleats. Experiencing the Brazilian National Football Team does not mean reducing experience to counting up the atoms that make up Neymar, nor just to sum up all the money it generates, nor to reduce it to the number of the team's supporters at stadiums. Even if such attempts may be theoretically possible, they are far from sufficient.

The second attitude is named *overmining,* which deems objects as being "too much" compared to what they really are. For these philosophers, objects should be treated only in the way they usefully present themselves to our minds or in the way they affect one another. It reduces them to being mere *bundles of qualities* that may be exhausted by an observer, for example, through a list of definite descriptions. For Harman, the many forms of empiricism share this common feature of overmining objects. In *Immaterialism*, Harman states that "the problem with overmining is that it allows object no surplus of reality beyond whatever they modify, transform, perturb or create."[3] Harman's strategy here is very important for our paper: we do not start with qualities or relations precisely because *what enters* relations or *has* qualities is the *what* that actually interests us. The worst solution regarding these two attitudes is the combination of both, which Harman names *duomining*[4]. It reduces the object to a primordial or general scheme while also claiming it may be exhausted by something, usually mathematics, praxis, or the human spirit. Consequently, it leaves no space for any real objects whatsoever.[5] Parmenides' reductive monism and scientific materialism are some of Harman's examples here, but we might add most forms of Marxism (especially in its repackaged special edition known as the "Frankfurt School"), nihilism and existentialism in their general presentations, and fanaticisms of all sorts, whether religious, political or otherwise.

A *weakened* form of overmining (in our view) is what Harman names "*relationism*," a position that claims nothing is real if it has no effect on other things. Even if this position reminds one of Bishop George Berkeley's philosophy, it is considerably wider: since anthropocentric relations enjoy no necessary primacy among relationists, all relations are considered to be on equal footing. Harman believes that their main thesis is that "to exist is to relate to something else" – and, in this fashion, "an object is exhausted by its presence for another."[6] Here Harman places the American pragmatists (perhaps William James), Alfred North Whitehead and Bruno Latour. Furthermore, we might add that for relationists there is no single necessary element that encompasses everything, such as Berkeley's all-perceiving deity. In criticizing them, Harman points out that if effects are the only thing that matter, objects become husks carrying bundles of qualities to be experienced by others, which in turn exhaust them. Under this scenario, there would be no reason for anything to change at all. Another problem is that different perceivers have different perceptions, so (real) objects would be too unstable to be "what really matters." I quote Harman:

> If a house is encountered by three women, a child, a dog, and a crow in the same moment, each of these perceptions will have a very different character. And given a purely relational definition of what objects are, it would seem impossible to call them relations to the 'same' house. The house itself vanishes into a mob of house-perceptions.[7]

The inability to deal with objects led countless philosophers and theorists straight to the doors of relativism, which seemed to be the only logical conclusion to be drawn from a misrepresentative and unsatisfactory theory that would not take objects seriously. In order to counter such a view, Harman asserts his position very clearly: "I am something real, here and now, not a tapestry of perceptions woven together from the outside."[8] Instead of being treated as mere bundles of qualities exhausted by perceivers, or being sheer instantiations of the Great Flux or the Great One, Harman wants to talk about real objects, one of the four poles of his quadruple scheme.[9] The hypothesis he wishes to bring back is the controversial *thing-in-itself*.

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3 Harman, *Immaterialism*, 10. He borrows this passage from Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 221.
4 Harman first seem to have used this term on a lecture he gave on Heidegger and causation in 2013, transcribed in his book *Bells and Whistles*. The other observations I made in this paragraph come from Immaterialism, 7 ff.
5 Harman, *Immaterialism*, 11-12.
6 Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 1B.
7 Ibid. This means that under such a scenario, perception of the house would be more important than the real object *house*.
8 Ibid.
9 This scheme is also comprised of sensual objects, sensual qualities and real qualities.

2.2 *Thing-in-itself*: Two pathways

There are two pathways that may lead us to a discussion of the notion of the *thing-in-itself*. The first is the more evident one, though Immanuel Kant, his heirs in German Idealism, and the different varieties of phenomenology. But I will opt for a second pathway through Ancient Greek philosophy, and will explain why in the following paragraphs. It is important to say that we are talking about the general notion of something that does not fully reveal itself to a human subject – nay, to *any* perceiver, for that matter. Therefore, we are not employing this term restrictively according to the intricacies of the Kantian philosophy, although we agree with him that this idea is something to which philosophy must refer in order to have a realist grounding.[10] However, Kant's conditions for phenomena to appear are so disappointingly narrow that our concept of object will need to be much broader than just its appearance in space and time. Furthermore, we are not just adding the *Ding an sich* as a theoretical presupposition for the sake of realism, but making a strong case for real objects.

The first pathway is given a much more detailed analysis by Harman, perhaps due to his proximity to phenomenological traditions. The notion of a "real object" is graspable through his heterodox interpretation of Heidegger's tool-analysis.[11] We may consider a hammer as ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) to be used by a builder in a construction. We also may conceive of the hammer as it appears to a conscious *Dasein*, as present-at-hand *(vorhanden)*. However, in his thought experiment, Heidegger claims that when the hammer breaks, it overwhelms *Dasein* with a realization that the reality of the hammer was actually hidden behind both its ordinary usage and our conscious contemplation. Harman then adds a plot twist: not only human *Dasein*, but *everything* has a deeper reality in-itself hidden beyond ordinary usage or conscious contemplation. Therefore, every object withdraws to an inner realm beyond relations, and he urges us to understand that they cannot be exhausted in any relation at all, be it human theories, human praxis, or any other kind of relation, including relations among non-humans. For Harman, this shows that the object has a deeper reality that, at the same time, withdraws inward while also exposing something of itself. The point is to draw our attention to the fact that the world is made of a myriad of objects that withdraw themselves from (a) all conscious or theoretical access, and (b) all usage or practical relations, so they cannot be fully deployed or exhausted by either of these two factors. On this basis, Harman claims Heidegger had discovered the connection that goes from *sensual qualities* to the *real object*.

Regarding non-human relations, Harman touches base with Whitehead by claiming he is the greatest of the recent anti-anthropocentric philosophers prior to Bruno Latour or Quentin Meillassoux.[12] Since all things prehend one another, relations are not something that demand the presence of a human soul/mind or human praxis. Importantly, not even a human-like soul is necessary. The contrary applies, for "what it says is that the crude prehensions made by minerals and dirt are no less relations than the sophisticated

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10 This Kantian argument is found on the *Critique of Pure Reason's* section "Refutation of Idealism." While many argue that his dissociation from Descartes is the most important feature of this section, I believe the sections on Berkeley are much more relevant. They are, in fact, one of the most important parts of the First Critique for they establish a clear commitment to empirical realism and pushes away Berkeley's "empirical idealism." It is noteworthy that Meillassoux makes a similar observation (*After Finitude*, 17 ff.) for different reasons, about Kant's separation from Berkeley as a crucial moment for current metaphysical/ speculative movements and the defense of his theory of the arche-fossil.

11 Cf. Harman, *Tool-Being*. In Chapters 3, 4, and 6 of Harman, *The Quadruple Object* we find a walkthrough of this argument.

12 A brief note as to why I used this classification. By the end of Section 3C of *The Quadruple Object*, Harman says "the towering exception in recent philosophy, the greatest of recent Anti-Copernicans, is surely Alfred North Whitehead," right after saying that "this cuts against the grain of Kant's Copernican Revolution, which still dominates philosophy in our time. Both Latour and Meillassoux have justly objected to Kant's analogy: whereas Copernicus drove the earth from the center of the cosmos and put it into motion, Kant restores humans to the center in a manner more reminiscent of Ptolemy." The link between Meillassoux's and Latour's Anti-Copernicanism is that both deny that humans are the center. In Latour's case this is more evident, for in the vast network of actors and modes of existence, humans enjoy no obligatory primacy. Now, thought/reason surely does have a special status in Meillassoux's work, but who can say he is referring to humans rather than to artificial intelligence, extra-terrestrial beings, or the *Dieu à venir*? Even if Meillassoux privileges Reason (and I agree that he does), it is completely contingent that it should take the form of the thought of humans. This is why I interpret the anti-Copernican philosophies of both Latour and Meillassoux as a kind of anti-anthropocentric attitude.

mental activity of humans." He adds that "instead of placing [human] souls into sand and stones, we find something sandy or stony in the human soul."[13]

Returning to the quadruple scheme, Harman credits Husserl for discovering the *unity* of the sensual object, which is experienced *in its unity*, and not in a "bundle of qualities" fashion. When we eat an apple, we eat an apple – and not redness or sweetness. The natural attitude takes sensual objects ordinarily by their unity exhibiting sensual qualities, such as sensual modifications of a tree across the seasons of the year. Husserl's novelty, however, was the discovery that we could find real qualities through eidetic reduction by bracketing sensual qualities.[14] Husserl has virtually no interest in real objects – but the Heideggerian tool-analysis has already provided what Harman needs.

This leaves us with two rifts: sensual x real, and objects x qualities. With the quadruple scheme now broadly conceived, the tension between real qualities and real objects in particular is not satisfactorily explored in Harman's works. He names this tension "essence," inspired by Leibniz, which would account for the interaction between real qualities and real objects, but the *how* is not satisfactorily explored.[15] Another relation not fully explained is the one between real objects and sensual objects, which would be connected indirectly through "sincerity."[16] Although a truly intriguing idea, it is not explained in much more detail. Thus, we feel that there is something still missing from this first pathway.

