Karen Felter Vaucanson

A COMPLEX RELATION

Reading Anne Conway from a
Process Theological Perspective

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**THE HISTORY OF HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIGNITY
IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION**

Cover image
Origenes by Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652) courtesy of Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino

Preface

I am extremely grateful for the help and support I have received from colleagues, friends, and family throughout the long process of writing this thesis. Special thanks go to my advisor Prof. Dr. Dr. Alfons Fürst and my secondary advisor Prof. Dr. Anders-Christian Jacobsen for always being available, for supporting my interests and ideas, and for providing me with valuable feedback from the very beginning. I am also very grateful to Prof. Dr. Catherine Keller for taking an interest in my project, meeting with me, and discussing various aspects of process theology. Special thanks are also due to my wonderful colleagues who have, in the process, become dear friends to me: Dr. Christian Hengstermann for reading and re-reading an exorbitant number of drafts, for answering my many – and sometimes senseless – questions, and for always believing in me; Dr. Marilyn Lewis for stimulating conversations, support and help, and especially for the immense and diligent work in copy-editing the finished thesis; Dr. Aurica Jax for insightful comments on process theology, for being a role model and a power-lady, and for infinite hospitality; Rev. Anders Gadegaard for a general interest in my work, for fruitful discussions about the implications of process theology, and for helping me present my project and its scope at the final project conference.

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Although I could not have completed this thesis without the help of the people mentioned above, I am solely responsible for any errors or mistakes. This thesis was submitted for publication before Jonathan Head's book *The Philosophy of Anne Conway: God, Creation and the Nature of Time* (Bloomsbury, 2020) came out. I have therefore been unable to address his reading of Conway here.

Copenhagen, October 2020   *Karen Felter Vaucanson*

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INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth-century philosopher Anne Conway (1631–1679) has received renewed attention from scholars of various fields during the last three decades. Preeminently, the historian of philosophy Sarah Hutton has contributed important work to this scholarly development by publishing a re-edited version of the Viscountess' correspondence, published in 1992, and by writing a seminal intellectual biography, published in 2004. Numerous other historians of philosophy have directed their attention to Conway and have convincingly shown her to be an important contributor to the philosophical debates of her time. Her only work, a short treatise entitled *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* is a strong critique of the most influential philosophers of her time, René Descartes (1596–1650), Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677), and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). In the treatise, she proposes a highly original anti-dualist, anti-pantheist, and anti-materialist solution to the mind-body problem.

More recently, there has been budding interest in Conway from other perspectives than that of the history of philosophy. The theologian Catherine Keller (1953–) reads the *Principles* as a prefiguration of a post-modern anti-dualism that views reality as a continuous and fluid process of becoming. Relatedness, freedom, and identity are the main themes taken up by Keller in her reading of Conway, which seeks to address some contemporary theological issues. As a process theologian, Keller speaks from within a strand of theology that is based on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), who saw in Descartes's philosophy – and in most philosophy thereafter – an unfortunate tendency to conceptualize being by way of a static substance ontology. Whitehead argues that modern philosophy since Descartes has viewed reality as something fixed and objective that can be described definitively. In contrast, his own philosophy places emphasis on the value of subjective experience, thus making context and interpretation the fundamental building blocks of reality.

These two different philosophical strands provide the background for the present analysis of Anne Conway's theology as the contrast between them is used as a means to exploring a subtle tension in her *Principles*. As a seventeenth-century philosopher, Anne Conway operates within a paradigm that views substance as independent and static but Keller argues that the *Principles* contains an alternative ontology that is based on a fluid and inherently interdependent substance

theory and which therefore views reality as a processual movement of continuous becoming.

The present thesis attempts to investigate how and to what extent Conway's philosophy can be viewed as a precursor to process theology. I focus on two main themes: the God-world relation and the spirit-body relation. Within these two themes, it is my ambition to develop and discuss the theological consequences that follow from a processual reading of Conway. Thus, by using process theology as a hermeneutical lens, I read the *Principles* for the purpose of exploring the destabilizing potential in Conway's metaphysics, as identified by Keller. In so doing, I am confronting an early modern treatise on metaphysics with modern and contemporary theological issues that are based on a post-modern resistance to static substance ontologies. It is the fundamental claim of the thesis that this approach opens up new and interesting perspectives on Conway's metaphysical system. While her treatise is constructed by way of a Cartesian rationalistic method, based on philosophical abstractions and logical deduction, the system itself contains elements that shake this foundation because they remain attuned to the importance of experience and interpretation in the philosophical description of reality. But I also emphasize that we should be careful to remember the places where Conway's position differs from that of modern process theology.

The thesis is structured in four main parts each of which is divided into subsections: First, "Aims and approach", second, "Intellectual context", third, the "The relation between God and the world, and fourth, "The relation between spirit and body". While the two first parts lay the groundwork for the thesis, parts three and four constitute the main analytical body of the dissertation. Throughout the dissertation I refer to the last two main parts as Part Three (the God-world relation) and Part Four (the spirit-body relation).

In the first main part, I present how process theology will function as the hermeneutical lens for my reading of Conway. I have compiled a body of material based on the writings of four chosen authors. These are: the founder of process philosophy Alfred N. Whitehead, who provides me with the terminological apparatus to explain how a processual ontology views reality; John B. Cobb Jr. (1925–) and David R. Griffin (1939–), who provide a theological superstructure to Whitehead's philosophy; and Catherine Keller, who has been chosen because she engages directly with Conway. Based on selected writings of the four authors, I develop a synthesis of process theology, and identify creativity and freedom as its two key categories. These categories are then applied to the *Principles* in order to problematize Conway's substance ontology with regard to the main themes of the God-world relation and spirit-body relation.

Before delving into the analysis of the *Principles*, I present, in the second part, the intellectual context in which Conway was situated. Although it is not the aim of the thesis to give a historical analysis of the *Principles*, an overview of the in-

tellectual context is necessary because her treatise is, above all, a dialogue with contemporary philosophies. I therefore begin with a brief biography of Conway and the circumstances surrounding the publishing of the *Principles* before moving on to introduce the three positions it critically engages with (dualism, pantheism, materialism). I then give a summary of the treatise itself. After this, I identify three "overlapping frameworks" that aim to show, using broad brush strokes, how Conway was embedded in a historical context where the relation between the rational and the empirical, the material and the spiritual, and the divine and the creaturely was questioned from many angles and in many different ways. By building on former scholarship, I want to show that the seventeenth century struggled with questionings of the stable world views of static substance ontologies but also sought to find new epistemological anchoring points. In the first framework, I give a brief introduction to the Baroque and the destabilizing potential found in the way it challenges the idea of absolute truth. The second and third frameworks, Neoplatonism and Quakerism, present two major sources of influence on Conway's thinking. I use these two frameworks to exemplify how Conway was engaged with both a rationalistic and an experience-based approach to understanding reality.

Having presented my aims and approach as well as having given an introduction to the intellectual context of Anne Conway's time, I turn to the main analytical parts of the thesis in which I investigate the processual potential of the *Principles*.

Part Three explores the main theological question underlying Anne Conway's *Principles*, namely how God relates to the world. I show that she answers this question from within a rationalistic, theocentric framework by use of logical deduction from God's divine and stable attributes. I analyze, first, how Conway's terminology itself may be said to problematize her stable system. While she evidently takes the idea of God to be clear and articulable, her terminology becomes gradually more blurred as we descend the ontological hierarchy from God to creation. I show how her use of the term "substance" differs according to which "level" of the ontological scale of her system she is operating on. Namely, she uses "substance" to describe God as static and creation as mutable. I suggest that this can be analyzed as a sliding from the ontology of being as static and absolute, found in her rationalist ideal, to what we might call an ontology of becoming that is only developed later in process theology. This development might testify to an implicit urge in the *Principles* to re-conceptualize the break between God and the world as a process rather than a static binary.

In the following three subsections of the first half of Part Three, I present Conway's metaphysics, which insists on three different substances: God, Christ, and creation. Conway's account of each of these substances is thoroughly analyzed, paying particular attention to elements that could hold a destabilizing potential

or speak to a process theological view of the God-world relation. I end each sub-section with a comparison to a process theological understanding.

In the second half of Part Three I change the perspective and explore how it might illuminate our understanding of Conway's view of the God-world relation if we read it from a process theological perspective. Here, the two process theological key categories of creativity and freedom direct my reading as I argue that we find both to be central concepts in Conway's text. Indeed, they are constitutive of her view of the God-world relation. I apply this to a discussion, first, of Conway's view of creation as either *ex nihilo* or *ex profundis* and, second, of her view of the difference between God's freedom and creatures' freedom.

I begin Part Four by arguing that the properties of and relation between spirit and body are a reworking of the same fundamental question as that of God's presence in the world, only from an anthropocentric perspective rather than a theocentric one. I take my point of departure in Conway's treatise to show how she refutes the "abstractions" of Cartesian dualism on the grounds of experience. Conway frames this discussion by accentuating the distinction between God's operations in the world, about which we have knowledge, and his divine will, which is inaccessible to human knowledge. I suggest that her arguments anticipate the later process theological critique of Descartes, as both her philosophy and that of process theology agree that dualism undermines the epistemological value of bodily experience. I then describe her understanding of spirit and matter in detail before moving on to explain the six arguments Conway gives for her spiritual monism. Throughout this account of Conway's position, I draw parallels to process theology.

In the second half of Part Four, I explore how Conway's cosmology of the many – the multiplicity inherent in every creature and their interdependent and changing reality – challenges the idea of an individual. The processual character of the one created substance expressed in the relatedness between body and spirit, as well as between all creatures, means that we cannot clearly distinguish the realm of actuality from the ideals of potentiality, nor community from the individual. In light of the analysis of Part Three and the first half of Part Four, I then explore how Conway and process theology, respectively, envision personal identity. I do so, first, by discussing similarities and differences in their views of how an individual is composed and what can be said to constitute personal identity. Second, the key categories of creativity and freedom are applied to amplify the differences between these views.

I end Part Four by looking briefly at Conway's account of spirit and body from a Christological perspective. The belief that God was incarnated in Jesus Christ is absolutely central to all Christian theology, and in Conway's system it can be said to epitomize the point where the divine spirit and the created substance converge in harmony. By using the concept of deep incarnation, I tentatively explore

how Conway's metaphysics can provide the foundation for a process theological understanding of Christ. I suggest that her position leads to a soteriology with social consequences where the possibility of salvation rests on the interdependence of creatures on each other and on God. In other words, hers is a soteriology that makes the infinity of complex relations in which individuals partake the very foundation for participation in the new creation springing from the fountain of love.

1. AIMS AND APPROACH

The premise of this thesis is that process theology can be used as a hermeneutical lens and provide a theological backdrop against which to read Anne Conway's treatise. It serves as hermeneutical lens in that it opens up some perspectives on how we may think of process and concepts linked to process. What does process theology mean when it says that being is process? How does process theology define this process? We need to answer these fundamental questions before asking how the concept of process informs the two main themes of the *Principles* (the God-world relation and the body-spirit relation).

The definition of process and process-related concepts used in the present thesis will be developed on the basis of selected writings by four prolific authors who have contributed to the development of process theology. These are: the founder of process philosophy Alfred N. Whitehead, who provides me with the terminological apparatus to explain how a processual ontology views reality; John B. Cobb Jr. and David R. Griffin, who provide a theological superstructure to Whitehead's philosophy; and Catherine Keller, who engages directly with Conway from a post-modern theological perspective.

These four authors represent process theology in three different generations: the beginning in the early twentieth century (1920s to 1930s), the "Golden Age" in the late twentieth century (1970s to 1990s) when process theology flourished, and today (2000–). Thus, while the presentation is based on a broad temporal span and writings of prolific authors with different areas of interest and approaches, I focus on specific concepts that are part of how they account for the relations between God and the world, and spirit and body. My aim is to identify thoughts, ideas, and concepts that unify these authors in their common goal of creating an alternative to the static substance ontologies of dualism, pantheism, and materialism. I will distill central concepts from their writings and from this create a synthesis of their thought, which will then be applied to the *Principles* in order to investigate to what degree Conway shares in a process theological world view.

1.1. Introduction to the Process Theological Authors

Whitehead was born in Kent, England, and studied mathematics at Cambridge University, where he was a fellow and later Senior Lecturer at Trinity College from 1884 to 1910. He co-authored the important mathematical work *Principia Mathe-*

matica (1910, 1912, 1913) with Bertrand Russell[1] and had a keen interest in physics, analytic philosophy, and the philosophy of science. In 1924 he was invited to the US where he took up a post at Harvard University as Professor of Philosophy. It was here, in his mature years, that he turned to metaphysics and wrote the books that are relevant to our present purpose: *Religion in the Making* (1926), which is the first statement of his mature position; *Process and Reality* (1929), which is considered his magnum opus; and *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), his last comprehensive philosophical work. Whitehead's philosophy, which he called the "philosophy of organism" bears witness to his comprehensive education and interests. Whitehead was deeply inspired by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), particularly his theory of monads.[2] Leibniz, in turn, may have taken his inspiration for this theory from Anne Conway.[3] Whitehead most likely did not read Conway directly, but he would have known of her ideas from Leibniz. His famous quote that all philosophy is "a series of footnotes to Plato"[4] shows his great appreciation of the Alexandrian Church Fathers, especially the Neoplatonists.[5] He particularly appreciated their insight about nature being spiritual and creative and their way of structuring reality around Logos.

Whitehead's process philosophy was developed into theology by Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000),[6] who met Whitehead at Harvard University in 1925, when he was working as his teaching assistant. Of particular relevance to this thesis is his development of Whitehead's philosophy into an understanding of God as "di-polar". In opposition to the classic monopolar theistic view of God as supreme, unchanging, One, activity, and so on, Hartshorne holds that God possesses these classical attributes as well as their contrasts. While Hartshorne's concept of God's dipolarity is important for this thesis, his theology is developed further by the second generation of process theologians, whom I use to a much greater degree than Hartshorne.

The most important authors of the second generation of process theologians are arguably John B. Cobb, Jr. (born 1925) and David Ray Griffin (born 1939).[7]

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1   See on this Desmet/David, Art. Alfred North Whitehead.
2   Whitehead himself expresses his admiration for Leibniz, see e.g. Whitehead, Modes of Thought 3. See also Basile, Learning from Leibniz 1128; Griffin, Process Theology 160. I shall explore this point further in Part Four.
3   Merchant, Vitalism of Anne Conway 255–269. I shall explore this point further in Part Four.
4   Whitehead, Process and Reality 39.
5   Especially the *Adventures of Ideas* is very theological, particularly through its references to Origen and Clement of Alexandria.
6   Faber, Gott als Poet der Welt 29. Cf. Hartshorne, Christian Natural Theology 112.
7   Other process theologians that are significant for the middle period are Daniel Day Williams (1910–1973), Norman Pittenger (1905–1997), Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki (1933–), and Bruce G. Epperly (1952–).

Cobb studied under Hartshorne at Chicago Divinity School. After having received his Doctorate in Philosophy in 1952 he moved to Claremont School of Theology, where he met Griffin. In 1973 the two founded the Center for Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology. When taken together, Cobb and Griffin are probably the foremost contemporary exponents of the second generation of process theology. They are both extremely prolific authors and they have co-written several books on process theology, including *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (1976). Cobb is particularly interested in existentialism and Christology from a process perspective and also focuses on ecological issues and interreligious dialogue. *A Christian Natural Theology* (1965) and *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (1975) are of particular relevance to this thesis and will be the main works of reference used. Griffin has characterized himself as a "postmodern constructivist" and works with a holistic and interdisciplinary approach.[8] He has a strong interest in scientific naturalism and theodicy.

Finally, as a representative of the third generation of process theology, I have selected Catherine Keller who holds a PhD in Philosophy of Religion from Claremont, where she studied under John B. Cobb. She is Professor of Constructive Theology at Drew University and engages with process thought from a deconstructive perspective in her books *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (2003) and *On the Mystery: Discerning God in Process* (2008). She has also written explicitly on Anne Conway in her article *Be a Multiplicity: Ancestral Anticipations* (2010). She combines Whitehead's process philosophy with French poststructuralism (Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze) to draw attention to problematic structures of power and subversion in order to think anew about creation and "con-viviality" in particular.

1.2. Problems of Modern Philosophy: Towards a Process Theological Terminology

Any attempt to define process theology or capture the concept "process" begins with Alfred North Whitehead. The various intellectual interests and aptitudes of Whitehead are reflected in his philosophical system, which seeks to describe the universe as a whole, or "that which is comprehensive of all that there is" in a coherent way that is compatible with history and science.[9] This description of reality is based on experience, and it is what Whitehead refers to as "metaphysics". Therefore, "metaphysics" signals for Whitehead not what lies beyond our experience

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8   Faber, Gott als Poet der Welt 40. See also Griffin, Postmodern Theology 29 f.
9   Whitehead, Religion in the Making 88 f.

but an attempt to "explain the coherence of *all* things that *are* experienced".[10] He argued that it was not possible to give a satisfying metaphysical description of reality within the established philosophical paradigm of his time.[11] Particularly, the mechanistic worldview and the Cartesian dualism and substance metaphysics that had dominated Western philosophy since the early modern period constituted a problem. Therefore, Whitehead opened his magnum opus *Process and Reality* with the direct objective to "recur" to "that phase of philosophic thought which began with Descartes and ended with Hume".[12] This particular turn of phrase might suggest that Whitehead actually endorsed Descartes's metaphysics, but this is certainly not the case.[13] Rather, he recurred to Descartes in order to locate the flawed assumptions that he believed made Descartes's ontology lack "intrinsic reasonableness" and – ultimately – caused his entire system to crumble.[14]

The primary flawed assumption he found in Descartes was the idea of what Whitehead coined "vacuous actuality", or the idea that matter is dead and devoid of "subjective immediacy" and experience.[15] Whitehead believed that vacuous actuality is an abstraction that is mistaken for a concrete reality, an error that he called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness".[16] This assumption not only failed to explain the connection between mind and body, it also raised an insurmountable epistemological problem: if the *res cogitans* is utterly detached from the *res extensa*, and the *res cogitans* can exist without or apart from any other substance, then how does one know anything to be real or true at all? Nevertheless, this substance metaphysics has, according to Whitehead, informed all modern philosophy since Descartes:

"All modern philosophy hinges round the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal. The result always does violence to that immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis. We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures; whereas, under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience […]."[17]

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10   Griffin, Process Theology 159.
11   Process philosophy opposes "substance metaphysics", where substance is defined as simple, enduring beings or entities which are internally unchangeable. This has been the dominant research paradigm in the history of Western philosophy since Aristotle. See Seibt, Art. Process Philosophy.
12   Whitehead, Process and Reality xi.
13   See e. g. Sherburne, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 3–18.
14   Whitehead, Process and Reality 39.
15   Ibid. xiii. viii. 29.
16   Ibid. 18.
17   Ibid. 49 f.

The flawed assumptions of Descartes are Whitehead's point of departure: The idea of "solitary substances" devoid of subjective experience must be abandoned, and an alternative framework built. This epistemological difficulty "is only solvable by an appeal to ontology".[18] As an alternative, Whitehead sought to conceive an ontology based on experience rather than abstractions. We can know what reality is "only by analogy with the part of nature known most directly, our own experience".[19] This assumption becomes a corner stone in process theology that does not draw a distinction between what we experience and everything else – our experience is "a high-level exemplification of reality in general".[20] And since process theologians hold that our basic experience is that the world is in constant change, in motion and in process, they conclude that to be actual is to be in process.[21] Whitehead's ontology is based on the premise that being is dynamic rather than static, and that all within and about reality is an ongoing and continuing interaction of processes. In order to develop this new ontology of process and to distance himself from Cartesian substance metaphysics, Whitehead replaced the traditional descriptive concepts of philosophy with a new set of basic categories.

Before moving on to describing the key terminology of Whitehead's philosophy, I want to draw attention the analysis of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, who describes the static substance ontologies that Conway and process theology are writing against (dualism, materialism, pantheism) as "strong" ontologies.[22] By this term Vattimo means to say that the static substance ontologies underlying these philosophies are based on a view of reality as something fixed and objective that can be described definitively. As Vincent Delecroix notes in his recent history of the philosophy of religion, such strong ontologies are based on the assumption that God equals being. Since the traditional attributes of God pertain to absolute categories such as the eternal, the immutable, the omniscient, the omnipotent, etc., being is understood in the same way.[23] From this assumption, strong ontologies construct their metaphysics using logical deduction, and in the seventeenth century this resulted in attempts to create harmonious philosophical systems that encompassed all of reality.

Vattimo opposes such strong ontologies to "weak" ontologies that have been developing throughout modernity but especially in the postmodern context.[24] As

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18   Ibid. 189.
19   Griffin, Process Theology 160.
20   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 13.
21   Ibid. 14.
22   Cited in Delecroix, Introduction à la philosophie de la religion 954.
23   Ibid. 955.
24   With some justification one might criticize Vattimo's choice of words to describe these two opposing ontologies. Why should an ontology of transformation or becoming be termed "weak", when this understanding of reality seems more in accordance with common expe-

we have seen process philosophy is a prime example of one such weak ontology because it emphasizes that the "facts" of a static, objective being are necessarily subject to subjective experience. They start from the fact that any philosophy is always embedded in a particular context (historical as well as semantic), and therefore there can be no objective way to describe the reality of being as a static substance. This might lead one to think that philosophy suffers an epistemological defeat because it becomes "detached" from the being it seeks to describe. But rather than seeing this as a loss, weak ontologies make the embedded nature of philosophy their point of departure. They hold that since being is subject to interpretation, being itself cannot be static. Indeed, being is thought of as event. I will use the distinction between "strong" and "weak" ontologies as formulated by Vattimo throughout the thesis, as shorthand for the complex ontological and epistemological aspects they express, but this is not done without consideration of its problematic connotations of valuation.

In a theological perspective, the identification between being and God means that God, too, is thought of as event rather than as static. Delecroix's history of philosophy traces the battle between strong and weak ontologies from early modernity to the present and argues that the latter consistently founds its arguments on the event of the Incarnation. It is, in other words, truly a philosophy of religion. The Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ becomes the pivotal point for the turn from objective, static being to being as interpretation and event. In this view, even God is thought of as something relational and fluid rather than something detached and objective. Delecroix exemplifies this in the shift from the Old Testament God who emphatically proclaims in Ex. 3:14: "I am who I am" (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) to the revelation of God in the event of the crucified Christ. The point is that in the Old Testament, the name "God" refers to some kind of static, objective being transcendent from mankind, while the name "Jesus Christ" reveals this very being as an event which is immanent to the world (the Incarnation, crucifixion, Resurrection and eventual salvation).