For these reasons, I would like to take up the second pathway by putting into evidence Harman's takes on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The rifts may be traced to them. Socrates, who never truly reaches any finite and stable definition of anything, gives us the rift between objects and their qualities – the object is always *more*, always *excessive*, always *beyond* its perceived qualities.[17] In Harman's terminology, objects always *withdraw* to their own inner ontological realm, thereby not being able to be exhausted by any of their real or sensual qualities. These qualities are *withheld* (a term he uses in his recent book of 2018[18]), always leaving room for more surprises. We believe that Socrates was pointing out two things: (a) that real qualities and sensual qualities must be discriminated from each other; and (b) the inexhaustibility of real objects notwithstanding any of the two aforementioned qualities. Thesis (a) is particularly noticeable when Socrates discriminates between sheer opinion and qualities that he arrives at that are true, albeit not enough. For example, in the dialogue *Meno*, Socrates works with a slave to show he could arrive at some real qualities of mathematical objects, despite not having any formal training in his life. Even so, it is not enough in order to have a complete conception of knowledge, so the dialogue had to continue though it ended with no definite solution, eventually confirming thesis (b).

This points us to the second rift coming from Plato's philosophy, which reframes the Eleatic division between the real and the sensual. Instead of radically denying any importance whatsoever to the sensual world by subsuming it under Pure Being (which would be a *duoming* position) Plato has a much more careful take on the sensible world, according to which we should strive to better ourselves and work towards the best common good we may achieve. It won't be perfection (for that is only in the realm of the Forms), but it could come to be a close enough attempt. Perhaps the *Republic* is one of the clearest examples, for even

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13 Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 2C. The brackets are mine, for the point that connects Whitehead with Ancient Greeks and other panpsychist traditions everywhere is that everything experiences the world somehow – that means that the human soul is just one of the infinite possible subjective forms, and not the center or the explanatory model. Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, especially Parts II and III. In Part II, the Fourth Category of Existence, the Subjective Form, is presented and articulated among the other categories in his scheme. It is present in every actual entity's "mental pole," to use Whitehead's own terminology. In Part III, it is more deeply developed into the theory of feelings, their transmission, their relation to propositions and the Continuum of Perception (of which human consciousness is only one of the very late possible stages, which is neither necessary, nor the starting point, nor the primary mode of explanation).

14 Husserl makes the argument for eidetic reduction across almost all of his works, in his customary demanding writing style. Harman's didactic presentation of the concept is much more useful for us here, especially in Chapter 2 of *The Quadruple Object*.

15 Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 7C and 9B.

16 Ibid., 9A and 9B.

17 This interpretation inspired by Harman also has the delightful side-effect of not treating Socrates merely as an ironical *je ne sais quoi* philosopher, but also paints him as someone genuinely worried about reality, reason, and respect for the integrity of objects, even if they be "ideal" ones, even at the cost of his own life.

18 Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*, 7.

though the Form of Justice and the ideal "Beautiful City" (Καλλίπολις) are not exactly empirical, we must not surrender to "realists" (in the bad sense of the word) such as Thrasymachus, and let his brand of justice forcefully dominate for the convenience of the strongest tyrant. We must strive towards justice, citizenship and education, even if we will never fully partake of the ideal Forms.[19]

Recognizing Socrates' rift between objects and qualities, and Plato's rift between the sensible and the real, Harman advances into the tradition surrounding Aristotle's theory of substance, which includes Leibniz's and his own position as a "weirder version" of Aristotle's.[20] However, he contrasts his own positon with Leibniz's in many ways. For this philosopher, substances are simple, and created or destroyed only by the Christian God, and monads are present only in created natural beings. Contrarily, Harman believes each and every thing can be analyzed under this quadruple scheme: humans, natural objects or artificial objects. Also against Leibniz, Harman states that a lantern, the moon, the number 3 and the Dutch East India Trading Company all are substances/objects, and cannot be thought as mere aggregates or as "inferior" just because some of them are natural and simple, while others are not. Finally, following Aristotle and against Leibniz once again, any of Harman's objects *can* be created, modified, generated, corrupted and destroyed. In summation, "objects need not be natural, simple or indestructible. Instead, objects will be defined only by their autonomous reality"[21] graspable by the quadruple scheme. Harman also makes the paradoxico-metaphysical[22] statement that objects both have and do not have these terms, for always something will withdraw further.

We can now briefly present the quadruple scheme in which the object can be grasped through two rifts: (a) the Socratic rift between *object* and *qualities*, and (b) the Platonic rift between the *sensible* and the *real* – all mixed together in an Aristotelian flavor of his *in re* attitude. That means that (a) and (b) are not general cosmological statements. Rather, they make up each and every thing, in their own peculiar realms. It is worthy to point out that among Ancient Greek philosophers, Leibniz' monadology, and Whitehead's philosophy of organism, everything is able to experience the world in some fashion, be it spirits, Gods, demigods, animals or even plants. I believe now we may see more clearly why I prefer the Ancient Greek pathway: we can arrive at the notion of the real object without having to commit ourselves to problematic base tenets of modernity (such as anthropocentrism, overestimation of praxis/action theories, Ockhamism and the reductivist mania, bifurcation of nature etc.). This is achievable because like Whitehead, Harman's OOO, and the sketch of philosophy we are beginning to present here, the Ancient Greeks did not privilege human subjectivity as the center, model or only possible topic for philosophy. The Aristotelian-inspired *in re* attitude applies to anything, so it is much more suited, from our perspective, to defend the concept of the real object without compelling us to deal with Kantians and/or other troublesome modern/post-modern disorientations. We shall see in the conclusion, in connection with future horizons for research, that our curious *contemporary Ancient Greek* predisposition may accommodate yet another classic school.

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19 I have long tried to argue that Plato is not a daydreaming lunatic, but a philosopher concerned with the improvement of virtue and reason, with the building of a more just society. This comes from taking knowledge, beauty and love seriously enough to promote real changes in the sensual world toward these and other Forms. A vulgar reading of Plato loses sight of the fact that while the ideal form of Beauty is important, perhaps just as significant as that is the μέθεξις (*methexis*, "partaking") of this Form – and this happens here and now, for the empirical betterment of ourselves, and a positive orientation and disposition towards the real world.

20 Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, 6D.

21 Ibid., 4D.

22 Paradoxico-metaphysics is a kind of metaphysical reasoning that Hilan Bensusan develops out of Anna Tsing's and Jon Cogburn's view of the tasks of metaphysics. Bensusan claims that the task of this kind of metaphysics is to provide the vastest and most complete account of reality we can provide, to the best of our abilities, and to show a total description of such a reality is impossible. This founding paradox forms a metaphysics of impossibility, not unlike Harman's own account of indirect causation and the value of negative philosophy. Cf. Bensusan, "Towards an Indexical Paradoxico-Metaphysics"; and Harman, *Immaterialism* (especially Chapter 5 and its discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius' negative theology).

3 Appraisals and speculations concerning Harman's article "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z"

To further explore the relation of Whitehead and Harman, I will turn to his article "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," which appeared in the edited volume *The Lure of Whitehead*, published by University of Minnesota Press in 2014. He begins this article by saying that the bond between Whitehead and the word "process" is unbreakable, and he will not spend time or energy trying to dissociate them. However, the subtext of the article is that he is somehow trying to liberate Whitehead from a Deleuzian-centered interpretation of process philosophy. Harman creates the nickname "School X" to unite Whitehead and Latour, for they do not care about the Kantian presuppositions that underlie both Analytic and Continental Philosophies. Both have a relational model of punctiform entities against tradition's enduring underlying substance theory. They are to be distinguished from the members of "School Y," in which Harman lumps together Henri Bergson, Manuel DeLanda, Gilles Deleuze, William James, Gilbert Simondon, and Isabelle Stengers.[23] School Y has a theory of a never-ending Great Flux of raw pulsating actions, whereas the individual (or the individual state) is not exactly as real as the Great Flux (this being a clear example of the undermining attitude in philosophy). School Z is OOO's position, whose basics we have already covered.

As Harman sees it, the concepts of process, becoming and relation have been conflated, and thus have generated too many confusions. For him, *process* is "emphasis on change over stasis," and a *process philosophy* would advocate that "underlying substances must be replaced by concrete events." This would contrast with philosophies of *becoming*, which "means that individual entities *per se* are derivative of a more primordial dynamism, thereby reducing individuals to realities of the second rank." Finally, "philosophers of *relation* are those that hold that the thing is not an autonomous reality apart from its interactions with other things, but is instead constituted by those interactions."[24] I will visit each of these terms while contrasting my own take on the matter in order to start building a variant form of *object-oriented philosophy*. This term shall be used from here on out as general nomenclature (one that Harman has also used before), an umbrella-term placeholder until we get to something else.