1.2.1. Actual Entities

Whitehead portrays the universe, that is, everything there is, as a rapidly repeating series of "occasions of experience" or what he calls "actual entities". These are what constitute reality:

rience than one of static being? The terminology seems to express a hierarchy that values being over becoming.

"'Actual entities' – also termed 'actual occasions' – are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space. But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of function, yet in the principles which actuality exemplifies all are on the same level. The final facts are, all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent."[25]

Described here by Whitehead as "drops of experience",[26] we might also call these actual entities "momentary experiences" or "events", because actual entities have a distinctively temporal character. They are happenings, occurrences or "momentary events which perish immediately upon coming into being" rather than substantial entities that could endure through time.[27] Time, or the temporal process, is the transition from one actual entity to another. The perishing of one actual entity marks the transition to the succeeding events and, thus, time is conceived of as a continuous flow of actual entities, small "drops of experience". In other words, time is thought of in more spatial terms – the singular events that take place in and through the actual entities are only real in that they are in an always changing relation to one another.

Cobb and Griffin explain the temporal process through the analogy of a movie: actual entities are like one frame following another and this process creates a flow that seems continuous but is actually made up of distinct moments.[28] This analogy is useful because it shows the dependency of one actual entity on all other actual entities. One cannot exist without another. Yet, the analogy risks giving the impression that the relation between actual entities is one of linear progression. As we have seen above, one "drop of experience" is never a "solitary substance" but always interdependent. This means that any singular image frame has a defining influence on the image frames that follow and precede it and *vice versa*. In other words, experience is always a complex relation where different drops of experience interact. Another experience is always affecting the singular experience, and, hence, there is both "subject" and "object" in an actual entity. Experiencing and experience form a nexus. Donald Sherburne explains this idea in the following way: Actual entities "exist (their being is their becoming) very briefly as 'subjects'

25   WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 18.
26   Whitehead borrows this slightly more poetic epithet from JAMES, Pluralistic Universe 60:
     "All our sensible experiences, as we get them immediately, do […] change by discrete pulses of perception, each of which keeps us saying 'more, more, more,' or 'less, less, less,' as the definite increments or diminutions make themselves felt. [All our sensible experiences] come to us in drops. Time itself comes in drops."
27   COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 14.
28   Ibid.

and then take up their role as objects, as brute facts that the future must take into account".

To exist is to be within a reality where being is becoming by way of one actual occasion taking account of another, even appropriating the other actual occasion. This is what Whitehead calls "prehension", and the term can provide us with a deeper understanding of what he means when he speaks of actual occasions being "drops of experience".

1.2.2. Prehension

Prehension is derived from *apprehension*, the latter meaning a fully conscious grasp of something.[29] Prehension, however, is not necessarily conscious. It is an awareness that occurs even on the lowest level of being. Whitehead thus asks his reader to "descend the scale of organic being" in order to understand how each enduring individual being, from horses down to jellyfish and beyond, plants and amoeba, are in relation with their surroundings by virtue of being actual entities.[30] They therefore all experience, albeit not necessarily consciously: "Consciousness presupposes experience, and not experience consciousness", argues Whitehead.[31] The experience at the lowest level could instead be called "feeling", "thought", or simply "taking account" of other actual entities.[32] In this way everything, even cells, atoms, and electrons experience, or in Whitehead's phrase, "enjoy" experience.[33] The term "enjoyment" emphasizes what we could call the "subjectivity" of each actual entity, thus making clear that "every such unit has intrinsic value, an inner reality in and for itself".[34] Enjoyment is linked to experience and is thus not necessarily a conscious activity. Every actual entity enjoys experience. Cobb and Griffin explain that, "To be, to actualize oneself, to act upon others, to share

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29   Whitehead borrows this term from Leibniz, to whose philosophy of monads he is deeply indebted. This will be discussed in Part Four of this thesis. Here it is sufficient to note that Whitehead borrows heavily from Leibniz, who in turn was deeply influenced by Anne Conway.

30   WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 176.

31   Ibid. 53.

32   Ibid. 176 f.

33   SHERBURNE, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 9, notes that it was important to Whitehead to make his ontological system compatible with the contemporary advances in science, and particularly with the theory of evolution. Therefore, what is inherent in human experience has to "go all the way down to the level of the most fully concrete reality, to the level of the simplest actual occasions, if evolution is ultimately to be a coherent concept."

34   COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 16.

a wider community, is to enjoy being an experiencing subject quite apart from any accompanying pain or pleasure".[35]

Whitehead holds that "actual entities involve each other by reason of their prehensions of each other".[36] Prehension is the "perfectly definite" and "determinate bond" between all actual entities that exist. This means that relations are primary and essential in a process view of reality. To be is to be in relation. This idea of actual entities as both momentary and interdependent constitutes a radical break with the Aristotelian substance metaphysics that posits actuality as constituted by inert substances extended in time and space and only externally related to each other.

Any actual entity "prehends" the entities in its immediate past, it is like an open window through which influences constantly rush. The past is like objective data, which is taken in by the actual entity in its becoming. Thereby the past is determining of the present. Whitehead speaks of this appropriation of the past into the present as the "causal efficacy" of each event.[37] This causal efficacy, where the past occasion is drawn into a new occasion, constitutes the "physical pole" of an actual occasion. Not all of the past entities are prehended in each moment of the actual entity. It is a finite and limited prehension of the past. Nevertheless, every actual entity harmonizes the entities it prehends into a unity of being, a process which Whitehead calls "concrescence".[38]

1.2.3. Concrescence

Sherburne explains that the word "*concrescence* means a growing together – in this case the growing together of the prehensions that constitute the actual entity which is in the process of becoming".[39] Thus, the process of becoming is the actual entity grasping or taking account of its environment and through concrescence coordinating these prehensions into some coherent structure. Whitehead calls any such coherent structure the "subjective aim" of each actual entity. With this term, he expresses the teleological element that he believes exists in all actual entities. Each actual entity "aims" at achieving "value". I will return to the meaning of value below. For now, it is sufficient to note that the subjective aim directs the actual occasion in its "decision" about how to process the past.[40] Making a deci-

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35   Ibid. 16 f.
36   WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 20.
37   Ibid. 169.
38   Ibid. 211.
39   SHERBURNE, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 8.
40   WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 43. "Decision" here does not refer to conscious judgment, but in the root sense of "a cutting off", i. e. a cutting off of other possibilities.

sion based on its subjective aim, the actual entity constitutes the actual occasion's "mental pole". The aim of this distinction is to deconstruct the dualism of Descartes by conceiving reality as simultaneously "physical" and "mental".

As shown, each actual entity inherits certain aspects of the past. From this position, Whitehead goes on to argue that every actual entity has infinite possible ways to react to this inheritance. In choosing how to react to its inheritance the actual entity constitutes a new reality. The actual entity makes a decision and thereby each moment is seen as a dynamic *becoming* rather a static *being*. The decision of the actual entity is a reality-forming event. The subjective aim of each actual occasion makes it free and the future open-ended. Formally expressed, every occasion of experience or reality-forming event involves three constituent elements: 1) objective data or the "efficient causes" (that is, the past which is prehended), 2) eternal possibilities of reacting to that data, and 3) the decision based on the subjective aim. These events are described by Sherburne as the pulse of the world:

"Actual entities happen very quickly; they appropriate their actual world, concresce, reach their final unity, and then become part of that actual world which gives rise to the next generation of actual entities."[41]

In this way, all of reality is an overlapping series of events, constantly prehending and becoming, always taking place in the past to form the future. It is a dialectic structure where birth, maturity, and death give rise to birth, maturity, and death. This process is as internal as it is external – it is not something that happens *to* us, but something in which we all constantly partake. It is agency and outcome simultaneously. The process constituting reality is as much subjective as it is objective. Further, the experience of process is simultaneously one of transition (time) and one of concrescence (eternity).

1.2.4. Dipolarity

Whitehead's understanding of reality as a process of becoming affects how we may think of God. We have established that for process theologians, experience is the foundation for all knowledge, because it is an exemplification of reality. Likewise, experience is the basis for any understanding of God. According to process theology, we experience God in every moment when we prehend him: "Our prehension of God is an essential part of all experience. There are not actual entities that are first self-contained and then have accidental relations to God. God-related-

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41   Sɪɪᴇʀʙᴜʀɴᴇ, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 8.

ness is constitutive of every occasion of experience".[42] Thus, we cannot understand reality or our lives outside our experience of God. In process theology, God is not an exception to the paradigm established about the world or somehow detached from the world. God is not an appendage to the world, understood as that which William James has aptly called the "great solver of absurdities".[43] Rather, God is the "chief exemplification" of the process structure developed to explain the world.[44] Indeed, God is an actual entity who always prehends all other actual entities. As such, the process view of God tells us as much about how to understand the structures of the world as the world tells us how to understand God.

Hartshorne developed the important process theological characteristic of God as "dipolar". This term was coined in distinction to traditional theism, which understood God as being "*in all respects* creator, active, infinite, eternal, necessary, independent, immutable, and impassible and *in no respects* created, passive, finite, temporal, contingent, dependent, mutable, or passible".[45] Conversely, process theology argues that God is inherently relational. The dipolarity of God is to be understood against the "monopolar prejudice", by which God and the world are placed in opposition to each other. That God is dipolar means that there are two sides to God, which are distinguishable but inseparable. These are described differently by different process theologians; Whitehead talks about the primordial and the consequent nature of God, while Hartshorne distinguishes between the "abstract essence" and the "concrete states" of God.[46] But both terminologies refer to the same basic conviction: that there is a dual aspect to God. To use Whitehead's terms, God's primordial nature is his abstract, eternal, immutable, and changeless aspect. It is the aspect of God that we may call the most perfect being, the highest goodness, the unchangeable. But in addition to that, God has another aspect, his consequent nature, which is concrete, temporal, and changing. This dipolarity of God is analogous to the mental and physical poles that constitute any actual entity. There is an active and a passive side, an eternal and a temporal, a side that is necessary and one that is contingent, one that is independent and one that is dependent. And indeed, according to process theology, God is an actual entity, but one that is different from all other actual entities.

"Like all actual entities, God inherits the input provided by the past actual world. At any given moment, then, God experiences the totality of the structures embodied in the immediately past phase of the entire sweep of all that which is."[47]

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42   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 29.
43   James, Some Problems of Philosophy 194.
44   Whitehead, Process and Reality 343.
45   Viney, Art. Process Theism.
46   Hartshorne, Reply to My Critics 571. 644. 700.
47   Sherburne, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 12.

In his consequent nature – the concrete, temporal, and changing side – God has immediate awareness of all that is actualized at any given moment. Unlike other actual entities, which have only a finite and limited prehension of the past, God's prehensive vision or "envisagement", to use Whitehead's term, encompasses everything and grasps the totality of reality at once.[48] This is the "passive" or perhaps better "interactive" and responsive side of God, who takes the world into himself at every moment. At the same time, in his primordial nature – the abstract, eternal, immutable, and changeless side – God is aware of the vast potential of the unrealized future. God takes account of the realm of potentiality, which is "constituted by the infinitely extended relatedness of the forms of definiteness that may, or may not, attain realization in the actual world".[49] God's primordial nature is abstract, and the knowledge of all possibilities belongs to him only. Thus, God's primordial nature corresponds to the second constituent element of every actual occasion, the eternal possibilities of reacting to the data that is prehended.

While the possibilities are there, finite actual events can only react to them, they cannot invent them. The creation of possibilities belongs to the abstract side of God. In his later works, Whitehead calls these eternal possibilities "eternal objects": "An eternal object in abstraction from any one particular actual entity is a potentiality for ingression into actual entities".[50] God knows all of these eternal objects in his primordial nature. Based on the prehension of the past and the realm of possibilities recognized, the actual event makes a decision. And this is the move from past to future, which then, in a circular movement, becomes part of God's consequent nature. Cobb and Griffin delineate this nexus between God's primordial nature and his consequent nature, between God and the world:

"Each new event must take account of the many events that make up the world given for it. It must do so in some definite way, for without definiteness there is no actuality. Since it has a past different from that of any event in its world, it must have a new form of definiteness. The past cannot impose such a form upon it, since the present can derive from the past only what the past contains. This form of definiteness can be derived only from the sphere of possibility. But the sphere of possibility is purely abstract, lacking all agency to provide selectively for the need of new events. There must be an agency that mediates between these abstract forms or pure possibilities and the actual world. This agency is best conceived as an envisagement of the abstract forms of definiteness such as to establish their graded relevance to every new situation in the actual world. In sum, God is that factor in the universe which establishes what-is-not as relevant to what-is, and lures the world towards new forms of realization."[51]

48   Whitehead, Process and Reality 33 f.
49   Sherburne, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 12.
50   Whitehead, Process and Reality 149.
51   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 42 f.

What Cobb and Griffin are describing is what Whitehead calls the "weaving" together of the divine consequent nature with the divine primordial nature. It is a movement from the actual past to the emerging future. In a world that consists of actual entities in a process of constant coming to be and passing away, some determinate order secures the harmonization or unity of the actual entities.

1.3. The Key Categories

Arguably, two key categories underlie the process theological terminology and constitute a basic tension in any attempt to describe reality as an event or experience. In the following subsection I shall present these two key categories, creativity and freedom, in order to apply them to Conway's *Principles*.

1.3.1. Creativity

According to Whitehead, creativity is the "ultimate metaphysical principle", which lies in "the nature of things" and is embodied in all actualities.[52] Creativity is the basic principle of reality in process theology. You could even say that God is subordinate to the principle of creativity. While traditional theism sees God as the "unmoved mover", process theology holds that creativity belongs both to God and to all actual entities.[53]

Creativity has different aspects. In all finite actualities, creativity comes in two forms: As efficient causation, and as self-determination or final causation. Self-determination relates to the key category of freedom and will be presented below. Efficient causation refers to the fact that an actual entity shares in the past through prehension. The actual occasion draws the past into itself, and the past is incarnated in the present occasion. The two occasions, the past and the present, are thus intimately interrelated.[54] But the past and the present occasions are not symmetrically interrelated. One occasion is temporally prior to another one, thereby informing it, but is not itself transformed by it. Thus, the past does not control the future. However, it does shape it by making it enter into new relations. One might say that the present occasion re-contextualizes the past.

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52 WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 343.
53 GRIFFIN, Process Theology 163.
54 Again, I would stress the distinction from the Cartesian worldview where the cause is external to the effect and the change produced is purely accidental.

Creativity is the ultimate explanatory category, but as the first universal of all things, it is without any order in itself. Creativity in itself is chaos, the "tohu wa-bohu" or "unformed void" mentioned in Genesis.[55] This means, first of all, that there is no *creatio ex nihilo* in process theology; there is no doctrine that separates completely the divine nature from the finite existents. According to process theology, the traditional notion of a *creatio ex nihilo* results in voluntarism, as creation would rest upon God's decision to create the world, thus making the world dependent on his will. Process theology argues instead that God and creation are not wholly different and unrelated. Rather, it belongs to the nature of God to be related to the world, and creation is really God *ordering* the world out of himself in his primordial nature. Therefore, and this is the second consequence of creativity as the first metaphysical principle, the creativity in God (and in creatures) must be an aesthetic creativity.

In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead establishes aesthetics as a metaphysical category, which orders the chaos in creativity.[56] If creativity is the basic principle of reality, then aesthetics is what directs it. We recall that God's primordial nature is composed of his eternal objects, the eternal possibilities. And the possibilities summed up in his primordial nature need to be "bodied forth" in an aesthetic creativity.[57] Aesthetic creativity is the way in which novelty emerges out of the conflict of opposites. According to process theologians, the fact that the world is ordered, despite of the vast plurality of finite actual entities with spontaneity and self-creativity, requires an Orderer.[58] Therefore, any meaningful expression about creation refers to God's aesthetic stimulation of creative chaos into increasingly complex forms of order.[59]

This universal sense of order is reflected in even the smallest processes or events, when everything in the event comes together to provide a *unity*. We recall that an event consists of three constituent elements: 1) objective data or the "efficient causes" (i.e., the past which is prehended), 2) eternal possibilities of reacting to that data, and 3) the decision based on the subjective aim. When these elements are unified, the event becomes one experience. The completion of an event leads

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55 Gen. 1:2 "Now the earth was formless and empty (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ), darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

56 WHITEHEAD, Adventures of Ideas 209 f. and *passim*. Aesthetics is an element in our experience, "on the fringe of consciousness, and yet massively qualifying our experience." It is in this intuition that every explanation originates. Human understanding and the truth about our own nature hinges on the "two grounds of criticism, [the] aesthetic and logical".

57 As Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream 5, 112, expresses it: "And as imagination bodies forth / The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen / Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing / A local habitation, and a name."

58 GRIFFIN, Process Theology 164.

59 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 70.

to what Whitehead calls aesthetic "satisfaction".[60] Every actual occasion aims at achieving aesthetic satisfaction which is connected to achieving value. For finite actual entities, this is achieved in the moment of concrescense of the prehensions, which is the heightening of contrasts into a unity. Thus, as Donald Viney writes, "[p]rocess metaphysics provides for an aesthetic theory that recognizes objective criteria of value such as unity amid contrast and intensity amid complexity".[61] Viney elaborates that unity amid contrast supports the ambition to account for the human experience of love as real. In human experience, love "requires *the existence of the other*" and the unification of the individual with this other. This creates a unity in complexity which gives value. According to process theology, this experience of love must necessarily mirror God's love for the world or else he would be unresponsive or passionless. Such a conception of love is unacceptable for the process theological notion of value and aesthetic satisfaction because it seems to sever the strong bond between God and creation.[62]

Thus, aesthetic satisfaction is seen as the culmination of experience. All aesthetic creativity is unity imposed on multiplicity. This means that everywhere we have the sense of the divine, which harmonizes all things into unity in still higher complexity:

"Thus if God be an actual entity which enters into every creative phase and yet is above change, He must be exempt from internal inconsistency which is the note of evil. Since God is actual, He must include in himself a synthesis of the total universe. There is, therefore, in God's nature the aspect of the realm of forms as qualified by the world, and the aspect of the world as qualified by the forms. His completion, so that He is exempt from transition into something else, must mean that his nature remains self-consistent in relation to all change. Thus, God is the measure of the aesthetic consistency in the world."[63]

Within creativity relatedness is a central element. As the supremely related One, God exerts his freedom to achieve greater unity in complexity. The more complex the many, the greater the One.[64] God's being as primordial and consequent con-

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60 WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 154. This is an aesthetic satisfaction, both in the Greek meaning of sense perception but also in the Germanic sense of beauty.

61 VINEY, Art. Process Theism.

62 At Conway's time, the question of passionless love was a major discussion which culminated in the condemnation of Molinos and the ensuing controversy in France in the 1690s where the Archbishop of Cambrai François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon attempted to give a systematic theological account of passionless love only to be attacked especially by the bishop of Chartre Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. See LE BRUN, Le pur amour de Platon à Lacan 121–130.

63 WHITEHEAD, Religion in the Making 98 f.

64 Bearing in mind parallels to the ambitions of the *philosophia perennis*, Whitehead looks for manifestations of this idea throughout history and finds it particularly in Platonism and the Alexandrian Church fathers, where God is the sum total of the world.

stitutes a real relatedness between God and the world, and this relation is para-
mount for the ontological basis of process theology: God acts on the world, and
the world acts on God. But this relation needs qualification. Process theology
does not invoke God as the sole or absolute source of the order and harmoniza-
tion – there is no *creatio ex nihilo*. Nor does God impose a normative order on
the world, different from the course of actuality. In an eloquent passage similar to
a litany, Whitehead explains this nexus between God and the world:

"It is as true to say that God is permanent and the world fluent, as that the World is per-
manent and God is fluent.
It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God
many.
It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in
comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.
It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the
World.
It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.
It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God."[65]

It is important to note that Whitehead's poetic expression here does not entail that
the *existence* of God is in any way precarious. His existence is not dependent on
the world. Likewise, process theologians would agree with traditional theists that
the actual occasions are contingent and could not exist independently of God.
In Whitehead's and Hartshorne's theism, "God's existence is everlasting, but the
existence of any particular creature is not. Nevertheless, the creatures, being lesser
creators, create something in God".[66] God takes in the new experiences and en-
joyment of the actual entities as they realize themselves, and he grows by it and
becomes enriched. Therefore, their existence influences God's experience of the
world, if not his existence.

   In process theology, the connectedness between God and the world, or the
"interdependence" of the two, becomes the framework within which to under-
stand reality as creativity.[67] Hartshorne used the term "panentheism" to describe
this very idea that everything in the world is experienced by God, while the world
experiences God in every moment.[68] This relatedness of God to the world (and
vice versa) means that process theologians speak of God's attributes in a different

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65   Whitehead, Process and Reality 348.
66   Viney, Art. Process Theism.
67   Whitehead, Religion in the Making 87.
68   See e.g. Hartshorne/Reese, Philosophers Speak of God 233–365. Panentheism is to be
      distinguished from theism (God as completely different from the world to the extent that
      he seems external to the world) on the one hand, and pantheism (God as indistinguishable
      from the world) on the other.

way from traditional theists. Process theology argues that the traditional doctrinal questions can be better understood if we think about God as first and foremost relational. For example, process theologians would claim that God is perfect, but they understand perfection in a radically different way from the scholastic definition of perfection as divine simplicity, unchangeability, impassibility, and so on. This does not mean that God does not *also* embody these aspects in his primordial nature, but he also holds the reverse aspects in his consequent nature. To process theologians, God is *more* perfect when he is thought of as also embodying the reverse aspects, because it relates him to the world in a way they find meaningful. Perfection is an expression of unity in complexity, or what Whitehead calls "aesthetics". Likewise, process theologians hold that God is omniscient, but in the sense that he prehends every actuality that is coming into being at any moment. That is, God fully comprehends and knows the realm of actuality. But the future is the realm of possibility and not yet actualized. God knows every possibility there is for the actual entities, but he does not know which possibility the actual entity will choose until that choice is made.[69]

God is omnipotent. But his omnipotence is of a different kind than the traditional theistic vision of God's power. God cannot exert his power as a dictator, coercively and by force. God's power is not a controlling power. God's omnipotence is bound by his love. While this position is quite traditional, process theology emphasizes the value of human experience by claiming that it is through our experience of love that we know that "love in the fullest sense involves a sympathetic response to the loved one".[70] Therefore the notion of divine impassibility is very problematic for process theologians because they see it as a misunderstanding based on the false assumption that independence and absoluteness are better than responsiveness and relationality.[71]

Against this notion of omnipotence, process theologians argue that it is important that God's love has an element of responsiveness to the loved ones, that is, to the world. Only in this way can there be a truly ethical commitment in God's love. Cobb and Griffin make the analogy of a parent who is in unaffected bliss, while her children are suffering, to show that while an element of independence is

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69 Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God 241.