Before we begin, let's present the general outlook Whitehead gave to his own book: "This course of lectures is designed as an essay in speculative philosophy." He then defines "speculative philosophy as the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted." Further down the page, he claims that "speculative philosophy has its rational side and its empirical side, the first being represented by the idea of coherence and logic, and the second by the idea of applicability and adequacy.[25] We must not neglect one side for the other; they both animate his philosophy. Now, we will see how *process*, *becoming* and *relation* might be understood if we take his philosophy of organism more at face value, without ceding to what we understand be a misleading idea of reducing it to a "process philosophy" idea, which arose mainly from theologians and Deleuzian scholars. We intend to prove that Harman's critiques are actually directed at this kind of "process philosophy," but not at Whitehead's philosophy of organism interpreted in a more careful way. The idea is to show how OOO and the philosophy of organism can become powerful allies.

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23 While not featuring in this list, Harman includes Steven Shaviro in the first footnote of "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," singling him out alongside Isabelle Stengers as examples of philosophers who dangerously conflate Whitehead and Deleuze. The very same argument was already underway in the edited volume *The Speculative Turn*, in which Shaviro and Harman exchanged critical papers. Shaviro's paper "The Actual Volcano" compared OOO and Whitehead, privileging the latter, while also heavily drawing on Deleuze's influences. This was already noted by Harman in his "Response to Shaviro," in which he pointed out that Whitehead and Deleuze were being conflated too recklessly. Shaviro wrote a chapter with the same title on his *The Universe of Things* (2014), but he still recurs heavily to Deleuze (and Kant) to say things like "Harman imagines a scenario in which objects lie inert, like Tennyson's Kraken – or Lovecraft's Cthulhu, for that matter – in an 'ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep'" (147). This is hardly the case, as we have seen up to this point – we will say more about this "stasis" later, along with the birth, change and alliances of objects in Harman's OOO too. Be that as it may, this is not the time or place to do a full research on each of School Y's members, for our goal here is to approximate Schools X and Z through our own interpretations.

24 These three definitions come from Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 232-234.

25 All these quotes are found in Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

3.1 Whitehead and process

Is Whitehead a process philosopher? For Harman, yes. He has good reasons to make this claim, since "process philosophy" has become a synonym for Whitehead's philosophy. However, I would like to call attention to the name Whitehead himself chose: philosophy of organism. Yes, process is an important category, but it is just one among forty-five. Perhaps there has been an overemphasis on this due to the developments of so-called "process theology" on the one hand, and his reception among Deleuzian circles on the other. Instead, I would like to start making the case for the *primacy of the ontological principle* as a different approach.

Harman quotes page 35 of *Process and Reality* to point to the fact that Whitehead had abandoned enduring substances and embraced a raw "change-over-stasis" point of view.[26] However, I would like to note a fruitful ambiguity on the same quoted page: what Whitehead is doing there is not taking about enduring substances in the supposedly negative way. Rather, he is providing a positive outlook which explains that

> an ordinary physical object, which has temporal endurance, is a society. In the ideally simple case, it has personal order and is an "enduring object." A society may (or may not) be analyzable into many strands of "enduring objects." This will be the case for most ordinary physical objects. These enduring objects and "societies," analyzable into strands of enduring objects, are the permanent entities which enjoy adventures of change throughout time and space. For example, they form the subject-matter of the science of dynamics.[27]

Right after this definition, he adds: "Actual entities perish, but do not change; they are what they are." And more interestingly for us: "a nexus which (i) enjoys social order, and (ii) is analyzable into strands of enduring objects may be termed a 'corpuscular society'."

For macro-ontological purposes, we have two choices: we may (a) try to use the working thesis of perpetually perishing punctiform actual entities – which is glaringly unworkable for ordinary purposes of adequacy and applicability, or (b) we can take Whitehead at his word and ground the other existential categories[28] in actual entities, then focus on these other categories to produce effective adaptations for the empirical side of his speculative philosophy. This means that actual entities are the ultimate grounding of the very last frontier of philosophy, but we do not effectively consider a symphony, a logical argument, or the Brazilian National Football Team by recurring to mere bunches of actual entities. We have the Whiteheadian-sanctioned strategy to use other categories of existence, such as *propositions*,[29] as long as we do not overlook that the very ultimate grounding of existence is in actual entities. The closest categories to them are the prehensions and the *nexūs*. As we will see later in this paper, prehensions do not exhaust the actual entity, but arises from one of them and goes into at least one of them.

I will endeavor to elaborate why our ontology opts for centering itself in the category of existence of the *nexus*, specifically, in its presentation as *corpuscular society*, not only for the empirical purposes of adequacy and applicability of speculative philosophy. Regarding its rational side, I believe it enables us to provide a new way to reorganize its categoreal scheme around the ontological principle aiming at this corpuscular society. We argue here that the category of actual entities cannot be truly operable beyond the

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26 "Rather than viewing the world as made up of enduring substances 'which enjoy adventures of change throughout space', change is now regarded as primary." Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 232: Here he is referring to Whitehead's words in *Process and Reality*, 35.

27 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 35.

28 Whitehead lists seven: actual entities, prehensions, *nexūs*, subjective forms, eternal objects, propositions, multiplicities and contrasts (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22). He makes it clear that actual entities and eternal objects are the extreme finalities, and the others are neither actual nor eternal, but real existences that combine both the actual and the eternal while not being reducible to one another.

29 In a time when philosophy is finally beginning to recuperate from the motion sickness of the linguistic turn, it is important to observe that "propositions" as a category of existence, for the Whitehead who has already transcended his logicist past, can never be reduced to verbal expressions or truth-tables. He writes that "the primary function of propositions is to be relevant as a lure for feeling" (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 25). The "feeling" here is not just emotional, but any kind of positive prehension. Cf. Part III, Chapter 4 of *Process and Reality*, where he extensively details his theory of feelings and its relation to propositions.

micro-ontological level, and that the category of prehensions should not be taken as primary for a proper understanding of Whitehead's philosophy of organism in its macro-ontological purposes. By "macro" I mean a quark, a cup, a legal codex, the country of Cambodia, or any object in OOO's general terminology. This is to be distinguished from the micro-ontological level, which is the really intricate realm of a single withdrawing actual entity as the highest level of abstraction possible. Such an analysis dangerously borders the problem of vacuous actuality. As such, we will focus on the macro instead of the micro from now on, and will do so by stating and expanding our preference for the *nexus* as the beginning of the object-oriented philosophy we are sketching here.

On the aforementioned page 35 of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead is referring to the study of *societies* in a terminology much closer to French social philosopher Gabriel Tarde than to orthodox anthropocentric sociological thought. This may have been the root of some conflation of "enduring substances," which Whitehead indeed denies, with "enduring objects", or "societies," which is an important topic he defends. Tarde believed sociology and monadology to be much closer than sociology and anthropocentric biases, for any association is the "subject-matter" for sociological theory. Any kind of association that enables something to emerge and to differ from its parts is a society. The cells of the lungs form the lung-society – and, outside this society, there is a broader society such as the human body, which also cannot be reduced to its lungs (or vice-versa).[30] Before we advance, it must be stated that we are not claiming Whitehead is a closeted "Tardean," but that Tarde's non-anthropocentric concept of society can be used here as a *label* to mark a position, a difference, regarding mainstream sociology which is centered only in human society, as in the works of Durkheim, Simmel, Weber and Marx.[31]

Before we advance, I believe I should clarify why I prefer to resort to Tarde rather than use Whitehead's own "social order theory." He claims that a society is made up of a "common element of form," and that this is "simply a complex eternal object exemplified in each member of the nexus."[32] This is hardly enough to characterize a society of any kind. This frustrating way of seeing societies as merely related to the dynamics of eternal object is one of the reasons I strongly push for Harman's theory of real objects to be fully integrated into the theory we are developing here. Nonetheless, it must be clearly stated that the point is not to dismiss Whitehead's thought, but to say that such a characterization of societies is counterproductive to his own project of speculative philosophy. To counter this, we will offer a way to complexify his system in the experimental way which he openly advocated, always receptive to novelty in the adventures of ideas that are philosophy and metaphysics.

The point is to explain why a society is the way it is. In order to do that, the focus will never be solely on the "perpetually perishing actual entities," for a *society emerges* and it is not reducible to its parts. Actually, if we focus on the "actual entities," there will not be any room for abstractive and speculative reasoning, since they perish too quickly for us even to say anything, and we lose sight of all other forty-four categories. We should focus on what emerges from their own internal reality and becomes an enduring mode of existence in its own right. Actual entities have a very specific function in Whitehead's system: they

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30 Cf. Tarde, *Monadology and Sociology* (especially the remarkably clear afterword essay "Tarde's Pansocial Ontology" by Theo Lorenc, the translator and editor of the book) and Bensusan & Freitas, "A Diáspora da Agência" (especially Chapter 3 on Tarde's monads and differences).

31 I have to recognize that Harman has a poor opinion of Tarde. In a paper called "On the Supposed Societies of Chemicals, Atoms, and Stars in Gabriel Tarde," published in 2012, Harman is very skeptical towards Tarde's sociology: "it should come as no surprise that Tarde affirms both the smallest part of the cosmos (the infinitesimal unit) and the largest (the relational whole), while mocking the existence of everything in between." (41-42) He does, however, positively observe that, for Tarde, "to be made of parts does not necessarily mean to be reducible to one's parts, since those parts may shift or be replaced without this changing the thing they join to compose." (42) However, this would not properly account for change, since sometimes changing parts might affect the whole (a sickened organ, for example). However, Harman notices that Tarde does not reduce things to their relations: "if a thing were nothing more than its relations with other things, it would be identical with its relations, and would thus be devoid of any surplus allowing it to change from its current state." (43). He concludes that we need intermediate-level objects, not just appeals to infinitesimals nor to global relations. Again, to make my point clearly: Tarde is utilized here is a position-marking choice against orthodox sociology's anthropocentrism. He functions here as "the road not taken," even though I agree with Harman's critiques.

32 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 34.

ground it, but do not exhaust the categoreal system. Even if they did, we just read that they do not change, undermining Harman's claim that Whitehead is committed to a "change-over-stasis" point of view. What is being missed by these critiques? A Whiteheadian object-oriented philosophy focused on a *Tardean object*, or on a *Social Object*, so to speak.

Now, to clarify our suggestion that actual entities should not be the focus of a macro-ontological philosophy. Whitehead claims that "an actual entity never moves."[33] and relates it to a punctiform notion of actual occasions that will similarly be defined as a happening-only-once-event, an "actant," in Latour's terminology.[34] Notwithstanding, we have seen that this is not the case regarding Whitehead's theory of corpuscular societies, which provides a pragmatic functioning very close to our proposed view on objects, but not close enough. This is why we need to stress Harman's real objects. The punctiform theory of actual entities is detrimental to Whitehead's purposes, for it clouds macroscopic implications and applications, since its meticulous details indeed seem to take us into an arbitrary disconnection. We solve this by introducing Harman's strong enclosure of real objects into our interpretation of the Tardean reading of corpuscular societies.

Returning to the main point, we take it as no accident that Whitehead chose to name his brand of thought as "philosophy of organism," not "philosophy of process." To understand why I'm stressing this point is to understand that process is ontologically oriented, mediated and directed. This means process has a subsidiary character in constituting an enduring object. We will come back to this argument in session 4 under our theory of the categoreal matrix. Before moving to the next part of Harman's paper, we stress the following quotation of Whitehead:

> The contrary doctrine [to the "enduring substance" notion] is that an actual entity never changes, and that is the outcome of whatever can be ascribed to it in the way of quality or relationship. There then remain two alternatives for philosophy: (i) a monistic universe with the illusion of change; and (ii) a pluralistic universe in which "change" means the diversities among the actual entities which belong to someone society of a definite type.[35]

As Whitehead opts for the second alternative, we vehemently highlight the importance that the concept of society has here for explaining change, which also involves the categoreal notion of internal/external applied to corpuscular societies. For example, against scientific materialism, which would take the atom (or electrons, or quarks, or whatever "Final Particle" they come to concoct) as the underlying unchanging nucleus, Whitehead states that "the atom is only explicable as a society with activities involving rhythms with their definite periods."[36] What endures change is not the actual entity, but the corpuscular society as an emergent object in its own right, with its own interior. This is what grounds the possibility of not only experiencing change, but also of interpreting it. What is withheld in order for something to change is something *in* and *of* the corpuscular society that operates its adaptations, alliances and possibilities of endurance (not merely the actual entities themselves, for they dully perish and do not change). Therefore, we can account for both stasis and change in our reading of Whitehead, which we term here the *social object hypothesis*.

3.2 Whitehead and becoming

Next, we have Harman's seemingly polemical claim that "no, Whitehead is not a philosopher of becoming."[37] Harman clarifies that to be a "philosopher of becoming," one must deny individuals. Let us contrast this statement with Whitehead's own terminology. Principle of Relativity: "it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming'"; Principle of Process: "that *how* an actual entity becomes constitutes *what* that actual entity is. (...). Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming'"; Ontological Principle: "That every condition to which the process of becoming conforms in any particular instance

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33 Ibid., 73.
34 Cf. Latour, "Irreductions", 159 ff.
35 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 79, brackets mine.
36 Ibid., 78.
37 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 239.

has its reason either in the character of some actual entity (...), or in the character of the subject which is in process of concrescence."[38] It is abundantly clear that Whitehead's notion of becoming has nothing to do with Harman's. However, it also seems that it has nothing to do with School Y's notion of becoming either. It seems that there is something missing in the midst of the reductive "preponderance of flux" vs. "preponderance of the individual" debate. For us, it is the primacy of the ontological principle that we are advocating with respect to the social object hypothesis, for macro-ontological purposes. Harman is *almost* pointing in this direction when he says: "Whitehead is not interested in the generation of individuals from a quasi-determinate pre-individual field, but in the generation of individuals from prior individuals."[39]

My point is to show the shared systemic feature of these three principles: *process* goes into *ontology* due to the subjective aim towards satisfaction, and it *may* be used as "subject-matter" for others in *relativity* because it is already a satisfied entity.[40] It is interesting to notice that the internal/external notion is very important to the ontological principle, as Whitehead himself attaches the "character of the subject" to its own "subjective aim," which controls the becoming of a subject, or at least one of these many becomings that are possible. This topic is not extensively explored in his philosophy, and I intend to examine it further in future works. One possible connection is with Nicolai Hartmann's own fundamental categories. For this German philosopher, the category of the internal/external is one of what I like to call "metacategories," which are those that do not have a specific ontological field to apply to, such as organic or spiritual beings, but rather apply to all the successions of reality's strata and objects that can establish an *internality*.[41]

From now on, *social objects* will be taken as the true objects in our Whitehead-inspired object-oriented philosophy. They enjoy real enclosure coming from the internal/external metacategory, grounding the gap between internality and the rest of the world – while also strongly hinting at the emergent nature of this social object that cannot be reduced to its parts. They also have an obliquus relation to their environment, even if there is a larger social object surrounding them. The internality of the lungs cannot be reduced to the internality of the heart, even though both are obliquely connected. We will name this intuition the *systemic feature of social objects* – the metacategoral feature of being able to be part of something, be it contingently or necessarily.

We must examine more closely these two modes of existence. Both are to be distinguished not by any easy formula, but *in* and *by* experience regarding the life of the object, its historical routes, its eventual relations, etc. In the first mode, we might conceive of a smoker's lung being exposed by itself to alert the youth on the dangers of emphysema. The second mode is the necessary presence of the internality of the lungs towards a larger social object, such as my body or that of the smoker. Such a relation combines both the continuity of each internality to itself; and the discontinuity of the gaps between systemic features that are necessary, at the same time, for me to live (as a whole); and for my lungs to have their internality properly upheld (as a part-of-a-whole on its own right and with its own demands, such as my breathing, doing exercises or having unclogged arteries).

The relation between the modes *part-of-a-whole* and *internality* is not exhausted by the surrounding larger society. For example, the usage of a smoker's lungs in the previous example is not a necessary systemic feature for that smoker at the time he was alive. However, the independent presentation of the lungs is to take it as a social object with sensible-real qualities cluster, which *admits* both its independency *and* its connectivity (in Harman's terms: the same real object can be processed into many different sensual objects for each perceiver). This difference is only operable through the metacategory of the systemic feature of social objects, which reveals a different form of continuity: that of the systematicity, which appears

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38 These three are Categories of Explanation contained in *Process and Reality*: categories IV, IX and XVIII, respectively. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22-25, italics mine.

39 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 239.

40 Interestingly enough, even in the Principle of Relativity, there is no determination of how it will be used as matter for others. A strawberry gives me joy, while to others the same strawberry can trigger horrible food allergies. However, being a satisfied ontological unit (i.e. with its concrescence process completed through its subjective aim) is important for both my ice-cream dessert and someone else's anaphylactic shock in terms of "subject-matter" in these new relations.

41 Cf. Hartmann, *New Ways of Ontology*, Chapter 7, esp. 66. Here I will at least hint that this "internality" is one of the metacategories of real objects; perhaps in a later works we might explore how this links up with Harman's own concept of space.

from the difference between the emergent whole and the internality-towards-whole in the necessary mode of existence. The gap between systems (be they mechanical, biological, psychological or social) is not merely given, it needs to be put into evidence, just as its connections also need to be put into evidence. In summation, gap and connection are both *aims* of the discussion, not its *beginning*, precisely because real social objects *admit* both withdrawal and linkage. They do not, however, integrally control what will be hidden and in which way it will connect with or be appropriated by others. There is plenty of room for complex creativity and contingency of the inner systemic core: the realm of real objects; and the eventful rise of new relations, be they generative, symbiotic, destructive, or otherwise.

This takes us back to Harman's assessment of Whitehead, when he states that there is apparently a gap that needs to be filled between discontinuous actual entities. Harman believes that *appetition* is an arbitrary introduction to deal with such a "radical discontinuity." This might seem spot-on when Whitehead says that "an actual entity never moves," and talks about appetition and satisfaction on the level of the actual entity, raising intelligibility problems due to its punctiform nature. However, as concerns corpuscular societies, this is left vague in his writings. Whitehead seems to provide only a pragmatic role for them in the chapter called "The Order of Nature." (Part II, Chapter 3 of *Process and Reality*). There is a loophole here that is profitable for us, for even though he does not focus on appetitions beyond that particular level, we claim that a corpuscular society has appetitions as well. Even more: the social object has *different* appetitions from its own internal actual entities, not reducible to them.[42] This is a central idea for us here: *societies, as emerging and enduring stabilities, are objects*. Note that the sociality inside the real object of one atom also points to its systematicity – both as its internal particles, as well as towards itself as a whole[43]. However, an atom is not reducible to its internal particles, and the internality of one single quark inside an atom is also assured and upheld by our real social object hypothesis, since its systemic feature assures its admitting both withholding and connectivity. This means that the real object remains the place for withdraw, privacy and surprises, but we can know it is not something: it is not absolutely disconnected from its sociability due to the metacategory of systemic feature. In other words, real social objects are not *immune* to systematicity; rather, they seem both to generate it, to proliferate it and even come to depend upon systematicity[44].