70 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 44.

71 Cobb and Griffin draw out Anselm's *Proslogium* and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* as examples that should serve as a warning. Anselm, Proslogium 13, writes: "Thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of thy being." And Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, vol. I, 113: "For in God there are no passions. Now love is a passion. Therefore love is not in God". This is, however, a rather poor reading of both Anselm and Aquinas. In the answer to the *objection* which is cited by Cobb and Griffin, Aquinas writes: "We must needs assert that in God there is love: because love is the first movement of the will." Nevertheless, the will is prior, which creates a completely different set of problems.

admirable, there has to be some sort of dependence and relativity in God's love.[72] Whitehead expresses this in these often cited words: "God is the great companion – the fellow sufferer who understands".[73] Because God is responsive – he enjoys our enjoyments and suffers with us in our pain – God wants the best possible future for the world. God is not neutral about the future and this entails that God is active in the world, even if not in the sense that he controls it. There is no determinism in process theology because God is dependent on the world and therefore never acting coercively or alone. Rather, God exerts his power by persuasion.

According to Whitehead, God provides every actual entity with an "initial aim". God's initial aim for us is conceived in his primordial nature and lies beyond the present reality. The initial aim arises from the realm of pure potentiality and is then prehended in the actual occasion, which must decide whether to realize the initial aim or not. As Cobb and Griffin describe it: "This is an impulse, initially felt conformally by the occasion, to actualize the best possibility open to it, given its concrete situation".[74] In other words, God's initial aim is the phase in the becoming before each entity's subjective aim is actualized. God's initial aim is what is life-giving and what brings about enjoyment in all creatures.[75] Because God is related to the world, is present in all actuality, and knows the best possible outcome of every actual entity's decisions, he exercises his power by luring or persuading us to make the best possible choices. As the highest good, God lures us into greater unity in complexity.

1.3.2. Freedom

In process theology, creativity is linked to freedom. We saw above that one of the elements of creativity was efficient causation. The other form in which creativity occurs is self-determination or creative self-agency. This is the present actual entity making a decision based on its subjective aim to finally create itself out of the material given to it. The actual event "takes control of its own existence" and finishes what the causal efficacy had started in a move that process theologians call "final causation": "This doctrine of the partial self-determination of every actuality reconciles efficient and final causation, real influence with real freedom".[76]

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72   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 47.
73   Whitehead, Process and Reality 351.
74   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 53.
75   Ibid. 56.
76   Ibid. 25. One significant theological consequence of this self-determining freedom is process theology's theodicy. Because process thought acknowledges creaturely freedom, "the occurrence of genuine evil is not incompatible with God's beneficence toward all his creatures" (ibid. 56). Many books address the problem of evil from the perspective of process

This shows how creativity and freedom are intimately linked in process theology. Neither efficient causation (what we might call the "past"), nor final causation (what we might call the "present") nor God's initial aim (what we might call the teleological aim of "eternity") are covert expressions of determinism. The past has huge influence on the present – every experience tells us so – but it does not determine it. In a like manner, God's persuasion or lure is in no way irresistible even though it defines reality. It is up to each actual entity freely to decide what to do in the present moment, and it is therefore possible for any actual entity to conflict with God's will. Thus, creative freedom is rooted in the very nature of things, as a foundation that lies beneath even God's power or will. Whitehead explains that "the relation of God to the World should lie beyond the accidents of will," being founded instead "upon the necessities of the nature of God and the nature of the World".[77] The world is not a contingent matter, and God's relation to the world is not bound by his will. While it is not God's *decision* to be related to the world, it is his *nature*. Consequently, it becomes the purpose of actual entities freely to decide what they want to do (or create) within this relatedness. Thus, freedom entails a risk.

This risk is connected to the ultimate aim of God, which is "the promotion of the creatures' own enjoyment".[78] As we saw above, the *good* is that which contributes to aesthetic satisfaction. This means that the good leads instrumentally towards greater beauty and greater intensity of experience or aesthetic satisfaction in multiplicity. In this sense, process theology is the proponent of a utilitarian ethics: "In process thought, morality stands in the service of enjoyment".[79] Good is a means to aesthetic ends. But as quoted above, "internal inconsistency […] is the note of evil".[80] Internal inconsistency is the event when an actual entity acts against the lure of God, thus not contributing to the process of unifying multiplicity in aesthetic satisfaction.

Thus, evil is the transitory opposition to God's harmony of the multiple. Evil occurs either by virtue of an actual entity resisting its initial aim (moral evil) or when it contrasts creativity with sheer triviality (non-moral evil).[81] Unity without complexity is worthless because "it is fascist", whereas unity in multiplicity, as for example in a democracy, is beautiful because it is a multiplicity of opinions that

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theology, but this topic is beyond the scope of this introduction. For further reading on the topic see particularly: Hartshorne, Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes; Griffin, Evil Revisited; id., God, Power, and Evil; Keller, On the Mystery.

77   Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas 215.
78   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 56.
79   Ibid. 57.
80   Whitehead, Religion in the Making 98 f.
81   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 70.

make up a whole more valuable than its parts.[82] One might describe this fascist unity as an actual entity revolting against the will of God. It does so by imposing its own order on other actual entities and thus distorting the harmonious and interdependent relatedness existing between them. This is necessarily a transitory state as the actual entity will eventually be subsumed by new actual entities, and, therefore, the fascist determination of one actual entity is necessarily banal or trivial. Not only does God lure actual entities away from moral evil, but he gives pleasure to them by creating greater multiplicity. "The morally admirable being is one who promotes worthwhile experience to the quantitatively and qualitatively greatest possible extent".[83]

We can now move on to nuance further the risk inherent in freedom:

"The good cannot be had without the possibility of the bad. To escape triviality necessarily means to risk discord. […] God's stimulation of a more and more complex world, which has the capacity for more and more intrinsic value, means the development of creatures with more and more freedom to reject divine aims. Increased freedom in relation to the world necessarily means increased freedom in relation to God."[84]

Finite beings have creative powers that cannot be overridden by divine will. This risks a strong cosmological dualism where actual entities have chosen to override their intimate relation to God. This is necessarily banal because the actual entity sets its own transitory and limited nature as the defining factor of its decision, thus also making it the grounds for its relatedness to God.

Viewing everything in the universe as actual entities entails that what we usually call individuals, beings that occupy space and endure through time, are not actually "individuals" in the ordinary sense of the word. Individual comes from the Latin *individere* which means indivisible. According to the common-sense definition of the Oxford English Dictionary it refers to "a single human being, as distinct from a particular group"[85] but in process theology, individuals are rather "societies" of actual entities. "Personal human existence is a 'serially ordered society' of occasions of experience".[86] These societies are strings of momentary actual entities that flow into each other by way of prehension and concrescence to create the illusion of something temporally and spatially static. These societies come

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82   I am grateful for this turn of phrase expressed by Christian Hengstermann in a private conversation.

83   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 70 f.

84   Ibid. 73. Hartshorne, Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method 238, expresses this as the relation between risk and opportunity: "Risk and opportunity go together, not because God chooses to have it so, but because opportunity without risk is meaningless or contradictory."

85   Art. Individual, adj. and n., in: OED Online, December 2019, Oxford University Press.

86   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 15.

in different forms and complexity. Rocks, trees, and humans alike are "enduring individuals" or societies. Common to them is that they endure over a period of time, which can be very long or very short. Mountains and mosquitoes are both enduring complex societies. They can be very small, such as atoms, or very large, such as stars: "An enduring individual is a series of occasions, each of which inherits more significantly from the preceding occasion in that series than it does from the other actualities in its environment."[87]

While there may not be an ontological difference between a rock and a human, there is an organizational or hierarchical difference. In some cases, the society has no dominating occasions and therefore no unity of experience. This is the case with, for example, rocks and whatever else we would call objects. These societies "have no coordinated originality of response" to their prehensions.[88] All individual spontaneities in these lower societies are mutually thwarting, meaning their mutual prehension of the past overpowers any singular "decision".[89] As scientists observe, although we cannot predict what a single electron will do, we can observe what a bullet will do. Thus, Cobb and Griffin explain that objects "are composed of subjects, but they themselves are not subjects".[90] Lower actualities are thus primarily "physical", making their decisions primarily in conformity with their past.

There is a hierarchy of ordered complex societies within each complex society. So, in other instances, the societies give rise to a "regnant nexus" or a dominant series of actual occasions and become what Hartshorne has called a "compound individual".[91] An individual is thus a complex society of events with a unifying structure. This is the case in human beings, who have what we could call a mind or a "soul":

"The regnant nexus is a string of actual entities, each one of which inherits its experience from the actual entity preceding it in the string as well as from some of the subordinate societies that make up the animal body. The regnant nexus is often conscious and is experienced by each of us as the self that we most truly are."[92]

The "regnant nexus", analogous to the traditional notion of the soul, prehends all the experience of all the actual entities in the society and coordinates them into

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87   Ibid. 65.
88   Ibid. 78.
89   Whitehead, Science and the Modern World 110.
90   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 78.
91   Hartshorne, Beyond Humanism 123. Cf. Whitehead, Process and Reality 103.
92   Sherburne, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 14.

higher and more complex forms of experience.[93] All societies are partly deter-
mined in the sense that efficient causality puts a limit to what formal causation
can do. We are what we are in terms of body, and therefore not all imaginable
possibilities are open within a certain structured society. Because each actual en-
tity does not inherit equally from all the preceding occasions, everything is not
random, and "the universe has enormous inertia".[94] Therefore rocks do not have
freedom in the sense that human beings have freedom. Although there is no on-
tological difference between the lower actualities and the higher, the difference is
tangible:

"In a sense, the difference between a living organism and the inorganic environment is
only a question of degree; but it is a difference of degree which makes all the difference – in
effect, it is a difference in quality."[95]

The characterization "living organism" is reserved for those complex societies
with a high degree of "mental" capability, that is, freedom to advance beyond the
past.

Process theology accepts the difference between body and mind (to use the
Cartesian terms) but refuses to accept that they are different and static substances
on the grounds of freedom, creativity, and relatedness. According to Whitehead,
Descartes's chief error was to believe that there is something, body, which is de-
void of experience. The idea of a "vacuous actuality" is an abstraction. Rather,
body and mind are "societies", too. Descartes's body and mind may be said to
correspond to the efficient cause and the formal cause in Whitehead's system.
Matter would be analogous to the efficient cause that is already determined; mind
or soul would then correspond to the formal causation which is self-creativity
and openness to the future. While the efficient cause and the formal cause are
differentiated in process theology, they are not ontologically separated. Cobb and
Griffin remind us that "no neat line can be drawn between the individual and its
environment, since what is 'the environment' in one moment essentially enters
into the individual in the next moment".[96]

This entails that bodies become porously open to each other with the conse-
quence that boundaries only ever exist temporally and spatially. Boundaries are in
a state of process. This openness, porosity, and influence from the surroundings
(both physical and temporal) is a response to the static substance ontologies and
the rationalist philosophy with its gravitational center in the self-contained sub-

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93   Thus, mind and body exist, but not as the final two substances constituting reality, as Des-
     cartes would have it. Rather, mind and body are also groupings of actual entities.
94   Cf. Mesle/Cobb, Process Theology 48 f.
95   Whitehead, Process and Reality 179.
96   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 26.

ject. According to process theology, creativity and freedom serve as concepts that destabilize determinism, dualism, vacuous actuality, static ontologies, etc. They defend the free will of all actual entities in that all actuality is partially self-creative. There is a cosmological aspect to this thought that intimately relates God to the world, which is expressed in the initial aim where reality is "sent out with a purpose". Hence, God's creative action works *from* an outset, *towards* a greater good, and at all times in-between. God's creative-responsive love works teleologically in history as creativity inherent in the nature of all things. But at the same time, this fluidity also leads to a fundamental link between individuals and raises the question, brought forth by Keller: "Will any mystical cosmology, indeed any polydoxical manifold, ultimately betray the particular – and especially, the human – individual?".[97] In other words, is there something within each individual, which could exist beyond the integral relatedness of the entire world or at least endure in some individual form? Process theology's insistence on the freedom of actual entities to choose their future stands in tension with the idea of an individual.

In process thought, freedom is a concept that describes independence, experience, subjectivity, and self-agency as constitutive elements of the process theological view of reality as relatedness. Thus, it holds a separating potency in that it seeks to maintain a certain degree of particularity in the multiple. Individual parts constantly gather and become greater unities. But at the same time, process thought defines reality as a complex relatedness. This becomes evident through the concept of creativity. Creativity ensures that relatedness remains at the fore of the ontological foundations of theology even as the separating potency of freedom is sought and maintained. Relatedness exists both on the level of God's relation to the world and on the level of creation's relation to itself.

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97   KELLER, Be a Multiplicity 86.

2. INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

In order to turn to Conway's writings and ask in earnest to what extent these process theological conceptions of creativity and freedom are to be found in the *Principles*, I will in the following give a broad-brushstroke introduction to the intellectual context in which Conway wrote her treatise. Such a historical turn might seem to be a detour from my enquiry, but I believe that it is necessary because the *Principles* is, above all, a very technical seventeenth-century dialogue with contemporary philosophies. If we are to understand Conway's position, we must also have a certain level of knowledge about her own time.

2.1. Biographical Notes

Lady Anne Conway (1631–1679) was a remarkable woman. She received no formal education but was better versed in philosophy than most educated men. She was chronically ill and tied to her bed for several years, yet her house became "the epicenter of intellectual and theological innovations, as well as a haven of social progressiveness".[1] She was an independent thinker, who took it upon herself to correct the "crass and dangerous errors" of the most important philosophers of her day: René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and Baruch de Spinoza (IX, 1 p. 63).

Born Anne Finch on 14 December 1631, she was the youngest in a large family of at least seven children, five of whom came from the previous marriages of her parents, Sir Heneage Finch and Elizabeth Bennett, who were both the widowers of wealthy aristocrats. Their union ensured that their children had continuous connections to prosperous families, the lower aristocracy, and the possibility of social advancement.[2] Despite the political turmoil of the period,[3] the Finch family

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1   White, The Legacy of Anne Conway 11.

2   Hutton, Anne Conway 14.

3   The seventeenth century was a time of great political turmoil in Europe. Although England was only nominally engaged in the devastating Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) through a short war with France (1627–1629), the country was not immune to its religious and politically destabilizing effects. In addition, England had experienced a rapid decline in economic and demographic stability in most segments of society since as early as the late fifteenth century. See Slack, A Divided Society 181 f.; Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution 65 f. While the Restoration of Charles II to the British throne in 1660 is generally considered to have been a return to normalcy after the Interregnum caused by the British Civil Wars, it is worth noting that the first decade of his reign was still marred

was on an upward social trajectory. They owned several properties, including one in the rural London suburb of Kensington, where Anne grew up.[4] Here she grew close to her older half-brother, John, and they remained dear friends in adult life. Letters between John and Anne show that he deeply respected and encouraged her intellectual endeavors, and Hutton argues that her friendship with John was of "key importance in enabling her to cultivate her mind".[5] John introduced Anne to "a measure of skepticism about human capacities to understand the workings of the natural world and about received philosophical systems" as well as to value scientific experiments in the pursuit of knowledge.[6]

Equally importantly, John studied at Cambridge under the renowned philosopher Dr. Henry More (1614–1687), whom he introduced to his sister around 1649. Henry More was to become one of the most important and formative people in Anne's life. In the early 1650s the two began a letter-correspondence when Conway appealed to him to help her study the philosophy of Descartes. As women were debarred from entering the university at this time, More took her on as an unofficial student, and began what Hutton has called a "seventeenth-century correspondence course in philosophy".[7] This early tutorial relationship subsequently blossomed into a lifelong friendship of philosophical and religious importance to both parties and it "afforded Anne intellectual companionship unmatched for a woman of her generation".[8] Indeed, Anne Conway's level of education is extraordinary. In her mature years she knew Latin, Greek, and possibly Hebrew.[9] A letter from her brother John shows us that she also studied mathematics, geography, and astronomy, as well as "Opticks or n[atu]ral Philosophy".[10] Her independence of mind, keen critical thinking, and "knowledge of things as well Natural as Divine" made More exclaim that she had "not onely out-gone all of your own Sex, but even of that other also".[11] Henry More in turn also gained intellectually from his "heroine pupil" whom he considered an "incomparable person". In 1653 he dedicated his *Antidote Against Atheism* to Conway and one scholar suggests that she might even have co-authored some of his works.[12] In her later years, Conway

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by many attempts at political and religious rebellion. See TILLY, *European Revolutions* 122–126.

4   The house is now known as Kensington Palace: HUTTON, Art. Conway [née Finch].

5   HUTTON, *Anne Conway* 17.

6   Ibid.

7   Ibid. 36.

8   HUTTON, Art. Conway [née Finch].

9   HUTTON, *Anne Conway* 18.

10   Ibid. 100. Letter from John Finch to Lady Conway 3 December 1657.

11   More, *An Antidote Against Atheism* A3.

12   POPKIN, *Spiritualistic Cosmologies* 100. Popkin refers to letters between More and Conway which suggest that she was raising points that led to More's revision of his works. Cf. HUTTON, *The Conway Letters* 39–112.

found her own feet as a philosopher and rejected many of More's ideas, but his influence on her philosophy can hardly be overestimated.[13]

In 1650 Anne Finch married Lord Edward Conway and became Lady Anne Conway. He was a man "of great Honour and Generosity",[14] who valued culture, intelligence, and education. Their mutual home at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire became an important meeting point for many intellectual and notable figures of the period.[15] There is, according to Hutton, "plenty of evidence to suggest that [the marriage between Edward and Anne] was not merely a match of convenience".[16] Their letters are affectionate in tone, and in her treatise, Conway speaks positively about sex and marriage as an example of the love and unity that pervades the whole created world.[17] Edward Conway certainly supported his wife's academic pursuits, even if he was probably not an intellectual discussion partner of hers.

Anne and Edward Conway had their first and only child, Heneage Conway, in 1658. But in 1661, when he was just two years old, both Anne and little Heneage contracted small pox. She recovered but was much disfigured – Edward described her face as "very much pitted, and they are deep, her right Eye is also a little sunk".[18] The disease was fatal in Heneage's case and Conway's correspondence indicates that the death of her son was an unbearable sorrow. In a letter to More she writes:

"The great sadness and perplexities I have suffered have rendered my thoughts so un-digested and confused, that in reason I ought yet to have freed you longer from them. It hath pleased God to exercise me by divers afflictions and by one so sensible in the death of my child, that you must wonder if I tell you it hath extorted from me a griefe proportionable to so great a losse."[19]

By her own account, the death of Heneage was the worst affliction she suffered. But it was not her only suffering. From around the age of twelve Conway suffered from a chronic illness for which no cure or relief could be found. The main symptom was debilitating headaches that grew worse throughout her life. Richard Ward writes that "Few have been afflicted in so Severe and Durable a manner as her self was".[20] These attacks tied Conway to her bed for long periods of time and isolated her from company. Hutton writes: "The crippling pain visited in her by her condition was an inescapable fact of her daily existence, and attempts to alle-

13   Hutton, Anne Conway 86.
14   Rust, Funeral Sermon 11.
15   Broad, Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century 67.
16   Hutton, Anne Conway 23.
17   Ibid. See also Conway, Principles p. 47.
18   Cited from Hutton, Anne Conway, 121. Letter from Lord Conway to Major Rawdon, 5. February 1661.
19   Hutton, The Conway Letters 181.
20   Ward, The Life of Henry More 193.

viate her suffering dominated her life".[21] She was visited by the foremost medical experts of England and Europe. At a time where there was no anesthetic available and the risks were high, she even underwent surgery. This speaks volumes about her pain and desperation.[22] Unfortunately it was of no help.

These two unhappy circumstances in her life, the death of her two-year old child and her chronic headaches, deeply influenced her philosophical thought. First, they implicitly formed the backdrop of her treatise, which is, in essence, a theodicy. Second, and not unrelated, Sarah Skwire speculates that the "chronic illness that evaded death's merciful release and increased in strength could well have led to a spiritual crisis for Conway".[23] Indeed, in 1664 she expressed her weariness and exhaustion in a letter to More describing how she had given up hoping for a cure and instead turned to prayer.[24]

In 1670 Conway was introduced to the "chameleon" Francis Mercury van Helmont. Physician, alchemist, inventor, diplomat, religious seeker, natural philosopher, and Christian Kabbalist, this colorful figure became a great influence on Anne's more mature thinking.[25] He first entered her life as her physician, and was – by Conway's own account – the most successful one she had encountered.[26] Ultimately his attempts to cure her failed, but he became a close friend of the Conway family, and he introduced her to new ideas, both religious and philosophical, that would have a much greater impact on Anne than his medicine.[27]

Van Helmont introduced her to the Christian Kabbalah, which they studied and discussed at length after he took up residence at Ragley Hall. Conway's encounter with Kabbalism overlapped with her encounter of Quakerism, and Hutton remarks that the two are intimately connected.[28] Through van Helmont, Conway met the prominent Scottish Quaker George Keith in 1675, and the teachings of the Quakers appealed so much to her that she converted to Quakerism during the last years of her life.[29] Hutton suggests that her attraction to the "Society of Friends", as they were called, lay in part in the parallels between her own suffer-

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21 Hutton, Anne Conway 116.
22 Ibid. 98.
23 Skwire, Women, Writers, Sufferers 9. In this article Skwire explores the intersections between gender and illness in the case of Anne Conway. She also argues that Conway's case of small pox marks a "turn from secular considerations of her illness to more religious speculations" (ibid. 8). I believe that religious considerations formed Conway's framework of thought consistently throughout her life.
24 Hutton, The Conway Letters 224.
25 Ead., Anne Conway 140.
26 Ead., The Conway Letters 533.
27 Ead., Anne Conway 148.
28 Ibid. 176.
29 The precise point in time is unknown, but it would have been between 1677 and 1678: ibid. 177.

ing and the persecution and suffering of the Quakers.[30] But their theology is also compatible with her own thought for they stressed the goodness and mercy of God, man's ability to perfect himself, and universal redemption.