This insight brings our philosophy closer to Systems Theory to explain different appetitions coexisting in the same unified social object. With Niklas Luhmann, for example, we can use theories of level-gradation that freed systems-thinking from the need to have every single part of a system process all stimuli in order to act on something trivial.[45] Consider the appetition of brain-stomach cellular network regarding hunger, which does not entail that my hair is hungry. Yet my hair is just as much as part of my body as is my

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42 This is a point that may help us understand Bergson's difference between *real action* and *possible action,* and even to bring him into the fold in this this respect at least. In *Matter and Memory* (25 ff.), Bergson differentiates a *real action* as a reflexive reaction on stimuli, whereas in *possible action*, the complexification arises from the reality of options and choices. This helps us illustrate our point here, for a real action of a person trying to quit smoking would be to cede to part of its system's appetition that desires a cigarette, but he also has this possible action arising from other part of his system's appetition that would like for him to quit. This provides evidence for the distinction between appetitions, even inside the same system. Larger social objects, such as the European Union, make these differences even more evident.

43 We downsize Whitehead's claim that "each atom is a system of all things" on page 36 of *Process and Reality*'s in two ways: first, we believe he was using stylistic phrasing while talking generally about the achievements of science; second, my feelings towards an atom, although real, do not constitute its systematicity. All we need to say is that continuity and discontinuity is much more complicated than mere boundaries between objects.

44 I believe much more can be said about this generation, proliferation and dependency on systematicity, but this is not the place to fully deploy such an intricate argumentation. It should suffice to say that I take up Markus Gabriel's idea that we should not rely on a hardcore concept of necessity, even if it is Meillassoux's necessity of contingency. When I talk about systematicity and the dependency it nourishes, I am much more in line with Gabriel's contingent necessities theory. Cf. Gabriel's works, especially chapter 2 of *O Sentido da Existência*, in which he gave the general outline of this argument, which would later be much more developed in his major work *Fields of Sense*, particularly chapter 11 on modalities.

45 Luhmann, "Introduction to Systems Theory," 121. At this point, Luhmann introduces the theory of level-gradation as espoused by cyberneticist William Ross Ashby, which freed systems thinking of having to mobilize every single unit to act on trivial stimuli. There is no simultaneous interdependence of parts, since levels are gradated into internal differentiations. It is a non-holistic thinking that very much suits our purposes here. Also, cf. Maciel, "Correlationism Revisited," for a further development of this argument and the way it connects to my heterodox reading of Meillassoux.

brain-stomach network. The thesis of discontinuity is not as absolute as Harman views it, and our systemic take on object-oriented philosophy might explain the unified social object in a better way, for it admits both specialized regions for contact and appetitions outside it, and also an inner realm or systemic core. This enables the previously stated admission for withholding and linkage, and multiplies it to infinity for as many internality-towards-wholes as a real social object may have. We observe here the appearance of another radical type of novelty. It is not restricted to the one that owes its existence to the surprises coming from the inner realm of real objects (which already are of transfinite possibilities). We now perceive the linkage feature, which also introduces vast and wild novelty into our philosophy's jurisdiction whenever actualized. Each new linkage breeds whole new transfinite sets of emergent novel objects (be they sensual or real) significantly much more than a single perishing actual entity.

The thesis of radical continuity of School Y, however, is kept at bay, since the metacategory of internal/external (in its system/environment presentation) is precisely what is to be assured by the integration of real objects theory into our ontology. This means: gaps between objects (for example, my heart and lungs) must not be overlooked, even by virtue of said objects belonging to a larger society at the same time. This is due to the fact that a society is not reducible to its parts – neither is the part reducible to its "towards-the-whole" systemic feature. Again, both gaps and linkages need to be explained, and the real social object hypothesis of our industrious ontology permits both.

Accordingly, I would like to replace Harman's odd characterization for the term "becoming" with the concept of *pre-determinative hierarchy*. This concept means that, because the "great One" or the "Great Flux" dictates what and how entities determinatively have to be, these entities would be mere second-class realities. Yet I agree with Harman that "becoming" is only one type of process. To criticize pre-determinative hierarchy means to state that processes are not absolutely determinative over their products. Creativity is Whitehead's ultimate category, and novelty is always there. This is another clear distinction from School Y's attitudes, whether from a Bergsonian philosopher who submits to the superior reality of the élan vital or *durée*, or Simondonian/Deleuzian philosopher who subsumes individuals under the becoming of the pre-individual fluxes in the deeper virtual plane, deemed to be the "true reality." In School X, we have no pre-individual reality as a pre-determinative hierarchy, for the ontological principle clearly states that actual entities/social objects are the only reasons for anything. Harman casually remarks that Whitehead's process is more related to fully-formed individuals than to the mere processes of comings and goings of hollow objects subservient to the Great Flux.[46] Now we know, with the social object hypothesis, that this is indeed the case, especially in Whitehead's unexplored doctrines of corpuscular societies.

Harman points out that Whitehead separated his philosophy from the notion of "continuity of becoming", which is School Y's most important tenet tracing back to Zeno of Elea. Rather, in *Process and Reality*, he defends a theory of the extensive continuum in which there is a *becoming of continuities*. Consequently, it does not mean that it is the "same thing" forever and for everything, nor that it is a theory of enduring substances or of the perpetual numerical one/same. Whitehead says:

> Every act of becoming must have an immediate successor, if we admit that something becomes. For otherwise we cannot point out what creature becomes as we enter upon the second in question. But we cannot, in the absence of some additional premise, infer that every act of becoming must have had an immediate predecessor. The conclusion is that in every act of becoming there is a becoming of something with temporal extension; but the act itself is not extensive, in the sense that it is divisible into earlier and later acts of becoming which corresponds to the extensive divisibility of what has become.[47]

I will name this the *principle of the inextensiveness of becoming*. It will be housed in the internality of the systemic core, its internal inextensive level, which I believe fulfils Harman's requirements for withdrawal. As we know, this core can be corrupted, destroyed, objectified or, most importantly, just be left alone – all of these *extensive* relations are theoretically admissible.

Whitehead details further the source of the determination for transformation. For him, it comes from the *subjective aim*, which makes the creature/social object into a final *superject* – or a real social object, in

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46 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 234.
47 Whitehead, Process and Reality, 69.

our terminology. Subjective aim is a part of the mental pole of the *res vera48/real object* which is seeking to integrate conceptual prehensions. From here on out, we shall equate this pole to the notion of systemic core. Prehensions may be divisible, but the core/subjective aim is not. However, its relation inside the actual entity/*res vera* is not one of absolute separation. The "mental pole" of the *res vera* is something that belongs inside the system *precisely* because it relates to the creature/social object as its superject. It is a different kind of internal relation for it takes the social object as a whole for itself: this is the *internality-towards-whole* we have already begun to present. Were this not the case, we would cede to the vacuous actuality of appetitions arising from nowhere and going into nothing. To avoid this, we now add to our social object hypothesis the systemic characteristic that ensues from the inextensiveness of becoming, which is guided by the internality of our self-enclosed real social object. When does a novel entity/object that underwent a becoming acquire extension? The answer: when it actualizes its concrescence into a social object as the final stage of satisfaction, even if for just a moment.

3.3 Whitehead and relations

Continuing, Harman says "yes, Whitehead is a philosopher of relation."[49] Here, he is claiming that Whitehead is strongly opposed to the self-containment theory of substance. While this seems to be the case, we must clarify the point further. Two theses that are indeed chased away from Whitehead's philosophy are (1) the *causa sui* theory of substances; and (2) the doctrine of vacuous actualities. Thesis (1) may be chiefly associated with Descartes' and Spinoza's philosophies, but many have used the idea that substances need to be the sole cause of themselves either to support an ontological monism, or to deny substances *because* of this definition. For Whitehead, not even God is *causa sui*, since God too is an actual entity.[50] God depends on the rest of the universe to keep making prehensions, which makes use of eternal objects actualizing God's subjective aim towards satisfaction. The eternal objects are "stored" by God's prehension of them; therefore, they may be prehended by any actual entity because God "holds" them: that is God's function. If actual entities ceased to prehend, there would be no concrescence, no actualization of God's satisfaction that arises from his subjective aim. Whitehead then defends the idea of a community of cosmic solidarity between the actual temporal world and the a-temporal God – however, both are made up of actual entities.[51] Be that as it may, I would like to at least hint at the fact that there is no reason, outside the pressure for selection coming from Abrahamic tradition, to believe that this function of storing eternal objects should be delegated to one single actual entity. Perhaps this function should be reworked, but this is neither the time nor place to embark on such a vast and demanding enterprise.

   Thesis (2) is Whitehead's well-known aversion to the doctrine of vacuous actualities, which takes into account no detail of the solidarity of the cosmos to describe the birth, growth, withering or death/dissolution of any social object whatsoever. This doctrine presupposes objects as *ex nihilo*, with no materials, no

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48 The term *res vera* is of Cartesian origin, and is used by Whitehead as a synonym for "actual entity" or "final reality." Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 22, First Category of Existence.