The Quakers were considered religious and political radicals. They strongly objected to the hierarchical division between clergy and congregation, as well as between men and women and between nobility and common people. They believed that everyone was equal and that every voice and experience counted. Indeed, they were one of the few Christian movements to have women ministers. They would interrupt ministers in their preaching and refuse to take oaths, to serve in the military or to pay tithes.[31] Both Anne's husband and Henry More were greatly disturbed by her involvement with these "schismatic enthusiasts" who refused to take off their hats before nobility and who flagrantly challenged the authority of both Church and kingdom.[32] Nevertheless, as a clear testimony to his love and respect for her, Lord Conway used his political influence to release the imprisoned Ulster Quakers at his wife's behest, despite the fact he considered them "a senseless, wilful, ridiculous generation of people".[33]

The last years of Conway's life were full of intellectual discussions and meetings at Ragley Hall. At this point her own philosophy was becoming fully developed, and she had begun to write her treatise. But her illness grew increasingly worse, and on 23 February 1679 she died, aged forty-eight.

2.2. Material

Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of material from Conway's hand, and what we do have is both fragmented and edited. Indeed, there are only two main sources that testify to the thought of this extraordinary woman: the preserved letters of her correspondence and her treatise which bears the full title, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy concerning God, Christ and Creation, that is, concerning the Nature of Spirit and Matter, thanks to which all the Problems can be resolved which could not be resolved by Scholastic Philosophy nor by Modern Philosophy in general, whether Cartesian, Hobbesian, or Spinozian.*

Parts of her correspondence with Henry More have been published in the volume *Conway Letters*, edited by Marjorie Hope Nicolson and published in 1930.[34] In 1992 Sarah Hutton presented a revised and extended edition, which includes

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30   Ibid.179 f.
31   Coudert/Corse, Introduction xxiii.
32   Keller, Be a Multiplicity 82.
33   Hutton, The Conway Letters 443 f.
34   Nicolson, Conway Letters.

some letters in the More–Conway correspondence that were omitted in Nicolson's version as well as some 50 letters from or concerning Lady Conway's relatives.[35] The themes of the letters include intellectual, social, and personal matters and range from 1650, before Anne's marriage to Lord Conway, to her death in 1679. They are an important source in mapping the intellectual friendship between More and Conway, as well as for obtaining biographical information about Lady Conway herself and her circle of friends and family. Unfortunately, the majority of the letters from Conway to More are lost, and in many instances we only have More's replies. Nevertheless, they reveal a great deal about Conway's philosophical interests and abilities.[36] I will refer to the letters when relevant to the understanding of the philosophy presented in her treatise.

The *Principles* is the publication of a compilation of notes found in a notebook in her bedroom after her death in 1679. The notes were probably arranged and edited by her friend van Helmont.[37] The unpublished preface, later printed in Richard Ward's biography of Henry More *The Life of The Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More* (1710), describes it as "broken fragments" and continues:

"Thou art to understand, that they are only Writings abruptly and scatteredly, I may add also obscurely, written in a Paper-Book, with a Black-lead Pen, towards the latter end of her long and tedious Pains and Sickness; which She never had Opportunity to revise, correct, or perfect."[38]

There is some debate as to whether or not Conway intended it for publication.[39] Sarah Hutton argues that it was probably written within the last two years of her life.[40] If that is the case, it is reasonable to believe that it incorporates all the different strands of philosophy and theology that Conway had been exposed to, not least Quaker theology. Unfortunately, the original English manuscript is now lost. It was first published in 1690 in a Latin translation, and in 1692 the Latin text was re-translated into English and published in London.[41]

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35 Hutton, The Conway Letters ix.
36 Ibid. x.
37 Ibid. xii.
38 Ward, The Life of Henry More 203.
39 Some scholars argue that the *Principles* was not intended for publication, see e. g. Hutton, Anne Conway 5; Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 248. On the other hand Rosengren, Conway 39, considers Conway's *Principles* a systematically excellent and thorough work that does not resemble notes. She further points out that Conway addresses "my readers" directly (Principles VI, 5 p. 31), which Rosengren believes could suggest that Conway had publication in mind.
40 Hutton, Anne Conway 34.
41 The translator is recorded as "J. C.". Coudert/Corse, Introduction xxxviii, note that the translator is identified as Jacobus Crull in the Dictionary of National Biography, while

The complicated history of the work presents us with some obvious text-critical challenges. What we have is a translation of a translation of incomplete notes. Further, it is very likely that van Helmont made some additions to the text in the process of editing. Sarah Hutton writes that some of the notes in the *Principles*, which give the reader references to the *Kabbalah Denudata*, are necessarily later additions since they refer to the second volume, not published until 1684.[42] Further, we should note that the opening summary of each chapter in Conway's *Principles* refers to the Kabbalah more often than the main text merits and often has an interpretational character which seems to skew the argument somewhat.[43] Despite the many text-critical challenges, the *Principles* remains the fullest and most comprehensive systematic source for Conway's thought, and this dissertation will therefore treat the *Principles* as a coherent work and as the source that thoroughly represents Conway's arguments, beliefs, and objectives.

Today, several translations of the *Principles* exist. Apart from the Latin edition of 1690 and the English edition of 1692, there is a bilingual edition (comprising both the Latin text and an English translation) edited and translated by Peter Loptson in 1982. Both Loptson's translation and his introduction have been criticized by some scholars, among them Allison Coudert and Taylor Corse, who deem the English "virtually incomprehensible in places" and further hold that Loptson "misunderstood or misinterpreted certain important aspects of Lady Conway's thought".[44] The most recent translation is from 1996, edited and translated by Coudert and Corse.[45] They write that the aim of their edition is to "produce a modern translation in idiomatic English that is both true to the spirit of the Latin and an accurate reflection of Lady Conway's highly original philosophy".[46]

    Marjorie Nicolson suggests that it is John Clark, M. D. who also translated van Helmont's *Seder Olam* in 1694.

42   Hutton, Anne Conway 5 n. 14.

43   For the same reason, I quote only rarely from the notes and opening résumés in my analysis. For more information on the genesis of the *Principles*, see e.g. Hutton, ibid. 3–6. 225 ff., and Coudert/Corse, Introduction xxxviii–xxxix.

44   Coudert/Corse, ibid. xxxix. Thomas, Time, Space, and Process in Anne Conway 993 ff., has carefully problematized Loptson's understanding of the relation between Conway's and Leibniz's philosophies with regard to time. Lascano, Anne Conway 328, strongly criticizes Loptson's claim that "Conway simply did not give much consideration to her view that all created beings have some body". Cf. Conway, Principles 23. Trans. Loptson.

45   Jonathan Bennett has provided a modern English translation launched online in 2009. It is more a rewriting than a close translation, and the translator is candid about replacing "archaic terms" with current words and omitting passages that are "obsolete" in order to make the text more accessible. This translation is too loose to be used in this thesis.

46   Coudert/Corse, Introduction xxxix. Among Coudert's research areas are Jewish-Christian relations and the Christian Kabbalah, so the editors have Conway's use of Kabbalah as an explicit point of interest. In the footnotes we find parallels to the Luranic Kabbalah, which has received some critique by Mary Warnock, who holds that the editors have "muddled mysticism with 'real' philosophy". See Hutton, Anne Conway 8. Hutton is cit-

As the edition of Coudert and Corse provides a very readable English translation that remains close to the original Latin text, this will be the work of reference for the present thesis. I will cite Conway's *Principles* from this edition, using parentheses in the main text to refer to page numbers.

2.3. Intellectual Opponents in the *Principles*

As mentioned, it is Conway's self-declared ambition in the *Principles* to correct the mistakes she sees in the three most influential philosophers of her time: Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. I shall therefore sketch out their positions before giving a summary of her *Principles*. It will not be my aim to give a detailed description of these positions as they are presented in the authors' own works. Since Conway uses these positions as the background against which she develops her own philosophy, the following accounts are simplifications that aim to show how Conway presents them for a specific purpose: to show how they each, in different ways, subscribe to a substance metaphysics that she finds problematic.

At one end of the spectrum, Conway defines her position on the God-world relation against the dualisms of Descartes and her teacher Henry More, who hold God and the world to be ontologically distinct substances. At the other end of the spectrum are the monistic materialisms of Hobbes and Spinoza, whose convictions, according to Conway, threaten to erase the distinction between God and the world completely. She argues that the substance-dualism propounded by Descartes and More results in an ontological gap between spirit and body – and ultimately between God and creation – while Hobbes and Spinoza are guilty of confounding God and creatures and make one being of both, albeit in different ways (IX, 4 p. 64). While she views Hobbes as a proponent of materialism, she sees Spinoza as a proponent of pantheism. As I will argue by using process theology, Conway's discussion with these philosophies can be seen as an early attempt to re-conceptualize the "solidity" of substance-philosophy or, as Catherine Keller would have it, to approach theology as "something emerging. Something *on the way*".[47]

The substance philosophy that Conway spends the most time refuting is dualism. Conway was introduced to Descartes's philosophy that propounded two

ing Warnock, in her review of the Coudert and Corse translation of the *Principles* in *The Times Literary Supplement*. Such an opposition between mysticism and "real philosophy" seems problematic, and it is one of the points of this thesis that what Warnock calls "mysticism" is a central aspect in understanding Conway's philosophy. Indeed, I will argue that "mysticism" understood as the religious experience of the subject is one of the issues that the treatise problematizes.

47   Keller, On the Mystery 2.

substances – the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* – by Henry More, who initially embraced it. Indeed, More played a key role in the early dissemination of Cartesianism in England, as he was the first to publish on and teach Descartes's philosophy at Cambridge University.[48] Conway does not explicitly distinguish between More's and Descartes's dualism, although there are differences. I shall briefly point out the main lines of Conway's presentation of Cartesian and Morean body-mind dualism. While she explicitly mentions Descartes and "Cartesianism" as an object of her criticism (she holds that her philosophy can "truly be called anti-Cartesianism" [IX, 2 p. 64]), she never mentions More directly in her text. Nevertheless, she phrases her criticism in terms that suggest that the object of her criticism is More's dualism and not Descartes's.[49] For example, she writes that:

"According to the sense of those who maintain that body and spirit are so infinitely distant in nature that one cannot become the other, the attributes are the following: that the body is impenetrable by all other bodies, so that their parts cannot penetrate each other. Another attribute of the body is that it is discerpible, or divisible. The attributes of spirit, however, as these people define them, are penetrability and indiscerpibility, so that one spirit can penetrate another or a thousand spirits can exist within each other, taking up no more space than one spirit." (VII, 3 p. 48)

According to Hutton, Conway's exact use of "the terms 'discerpible' and 'indiscerpible' as synonyms for 'divisible' and 'indivisible' make the reference to More unmistakable".[50] The gist of her critique of dualism, More's as well as Descartes's, is that they perceive body and spirit to be contraries. Thereby they insert a gap between God and the world. Against this Conway argues that "God and creatures are not so infinitely different in their essence as these doctors make body and spirit, for there are many attributes which God and creatures share" (VII, 3 p. 49). The main part of her thesis is dedicated to addressing the problem of how spirit interacts with body if they are indeed two ontologically distinct substances. This argument goes into some technical detail, which will be expounded in Part Four. Her conclusion is that spirit and body are not opposites but lie at two different ends of a continuum. While this seems to be an elegant solution to the mind-body problem, it also suggests that God and the world are really at two opposite ends of a continuum. This, in turn, seems to erase the gap between God and the world in a way that could easily lead to either materialism or pantheism. So, how does Conway try to avoid that difficulty?

In seventeenth century England philosophical materialism was largely associated with Thomas Hobbes. In Hobbes' more mature works such as *Leviathan* and

48   Hᴜᴛᴛᴏɴ, Anne Conway 40.
49   Ibid. 87.
50   Ibid.

De Corpore, he argues against belief in immaterial beings – including immaterial human minds.[51] Spiritual substance – that is God – is nowhere to be found in the natural world, and we do not need this "insignificant speech" to account for reality. Matter is the only substance, and all phenomena in the world can be explained in terms of motion and the interaction of material bodies. All beings are, according to this view, un-free, in that they operate according to physical laws and chains of cause and effect. Therefore, materialism can lead to determinism and, ultimately, atheism.[52] Henry More saw atheism as the necessary consequence of Hobbes' philosophy, and he dedicated much energy to proving the presence and extent of spirit in the world. At its core was an apologetic manoeuvre. In his work *An Antidote against Atheism*, More argues that the existence of Spirit is really the evidence for God: "That saying is no less true in Politicks, *No Bishop, no King*, than this in metaphysicks, *No Spirit no God*".[53] More's *The Immortality of the Soul* (1659) was explicitly aimed at Hobbes. Like her mentor, Conway was very critical of Hobbes' philosophy. But her critique is less apologetic in nature and the differences she draws out between her own philosophy and that of Hobbes pertain more to logic and experience. Indeed, she concedes that there are similarities between her own philosophy and that of Hobbes, for example "in this respect, that it maintains that all creatures were originally one substance from the lowest and most ignoble to the highest and most noble and from the smallest reptile, worm, and fly to the most glorious angel" (IX, 4 p. 64), and further, that "all things are one because we see that all visible things can change into one another" (IX, 5 p. 64). Hutton remarks that her recognition of some aspects of Hobbes's philosophy is both "surprising" and "bold".[54] But, having conceded these similarities, she makes her attack:

"Hobbes claims that God is material and corporeal, indeed, that he is nothing but matter and body. Thus he confounds God and creatures in their essences and denies that there is an essential difference between them." (IX, 3 p. 64)

On the matter of substance, "Hobbesianism […] is even more contrary to our philosophy than Cartesianism" (IX, 3 p. 64). More and Descartes (wrongly) denied the possibility of change of one thing into another, whereas Hobbes (wrongly) concluded that the possibility for change of substance meant that God and creatures are really the same substance.

Like materialism, pantheism also assumes substance monism. It advocates the complete identity between God and the world. Contrary to materialism, which claimed that God was infinite body, pantheism claims that all things are part of the

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51   Hobbes, De Corpore 20 f.
52   Hobbes, Of Liberty and Necessity, paragraph 11. Cf. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 26.
53   More, Antidote, Book III, xvi, 17. 142.
54   Hutton, Anne Conway 110.

same universal substance – God. At Conway's time many believed Spinoza represented this view – an interpretation of him that is now debated.[55] According to Spinoza, God is the only substance, wherefore all things that exist are part of God or Nature. As God is pure omnipotence and divine action, Spinoza often uses the phrase *deus sive natura* (God or Nature) to indicate that these two are identical. It is God's essence that he is that which has infinite attributes. God is the substance that exists necessarily, and all things are part of that substance, therefore all things that exist do so necessarily. Like More, Conway perceived Spinozism as an "outgrowth of Hobbism and Cartesianism".[56] In Conway's view Spinoza repeats the error of Hobbes, namely that "he confounds God and creatures and makes one being of both, all of which is diametrically opposed to our philosophy" (IX, 3 p. 64). Indeed, when she mentions Spinoza directly it is always in conjunction with Hobbes, as they, in her view, represent the same false philosophy. These philosophers, she writes, are "in contempt of the most glorious name of God" (IX, 1 p. 63). However, contrary to More, she accepted Spinoza's premise that everything is a spiritual substance, and she did not view him as a materialist in disguise.

Conway seems to have been accused of sharing Spinoza's pantheism.[57] At first glance her argument for the mutability of creatures owing to their shared substance, as well as her claim that everything in the world is inherently spiritual, seems to share some ground with Spinoza. However, it is clear that Conway sees herself in opposition to Spinoza. We see this in her careful distinction between three different substances – God, Christ, and creation – in order to avoid some theological problems. A consequence of Spinoza's view is that he ends up with problems of theodicy. If everything is spirit, and spirit is God, then how are we to account for all the evil and suffering in the world while maintaining the goodness of God? Is evil sanctioned by God, or even part of him? Spinoza does indeed deny the compassion of God by equating the divine will with the laws of nature, which means that God is essentially indifferent; he has no personal or relational attributes, and therefore there is no divine goodness.

This viewpoint could not be farther from Conway's for the *Principles* is, essentially, a theodicy.[58] She endeavors to prove the goodness of God and affirms his justice on impregnable grounds by holding that God and creatures are not of the same substance. Yet, they share some attributes, and this enables creatures to do

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55　The question of whether or not Spinoza was a pantheist is a major scholarly debate. See e. g. Müller, Streit um Gott 64–134. I shall not go into this debate here, but I use the term pantheism generally as an umbrella term that includes Spinoza's philosophy.

56　Hutton, Anne Conway 175.

57　Conway, Principles IX, 1–5 p. 63–65. For a more specific account of Conway's assessment of Spinoza, see Pugliese, Monism and Individuation in Anne Conway 771–785.

58　Hutton, Anne Conway 55; Coudert/Corse, Introduction xi; Lascano, Anne Conway on Liberty 164; Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 249. 256.

good as well as evil. Indeed, her spiritual monism is an inextricable part of her solution to the problem of evil.[59] It may be that the threat from pantheism to the goodness of God forms part of the backdrop to her emphasis on theodicy. Spinoza's philosophy is not dealt with as directly as the materialism of Hobbes and the dualism of Descartes and More, but its theological consequences lie in the background alongside an awareness of the problems of Calvinist voluntarism (which I shall return to later in this Introduction in the subsection, "Platonic-Origenian Framework").

These three substance-ontologies, dualism, materialism, and pantheism have in common that they distort the problem of how God and the world relate to one another, either by over-accentuating the ontological difference or claiming that there is no difference at all. Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, or "the unholy trio", as they have been called by Richard Popkin,[60] arrive at three different results based on the same kind of substance theory.

2.4. Summary of the *Principles*

The *Principles* consists of nine chapters, which in sum present a coherent metaphysical system constituted as a tripartite substance ontology. The topics are both manifold and intertwined, so for the sake of clarity, and in order to give a brief overview of Conway's argument, I shall here give a brief summary of her treatise.

Conway presents a metaphysics that insists on three different substances that are differentiated from each other and defined by their capability for change. Mutability, therefore, is the key concept that structures Conway's theological philosophy. Based on their capability for change, she identifies three kinds of "being" or three different substances:

"[T]here are three kinds of being. The first is altogether immutable. The second can only change towards the good, so that which is good by its very nature can become better. The third kind is that which, although it was good by its very nature, is nevertheless able to change from good to good as well as from good to evil." (V, 3 p. 24)

These three kinds of being are identified as God, Christ, and creatures respectively. The nature and attributes of God are the topics of the first subsection. Conway opens the treatise by establishing that "God is spirit, light, and life, infinitely wise, good, just, strong, all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, the creator and maker

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59   HUTTON, Anne Conway und die Güte Gottes 77.
60   POPKIN, Spiritualistic Cosmologies 98.

of all things visible and invisible" (I, 1 p. 9). The reader learns two things from the outset: God is the first principle, from which all things come into existence, and the divine attributes are central to his being. God is perfect, and therefore he is completely unable to change:

"[T]here is no greater being than God, and he cannot improve or be made better in any way, much less decrease, which would imply his imperfection. Therefore it is clear that God, or the highest being, is wholly unchangeable." (V, 3 p. 24)

Maintaining the absolute immutability of God means that God cannot be arbitrary. On the contrary, Conway stresses that God is not free in the sense that he can do evil if he so pleases. Rather, his will is bound to his goodness, justice, and wisdom. As Conway expresses it, this makes God "both free and necessary", since he is bound by his divine attributes as an inner necessity. Therefore, as she argues in chapters II and III, nothing comes into being outside God.

Creation, on the other hand, is defined by change: "It is the nature of every creature to be always in motion and always changing" (VII, 1 p. 42). Creation includes everything in the world, from humans to angels, horses to dust and sand; even the smallest physical entity, the so-called *physical monad*, counts as a creature. So does the Devil. Everything created participates in God in that it shares some of his attributes (what Conway calls his "communicable attributes") such as spirit, light, life, goodness, holiness, justice, and wisdom; but it differs from God in that it is dependent, finite, imperfect, and mutable. This creates an opposition between the harmony and unity of God and the plurality and difference of creation. This opposition risks constituting an ontological gap, which, according to Conway, proves the logical necessity of Christ as medium between the first and third substances. She explains that the substance of Christ is a kind of "Middle Nature" between God and creation:

"This mediating must not be understood in so crass a way, as if it stood at a midpoint between two extremes, just as the trunk of the body is between the head and the feet, but it is a median in respect to its nature." (V, 4 p. 25)

Christ participates in both the nature of God and in the nature of creation: as God (*logos ousios*), Christ is the essential Word of the Father. As man (*logos proforikos*), he is the Word, which is uttered or revealed. Thus, he "shares mutability and immutability and eternity and time [and …] spirit and body and consequently place and extension" (VII, 4 p. 50). Conway expounds the nature and function of Christ in chapters IV and V. In these chapters, which have been somewhat overlooked by scholarship, she elaborates on the nature of change as the defining concept that distinguishes her three kinds of being from each other. There are two kinds

of change, she says. The first is the free, intrinsic power, *liberum arbitrium*, to change from good to bad or from bad to good. This relates to creatures only. The second kind is that of eternal moral progression, changing continuously from one good to a better good. This kind of change defines Christ. But Conway is at pains to stress that here "I am speaking about the moral, not the natural, immutability of the Messiah" (V, 3 p. 25). In other words, she is saying that he is ethically immutable and essentially mutable.

In chapter VI, Conway continues to define the extent of the mutability of creation, while chapters VII and VIII expound the relation between spirit and matter in creation. The mutability of all creatures is rooted in the fact that all of creation consists of the same substance. Conway calls the spiritual matter that is the building blocks of creation "physical monads"; importantly, this spiritual matter is in itself a living substance capable of self-motion, perception, and even emotion. All creatures are part of this same created substance, and therefore, all creatures are both spiritual and material. There are spirits without *visible* bodies in Conway's cosmology, but she maintains that all created spirits are embodied (VII, 1 p. 43). The extent of their materiality varies as a result of the self-agency of individual creatures, a position that Conway defends by recourse to the theological trope of the Fall found in the Book of Genesis. Thus, she explains that created spirits abused their free will to turn away from God's goodness, resulting in the Fall, and coincidently, in visible bodies: "All the crassness of the visible bodies comes from the fall of the spirits from their original state" (VII, 1 p. 43).[61] In the Fall, the spirits forfeited their original ethereal bodies and were given bodies made of air and earth instead. But the bodies we inhabit presently are not static; they are subject to continuous change depending on our behavior. Conway explains how good choices quite literally entail getting more spiritual bodies. Conversely, bad choices entail grosser, darker bodies:

"One may easily understand how the heart or spirit of a wicked man is called hard and stony because his spirit has indeed real hardness in it […]. On the other hand, the spirit of a good person is soft and tender. We can really sense the internal hardness and softness of spirit [and these phrases] have a real and proper meaning without any figurative sense." (VII, 1 p. 44)

This leads Conway to her original position that matter and spirit are not opposite substances. Rather, they are the same substance in different modalities. As such, they are at different ends of a continuum:

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61   On several occasions Conway refers to an original, i. e., prelapsarian, "nature" or "state" of creation, which she defines as a "pristine state of goodness" (VII, 1 p. 42) with "oneness in spirit and body" (VII, 3 p. 47).

"Truly, every body is a spirit and nothing else, and it differs from a spirit only insofar as it is darker. Therefore, the crasser it becomes, the more it is removed from the condition of spirit. Consequently, the distinction between spirit and body is only modal and incremental, not essential and substantial." (VI, 11 p. 39 f.)

From here, she proceeds to give six reasons for her spiritual monism of the created substance, and we learn that the spirit-matter continuum is not an egalitarian structure, but a hierarchy: Since "spirit is the more excellent of the two in the true and natural order of things" (VII, 1 p. 42), the more spiritual a creature becomes, the closer it comes to God. Conway explains that it "is the nature of all creatures [to] grow and progress infinitely toward[s] greater perfection" (VII, 2 p. 46). Any creature will naturally, according to the order of things, strive towards God who is perfect. All of creation partakes in this continuous movement towards God. Therefore, the change or movement of creation is not arbitrary but a directed motion. However, since God is unable to change, a creature can never become fully like God. It can only progress towards God infinitely through its self-agency.

The possible ascent of spirits towards God through virtuous choices results in Conway positing the transmutation of species. She explains how, over time, a good horse can, on account of the right moral choices, progress in such a way that it eventually becomes a human being. On the other hand, it is also possible for a creature to descend the ontological ladder and become more material. An angel could therefore, in principle, become a rock, if it was not careful in its decisions. All of creation is capable of becoming more spirit-like or more material, quite literally.

In the ninth and final chapter of her treatise, Conway explains how her tripartite substance ontology – God, Christ, and creation – both differs from and is superior to the philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. They have all failed to understand that matter is inherently alive and spiritual, not dead. Matter and spirit are therefore not two different substances, but two different qualities of the same created substance. This created substance is not God, but neither is it devoid of God's presence. God works in all creatures and effects in them what Conway calls "vital motion" (IX, 6–9 p. 66–70). This is the concept that explains the curious combination of the nobler attributes – life, spirit, perception, etc. – and materiality in a creature. It can be further passed on from creature to creature because it is not an attribute, but a mode of being. She explains that this corresponds to the "dual extension" of each creature:

"Thus we can distinguish between material and virtual extension, every creature having this dual extension. Material extension is that which matter, body, or substance itself has, but without any motion or action. This extension, properly speaking, is neither greater nor

lesser since it always remains the same. Virtual extension is the motion or action which a creature has whether given immediately from God or received immediately from some fellow creature." (IX, 9 p. 69)

This second kind of motion or action is "the motion of life" (IX, 9 p. 69), which comes from God, and which explains how motion is communicated from one body to another. And this is "the entire work of the creature or creation as an instrument of God" (IX, 9 p. 70).

2.5. Overlapping Frameworks

As the title *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* suggests, Conway's metaphysical system draws on ancient philosophy – Neoplatonic, Origenian, and Kabbalistic – as well as on the newest scientific breakthroughs and philosophical methods and Quaker spirituality. In other words, Conway's treatise is a rich mélange of traditions and influences which are woven together into an eclectic yet consistent and original argument. In the following, it is not my aim to trace how these different strands may be said to influence the *Principles*' arguments.[62] Rather, I wish to show how Conway's intellectual milieu was embedded in a broader historical context where the relation between the rational and the empirical, the material and the spiritual, and the divine and the creaturely was questioned from many angles and in many different ways. Faced with the new scientific breakthroughs, philosophy, religion, and art searched for new epistemological anchoring points on which to base their claims to truth. It is my assertion that this "crisis of the European mind"[63] is an important context for reading Conway's *Principles* from a process theological perspective because it shows that Conway wrote in a time where the stable world views of strong ontologies were already being questioned and new understandings of reality – of religion, of philosophy, of people and nature, of government, etc. – were emerging.

I draw on former scholarship to substantiate this claim, and I will do so by identifying three contextual frameworks in which Conway wrote her *Principles*: the "Baroque", the "Neoplatonic", and the "Quaking". While the term "framework" is admittedly somewhat fuzzy, I have chosen to use the term for these different contextual layers because it allows me to free myself from the text of the *Principles* and approach different aspects of what we might describe as Conway's *imag-*

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62   This important work has been and is presently being conducted by historians of philosophy, whose works I will refer to in the footnotes when relevant.

63   Cf. HAZARD, La crise de la conscience européenne.

inaire.[64] Even if all the aspects of these frameworks are not immediately recognizable or even philologically traceable in Conway's text, it is my assumption that the *Principles* takes part in and expresses the cultural imaginary of her time. Since this fluctuated between the strong and weak ontologies, it is not without interest to give an account of the broader contextual framework in which she wrote.

I begin on a very general level by giving an account of the Baroque world view and then focus more sharply on Conway's immediate circle of intellectual peers to show that they gave their own answers to the questions of their time by way of a Neoplatonic Origenism forced into the inflexible shape of Cartesian logic. I end with the "Quaking" framework to show how another of Conway's sources of inspiration, the Quakers, went in completely the opposite direction from her peers within the Cambridge Platonist movement by rejecting all philosophical systematizing of religious experience.

2.5.1. The Baroque Framework

The French word "Baroque" is derived from the Portuguese word "barroco" or the Spanish "barrueco" and it is often associated with a highly ornate and extravagant form of architecture, music, painting, and sculpture. The word itself refers to a pearl of irregular shape, and this image captures the changing world-view that began to emerge in the seventeenth century. Spanning approximately from 1600 to 1750, the Baroque as a period can be said to lie as something "irregular" and destabilizing in between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.[65]

As Michael Moriarty states, "it is easy to see how the idea of associating the baroque with philosophy might at first elicit a certain skepticism. […] But, curiously enough, one of the suggested etymologies of the word actually relates to scholastic philosophy".[66] Art historical observations help capture the overall change in world-view that extended to philosophical thought and modes of enquiry. While the Renaissance was generally occupied with figures of symmetry, straight lines, and closed compositions in finished spaces, the Baroque is con-

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64 On this notion see LE GOFF, L'imaginaire médiéval. For an over-arching description of the seventeenth century *imaginaire* (although in a French context) see SELLIER, Essais sur l'imaginaire classique.

65 The following presentation of these periods is merely meant as a rough overview of general trends and is in no way adequate as a historical representation. The very idea of dividing history into periods such as "Renaissance", "Baroque", and "Enlightenment" is often contested. For problems concerning the definition of "the Baroque" see e. g. ROSENGREN, Conway 91–93.

66 The term refers to a particular kind of syllogism. Cf. MORIARTY, The Baroque and Philosophy 602.

cerned with the juxtaposition of contrasting elements and, as Else Marie Bukdahl writes, with "the dynamic aspects of space and nature, the oscillation between the macroscopic and the microscopic, the active role of the viewer, intervisuality, the unreliability of reality, and a strong sense of openness".[67] In art, this raised questions of visualization and perspective often depicted through certain destabilizing symbols or formal patterns such as the mirror, the labyrinth, the mask, the *mise-en-abyme*, and the *trompe-l'œil*. All of these symbols ask their viewer to identify what is real. In contrast, many of the over-arching tropes of Renaissance art focused on resemblance and similitude. Its approach to knowledge, as pointed out by Michel Foucault, "conceptualized things appearing in the world as entities that reflect one another. The earth reflects the heavens; the human mind reflects God's wisdom", etc.[68] The Baroque world-view was dominated by an inquiry into the harmony of this wholesome world-view. An interest in concepts such as infinity, instability, reflexivity, perspective, fluidity, transformation, the fragmentary, the chaotic, and multiplicity all testify to this by destabilizing the point-of-view of the observing subject.[69]

In the Enlightenment Period the destabilized point-of-view was arguably re-stabilized as it found a new anchoring point in the rationalism and scientific methods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The neo-classical art and architecture of the period reveal a return to simplicity and symmetry. Classical portraits with naturalistic detail, sober colors, and strong vertical and horizontal lines give the impression of timeless knowledge and subject matter. Human knowledge and understanding became central and institutionalized. The Age of Reason saw philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes propound ideas such as natural law in their development of political philosophy. In theology, enquiries into the existence and attributes of God were developed away from Scripture and revelation. It aimed to adhere to the same standards of investigation as contemporary science and philosophy, relying on human faculties that are "natural" such as reason and sense perception.[70]

Already in the seventeenth century, the religious and philosophical realm was deeply affected by many scientific breakthroughs: from Galileo Galilei's (1564–1642) confirmation of the Copernican heliocentric thesis, positing the sun and not the earth as center of the universe, to Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) emphasis on experimental demonstrations and inductive investigation as means of obtaining knowledge and truth, to Isaac Newton's (1642–1727) invention of the telescope and his mathematical demonstrations that proved his theory of gravity. These scientific break-

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67 Bukdahl, The Recurrent Actuality of The Baroque 33.
68 Raffnsøe/Thaning/Gudmand-Høyer, Michel Foucault 159.
69 Bukdahl, The Recurrent Actuality of The Baroque 33. See also Wölfflin, Principles of Art History, and Rosengren, Conway 92.
70 Chignell/Pereboom, Art. Natural Theology and Natural Religion.

throughs were accompanied by technological advances: the invention of the micro-
scope (and thereby the discovery of bacteria), the calculating machine, and a method
for blood transfusion, to name just a few discoveries that suddenly made the world
expand and seem infinitely complex. Optics such as mirrors and glass lenses (e. g.
the telescope) revealed new perspectives when shaped according to certain mathe-
matical forms. The encounter with infinite space,[71] and the growing sensation that
all boundaries were fluid, as new discoveries continued to expand the visual world,
resulted in an increasing destabilization. Arguably, this led to the budding realization
that the world could not be described from one single perspective.

Scientists and philosophers alike became weary of the intellectual conjectures
of scholastic Aristotelianism that had dominated the Middle Ages and the Renais-
sance with its deductive method and centrist view of the world. From the vantage
point of today, we can describe these changes from Aristotelianism to modern
philosophy. This was a change in content as well as style.[72] Aristotelianism was
a synthesis of logic, ethics, physics, psychology, politics, and economics. It was
a general philosophy that sought to encompass all areas of knowledge into one
system. Modern philosophy, on the other hand, became increasingly specialized
and divided into different disciplines. Facing the moving and ever-changing facets
of the new world, modern philosophy sought footholds for knowledge in experi-
ments and scientific investigations, positing theoretical and empirical methods as

71 Henry More was very preoccupied with infinite space and posited it as an attribute of God.
72 Hutton, British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century 265. Hutton presents a rich his-
    torical study of one of the most fertile periods in modern philosophy. It was in the seven-
    teenth century that Britain's first philosophers of international stature and lasting influence
    emerged. Its most famous names, Hobbes and Locke, rank alongside the greatest names
    in the European philosophical canon. Bacon too belongs with this constellation of great
    thinkers, although his status as a philosopher tends to be obscured by his status as father of
    modern science. The seventeenth century is normally regarded as the dawn of modernity
    following the breakdown of the Aristotelian synthesis which had dominated intellectu-
    al life since the Middle Ages. In this period of transformational change, Bacon, Hobbes,
    and Locke are acknowledged to have contributed significantly to the shape of European
    philosophy from their own time to the present day. But these figures did not work in iso-
    lation. Hutton places them in their intellectual context, including the social, political, and
    religious conditions in which philosophy was practised. She treats seventeenth-century
    philosophy as an ongoing conversation: like all conversations, some voices will dominate,
    some will be more persuasive than others, and there will be enormous variations in tone
    from the polite to the polemical, the matter-of-fact, or the intemperate. The conversation
    model allows voices to be heard which would otherwise be discounted. Hutton shows the
    importance of figures normally regarded as 'minor' players in philosophy (e. g. Herbert of
    Cherbury, Cudworth, More, Burthogge, Norris, Toland) as well as others who have been
    completely overlooked, notably female philosophers. Crucially, instead of emphasizing
    the break between seventeenth-century philosophy and its past, the conversation model
    makes it possible to trace continuities between the Renaissance and seventeenth century,
    across the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century, while at the same time
    acknowledging the major changes which occurred (ibid. 7–25).

the basis of knowledge and truth. A high level of specialized technical knowledge was required for experimental physics, for example. Aristotelian philosophy was conducted in Latin for an academic audience, but modern science was written in the vernacular for a general audience, thus relocating philosophy outside the academy.[73] Logic was no longer understood as the art of disputing well but came to be based on practice and demonstrations. This all contributed to descriptions of the world independent of traditional theological models of explanation. The results brought by the new scientific approaches provided new and convincing explanations of physical phenomena that had hitherto been explained theologically. A general decline in interest of metaphysics ensued, and the new empirical science blossomed. Questions that were previously considered metaphysical became subject to empirical inquiry.

The discussion of whether or not there exists such a thing as vacuum or "empty space" serves as an example of this encounter between the new science and the traditional world-view.[74] Up to this point, most scientists had rejected the idea of empty space,[75] for according to Aristotelian logic it was impossible that something should simultaneously be and not be. But when the famous mathematician, philosopher, and theologian Blaise Pascal invented a hydraulic press (i. e., a barometer) thus proving the existence of vacuum, it shook the metaphysical assumption that empty space could not be a part of creation. Until that point, science had held the view that a vacuum could not exist because it was per definition non-being. Within the framework of traditional Aristotelian logic, the idea that God's creation included its exact opposite was unthinkable.[76]

A growing disparity arose between the new scientific and traditional ways of acquiring knowledge. The tension between truth deduced from the nature of God

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73   Ibid. 10.
74   Both Henry More and Anne Conway were occupied with the question of vacuum. In accordance with his view of God's extension and action, More defends the possibility of a vacuum which Descartes, following his identification of body and extension, must deny. While a vessel, on the principles of Cartesian physics, must collapse once the bodily extension between two opposing sides has been removed, Morean philosophy of nature allows for a possible divine intervention preventing them from meeting; More, Opera Omnia Book II/2, 235: "For if God impresses motion upon matter, as you have shown earlier, can he not press against it, preventing the sides of the vessel from meeting? However, it is a contradiction to say, you argue, that the sides of a vessel are distant from one another without there being anything between them." However, while defending the conceptual possibility, More is careful to deny the actual reality of a vacuum on theological grounds. Instead of leaving places devoid of its beneficent self-communication, "the divine fecundity", he instead states as a corollary of his Christian Platonism that God's creative goodness, "is not idle anywhere. It has produced matter in all places without leaving even the minutest of gaps" (ibid. 246).
75   Grant, Much Ado About Nothing 5.
76   Ibid. 103–116. 170.

and truth induced from empirical observations spread to moral and religious concerns. If the new scientific descriptions and understanding of nature and man were true, was there room for human freedom and moral responsibility? What did individual experience, self-consciousness or awareness entail for scientific enquiry? And how is one to understand theological ideas such as God, creation, and salvation within this new framework? These Baroque questions shook the foundations of the philosophical and theological axioms of the old world. As Galileo had robbed the earth of its central place in the neatly ordered cosmos, heaven lost its role as the anchoring point of knowledge. Instead, scientific advances took its place. Rather than seeing stars as holes in heaven opening up towards the divine harmony of the cosmos, infinite distances of nothingness opened between them, prompting questions of man's position in this newfound chaos.

Rene Descartes's famous *cogito* is perhaps the most successful attempt to find a new anchoring point in which to structure the world and the experience of reality.[77] Asking if there is true knowledge and how we may obtain it, his philosophical method was to doubt everything and to reject spiritual or religious explanations of the world. The *cogito*'s foundation is the reason of the thinking subject. The consequences of this ground-breaking change in perspective has meant that Cartesian rationalism is considered to be one of the main pillars of Enlightenment thought.[78] It has been argued that the Cartesian *cogito* can be linked to the "centralized" or universal perspective.[79] The thinking *I* becomes the anchoring point from which to obtain knowledge and truth. Immediately, however, the thinking *I* is destabilized in its encounter with another *I* which prompts the question: from whose point of view should the world be structured and ordered?

2.5.2. The Platonic-Origenian Framework

The reception of Descartes's work in England is associated first and foremost with the circle of seventeenth-century English thinkers known as the Cambridge Platonists. This umbrella term was used by John Tulloch in 1872 to designate a group of liberal theologians who shared similar ecclesiastical and philosophical opinions and concerns. Although grouped around fellows of Cambridge University such as Benjamin Whichcote, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth, the circle is rather loosely knit and is formed more by a mutual school of thought than

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77 Moriarty, The Baroque and Philosophy 603–608. Cf. Serres, Les cinq sens 18 f.
78 Lozar, Descartes 131, explains Heidegger's claim that Descartes represents a "paradigmatic shift" in the self-understanding of man, as with him both knowledge of God and the "*axis mundi, omphalos ges*, was once and for all placed into the 'belly button' of the human being". See also Bristow, Art. Enlightenment.
79 Bukdahl, The Recurrent Actuality of The Baroque 60.

a geographical location.[80] For our present purposes, it will suffice to give a general characterization of the group's philosophical and theological views with the intention of pointing to aspects relevant for the process theological reading of Conway's treatise.[81] Since Conway was tutored by Henry More, he will function as a representative figure in the following overview. When relevant, other figures such as Ralph Cudworth, George Rust, and John Smith will be mentioned.

Sarah Hutton situates the Cambridge Platonists within the "Baroque framework" of the seventeenth century depicted above, when she describes them as a group of philosophers trying to establish the epistemological foundations of the new philosophy. She writes:

"[The Cambridge Platonists] also emphatically repudiated the scholasticism that prevailed in academic philosophy and took a lively interest in the developments that brought about the scientific revolution. They therefore form part of the philosophical revolution of the seventeenth century, especially since they sought an alternative philosophical foundation to Aristotelianism which was waning fast in the face of challenges from scepticism and competing alternative philosophies, notably those of Hobbes and Descartes."[82]

The group were, above all, rationalists. They relied on the illumination of God-given human reason, "the candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20:27), to provide them with a secure foundation for both religious and political matters.[83] The group was deeply interested in the new philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza and found inspiration in their rationalism. At the same time, their philosophy is first and foremost a response to the arguments of this "unholy trio".[84] The Cambridge Platonists were moderate dualists in that they rejected the radical dualism of the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans* of Descartes. They insisted "that the mind is ontologically prior to matter and the truths of the intelligible realm superior to

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80 Even though Anne Conway was a woman and therefore prohibited from obtaining a formal education at Cambridge University, she is considered part of the inner group. The work being presently conducted by The Centre for Cambridge Platonism under the direction of Prof. Douglas Hedley seeks to map the many connections, overlaps, and differences within this fluid group. See http://dev.cambridge-platonism.divinity.cam.ac.uk/. The Centre's work has shown the historical validity of speaking of a "school", "group" or "circle" even though such nomenclatures are always difficult to delineate definitively. Cf. Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy 6.

81 I rely here Marilyn Lewis' seminal work in her doctoral thesis, "The Educational Influence of Cambridge Platonism". It follows the method of *Konstellationsforschung* also followed by Sarah Hutton, which "focuses [on a] group rather than an individual and on interconnections, be these textual, social, intellectual or cultural": Lewis, ibid. 13.

82 Hutton, Art. The Cambridge Platonists.

83 Lewis, The Educational Influence of Cambridge Platonism 9. Cf. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 11.

84 Popkin, Spiritualistic Cosmologies 98.

empirical knowledge".[85] They supported post-Galilean science, and argued for an atomistic theory of matter but rejected a materialistic world-view and mechanistic natural philosophy. Instead, "they proposed that spirit is the fundamental causal principle in the operations of nature".[86] They also rejected dogmatism and the consequent value of "orthodoxy".[87]

They advocated a natural theology and propounded the eternal existence of truth and moral principles within the hearts of all human beings. The theory of *universal notions* or "innate ideas" that provide secure knowledge of religious and moral matters was popular among seventeenth-century rationalists and found in Descartes its most prominent exponent.[88] The belief that some ideas or values are natural, a part of a being's essence, or created, was also adopted by the Cambridge Platonists. They believed in the eternal existence of moral principles and of absolute truth, and they argued that the human mind can access this truth because it is rational. In their view, no satisfactory empirical origin could be found for concepts such as God, infinity, substance, and goodness. Therefore, these ideas or values must be natural, part of a being's essence or soul: "The Soul of Man is not *Abrasa Tabula* [e.g.] a Table-book in which nothing is writ", writes Henry More. It has "actuall Knowledge of her own", in terms of "innate ideas".[89] This contention that the human mind is equipped with the principles of reason and morality led to a rather optimistic anthropology which is underscored by the Cambridge Platonists' emphasis on human freedom.[90] Against an Augustinian determinism they proposed man's capability for moral self-determination and his soteriologi-

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85 Hedley, The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World' 187.

86 Ibid. 186.

87 See e.g. Lewis, The Educational Influence of Cambridge Platonism 9. 18. 28. 119.

88 In his *Meditations*, Descartes divides ideas into three kinds: The Philosophical Writings of Descartes 26: "Among my ideas, some appear to be innate, some to be adventitious, and others to have been invented by me. My understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, seems to derive simply from my own nature. But my hearing a noise, as I do now, or seeing the sun, or feeling the fire, comes from things which are located outside me, or so I have hitherto judged. Lastly, sirens, hippogriffs and the like are my own invention."