49 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 242.

50 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 75.

51 Ibid., 65. The relation between Whitehead and a-temporality is just another of the unexplored theses, inspirations or consequences of his philosophy. Process theologians usually treat this in connection with Christian traditions, but the untrodden path is the Ancient Greek religion. There is no meta-ontological event of the *ex nihilo* "Creation" in either the Ancient Greeks or Whitehead. Some process theologians appealed to the idea of continuous creation as found in religious occasionalism. This strategy fails because it is still an *ex nihilo*, just multiplied by the infinity of substances. Whitehead's creativity *in* nature and *of* nature places him much closer to Plato's *Timaeus* than to the thinkers of the Abrahamic traditions, who seem to believe that giving Nature the powers of creation would be heretical. However, this is precisely the case here, for eternal objects do not determine nothing: they merely perform some functions, such as lending themselves for ingression into the constitution of an actual entity through dative ingression, conformal physical feelings, conceptual feelings or comparative feelings (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 164). None of these functions is guided by God, but by each actual entity's subjective aim that coordinate (or ignore) the manifold of prehensions coming from many places: "each task of creation is a social effort" (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 223).

processes, no relations, no historical routes, no symbiosis, no reality – and this really does not seem to be the case for any kind of object.[52] Be that as it may, it is not yet enough to understand the type of enclosure Whitehead is proposing in order to differentiate between enduring objects/corpuscular societies and his rejection of the enduring substance theory.

We have shown that our systems-approach via the real social object hypothesis is not only coherent with the philosophy of organism; rather, it seems to be the very basis of its macroscopical applications and its further connections. The binomial "operational closure" and "cognitive openness" found in Luhmann's theory is not equal to a *causa sui* theory, for the openness is not only made possible by the closure, but is also a requirement of it.[53] The best example seems to be the operational closure of the brain coupled with its openness towards the environment in order to survive and maintain its closure. This means that a systemic object-oriented philosophy can handle closure, openness and social objects without precluding one in favor of the other or insisting on pre-determinative hierarchies. Social objects can withstand change, and do not depend on every relation to everything else at all times. Nor do all of its parts even need to be involved in every single interaction, operation or function.

An actual entity is what it is, but the corpuscular society is something else. There is evidently a "break" in the "categoreal continuum"[54] when a corpuscular society emerges from a mere nexus of actual entities. Therefore, I believe Harman's accusation that Whitehead thought of entities as an "utter determinacy" is not the case. There is always an inner realm or systemic core beyond any individual relations opened to creative complexity. Another way to put it: there is always the subjective aim beyond ordinary prehensions willing to integrate conceptual and physical prehensions into novelties. To conclude this argument, we not only can have closure without ceding to *causa sui* or to the doctrine of vacuous actuality; it is actually an ontological requirement for macro-ontological rational and empirical purposes of speculative philosophy.

Let us now consider Harman's accusation that "Whitehead is one of the foremost champions in Western philosophy of a relational metaphysics, in which entities have no reality apart from their interaction with other entities."[55] This relates to his critique of overmining philosophies that relations/prehensions supposedly exhaust objects. We shall refer to this as the *depletion hypothesis*. Now let's contrast this with Whitehead's text:

> Each actual entity [for us also, 'each social object'] is analyzable in an indefinite number of ways. In some modes of analysis, the component elements are more abstract than in other modes of analysis. The analysis of an actual entity into 'prehensions' is that mode of analysis which exhibit the most concrete elements in the nature of actual entities. (…) [A prehension] is referent to an external world, and in this sense will be said to have a 'vector character'; it involves emotion and purpose, and valuation, and causation. In fact, any characteristic of an actual entity is reproduced in a prehension. It might have been a complete actuality; but, by reason of a certain incomplete partiality, a prehension is only a subordinate element in an actual entity.[56]

This passage leaves no doubt that no prehension exhausts any actual entity. They are subordinate elements. If prehensions are not the totality of an actual entity, and if "actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other,"[57] this means that there is always something held back in each prehension –

52 Perhaps only Meillassoux comes closer to being fully committed to such an unreasonable idea: through his concept of hyperchaos, a sort of "Anti-Demiurge," which is the only principle to monopolize and produce all changes in the omniverse randomly and at its own whim (Cf. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, esp. Chapter 3; Maciel, *Meta-metafísica e correlacionismo*, particularly item C.1). I believe Harman's real objects are neither *ex nihilo* nor contingent on the fancy randomness of hyperchaos. This is made evident in Harman, *Immaterialism*, in which he describes at length the birth, growth, symbiotic moments and dissolution of the Dutch East India Company.
53 Luhmann, *Introduction to Systems Theory*, 64 ff.
54 This is Nicolai Hartmann's expression, which appeared in his *New Ways of Ontology*, 77, and then he recursively uses this "break" metaphor throughout the rest of the book. This describes a situation in which superior strata of reality do not retain all the same categories from bellow. The category of space, for instance, is part of the physical and organic strata, but not of the psychological: it "breaks" on the organic/psychological border.
55 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 242.
56 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 19, brackets mine.
57 Ibid., 20.

which means, the space for real objectivity in withdrawal, in Harman's sense. This becomes extraordinarily more clear when we take our level of analysis to the real social object hypothesis, which is in a very complex realistic entanglement with so many other real social objects, though none are exhausted by the other. An actual entity is perpetually perishing, indeed, but the corpuscular society/real social object can withstand change, for it is not dependent on their relations to everything else all the time. If I lose my connection to breathable air, it does not mean I am instantly dead. I may be holding my breath due to an unpleasant smell, or because I am swimming. The social object is neither a *causa sui* absolutely isolated entity, nor is it a holistic hyperbole connected to everything at all times. The variation of modes of systemic features of existence must be accounted for in any complex realist philosophy: its contingency/necessity must be industriously interpreted, and not taken for granted, in view of its admitting the features of internality, towards-whole, and linkage. This is an intermediate-level ontology that I believe meets Harman's criteria for object-oriented philosophies.

To conclude this analysis, we have seen that prehensions do not exhaust the actual entity – and the social object even less so. Now I would like to ascertain that the type of enclosure that we are looking for rests on the real internal constitution of the social objects[58]. We have seen, by virtue of the principle of inextensiveness of becoming, that social objects are not dominated by their "becoming," in the popular sense. Rather, they have an aim towards satisfaction, which involves the ingression of conceptual and physical prehensions in the integrative phases of concrescence. Who guides this concrescence? Whitehead is very clear: "the concrescence is dominated by a subjective aim which essentially concerns the creature as a final superject. This subjective aim is this subject itself determining its own self-creation as one creature."[59] The subjective aim, the "mental pole" of the internality of the social object, or the systemic core (nomenclature here are dealer's choice) produces a towards-whole of itself by treating the social object as a whole different from its parts. Its superjective nature emerges from the activity of the subjective aim that integrates so many prehensions coming from so many places, but the internal/external metacategory is of paramount importance in determining *what* and *how* this will be coordinated – and even *if* this will come to pass at all.

3.4 Final analysis of Harman's take on Whitehead

What Harman emphasizes most is the point of the integrity of individuals. This is why he feels closer to Whitehead and Latour than to School Y. His main adversary is clearly Deleuze. What he likes most in Whitehead is that there are gaps to be bridged. For School Y, discontinuity is a mystery, since everything is supposed to be metaphysically continuous – be it the continuity of *durée* (Bergson), the Deleuzian virtual plane, the radical empiricism of James, or the Simondonian pre-individual realm that has not yet been carved up into specific individuals.

The emergence of the superject comes from each actual entity on the micro-ontological level, but this is much more evident from each real social object. Additionally, it is not determined from outside. We quote the ninth Categoreal Obligation: "the concrescence of each individual entity is internally determined and externally free."[60] Whitehead summarizes this as the idea that "in each concrescence, whatever is determinable is determined, but that there is always a remainder for the decision of the subject-superject of that concrescence."[61] Thus, when Harman claims that Whitehead presents "God as a universal mediator who closes all gaps,"[62] this is not accurate at all. For Harman, this should be rejected not because of atheism,

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58 The expression "real internal constitution" comes from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (III, III, 15), and is quoted by Whitehead more than twenty times throughout *Process and Reality*. The first occurrence, curiously enough, comes when he is elaborating on the ontological principle.

59 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 69.

60 Ibid., 27.

61 Ibid., 27-28.

62 Harman, "Whitehead and Schools X, Y, and Z," 244.

but because no single entity should have the power to bridge all gaps.[63] However, this is not the case in *Process and Reality*. Again, God's function in Whitehead's system is to prehend eternal objects. Some set of the available inventory of eternal objects may ingress concrescence, but they neither guide this process, nor is their function to close any gap, let alone "all gaps." God is an accident of Creativity, for something needs to be held back in order for creativity to produce *new novelties* in a general, cosmic level. We will see in the next section how this can be resolved without the need for appealing to specific monotheistic entities.

Harman finishes his paper by claiming that he wants a philosophy that emphasizes objects over relations, for relations are explained in objects' terms. Therefore, Harman believes OOO could subsume any relationist philosophy under its paradigm.[64]

4 Towards a Whiteheadian Object-Oriented Philosophy

I will briefly present one of the assemblage pieces of my ongoing metaphysical engineering, to which I have been referring as Surology or Hadetics. I would like to quote the specific snippet from *Process and Reality* that first made me aware that OOO and School X could eventually to be united under a larger metaphysics, alongside the one with which I have been tinkering:

> The real internal constitution of an actual entity progressively constitutes a decision conditioning the creativity which transcends that actuality. The Castle Rock at Edinburgh exists from moment to moment, and from century to century, by reason of the decision effected by its own historic route of antecedent occasions. And if, in some vast upheaval of nature, it were shattered into fragments, that convulsion would still be conditioned by the fact that it was the destruction of *that* rock. 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 eat *that* lamb at *that* spot at *that* time: the wolf knew it; the lamb knew it; and the carrion birds knew it.[65]

Clearly, there is here a sketch of the real social object theory, for "every explanatory fact refers to the decision and to the efficacy of an actual thing."[66] Furthermore, here and in the last quotation there is clearly some sketch of an indexical metaphysics, similar to the one proposed by Bensusan[67] (albeit with very different arguments, which may be a good thing, since arriving at the same conclusion through different paths may function as an indication of truth). Importantly, these indexicals are not purely logical. Actually, only through very abstract reasoning can they be presented as something purely logical, which can very easily become a fallacy of misplaced concreteness, which "consists in neglecting the degree of abstraction involved when an actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought."[68] Indexicals refer to lively real experiences with real social objects which "enjoy adventures of change throughout space and time."[69]

This is why an object is not merely an event. Analogously to when Harman says that *objects* are *what* may or may not enter relations, we say: events are *about* objects. A hypothetical earthquake, for example, would destroy *that* Castle Rock of Edinburgh – and this would not be related to the influence of Aristotle on Avicenna's philosophy, or to the legal institution of impeaching a president, or to the fact that jellyfish do not breathe air. Objects, as we learned from Harman, are to be defined by their *autonomous* reality – and events do not, by any chance whatsoever, exhaust objects or encompass them all. They even may extinguish some of them in destruction, but that is by no means the only event possible that a social object could undergo. Even if we go towards a huge object, such as a galaxy, it would still be an emergent real social object, and

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 246.
65 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 43. The italics are Whitehead's own.
66 Ibid., 46.
67 Cf. Bensusan, "Towards an Indexical Paradoxico-Metaphysics."
68 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 7-8.
69 Ibid., 35.

each of its parts would relate to it as to their superject in a myriad of novel ways.[70] On the grounds that novel objects emerge when social object A and social object B relate to C or D; and because events are *about* objects, we can comprehend why Whitehead insists there are no meta-events that encompass all events.[71] Presumably this is also Whitehead's metaphysical rendering of Russell's Paradox applied to *Process and Reality*'s Theory of Extension (Part IV).

Internal events must be differentiated through the application of the internal/external metacategory that animates the social objects' system/environment differentiation. Even so, internal events also relate to its towards-whole, its superjective nature, and are by no means overdetermined by a pre-determinative hierarchy. This functions as a decisive piece of evidence that made me strongly accept Harman's argument that Whitehead is clearly not a member of School Y.

Now, to quickly return to my expression of *macro-ontological purposes*, I quote this poetic part of *Process and Reality*:

> An "object" is a transcendent element characterizing that *definiteness* to which our "experience" has to conform. In this sense, the future has *objective* reality in the present, but no *formal* actuality. For it is inherent in the constitution of the immediate, present actuality that a future will supersede it. Also conditions to which that future must conform, including real relationships to the present, are really objective in the immediate actuality. Thus each actual entity, although complete so far as concerns its *microscopic* process, is yet incomplete by reason of its objective inclusion of the *macroscopic* process. It really experiences a future which must be actual, although the completed actualities of that future are undetermined. In this sense, each actual occasion experiences its own objective immortality.[72]

We see that the historical route is just as important as the systemic core, since the decisions of the social object towards its satisfactions are to be anchored in the definiteness of that object. This is exactly the same point Harman will make in *Immaterialism*, when he describes the birth of the Dutch East India Trading Company (VOC), its initial successes and failures, the arrival of Governor-General Coen, the infamous *Discourse* that founded the rationally sanctioned barbaric colonial praxis, and all the other events Harman describes.[73] The real social object of the VOC needs to be taken in its internality (the system/environment differentiation), its towards-whole feature (Coen's symbiotic ingression and the *Discourse* which became the stabilized objectivity of the VOC), and its linkage feature (in Harman's book, to the Portuguese, to the natives of the Moluccas Islands– but to Harman himself too, and to many other entities). Additionally, we must remember that each of these examples are real social objects in their own right as well.

The enunciation of the Ontological Principle is then reformed in Surology to refer not only to the microscopic level of actual entities, but also to real social objects at the macroscopic level. This was done so as to better pursue speculative philosophy's empirical side and to highlight the value of coherence as an argument for the sociality of nature. The category of actual entity functions better under Surology's negative philosophical mode of operation, of something that limits and grounds other categories of existence, albeit being unstable for macroscopic purposes of epistemology, technology and politics. I believe this also satisfies Harman's requirement for real objects in withdrawal, since they do not fully reveal themselves to anything, be it praxis or theory, humans or other perceivers. The positive philosophical mode of operation is the real complex articulations and studies of the internality of the object, of its internality-towards-whole, and of its real linkage – both being active components of the rational and empirical parts of speculative philosophy.

We now have elements to treat *Process and Reality*'s categoreal scheme not in a linear disposition, but putting it into evidence as a categoreal matrix. The ontological principle will occupy the center, with

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70 This argument brings me closer to another object-oriented ontologist, Timothy Morton. He coined the term *hyperobject*, which Harman defines as "objects deployed so massively in space or time that human beings cannot engage with them in any reciprocal way. This should be obvious once we think of radioactive waste, plastic garbage, or global warming itself, all of them having effects at a scale we can hardly begin to conceive." (Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*, 232). For more information, cf. Morton, *Hyperobjects*.

71 Cf. Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, Chapter IV: "The Method of Extensive Abstraction."

72 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 215. Italics mine.

73 I am being witty on purpose here, for Harman wrote the paper we are talking about in 2014, and two years later, he would end up exercising many of the functionally similar theses we have been discussing here. Cf. Harman, *Immaterialism*, Part II.

the principles of relativity and process orbiting around this categoreal nucleus. They are guided (a) by the internal ontological pulse towards satisfaction and towards integration of physical and conceptual prehensions; and (b) by the external possibility of influencing the becoming of other real social objects, even as being *matter* for other real social objects by means of Whitehead's theory of objectification.[74] Emerging out of the ontological principle-centered matrix, the difference between the principle of process and the principle of relativity accounts for the surplus of reality in any perspectives whatsoever, even coming from self-description of the system for its eventual particular internal changes. This differentiation provides the subject-matter for maintenance, emergence, or even mutation. Arising from this matrix, we now are able to see that it is due to the feature of internality-towards-whole (which admits withdrawal into a society/system), and due to the consequential formation of symbiotic relations/structural couplings, that gaps appear. They appear from *withdrawal*, and not just from *boundaries*. The gap is the *why* of the principle of relativity, and does not determine *how* it will be used – be it by others, or by the self-organizing system/ real social object. In the mode of existence arising from the principle of relativity, the social object only functions as subject-matter for whatever may come.

The ingression of OOO's real objects theory allows Surology to unify the vagueness of Whitehead's treatment of corpuscular societies in their own right. Not because he is an "overminer," but because he was more interested in cosmology: the extensive continuum, cosmic epoch, and other theories regarding nature's vastness. What we are doing here is also fulfilling his directives for the task of providing a scheme to satisfy the empirical side of speculative philosophy, and stretching our interpretative jurisdiction of possibilities as wide as possible, so long as we do not lose categoreal coherence. We will benefit from a macro-ontological approach to real social objects that has room for a unified systemic-superjective enclosure that coordinates, hides, exposes, evolves, adapts and/or furthers its inner systemic core. The degrees of endurance and the strata of emergence are transversally embedded into an object's subjective aim towards-whole, actualisable not only in ordinary concrescences at the level of actual entities, but also in social systemic ones, such as art, law, economy, science, etc.

It is not our point to subsume OOO under Whitehead, or vice versa. Rather, it is an alliance that aims at integrating both as real components in this metaphysical framework of Surology/Hadetics: not assimilation, but *symbiosis*. The *reason* of things, particularly regarding their coherence and empirical variables, is redirected through our re-reading that stabilized a *real social object-oriented ontology*. To conceive communicative reflections on, about, or by them, is to do philosophy.[75] Maybe we could simplify refer to this long name as a *unit*.[76] The implications of my argumentation cannot be exhausted here, but we believe we have shown there are reasons for claiming philosophy belongs to all who can produce communication about units, against units, create new units, and so on – even within themselves.

I have on occasion criticized some of Whitehead's ideas throughout this paper. Here I would like to register another important critique: I have little faith in subjective aim being such a strong determinative power as Whitehead claims. Maybe he needed to make a strong case for the capacity of speculative

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74 This theory would require a whole new paper, but it should suffice to allude to the fact that it bridges one real object with another with which it interacts. Object A objectifies Object B, which means, A "transforms" B from a real object into a sensual object, by highlighting physical and conceptual prehensions emerging from it (real qualities). Also, B might display general elements that might only be sensual qualities regarding its own internality-towards-whole, but these sensual qualities might become real qualities through different processes of objectification. The color green, for example, is basically the only part of the light spectrum not absorbed by most plants – however, this sensual quality becomes real quality when we are painting a picture of a beautiful ravine in spring. This *new* real object, the painting, has *green* as one of its real qualities.