89 More, Antidote Book I, v, 1/1, 17.

90 Hutton, The Cambridge Platonists 315–317. Several of the Cambridge Platonists wrote directly on the topic of human freedom. See e.g. Cudworth, A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality, published posthumously in 1848. Summarized by Hutton, Cudworth argues that the will is not distinct from reason, but "a power of the soul which combines the functions of both reason and will in order to direct the soul towards the good". See Sterry, A Discourse of the Freedom of the Will (London 1675). Hutton, Art. The Cambridge Platonists, sums up Sterry's argument about human freedom as the act "in accordance with one's nature, appropriately to one's level of being, be that plant, animal or intellectual entity. Human liberty is grounded in the divine essence and entails liberty of the understanding and of the will."

cal capabilities. Human reason and moral realization would, in combination with divine grace, provide humans with the possibility for divinization or deification.

On the other hand, one of the biggest threats to Christianity, according to the Cambridge Platonists, was irrationalism, fanatism or "Enthusiasm", as More calls it.[91] The derogatory term "Enthusiasts" was generally used against the Puritans, who believed that faith alone provided the basis for truth and knowledge. During the British Civil Wars (1642–1651) Puritanism in Britain was largely defined by Calvinism, and Cambridge became a place of theological resistance to that development. They especially resented Calvin's influential doctrine of double predestination (founded on Augustine's theology), his voluntarism, and his insistence on a narrow understanding of scriptural authority. Closely entangled, these elements could be said to derive from the Puritan focus on faith and revelation as the sole access to truth. To put the case starkly, Calvinist Puritanism was the fundamental theological opposition to Cambridge Platonism. Viewed from this perspective, the Cambridge Platonists' strong emphasis on reason taps into the age-old theological conflict between reason and faith, which reached a zenith in early modern England.[92] Following the Scottish Confession of Faith in 1560 and the Lutheran Formula of Concord in 1577, which both held that man is so impaired by the Fall that only faith can provide knowledge of God, fideism had taken a strong hold on the Protestant tradition.[93] The belief that man's nature was tainted by sin led to the idea that truth can only be obtained by faith and revelation. Ultimately, this view is based on the belief that man cannot know anything about God outside revelation in Scripture read through the lens of faith. This in turn led to Calvinists positing voluntarism: the position that the will of God is absolutely sovereign and that human beings are bound to accept that whatever God wills is good *because* God wills it. Henry More argued that these irrational "Enthusiasts" were no better than atheists:

"Our exorbitant Enthusiasts professe that everything is God in love and wrath: Which if I understand anything is no better then Atheisme. For it implies that God is nothing else but the Universall Matter of the World, dressed up in severall shapes and forms, in sundry properties and qualities […]. But to slice God into so many parts is to wound him and kill him, and to make no God at all."[94]

91   See More, Enthusiasmus Triumphatus XLVII, 34.
92   As Paul declared that the "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19) and Anselm claimed his *credo ut intelligam*, Christianity can be said to have "negotiated the twin poles of rationalism and fideism": Givens, Cambridge Platonists and the Miltonic Heritage 149.
93   Ibid.
94   More, Enthusiasmus Triumphatus XLVII, 34.

For More and the other Cambridge Platonists, it is imperative that God is bound to a moral goodness, which we can understand as good through our "inner light". This does not mean, however, that the Cambridge Platonists did not value faith. Rather, they firmly opposed any dichotomy between reason and faith. They believed reason was planted in our minds by God and that Scripture was rational. As Benjamin Whichcote wrote: "I oppose not rational to spiritual; for spiritual is most rational."[95] For the Cambridge Platonists, faith and Scripture confirmed what reason had already expressed.[96] Therefore, the combination of universal reason and indelible ideas of eternal truth and morality can be seen as the most essential element of their religious philosophy.[97]

The Origenist Turn

Facing the challenges that the new philosophy posed, the Cambridge Platonists turned to the ancient Greek philosophers and Church Fathers, notably the "Divine Plotinus"[98] and Origen[99] for inspiration.[100] The school did not differentiate critically between Plato, Plotinus, Origen, Porphyry, and Iamblichus. Rather, they embraced "a revised edition of Platonism", often referred to as Neoplatonism.[101]

One important strand of the Neoplatonic thought is that of the Renaissance philosophers Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, which is based on the idea of the *philosophia perennis* or "Perennial Philosophy". This is the view that philosophical truth is the same for all times although it might be grasped to different degrees at different points in time.[102] Adherents of the *philosophia perennis*

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95 Whichcote, Eight Letters 108.
96 Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 10: "All that the Cambridge Platonists ever uttered reverts in the end to Whichcote's refusal to oppose the Spiritual to the rational, the supernatural to the natural, Grace to Nature."
97 Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy 12.
98 More, THE ORACLE 296. Cf. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 4.
99 More, A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings, preface xxi, refers to Origen as "that Miracle of the Christian World".
100 While Scholasticism and Calvinism drew heavily on the Latin Church Fathers, the Cambridge Platonists excluded these from their references with almost surgical precision: Givens, Cambridge Platonists and the Miltonic Heritage 150. Cf. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 4. However, the nomenclature "The Cambridge Platonists" is slightly misleading for the group did not follow the Platonic tradition slavishly. Some would claim that they were "more truly Plotinists": Coleridge/Bredvold, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century 366. Others suggest that "Origenian Platonists", a term first coined by John Beale in 1666, captures best the richness and variety of texts on which the circle drew: Lewis/Secci/Hengstermann, Origenian Platonisme in Interregnum Cambridge 267.
101 Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 1. Henry More ensured that Anne Conway read the philosophers he held in high regard. These included Plato, Plotinus, Origen, Ficino, and possibly Nicolas of Cusa: Ward, The Life of Henry More 1, 18. Cf. Hutton, Anne Conway 69. 92.
102 See Hutton, ibid. 80. The idea of *philosophia perennis* gives rise to the question of how absolute metaphysical truth can be manifested in different cultures and societies across time.

traced a line from a tradition they believed to be rooted in Adam before moving through the "primitive theology of the Gentiles", Moses, the Prophets, Pythagoras, and others, only to find its way "entire" into the books of "our Plato", as Ficino writes.[103] The group's admiration for Plato, Plotinus, and Origen was, in their view, not in conflict with their adherence to modern science and philosophy. Quite the contrary, for the model of *philosophia perennis* made it possible for them to regard contemporary philosophy as the recapturing of ancient ideas and truths.[104] When William Spencer, a fellow at Trinity College in Cambridge, published his annotated edition of Origen's *Contra Celsum* in 1658, it inaugurated a period in England of particular attention to the Alexandrine. His ideas were put forth as an example of the ancient wisdom handed down by Adam and the prophets, thus reaching back in time to the origin of Christianity.[105] Ralph Cudworth, one of the central figures in Cambridge Platonism, quotes Origen's *Contra Celsum* on the title page of his magnum opus *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*: "Human wisdom is a means of education for the soul, divine wisdom being the end".[106]

The particular combination of reason and faith, human freedom and grace, a denial of predestination, and an assertion of self-agency seems to find an authoritative center of gravity in the writings of Origen.[107] Origen's emphasis on the free will and rational faculties of human nature came to be of principal importance to Henry More and his circle. But also, the doctrines more peculiar to Origen such as the pre-existence of the soul and the restitution of all things [*apokatastasis panton*] were taken up by Henry More, Anne Conway, and others, and integrated into their philosophies.[108] Some believe that Origen represents "the possibility of

One might position this problem within the Baroque framework by seeing it as a reiteration of the challenges brought to philosophy and theology when metaphysics is confronted with subjectivity.

103 Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 6, cites Ficino, De christiana religione, chapter XXII. Cf. also Hutton, ibid. 80.
104 Hutton, ibid. 80 f.
105 A considerable number of key texts concerning the Church Father were published, amounting to what is often referred to as an "Origenist moment in English theology": Hutton, Henry More and Anne Conway 113. For a discussion of the texts published during this "Origenist moment", see Lewis, Expanding the "Origenist Moment" 221–239.
106 The quote is from Origen, Contra Celsum VI 13.
107 Historians of philosophy have made the point that it is important to discern the relation between Conway's Origenism and other strands of influence on her thought, notably the Jewish tradition of Kabbalism. We cannot know entirely which of her specific ideas are indebted to which sources. See Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 221. 233. For the purpose of giving a process theological reading of Conway, this question stands in the background as the ideas and positions propounded by the Cambridge Platonists have clear parallels to Origenian theology. The Kabbalistic perspective is treated below.
108 The connection between Origen and leading Cambridge Platonists has been well established. See notably Sarah Hutton's work in: Hutton, Henry More and Anne Conway

a genuinely Platonic type of Christianity", in that he took the idea of divine presence in the world seriously but managed to avoid "both impersonal pantheism and the view of God as supernatural (cosmological dualism)".[109] For Henry More and his circle, Origen provided a center of gravity that combined rationalism and Christian revelation. Among the Cambridge Platonists, Origen became the lever by means of which the weight of the pessimistic anthropology of the Augustinian tradition could be lifted.[110] Throughout the Middle Ages and into early modern times, theological anthropologies inspired by Augustine had focused on the radical break between God and the world that followed from the Fall.[111] Against this position, the Cambridge Platonists argued with Origen that man's moral awareness partakes of a universal righteousness. The crux of the matter lies in man's capacity to apply these moral principles to life.

This possibility of spiritual progress is reflected in the quotation of Origen on Cudworth's title page: "human wisdom is the training of the soul". This "training" would lead to a spiritual process and eventual deification. We might call this rationalist soteriology of progress "intellectualism" because it is based on the assumption that knowledge and application of the good is possible.[112] As mentioned above, this was opposed to a Calvinist voluntarism holding that God's will transcends human wisdom. Using Origen, the Cambridge Platonists argue that there is a connection between reason and will and that this connection is grounded in human freedom. Against the Augustinian tradition that posits original sin as a radical break between God and creation, the Cambridge Platonists hold that human beings are free to adhere to or reject the divine message, and that the responsibility for this choice falls upon the individual.[113]

123–125; ead., Anne Conway 69–72; ead., Origen and Anne Conway. Other works that assign the crucial importance of Origen to the Cambridge Platonists include: Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 4–6; Lewis/Secci/Hengstermann, Origenian Platonisme in Interregnum Cambridge. So distinctive is the Origenian quality of their thought, that some scholars have substituted the name "Cambridge Origenists" for "Cambridge Platonists": Fürst/Hengstermann, Die Cambridge Origenists. It has been pointed out that not everyone in the Cambridge Platonist school of thought adhered to Origen: Levitin, Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science 486.

109 Dombrowski, A Platonic Philosophy of Religion 30.
110 Givens, Cambridge Platonists and the Miltonic Heritage 149, follows Patrides in asserting that by using the Greek Fathers, and especially Origen, the Cambridge Platonists were able to reject "the entire Western theological tradition from St Augustine through the medieval schoolmen to the classic Protestantism of Luther, Calvin, and their variegated followers in the seventeenth century". See also Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 4.
111 LaCugna, God for Us 143 f.; Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to Medieval Theology 75–120; Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines 163–188. 344–374.
112 Hutton, The Cambridge Platonists 315–317.
113 For a nuancing of the Augustinian position in seventeenth century England, see Hedley, The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World'.

In his article "The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World'", Douglas Hedley points to multiple aspects of Origenian thinking that influenced the Cambridge Platonists. Amongst these are John Smith's (1616–1652) appropriation of the Origenian idea of "spiritual sensation" and More's espousal of the pre-existence of the soul. These are of particular interest in the present context because they serve as examples of what was so appealing about Origenian theology in the context of the unstable Baroque.[114] According to Hedley, the Cambridge Platonists believed God to be "enigmatically present in the world in accordance with St Paul's 'For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face'".[115] Origen's idea of the spiritual senses provided an epistemological category that suggested the possibility of man's experience of divine truth. For example, Origen speaks of seeing God with "eyes of the mind",[116] or hearing with "spiritual ears".[117] This idea of sensing God seems to create an intellectual or noetic parallel to that of sense-perception, thus allowing rational created beings to obtain true knowledge of God. This in turn points to the soul as the central point of perceiving both the outward veil and the inward reality. This is an epistemological challenge, which can occur in varying degrees, for the soul needs training so that it can better make this linkage from experience to transcendence and *vice versa*. In other words, the soul's recognition of truth is a continuous process of discernment brought about by the ascetic discipline of reason. Hedley concludes: "If the greatest truths are enigmatic and veiled, knowledge is the ascent from the sensible to the intelligible and in this ascent the epistemic constraints of empirical knowledge are transcended."[118]

Stretching the traditional philosophical terminology a bit, we might call this position a "rational spiritualism" to emphasize how it seeks to encompass the demand for acquiring knowledge through both experience and reason. In order to avoid a dichotomy between these two poles, it posits the subjective religious experience (of the soul) as the legitimate place where God and humans can "meet". But this experience is counterposed by a demand for rational analysis of this experience.

The noetic capability of the human soul, or its "non-discursive awareness of spiritual truths", as Hedley writes, is also one of the arguments for the pre-existence of souls. As we shall see in Parts Three and Four, this doctrine becomes important for Anne Conway's understanding of the relation between God and the world as well as that between body and spirit because it avoids both a cosmological and an ontological dualism while also providing a solution to the problem of evil and

114 Ibid. 188.
115 Ibid. Cf. 1 Cor. 13:12.
116 Origen, Commentary on Lamentations, Fragment 116; On Prayer 9,2.
117 Contra Celsum VII 34. For more examples, see McInroy, Origen of Alexandria 20.
118 Hedley, The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World' 188.

suffering that maintains the goodness, justice, and power of God.[119] Briefly put, instead of positing an evil counterpart to God such as the demiurge of Gnosticism, evil and suffering are, on this view, the result of transgressions made in a previous life. Origen's doctrine of spiritual senses has had a "momentous reception history", influencing among others one of the sources of inspiration for modern process theology, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.[120] For the present purpose it suffices to underline that the Origenian way of thinking about the noetic capability of the soul is interesting for a process theological reading of Anne Conway because it captures the complex relation between the rational and empirical, the material and spiritual, and the divine and creaturely.

In this sense, Origen's doctrines of the free will, the pre-existence of souls, the rational faculties of the soul, universal salvation, and the spiritual senses are key aspects of the intellectual milieu of Conway's time. The Cambridge Platonists present the Alexandrine and his doctrines as rationalist solutions to the challenges brought about by the subjectivism of the enthusiastic movements, the voluntarism, predestination, and pure revelation doctrines of Calvinism, and the negative anthropology of Augustinianism. But while they read Origin as a seventeenth-century rationalist, his positive anthropology and its trust in the spiritual senses also opens the door for a spirituality that tends to found truth on religious experience more readily than on the logical apparatus of rational skepticism. In this way, Origen can function as a sort of "Trojan horse" inserted into the rationalistic philosophy of Cambridge Platonism and shaking the epistemological foundations of their system.

The Origenian ideas also come to the fore in Conway's treatise in the form of Christian Kabbalism.[121] She derived her knowledge of these mystical teachings of Judaism from van Helmont.[122] Many of the doctrines contained in the Lurianic

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119 Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 222.
120 Hedley, The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World' 188. Cobb Jr., Wesley the Process Theologian, holds that John Wesley was a process theologian in the sense that he sees the relation between God and creatures as one of change and process.
121 Kabbalism pervaded both Anne Conway's and Henry More's philosophies. More, Immortality of the Soul II 12,10 f. p. 113 f., argues that the pre-existence of the soul is a doctrine that antedated Origen and that it was part of "the abstruse Philosophy of the *Jewes*, which that they call their *Cabbala*" and it was held by "the greatest philosophers" including Moses, Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Iamblicus, and Marsilius Ficino. Cf. Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 234. The influence of the Kabbalah on Conway has been given scholarly attention. See above all: Coudert, The Impact of the Kabbalah, esp. 177–220; Coudert/Corse, Introduction xviii–xxii; Hutton, Henry More, Anne Conway and the Kabbalah 27–42; ead. Anne Conway 156–176; Brown, Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle 77–96; Reid, The Metaphysics of Henry More 255–264.
122 Van Helmont and his friend, the German Kabbalist scholar Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689) had collaborated on a collection of texts that were eventually published as the *Kabbalah Denudata* in 1677 with a second volume in 1684. This was the hitherto largest

Kabbalah[123] seemed congenial to More's and Conway's Origenian inclinations and confirmed their understanding of the perennial philosophy. To them, these texts represented an ancient truth and proved that they shared an origin in common with Neoplatonism.[124] Both Hutton and Coudert and Corse point to the many parallels between the Kabbalah and Conway's theology, all of which have parallels to the thought of Origen. Coudert and Corse point to the monism inherent in Luria's version of the Kabbalah. He believed that the created universe was formed by "one basically spiritual substance", where spirit and matter were at different ends of a continuum.[125] Everything in the world is endowed with "a certain life", even "dust and stones".[126] Luria casts the history of the world as a drama of exile from heaven and an eventual redemption and return to the divine creator. In a passage that sounds very much like Origen's theological framework, Coudert and Corse explain how Luria also believed that:

"[M]atter would eventually be restored to its essentially spiritual state by a process of restoration, known as *tikkun*. Though the process was long and arduous, each material entity was allotted repeated reincarnations (*gilgul*), during which it would slowly move up the spiritual ladder. Exile was therefore a necessary, though transitory, stage in a process which would end in universal salvation."[127]

Givens argues that the doctrine of *tikkun* is "roughly analogous to apokatastasis".[128] Further, we see an emphasis on human's goodness and perfectibility, and the belief that evil is paideutic or instructive rather than punitive.

     While many of the ideas of Kabbalism are recognizable in Conway's treatise, her use of the Kabbalah is fundamentally philosophical and rational rather than

      collection of Kabbalistic texts published in Latin, and it became immensely influential. Cf. Coudert/Corse, Introduction xviii. Both van Helmont and von Rosenroth believed the fragments collected in the *Kabbalah Denudata* contained ancient wisdom imparted orally to Moses and the prophets. Therefore, the Kabbalah revealed the most ancient and purest source of wisdom, the *prisca theologia*, or the first philosophy. Cf. Hutton, Anne Conway 163.

123 Isaac Luria is considered the father of early modern Kabbalism, and the secondary literature that treats Anne Conway, Henry More, Francis Mercury van Helmont and their relation to the Kabbalah often refers to the version they engaged with as the "Lurianic Kabbalah". See e. g. Coudert, The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century 192.

124 Hutton, Anne Conway 165. In reality the Kabbalistic ideas propounded in the *Kabbalah Denudata*, to which Henry More and Anne Conway were introduced, were from the sixteenth century. They originated from the disciples around Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572), a Jewish mystic from Ottoman Syria.

125 Coudert/Corse, Introduction xx.

126 Ibid. 8.

127 Ibid. xix. Their italics.

128 Givens, Cambridge Platonists and the Miltonic Heritage 163.

mystical or spiritual. Her *Principles* contains explicit references to the Kabbalah but purely to underline points that have already been established by way of a rationalistic method. She does not elaborate on the possible meanings of the references or interpret their poetic language and metaphorical expressions. As Hutton comments, her *Principles* is "strikingly free from the allegorical and symbolic interpretations that are stock-in-trade of most commentators".[129] Hutton continues to assert that it is impossible to map the mystic order of the Kabbalah onto Conway's rationalist system. The arguments from the Kabbalah, like the Neoplatonic ones, enter into her arguments almost unnoticeably. "In her framing of the tripartite hierarchy of being, the requirements of logic and metaphysics, and possibly of Christian doctrine, take precedence over faithfulness to a mystical schema. […] Logical deduction takes precedence as her preferred means of demonstration".[130]

2.5.3. The Quaking Framework

Although Conway's treatise is certainly rationalistic and shows an undisputable preference for rational arguments and logical deduction in accordance with the Cartesian method, the mystic order of the Kabbalah is an interesting backdrop to her thinking. Sharing many ideas with Origen's theology – spiritual monism, spiritual progress, and universal salvation – her use of the Kabbalah arguably expresses a spiritual strand in her thinking that sought to transcend the confines of the rationalistic method. Both in the mysticism of Kabbalah and in the theology of Origen, the positive anthropology of Cambridge Platonism found an anchor for its logical deductions. The spiritual and mystic tendencies inherent in both Origen and the Kabbalah go some way towards positing religious experience as the anchoring point of rational philosophy. Without such a foundation in experienced reality, it is in danger of being founded on pure abstractions in which case it would simply reproduce the errors of the Aristotelian Scholasticism it criticized. This point will be made clearer in my reading of Conway's argument of infinite divisibility in Part Four.

The tendency to use religious experience as the anchoring point for philosophy becomes even clearer in Conway's positive disposition towards the Quakers. In the words of Phyllis Mack, the Quakers were "a movement of anti-structure".[131] Considered radicals who went against social norms and hierarchies, they moved steadfastly wherever the spirit, as they perceived it, might lead them. Founded by George Fox in 1650, the Quakers were not initially fond of doctrines and did not

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129 Hutton, Anne Conway 168.
130 Ibid. 168. 170.
131 Mack, Visionary Women 3.

have a fixed catechism or creed. Rather, they valued interiority, charisma, prophe-
sying, and emotionalism, and they were energized "not by laws or fixed programs
but by charismatic preaching".[132] Hutton argues that one of the things that initially
appealed to Conway in the Quaker theology was the parallel between her own suf-
fering and that of the persecuted "Society of Friends".[133] Not only did they seem to
understand the Lady who was so debilitated by headaches but they lived through
similar pain themselves. Therefore, when William Penn assured Conway that she
was carrying the "inward yoak, burden, and cross" of Jesus in her suffering, it
served as better consolation to her than Henry More's "learned and Rhetorical
discourses of resignation", as she called them.[134] Thus, in a letter to Henry More in
1674, she defends the Quakers against his allegations of enthusiasm:

"They have been and are a suffering people and are taught from the consolation [that]
has been experimentally felt by them under their great tryals to administer comfort upon
occasion to others in great distresse."[135]

For the Quakers, pain and suffering were an indication of goodness, and they sig-
nified the prospect of the future restoration and comfort of God in heaven. It was
considered a preparative for the divine beauty, and the "efficacious balm of divine
love".[136] Hutton argues that it was after her meeting with the Quakers that Anne
Conway was able to formulate her own theodicy, stressing God as good and mer-
ciful and pain and suffering as medicinal. Thus, she could write in her *Principles*
that every creature "must return toward the good, and the greater its suffering, the
sooner its return and restoration" (VII, 1 p. 43).[137]

    The Quakers appealed to Conway in more respects than in their mutual suffer-
ing. They also insisted that their theology could be referred back to apostolic times,
and that their teachings represented "original Christianity".[138] The Scottish Quaker
leader George Keith, who, as mentioned above, had a profound influence on Conway
and visited her many times, stressed the goodness and mercy of God and described
him as "Spirit and Light".[139] Based on the goodness, mercy, and justice of God, the
Quakers also believed in the possibility of perfection and universal salvation. Most

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132 Ibid. 3. Later, after decades of systematic persecution, the Quakers attempted to conform
    to social and political codes of conduct. Their behavior then became more sober and re-
    strained, but in Conway's time they were still considered very radical.
133 Hutton, Anne Conway 179; Mack, Visionary Women 379.
134 William Penn to Lady Conway, 20. August 1675. Hutton, The Conway Letters 403; ead.,
    Anne Conway 180.
135 Ead., The Conway Letters 422.
136 Ead., Anne Conway 181.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Keith, Immediate Revelation 236 f.

controversial was their Christology. They conceived of Christ in the image of light, and stressed the presence of Christ in the believer. Hutton writes:

"To the horror of many seventeenth-century Christians, the Quaker doctrine of 'the light within', or the birth of Christ in the human soul, which laid emphasis on the presence and interior working of the holy spirit, ignored or at best downplayed the historical Christ."[140]

In emphasizing the inner light rather than the historical Christ, Quaker theology implicitly challenged all power discourses from ecclesiastic authority and the crown to Scripture and rational logic. Conway's *Principles* echoes Quaker Christology when she refers to "the light and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts of men" (VI, 9 p. 37).[141] Hutton even suggests that More and Conway had direct influence on the development on Keith's Christology.[142] Between 1674 and 1678 the three of them were in close contact, and the conversations and letter correspondences between them led Keith to develop his idea of the nature of the soul of Christ. He believed that the soul of Christ is extended throughout the universe. In a letter to the German Kabbalist Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, he addresses "the great mystery of piety" between the universality of the eternal Logos and the particularity of Christ as man. Here, he stresses Christ as the mediator that bridges the gap between God and creation:

"From the first beginning, there existed our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all creatures both visible and invisible were created as Paul once said to the Ephesians. Indeed he is our mediator since he partakes in both extremes, so to speak. He is both God and creature from the beginning, for since there is nothing more extreme than the infinite God and finite creatures, there must be some kind of medium to intercede between those two extremes, which medium is the man Jesus Christ, who is both God and creature – that is, he participates in the nature of both as a medium between two extremes."[143]

While Conway wrote to More that she had some problems with Keith's doctrine of the extended soul of Christ that penetrates the whole of the creation – she presumably referred to its pantheistic connotations – the parallels between Keith's Christology and Conway's are striking. They both conceive of Christ as a mediator between extremes. They both stress the "intimate presence of Christ" in each creature. This insistence on the inner presence of Christ in creatures, rather than on his passion or on dogmatic teachings about the cross, goes some way towards

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140 HUTTON, Anne Conway 183.
141 Cf. PARAGEAU, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 255.
142 HUTTON, Anne Conway 190–196.
143 Cited from ibid. 191. Letter from George Keith to Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, November 1675.

giving value to religious experience. In her Christology, she seems fully in line with Robert Barclay who declared it the "chief and first Principle" of Christianity to have this "inward sense" of the divine:

"That there is somewhat of God, some Light, some Grace, some Power, some measure of the Spirit; some Divine, Spiritual, Heavenly, substantial Life and Virtue in all Men, which is a faithful Witness against all Unrighteousness and Ungodliness in the heart of Man."[144]

The intense religious experience of the Quakers led them to shout, prophesy, tremble, and shake (hence the name "Quakers"). All of these points reveal the emphasis Quakers placed on experience as the epistemological foundation for knowledge. George Fox insisted on the relevance of personal experience in determining the direction of a prophet's activity.[145] Parageau explains that they "did value experience above learning",[146] and Coudert and Corse write that they "emphasized an individual's immediate experience of God".[147]

Coudert and Corse further identify an apparent clash between Lurianic Kabbalah as "subtle, immensely complex, mystical, and metaphorical" and Quakerism which stressed "simplicity, directness, and plainness of speech", despite their shared ecumenical, optimistic philosophy.[148] The metaphorical mysticism of Kabbalism runs counter to the immediateness of Quakerism in that it installs a boundary between divine wisdom and human knowledge. However, as argued above, Conway's interest in the Kabbalah does not lie in its mysticism and metaphors. Her *Principles* exhibits a preference for clear and plain arguments. At the same time, the teachings of Kabbalism, like those of Origen, do emphasize the spiritual progress possible for rational creatures and open the door for experi-

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144   Robert Barclay, Universal Love Considered 35 f. Cf. Hutton, Anne Conway 183. The early Quakers believed in this interiority of the divine in a literal sense. This led to the belief that they were, in fact, God's mouthpieces on earth. Scripture became secondary to personal witness. Their experience of the inner light was "their alone Bible", as one anonymous anti-Quaker pamphlet described it. This radical teaching was – perhaps unsurprisingly – condemned by other Christians. By the 1670s, some Quaker leaders began to modify their statements and transform their meaning from being literal to being metaphorical. Some scholars suggest that the meetings at Ragley Hall were crucial for this revision: Hutton, ibid. 183 f.

145   Mack, Visionary Women 141.

146   Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 259. Her article argues that this points to their preference for action over belief, which should ideally result in the practice of *imitatio Christi*: ibid. 259–265.

147   Coudert/Corse, Introduction xxiv.

148   Ibid. xxii. Hutton, Anne Conway 177, argues that the "path that led [Conway] to Quakerism was the same path that brought her into contact with Jewish mystical thought. Partly for this reason, it is very difficult to disentangle her interest in Quakerism from her interest in kabbalism."

ence-based philosophies and theologies. Conway's coupling of these thoughts with Quakerism is interesting because Quakerism pushes the idea of spiritual progress even further by its extreme emphasis on the "inner light" that is found in religious experience. Rather than Scripture or logical deduction, pure religious experience was the anchoring point of knowledge for the Quakers. Carol Wayne White observes that Conway's encounter with the Quakers "*moved* the feeble, bedridden Conway to *action*. During her last years, she unceasingly advocated for the Quakers who were persecuted and imprisoned for their stance against social conventions".[149] Far from being "resigned" to her own experience of pain (as More would have it), rationalizing over it and thinking of it as confined to its own space, Conway's experience nourished movement.

The fact that the Quakers explained the world in terms of experience and that Conway was deeply inspired by them points to a methodological challenge in Conway's *Principles*. Catherine Keller believes this is evident in Conway's methodology, which exposes "the hybridity, not only the plurality, of teachings – as for instance in Conway's mix of Anglicanism, gospel-driven Quaker dissidence, Renaissance Neoplatonism, Kabbalistic heterodoxy, and natural philosophy".[150] Keller also stresses the close connection between movement and a relational cosmology.[151] The view that experience is always relational challenges the rationalist view of the self-contained *cogito* as the epistemological anchoring point for philosophy and theology. In line with the terminology introduced above, experience can be described as an *event*. Making spiritual experience the starting point for theology goes against the strong ontology of rationalism that takes its starting point in cold logic. Instead, the starting point for the Quakers becomes the event and this event is the encounter with something else, something Other. In this event, where the individual encounters something else, the experience of relatedness holds authority over the deduced truths of the doctors.

In his famous study *La fable mystique I-II*, Michel de Certeau argues that the personalized, mystical experience challenged the authority of religious institutions by going beyond the linguistic and epistemological boundaries previously set up by those institutions.[152] According to Certeau, the sources on mysticism reveal a phenomenology of the extraordinary that is trying to define itself within the institutional structures of the Church. Descriptions of extraordinary bodily experiences abound. These are both physical (bleedings, cuts, and wounds) and sensorial (hallucinations and internal sensations) and are interpreted by Certeau as the emergence of a new specialized technique. Instead of securing the founda-

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149 White, The Legacy of Anne Conway 30. My italics.
150 Keller, Be a Multiplicity 85.
151 Ibid. 85.
152 De Certeau, La fable mystique 21.

tions of faith in rational thought systems, the discourse on the mystical experience reshapes them into a new form of religious practice in an attempt to construct an alternative discourse of authority. We may see the Quaker emphasis on experience as one strand of this discourse and we can add that it runs counter to the strong ontology of rationalism. With its focus on experience and event it remains open and porous rather than static and *incurvatus in se*. Experience becomes manifest across boundaries and bodies, reflecting the divine incarnation and the intimate relation between God and the world that it reveals. Laurel Schneider notes that "bodies, whether human or not, like cultures and languages, are porously open to each other". Boundaries "exist temporally and spatially, meaning that they are always in a state of emerging and passing away".[153]

This openness, porosity, and influence from different perspectives can be seen as an integral part of and response to the changes that happened in the Baroque period. It can be seen as a counter-position to the rationalist, static world-view with its gravitational center in the subject. These two different strands of thought are both at play in Conway's *Principles*. One might say that if the empiricist, rationalist approach answered the "how?", to a certain extent it failed to address the "why?".[154] Cecilia Rosengren argues that Conway represents what Richard Popkin has called the "The Third Force" in seventeenth century thought which "quakes" or undermines the foundations of rationalistic philosophy based on logical deduction. It is an intellectual movement that "grew out of the attempt to overcome the sceptical crisis of the time through religious activity and the inspired readings of the prophesies in Scripture".[155] According to this analysis, the goal was to find a representation of the world that could incorporate both an adequate description and an explanation. Rosengren reads the philosophical position of Conway's *Principles* as a representation of a world-view fully within a Baroque framework of oppositions such as life/death, light/darkness, spirit/body, abstraction/experience and dynamic concepts such as motion, relationality, change, and process:

"Jag menar att Conway tar sig an och skaper ett intelligent scenario av eländet och storheten i världen, och låter (medvetet eller omedvetet) barokka stilgrepp spela en viktig roll."
"I believe that Conway begins to create an intelligent scenario of the misery and greatness of the world, and (consciously or unconsciously) lets baroque figures play an important role."[156]

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153 SCHNEIDER, Beyond Monotheism 159.
154 On Whitehead's evaluation, scientific theories only provide a description of the *structural* elements of reality, but not sufficiently concerned with the *intrinsic* nature of things: WHITEHEAD, Science and the Modern World 153: "Science ignores what anything is in itself. Its entities are merely considered in respect to their extrinsic reality, that is to say, in respect to their aspects in other things." Cf. BASILE, Learning from Leibniz 1133.
155 ROSENGREN, Conway 92. Cf. POPKIN, Spiritualistic Cosmologies 97.
156 ROSENGREN, ibid. 95. My translation.

2.6. Conway's Method in the *Principles*

The fact that the Quakers explained reality in terms of experience and that Conway was deeply inspired by them points to an ambiguity in her thought that is fundamental to the *Principles*. Her tripartite substance ontology is arguably derived from two different approaches, one rational and one spiritual. While there is a rationalistic and skeptical approach that uses logic and has as its ideal the static and self-contained philosophical system, her system leaves room for a theology-of-event approach that seeks to describe reality as relational and processual. In this final subsection on the intellectual context of the *Principles*, I shall try to show how this emerges in Conway's philosophical method.

As Hutton argues, there can be no doubt that Conway's *Principles* is structured first and foremost on a rationalistic model. Her approach is theocentric in the sense that it uses logical deduction from God's divine and stable attributes to explain reality. For example, she argues that God is good and that this goodness is an immutable goodness, which creatures can understand as good because they are rational and participate in the same goodness. Indeed, all the divine attributes are stable and absolute because God is wholly unchangeable. Conway's system requires a difference between God and creation because of this underlying assumption of a stable, universalist metaphysics. The background assumption is that there is a universal, essential, and static truth to be found in the world and that a logical thinking subject can apply its God-given reason in order to grasp it. As the title of the treatise makes explicit, her *Principles* is the development of an ontology of "spirit and matter" particularly against the background of the rationalist philosophies of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza. There are multiple similarities between them in the way they go about doing philosophy: Conway's *Principles* employs the same rationalistic method as they do. Even if she is in complete disagreement with their conclusions, she employs the same method, namely logical deduction, mathematical arguments, and the belief that reason alone should be the basis of knowledge.

Conway was – like Henry More and Ralph Cudworth – anxious to meet the strict methodological standards of her philosophical counterparts. The three proposed philosophical systems of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza are closed and self-sufficient, based on reason and intellectual deduction. Sarah Hutton shows how Henry More began his tutoring of Conway by stressing Descartes's methodological principles.[157] They had the advantage of being pedagogically constructed, so that everyone – including people not trained in philosophy – might understand them.[158] In a Cartesian manner, More would ask his pupil to think about

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157 Hutton, Anne Conway 46–49.
158 The Philosophical Writings of Descartes 184 f.

objections to Descartes's arguments, e. g. faults in his logic. He would then pose a series of counter-arguments and ask her to identify the best one. This "training" ventured down a strictly logical path based on the assumption that everyone could follow it. As Hutton writes, the "expertise in logic" required to take on this kind of debate "is no more than what may be learned from Descartes himself". And she continues: "Cartesianism offered not just a body of doctrine in the domain of natural philosophy, but a method for obtaining that knowledge". In light of the many new developments in science, Cartesian skepticism was "unquestionably superior to Aristotelianism".[159] The form of Conway's treatise owes much to Descartes in that:

"It combines the interrogative process of *quaestiones et responsiones* (questions and replies) with *apodeixis* (demonstration). Her *Principles* is the work of someone accustomed to the discipline of arguing *more geometrico* (in a geometric manner)."[160]

The title of her treatise echoes Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), which is a synthesis of his *Discourse on Method* (1637) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). She makes some clear references to his logical method, although she never cites him. Many of her central theological assumptions are based on this analytical tool. For example, in discussing the role of Christ as mediator between God and all creatures, she says "that such a being is a mediator is as demonstrable *from the principles of sound reason* as is the existence of God"(V, 1 p. 23). Concerning the atemporal action or operation of God in the world, she asserts that "although the imagination and understanding conceives this with difficulty, *true and solid reason* sufficiently affirms it" (III, 8 p. 18).[161] Moreover, according to Conway, reason is what manages and regulates an otherwise arbitrary will, and it is therefore necessary that both God and creation be defined by "true and solid reason or the guidance of wisdom" (III, 1 p. 15). Hutton concludes that "the a priori character of her metaphysics and the underlying deductive framework of her exposition suggest that she remained faithful to the philosophical method in which she was trained".[162]

In another passage she writes explicitly against Hobbes, conceding that her argument shares a similar structure (IX, 4 p. 64). In explaining how one creature

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159 HUTTON, Anne Conway 48 f., points out that the Cartesianism More taught Conway was a modified form, which is consistent with More's own critique of Descartes. More continued to teach Cartesian method, even after he had condemned the philosophy. This points to the appeal of and the need for a system that could replace Aristotelian natural philosophy.

160 Ibid. 50.

161 My italics.

162 HUTTON, Anne Conway 50.

can change into another, she refers to "the pattern and order which the divine wisdom has arranged so that one change follows another in a fixed sequence. Hence A must first be changed into B before it can change into C" (IX, 5 p. 65). Similarly, Hobbes argues that it is wrong to think that just because we can think about "A" and "B" separately, it follows that "A" can exist without "B" existing.[163] This attack on Aristotelian scholasticism is part of his argument for demonstrating the problem of thinking about something which has no body. While the argument is not the same, the analytical logic employed is.

In a similar way, Conway also uses the geometrical method, which was popular in the seventeenth century due to the new science of mechanics. Used in Greek mathematics, for example in Euclid's *Elements*, it was also employed by the rationalists, e.g. by Spinoza in his *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical order* (1677) to show the connection between mathematical theory and natural phenomena. The geometrical method is based on the definition of things, which then allows for deductions and conclusions. It employs axioms, postulates, and demonstrations to arrive at certain and indisputable truths. Conway employs geometrical demonstration to ensure the certainty of the results she has made via deduction from definitions. For example, in order to show that creatures are able to perfect themselves, she gives the example of a triangular prism:

"We have such an example in a triangular prism, which is the first figure of all solid rectilinear bodies into which a body can be changed. From this it may change into a cube, which is a more perfect figure and includes the prism. From the cube it can change into another more perfect figure, which comes nearer to a sphere, and from this into another which is even closer to perfection." (IX, 7 p. 66)

Just as a triangle can never become a perfect sphere, a creature can never attain equality with God. Therefore, God and creatures must be two separate species. Again, other rationalists use the geometrical method, but they arrive at entirely different conclusions. All these methods assume a static and essential truth which can be grasped by human intellect and then interpreted by way of a strict methodology. On this view, the essence or truth of a thing or a system is not influenced by the person who defines it. It is based on the assumption that knowledge and truth have an anchoring point in the person who thinks – the *cogito*. If applied correctly, the logic of the thinking subject assures at least some degree of epistemological certainty. We clearly see Conway's rationalism in that her *Principles* is presented as a coherent logical system.[164]

163 Hobbes, De Corpore 3.4. Cf. Stewart, Art. Thomas Hobbes.
164 The concept of a philosophical system first occurs with the rationalists. It can refer to different things, e.g. a political system (as in Hobbes), the methodological or rhetorical system of a text or a speech (as in Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe*

Conway's treatise also has elements that draw us towards understanding the God-world relation from an anthropocentric and experienced-based perspective.[165] There are instances where the logic of static metaphysics falls short. As we will see from the analysis of Part Four of this thesis, her position of the infinite divisibility of creatures serves as the prime example. Echoing an argument also put forth by Pascal in the famous fragment on man's disproportion, Conway argues that there is necessarily an irreducible multiplicity of creatures (embodied spirits or physical monads) in every creature. A creature, she argues, could always be divided further. Therefore, each creature consists of an infinity of other creatures. And each of these has within itself another infinity. And so on to infinity. Her conclusion is that "an infinite number of creatures can be contained and exist inside the smallest creatures" (III, 5 p. 17). Therefore, we cannot comprehend things as merely singular, although they might appear as such. "It should be noted," says Conway, "that although the spirit of man is commonly said to be one single thing, yet this spirit is composed of many spirits, indeed, countless ones" (VII, 4 p. 53). This is, in fact, the basis of her argument against dualism. She holds that it is not possible to begin one's ontology in an abstraction such as the separation between a spiritual and material entity, as Descartes or Henry More does.

It is in Conway's solution to this caveat that the "experience-based", processual, and relational approach becomes clear. She argues that we must understand God through his *operations* in the world (III, 9 p. 20), and by so doing she takes her first step away from pure logical abstractions. She takes into account that philosophical thinking about God always takes its point of departure in the experience of reality. In other words, there seems to be an acknowledgment of the limited creaturely perspective in the development of her system. This tension is not an articulated strand in her treatise. Yet, the Baroque and Quaking framework put implicit questions to the rational subject. This may be seen as a reflection of the challenge posed to rationalism by a spiritualism that questions the authority of reason. How is one to incorporate within a rational philosophical system the very insecurities brought to the system by the subject's perspective? The Quaker position is inherently de-constructive of any such system, and it is therefore interesting to analyze how Conway tries to incorporate this into her rational philosophical system. As Phyllis Mack formulates it, the substance of Quaker women's theology "acknowledged the gentle murmur of wisdom but not the cool voice of reason", rather they "resolutely and persistently defended Quakerism as a religion

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as opposed to the false intellectual systems of the voluntarists or the fatalists), or a cosmological system – a *sistema di mundi*. The idea is that everything is coherent and can fit together and that this coherence is understandable to the thinking subject.

165   Hutton, Anne Conway 44. 50, gives an example of how Conway criticizes Descartes's theory of sense-perception on empirical grounds.

of *anti-structure*".[166] In a similar vein, Conway's argument of infinite divisibility is a sound logical argument, but the position she arrives at seems to erode the very foundations of the rationalistic method. Indeed, it seems to erode the very foundation of the static metaphysical system as such since any abstract concept of reality will always be defined by what humans, in their limited understanding, project into it.

To sum up this main part on the intellectual context of the *Principles*, we can say that, as a seventeenth-century philosopher, Anne Conway operates within the paradigm of strong ontologies. She posits her own system as three distinct substances – God, Christ, and creation – which are "completely non-interchangeable among each other" (VI, 5 p. 31), as the antidote to the erroneous extremes of dualism, pantheism, and materialism, and she argues that this fundamental structure, her tripartite scheme, enables her to proceed "securely in the middle way of truth" in her description of substance (VI, 5 p. 31). Yet, by employing the process theological key categories we can see that a subtle strand runs throughout the seventeenth century; in Conway's philosophy this can be seen as a precursor to the weak ontology of process theology. While Conway uses logic and has as her ideal the static and self-contained philosophical system, she seeks to describe being as relational and processual.[167]

I will now move on to focus on the two main themes of the treatise (the God-world relation and the spirit-body relation) and attempt to highlight how relatedness and multiplicity give rise to theological questions within the *Principles*.

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166 Mack, Visionary Women 319. My italics.
167 It is not entirely correct to juxtapose rationalism and empiricism in this way. The rationalists also valued empirical experiments. Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza were deeply interested in the scientific experiments of their time. But for them, rationalism provided the fixed a priori framework for understanding the empirical experiments that where subject to the unreliability of the senses. Thus, the knowledge that we already have structures and orders the empirical data given, but reason also secures the skeptical enquiry into the validity of these observations. Cf. Gal, Paradoxes: Baroque Science 713 ff.