75 I should clarify that I am referring to Luhmann's theory of communication, and not those found in mainstream philosophy of language or among adherents of the Frankfurt School. Luhmann draws heavily on Peirce's trichotomy to come up with his own triad of message-medium-comprehension. This is neither the time nor the place to fully go into details, but this theory takes communication as the unit of sociological analysis, since it has a self-enclosure that permits it to be spoken, read, thought and reproduced independently from the emitter, a specific receiver, consensus or specific orders. This took Luhmann far away from mainstream philosophy of language, and closer to his friend Jacques Derrida's concept of écriture, or the "absence of the author." Cf. Luhmann *Introduction to Systems Theory*, Lecture VI; and Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*.

76 I hope Ian Bogost won't mind my tagging along. But my focus is less on the unit-*operations* than on units before, during and after operations.

philosophy to arrive there. However, he is the same author who writes that "there is no reason, so far as our knowledge is concerned, to conceive the actual world as purely orderly, or purely as chaotic."[77] Maybe he could better account for chaos by weakening the determinative power of actual entities – and, in our case, of systems or real social objects. This attaches the *reason* for chaos not to a doctrine of vacuous actuality, but to a more appropriate point: the ontological principle. This means, chaos may be understood/interpreted as cumulative residual effects of prehensions. The unit chooses something over something else, but this is not completely determined neither internally (for the subjective aim of a society is not all that strong as an actual entity's), nor externally (because of the principle of relativity's incapacity to determine how it will be used as subject-matter for others). Since all units operate in some way, even when withdrawing, all units produce chaos. As such, we have an ontological grounding for chaos that yields at least some interesting possible interpretations.[78] This does not just mean an "origin story" of chaos, but also sketches ways to mitigate its effects in the horizons of theoretical and pragmatic applications of speculative philosophy (Hadetics, OOO, Whitehead, and other complex realist friends).

As a final point, I believe another pertinent critique of Whitehead, arises in connection with his theology. We have seen that he deems God an accident of Creativity, that which is held back for the emergence of *new novelties*. But we can defend something different: what is held back is the superjective nature of each and every real social object (be it inorganic, mechanic, organic, psychological or social), and who decides what is to be held back is, again, each social real object. Some set of eternal objects may be conceptually prehended among a larger society of social objects, but they can be abstracted from these prehensions, without need for an "eternal object storage room." We can abstractly conceive of a point whenever we see a drop of black ink, a flying seagull on the horizon, or a peanut. The eternal object "point" can easily be abstracted from these social objects, with no need for a God storing the idea of "point" that is to be prehended. Therefore, Surology has no need for a God like Whitehead's. The corpuscular society's superject withholds any number of qualities that might be processed into eternal objects. Furthermore, their subjective aims ground all possible interpolations between stasis and change. Even in inertia, there is a lot going on when we are talking about stasis, for it too must not be presupposed: it needs to be explained, just like change also needs to be explained. This interpretation radicalizes the primacy of the ontological principle and the categoreal matrix centered on social objects it ensues, but it also frees the divine beings from the task of having to hold something back. It leaves space not only for religious plurality, but for a myriad of ways to constitute, relate to, and conceive of the divine nature of God, gods, goddesses, spirits and any other functionally equivalent religious units.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I will summarize Harman's results in the following values: 1 for "depends upon" or "is exhausted by"; 0 for "denies"; and ½ for "a case need be made":

- School X: Process → 1; Becoming → 0; Relations → 1;
- School Y: Conflation of the three variables → 1;
- School Z: Denial of all three variables → 0.

In order to approximate X and Z (while maintaining School Y at bay), our research came to show different data through the sophistication of the variables. "Process" became (i') preference for change over stasis;

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77 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 110.
78 I have previously made a functionally similar argument against Meillassoux's hyperchaos, insofar as it is grounded in Time's absolute and whimsical power to change anything randomly. Outside the whims of hyperchaos' nothing whatsoever would change at all. Therefore, absolutely no change would be possible if it were not produced by this Anti-Demiurge-like figure. *This*, ladies and gentlemen, is what a "mediator that closes all gaps" looks like. In my 2017 presentation (Maciel, *Ontology of the Complexity as Arche-Materiality*) I was inspired by Hägglund, "Radical Atheist Materialism." I presented a case for the *Arche-Materiality of Complexity*, which was a framework for a cosmological way to enunciate the ontological conclusions we have reached in this paper. These, in turn, provide a more sophisticated grounding for what was, at that time, only an unspecific general cosmological insight.

"Becoming" was replaced by (ii') presence of pre-determinative hierarchy; and "Relations" turned out to be (iii') the depletion hypothesis. This sophistication of variables yielded different results in the classification. For us, (i') stasis and change both emerge from the ontological principle and the categoreal matrix that it ensues, since necessity and contingency are both admitted into the categoreal systemic feature of real social objects. Therefore, preferences vary. Also, (ii') there is no pre-determinative hierarchy, but rather units coming out of units. Plus, due to the limitations of the principle of relativity in the face of the selection criteria of the subjective aim, there is no way for the subject matter to determine neither how it will be prehended (positively or negatively) or through which coordinative operations this shall or shall not proceed. They might merely provide *some* elements – *some* real/sensual qualities – to be prehended, and not determine what will stay and what will be neglected. Finally, (iii') relations do not define, but rather *presuppose* the ontological principle, for prehensions have merely a subsidiary relation to actual entities and to real social objects, therefore not depleting them.

Applying the new variables to School Z, we have said that there is stasis and there are also changes in objects – for example, the decades-long stasis of VOC and the changes brought by Governor-General Coen and his *Discourse*. Both are important in understanding this social object. There is no pre-determinative hierarchy, for even if the VOC was formally commanded by the Dutch Republic, the long distance and stock autonomy of the Company assured its autonomous reality. Finally, objects may engage in relations with others through other objects, such as the VOC, Coen, the Moluccas Islands and the polemical slaughters perpetrated by that Company against natives in present-day Indonesia – but none of them exhaust the others. There is always (a) something withdrawn from access; and (b) novelties produced by the social objects and their interactions.

In summation, I believe our research has shown the following results:

- School S {Schools X, Z (OOOs), Surology}: (i) → ½; (ii) → 0; (iii) → 0;
- School Y: Conflation of the three variables → 1.

I would like to end this paper with one proposition, and the acknowledgement of two further ideas on the horizon of possibilities. The proposition is polemical: through the idea of the categoreal matrix centered on the ontological principle towards the real social object (or unit), the quadruple scheme would be duly activated and made operational without the obligatory recourse to modern philosophies. The withdrawing unit gives us the real object pole and its internality. The unit objectified by anything else gives us the sensual object pole. The unit's withstanding of changes gives us the sensual qualities pole. The way a unit regulates its real internal constitution that ensues from the systemic feature and the towards-whole feature give us the real qualities pole. Particularly, I believe School S's way of dealing with the *real object – real quality* tension is thus much better explained than through a vague appeal to "essence." If by that we can understand the systemic features of social objects through the categoreal matrix (specifically involving its historical routes and its relativity), then perhaps we can shine a light on this issue. It also has the advantage of not being too dependent upon eidetic reduction and its seeming mentalist characteristic. The matrix pairs up much better with the second pathway for the real objects, for it can theorize the rifts (object x quality; sensual x real) independently from the (post)moderns.

Two ideas also dawn on the horizon for later development. The formula "events are about objects" takes us back yet to another school of Ancient Greek philosophy that we and Harman have not yet discussed: Stoicism. The conclusion we have reached, that events *per se* are not the ground floor for School S, has direct connection to their corporealism, a metaphysical position that grounds ontology in bodies. It is worth remembering that, for the Stoics, "body" is not necessarily "material," since Zeus, the Logos, the Spirit, are all examples of *body* just no less than a chair or fire. They characterized bodies in a way that sounds familiar to School S: bodies are *limited*. For them, the incorporeals *subsist* regarding the corporeals, therefore they may be unlimited, as is the case for time, space, void and the *lekta* ("sayables"). Incorporeals are nothing by themselves, for they are not truly beings. Only bodies are beings when they *limit* incorporeals in their own peculiar ways. For example, the incorporeal space is occupied by a building, and then it might be conceived as a room or place. We can say that *events subsist units*: it is the units that produce events, which are affected by them, which enter or leave relations, reinforcing the centrality of the ontological principle in our categoreal matrix. Stated differently: units *occupy* events.

Another idea for the horizon is that this work is a prelude to a new material value ethics (with a decisive Scheler-Hartmann inspiration, naturally) which draws heavily on our unusual School S alliance. This means that we might conceive of new ethical values for a global philosophy by having our own reasons to defend or reject any specific set of values or tenets. This would surely have overwhelming implications for all social systems and the theories conceivable on the basis of them: such as a strong case for the sociality of nature, the unwavering importance of individuals, the autopoiesis of social systems as a material-ethical value. Maybe then, just maybe, we could once again dare to hope and dream of a creatively complex way to work towards a new common good.

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