3. GOD AND THE WORLD

How does God relate to the world? This must be the main theological question underlying Anne Conway's *Principles*. The classic theistic model holds that God and the world are ontologically distinct. In opposition to this dualistic cosmology, we have seen that both pantheism and materialism, according to Conway, conflate the two and "make one being of both" (IX, 3 p. 64).[1] Dualism, materialism, and pantheism all operate with strong ontologies. According to the American theologian Catherine Mowry LaCugna, the theistic model reached its high point in the Western Scholastic tradition with the *apparatus rationale* of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.[2] His approach is firmly theocentric, as she writes, in that "the *Summa* […] has God as its subject and seeks to see things as God sees them".[3] This speculative approach to theology shows in the *Summa's* structure which begins by defining God's being as one essence. It does so on the basis of logical deduction. In other words, the description of God's being is determined by the pre-established principles of the "science" of Aristotelian metaphysics.[4] The approach can be described as speculative because it defines God without reference to experience or indeed revelation in Scripture. Thus, God is defined outside his relation to the world:

"[According to Thomas] relations may be 'real' or 'logical'. A real relation belongs to the very nature of something (mother-daughter), whereas a logical relation is an accidental feature of something (location). God's relation to creation is *logical*, not real, because being related to creatures is not a part of God's nature. The creature's relation to God *is real* because creation is constituted to be what it is by virtue of its relation to God."[5]

According to LaCugna, the Scholastic tradition sees God's relation to the world as merely "logical" because it is not constitutive of God's being. It is only creation's relation to God which is "real" since it could not be what it is – creation – without its relation to God. Indeed, one might say that the world *is* its relation to God

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1   See also the subsection: "Intellectual Opponents in the *Principles*" in Part Two, p. 46–50.
2   LaCugna, God for Us 143.
3   Ibid. 148.
4   As noted in Part Two, the decline of Aristotelian metaphysics in the seventeenth century gave room for a new metaphysical science that was based on Cartesian skepticism. With the help of the new empirical sciences, the aim of skepticism was to use reason to unravel the invalid assumptions of Aristotelianism and lay out a new, solid foundation for knowledge.
5   LaCugna, God for Us 153.

while God *is* substance independent of the world (pure being). For the Scholastics, the divine attributes serve as a fixed background for any discussion of religious issues. Through dialectic reasoning, conceptual analysis, and inference, they wanted to resolve theological or philosophical contradictions in the tradition and present divine truth in a systematic and logical form.

Conway's method shares many similar traits. She often presents her opponents' points in the form of a question before disputing them and exposing logical fallacies in them.[6] However, on several occasions she explicitly criticizes "the Scholastics". For example, she accuses them of imparting to God "indifference of will" (III, 2 p. 15) and inventing an unsatisfactory solution to the question of the relation between body and spirit (VII, 4 p. 41). She wishes to create a stronger link between God and the world that does not allow for an indifferent God. This wish becomes linked to her rationalism. As stated in Part Two above, the metaphysical assumptions of Scholasticism were in rapid decline in the second half of the seventeenth century. Sarah Hutton explains how one of the attractions of Cartesianism was that it supplied another framework for theological thinking "at a time where scholastic Aristotelianism had been discredited as a plausible intellectual framework".[7] Yet, rationalism retains an *a priori* character in that it posits a number of assumptions (the "first principles" of its metaphysics) that are arrived at by means of the skeptical method and the "innate ideas" implanted in the mind by God. As mentioned, Descartes's *cogito* is maybe the most influential of these first principles. Likewise, Conway's *Principles* makes a series of *a priori* ontological commitments about God from the outset. In other words, her system builds on the assumption that knowledge of God *in se* is possible through reasonable deduction.[8] But in contrast to the Scholastics, her entire system seeks to question and validate the ontological commitments that are made from the outset.

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6   Walker, The Decline of Hell 138, writes that her treatise is "written mostly in a dry, almost scholastic style – she likes to put objections into syllogistic form and refute them piecemeal".

7   Hutton, Anne Conway 41.

8   In a Trinitarian context, the terms "immanent" and "economic" are often used to distinguish God's inner being, the internal relation between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit before God reveals himself to the world (*Deus in se*), from God as he reveals himself to man in history and time (*Deus pro nobis*). This distinction was problematized by Karl Rahner (1904–1984) in his famous axiom which stated that "the 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity": Rahner, The Trinity 21 f. Rahner's argument is that God *in se* must correspond exactly to God *pro nobis* for the revelation of God in Christ as described in the New Testament to be true and soteriologically relevant. Thus, for Rahner revelation is not a representation of God created by himself or merely one aspect of him, and therefore no part of him remains "hidden" (cf. the *deus absconditus* important in the works of Nicolas of Cusa, Blaise Pascal, John Calvin, and Martin Luther). The strength of Rahner's axiom is that it establishes human understanding as the inevitable point of departure for any discussion about God, making any attempt to

Conway's ontological commitments are a list of divine attributes that, according to Sarah Hutton, are derived from sources such as Plato, Kabbalism, and Descartes.[9] These will be presented below. For now, it suffices to say that they function as a framework and funnel for defining the relation between God and the world. Conway's description of God's inner being, which is independent of or primary to the way he reveals himself in creation, leads her to define creation as clearly distinct from God, thus creating an ontological gap between the substance of God and the substance of creation. In order to bridge this gap, she posits Christ as "Middle Nature", a substance distinct from both God and creation, but as "Wisdom" or the "Word" he is able to relate the two to each other. She also holds, through a somewhat unusual ontological commitment, that God is "pure spirit" and that the creation emanates from God.[10] Her tripartite ontology of substance is a hierarchy inspired by the Neoplatonist doctrine of emanation where God's substance is "pure spirit" and the substance of creation is spiritual in varying degrees. By making these claims, the *Principles* points towards an understanding of the God-world relation that stresses relatedness between them. This relatedness subsists despite the ontological difference.

How does Conway negotiate the problem of insuring relatedness between God and the world while at the same time maintaining their ontological difference? I argue that from the outset she assumes an ontological break between God and the world, but, as we follow the logic of the argument and "descend the scale of being" until we arrive at the physical monad, the system reveals itself as unstable. Her use of "substance" becomes gradually more blurred, and this, I believe, can be analyzed as a "sliding" from the strong ontology of being found in her rationalist ideal to a weaker ontology of becoming that would only be developed later in process theology. This development may testify to an implicit urge in the *Principles* to re-conceptualize the break between God and the world as a process rather than a static binary. Thus, Conway's *Principles* may be thought of as a not yet fully formed precursor to process theology. We might say, with some simplification, that the *Principles* claims to offer a firm and indisputable *solution* to the problem of the God-world relation, and that this strong solution is an undeveloped idea of "process". Conversely, process theology offers a radical and well-developed view of *process* but presents this as a weak and flexible "solution" which is porous and open to continual reinterpretations.

I shall now develop these arguments in full. First, I will identify the similarities and differences between Conway's position and that of process theology: How

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talk in isolation about God's immanence obsolete. LaCugna's analysis takes its point of departure from a discussion with Rahner and has been criticized for being unnuanced in its strong distinction between the "Western" and "Eastern" traditions.

9   Hutton, Anne Conway 221.
10   Ibid.

does she define God, Christ, and creation, and how does this compare to process theology? The second half explores this further by discussing how the key categories of process theology play into the tension inherent in Conway's system between a strong and a weak ontology.

3.1. Conway's Ontology of Substance

Anne Conway builds her ontology on a tripartite structure deduced from the nature of God. She defines three distinct species, as she calls them, and posits the existence of these three only: God, Christ, and creatures. The latter includes everything in the world from angels to humans, horses to stones; even the smallest physical entity, the so-called physical monad, counts as a creature. These three primary species are distinguished from each other on the basis of their capacity or incapacity to change. God is perfect and thus completely unable to change; Christ is capable of change but only from good to better; and creation has the intrinsic power to change for either better or worse (V, 3 p. 24) Thus, mutability is the conceptual ground for distinction in Conway's ontology. She writes:

"Since we know to what extent things are able to change, we must now determine how many *species* of things there are which are distinguished from each other in terms of their *substance* or *essence*. If we look closely into this, we will discover there are only three, which, as was said above, are God, Christ, and creatures; and that these three species are really distinct in terms of their essence has already been proved. No argument can prove that there is a fourth species distinct from the other three. Indeed, a fourth species seems altogether superfluous. Since all phenomena in the entire universe can be reduced to these three aforementioned species as if into their original and peculiar causes, nothing compels us to recognize a further species according to this rule: whatever is correctly understood is most true and certain." (VI, 4 p. 30)[11]

This quotation reveals some interesting things. First, Conway believes her understanding is "correct" and therefore "true" and "certain". This is an example of her adopting the methodological criteria of Descartes and placing herself within an approach of logical deduction.[12] Second, she naturally shares the philosophical terminology of her time – the terminology of the strong ontologies that seek to define reality in terms of the static, independent, and clearly defined categories

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11 My italics. Coudert and Corse translate *substance* and *essence* from the Latin "substantiam vel essentiam": Conway, Principles 46. Image p. 63.
12 Conway's adherence to Cartesian methodology has been pointed out by several scholars. See Conway, Principles VII, 4 p. 30 n. 6.

of "substance" and "essence". However, her use of these terms is not always in accordance with the established philosophical paradigm, which creates some ambiguity in her system. To understand better how Conway structures her ontology, a clarification of the terms she employs is in order.

Conway defines God, Christ, and creation as three distinct *species*: "there are only three [species], which, as was said above, are God, Christ, and creatures" (VI, 4 p. 30). She also occasionally refers to them as three distinct orders of *being*: "Therefore there are three kinds of being".[13] However, Conway seems to operate with many of the same terms at two different levels: a "general" level, which pertains to her whole system, and a "specific" level, which pertains to things within the created realm only. Thus, in the context of determining the ontological distinction between God, Christ, and creation, it seems she uses species and being interchangeably. The crux of the matter is that "these three species are really distinct […] in terms of their substance or essence" (VI, 4 p. 30). Moving on to the level of creation, Conway uses the term species much more frequently. Within this context it denotes individuals within a group or a group subordinate to a genus. Thus, she also speaks about several different "species" within creation:

"In fact, daily experience teaches us that various species change into each other: earth changes into water, water into air, air into fire or ether and, vice versa, fire into air, air into water, etc., and these are nevertheless distinct species. Similarly, stones change into metals and one metal into another." (VI, 6 p. 34)

"For species are nothing but individual entities subsumed under one general and common idea of the mind or one common term, as, for instance, man is a species including all individual men and horse is a species including all individual horses." (VI, 3 p. 30)

We might think of these particular species within the created realm as sub-species, that *can* change into one another, because they are fundamentally (as in their original first state of formation) of the same species in "substance or essence" – that is to say, they are all part of the general level of species in creation. The difference between these two uses of "species" should be evident from the context. Conway argues that there are many species, which are said to differ, "but nevertheless are not distinct from each other in *substance* or *essence*, but only in certain *modes* or *attributes*" (VI, 3 p. 29).

Let us move on to Conway's definition of substance. The idea of substance was, in her time, the foundation for any philosophical endeavor.[14] The standard

13   Ibid. V, 3 p. 24. Coudert and Corse translate *being* from the Latin "Entium": Conway, Principles 33. Image p. 50.
14   See e.g. Leibniz' critique of Locke's dismissal of substance: Leibniz, New Essays on Human Understanding 150.

definition of substance (*ousia*) was taken from Aristotle's Metaphysics. In Z. 3 he defines substance as that which subsists in itself and through itself. That is, substance must be separable (non-parasitic) and "individual" (meaning that nothing else gives it unity).[15] This definition of substance corresponds to the one we find in both Henry More and Descartes.[16] Conway's definition and use of substance is slightly different and seems somewhat unclear. There are two reasons for this. First, she uses the concept of mutability to structure her understanding of substance. Second, she seems to conflate *substance* and *essence*.[17] She uses both of these concepts to qualify what she considers to be distinct and unchangeable:

"For example, water does not change but stays the same, although when cold it freezes, where it was fluid before. When water turns to stone, there is no reason to suppose that a greater change of substance has occurred than in the earlier example when it changed from water to ice. And when a stone changes back into softer and more pliant earth, this too is no change of substance. Thus, in all other changes which can be observed the *substance* or *essence* always remains the same." (VI, 3 p. 29)[18]

Substance or essence describes that which is constant in contrast to its mutable attributes. With this definition in mind, she eradicates two erroneous positions: that of those who believe that there is only one substance (cf. the materialism of Hobbes and the pantheism of Spinoza) and that of those who believe there are only two substances, namely God and creation (or *res cogitans* and *res exten-*

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15   For a fundamental discussion of substance, essence, form, and matter see Aristotle, Metaphysics VII 7. See also Cohen, Aristotle's Metaphysics.

16   In the first part of *Principles of Philosophy* Descartes defines substance as a "thing that exists in such a way that it does not depend on anything else for its existence": The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Book 1 section 51. More, The True Notion of a Spirit xxvi, rejects the notion of ontological independence as being part of the definition of substance. Instead, substance is defined as something not being predicated of another entity: "It does not follow from thence, because they are substantial, that they may exist separate by themselves; for a thing to subsist by itself, only signifies so to subsist that it wants not the prop of some other subject in which it may inhere as accidents do." For a deeper interpretation of Conway's critique of Descartes's substance metaphysics see Rosengren, Conway 66–73.

17   Cohen, Aristotle's Metaphysics. "Essence" is the standard English translation of Aristotle's curious phrase τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, literally "the what it was to be", for a thing: Aristotle, Metaphysics 1029b. This phrase so boggled his Roman translators that they coined the word *essentia* to render the entire phrase, and it is from this Latin word that the English word derives. For Aristotle, essence is substance in the strictest sense: In Metaphysics VI 6 he writes that "a given thing seems to be nothing other than its own substance, and something's substance is said to be its essence". It is what substance is in its specific characteristics – its definition so to speak, its organizing principle. In this way, it corresponds to species.

18   My italics.

sa cf. Descartes and More). Based on the concept of mutability she arrives at three different species, each with their own substance or essence:

"Indeed, daily experience teaches us that creatures are mutable and continually change from one state to another. Moreover, there are two kinds of change. One has the intrinsic power of changing itself either for good or bad, and this is common to all creatures, but not to the first born of all creatures. The other kind of change is the power of moving only from one good to another. Therefore there are three kinds of being. The first is altogether immutable. The second can only change toward the good, so that which is good by its very nature can become better. The third kind is that which, although it was good by its very nature, is nevertheless able to change from good to good as well as from good to evil. The first and last of these three kinds are opposites. The second is the natural medium between them, through which the extremes are united." (V, 3 p. 24)[19]

Because the substance or essence of a thing cannot change, this proves that one species cannot change into the other. Creation cannot become God, and God cannot become creation. In other words, it is the substance or essence that makes the three species distinct from each other.[20] Thus, Conway's definition of the substance or essence is derived from her tripartite scheme of God, Christ, and creation shown above. But since it is the substance of creation actually to change, this means that the substance of creation is fluid, not static. This is contrary to the Aristotelian understanding of substance on which Descartes and Hobbes rely. Indeed, it seems to be closer to a weak ontology that puts emphasis on reality as becoming. It is also a different use of substance than the one Conway uses in relation to God. Thus, we must be aware that there is a slide in her use of substance from something unchanging when it pertains to God (strong ontology) to something inherently changing when it comes to creation (weak ontology). This distinction seems further to entail a cosmological dualism.

Let us move on to define Conway's use of mode or attribute. She uses these terms interchangeably to designate the mutable characteristics of a certain species or being. For Conway, modes of being include body and motion (IX, 9 p. 68–69). Again, she argues explicitly against Descartes and Hobbes that these attributes are not distinct from, but part of, one "remarkable substance" which they "un-

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19   While Origen's ontology is perhaps less clear, he does subscribe to a tripartite division of being in his first and fourth *Homilies on Isaiah*. At the top of the pyramidal scheme is the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit in the "middle", mediating between him and the creatures at the bottom. See the exposition in HENGSTERMANN, Origenes und der Ursprung der Freiheitsmetaphysik 143–168.

20   See e.g. Conway, Principles VI, 3 f. p.30: "These arguments prove that in terms of its substance or essence one species cannot change from one into another and equally that one individual cannot change into another" and the "species of things […] are distinguished from each other in terms of their substance or essence".

derstand nothing about" (IX, 6 p. 66). She continues to argue that Hobbes and Descartes do not hit the mark when they perceive extension and impenetrability as attributes to the so-called "substance" that they believe is body:

"They only touch the surface, never glimpsing the center. For they ignore the most noble attribute of that substance, which they call matter and body, and understand nothing about it. If anyone asks what are these more excellent attributes, I reply that they are the following: spirit or life and light, by which I mean the capacity for every kind of feeling, perception, or knowledge, even love, all power and virtue, joy and fruition, which the noblest creatures have or can have, even the vilest and most contemptible." (IX, 6 p. 66)

For Conway, then, body or extension is not a substance distinct from God but only an attribute of the substance of creation. It is not even a core attribute of creation (VII, 1 p. 41f.). Many of the attributes Conway stresses as primary to the created substance have relational elements in that they are defined through their relation to other beings (feeling, perception, love). Modes or attributes are mutable categories that characterize creation. However, this definition is only true within the realm of creation. The modes and attributes of God are different from the modes or attributes of creation because God's attributes cannot change. Indeed, God *is* his attributes *per substantiam*. This leads us to Conway's ontological commitments:

"God is spirit, light, and life, infinitely wise, good, just, strong, all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, the creator and maker of all things visible and invisible. In God there is no time, change, arrangement, or division of parts." (I, 1f. p. 9)

The untraditional attributes of "spirit, light, and life" are posited as the main attributes *per substantiam* of God. This makes Conway's use of mode and substance interchangeable when it comes to her understanding of God: Spirit, Light, Life, Goodness, etc. can all be used interchangeably to name God. But it becomes apparent that the "center" of the substance caused by God – creation – shares in the being of God through its "more excellent attributes" of "spirit, light, and life." In other words, creation is defined by its causal relation to God through its partaking in the divine spirit, light, life etc.

So far Conway is consistent in her terminology, but, since the two levels on which her ontology of substance is developed are not explicit, she does not always abide by her own working definitions. When it comes to the essence of creation, things become unclear. Her definition of essence has been structured around the organizing principle of a being or species, which within creation is mutability. As we have learned, all of creation is really one species which is one and the same in essence. A consequence of this emphasis on unity could be termed anti-essential-

ism, as it eradicates any idea of personal identity (in the modern sense). Her view of creation seems to be strictly substance-monist and anti-essentialist. Conway can easily be read this way. She writes many passages that suggests that she rejects substantial form or a particular essence of things in creation:[21]

"[God] brings into actual being that which was hidden in the idea, so that he produces and makes a distinct and essential substance." (I, 7 p. 10)

"[A]ll creatures, or the whole of creation, are also a single species in substance or essence, although it includes many individuals gathered into subordinate species and distinguished from each other modally but not substantially or essentially." (VI, 4 p. 31)

The first quotation seems consistent with creation as one whole species, which is one in substance or essence. The second quotation supports this view. She argues that whichever way spiritual bodies are divided, they are still one and the same substance or essence – that is its nature as it was originally, in its first formation. However, in several passages she mentions the "real essences of creatures" (plural), which seems to suggest several specific essences within creation itself: "God's infinite power multiplies the real essences of creatures" (III, 4 p. 16).[22] Conway does not specify what she means by "real essences", but some passages suggest that it could mean individual essence or what in theological terminology could be called the soul.[23] Indeed, on several occasions she approaches an essentialist position in her view of the created species:

"[C]an one individual be changed into another, either of the same or of a different species? I say that this is impossible, *for then the essential nature of things would change*, which would cause great confusion not only for creatures but also for the wisdom of God, which made everything. For example, if one man could change into another, namely Paul into Judas or

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21 On these grounds one might be tempted to identify Conway as an essentialist or a Spinozist. Indeed, Loptson, Conway 2, argues that her system is essentialist. Another reason is that she adheres to the "doctrine of emanation", arguing that all beings originate from one and the same substance: Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 250. For a discussion of Conway's Spinozism, see also Pugliese, Monism and Individuation in Anne Conway.

22 "Real essence" is a term coined by John Locke (1631–1704) in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Put simply, a real essence is – in the material world – the underlying physical cause of the object's observable qualities. This is to be contrasted with nominal essence, which is an abstract idea that we make when we identify similar qualities shared by objects: Jones, Art. Locke on Real Essence. It is uncertain whether Conway would have known about this distinction.

23 On several occasions Conway speaks about the soul of individual creatures, which supports an essentialist rather than an anti-essentialist interpretation: Principles VI, 6–10 p. 34. 36. 37 and *passim*.

Judas into Paul, then he who sinned would not be punished for that sin but another in his stead who was innocent and virtuous." (VI, 2 p. 29)[24]

Arguing on the basis of the justice and wisdom of God, Conway here claims that one man cannot change into the other, because then no one would be responsible for his or her own actions. In other words, there seems to be a soteriological need for personal identity or personal essence because otherwise God would be unjust.[25] Then again, on the surface this idea could appear to be at odds with the theory of the transmutation of species that Conway proposes later in the treatise. Here she argues that a good horse can eventually change into a human being and for the general transmutation of beings within the created species (VI, 6 p. 32 f.). However, this type of change is actually the result of God's justice, as either punishment or reward for the individual's actions. I shall return to this in Part Four.

For now, it is sufficient to note that while Conway evidently takes the idea of God to be clear and articulable, her terminological clarity becomes weaker as we descend the ontological hierarchy. The one substance or essence of creation is divided into a multiplicity of essences. Jane Duran views this as a point of connection between Conway's ontology and a nascent epistemology:[26]

"As the admixture of the corporeal becomes greater, and as the beings descend down the ontological hierarchy, it becomes more difficult to construe their constituents and to articulate what proportion of which being is corporeal, what spiritual, etc. It is in this sense, I believe, that Conway has given us a beginning epistemology, and nascent epistemic principles. For it is clear, although Conway does not explicitly say so, that for her, too, the idea of God is the most clearly held and the most articulable idea we possess. The ontological descriptions of God at the opening of the *Principles* are straightforward and unproblematic; descriptions of other creatures at a later stage much less so."[27]

Duran says that in order to understand Conway's view of creation, we could begin with God. As a "clear and distinct" first principle, Conway bases her rationalism on the ontological definition of God. This becomes the point of reference for her entire system. But as Conway's terminology becomes fuzzier and less clear the farther we descend in the ontological hierarchy, we see how the most immediate constituents of reality, as they are experienced by the subject, become difficult to define. The lower a being is in Conway's ontological hierarchy, the less perfect

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24 My italics.
25 Rosengren, Conway 67 f. The contrary interpretation is that this passage is Conway's expression of the Scholastic tradition of substantial form. She could be arguing that Paul and Judas are just modes of the same substance with substantial form.
26 Duran, Anne Viscountess Conway 71–73, uses this connection for the purpose of comparing Conway's epistemology to that of Descartes on the point of passions.
27 Ibid. 71.

it is and the more body it possesses. It is this ontological break from the purely spiritual to the mixture of spirit and matter that presents Conway with epistemological challenges, for how are we to discern the bodily from the spiritual? An epistemological field has opened up: although the ontology of God began as the clear principle on which the system is founded, it turns out that this principle is difficult to relate to the world in a meaningful way. The strong ontology that wishes to define God as one, universal, and of static being, is challenged when applied to the particularity of the experiencing subjects. This gradually emerging lack of clarity can be seen as typically Baroque because the part of reality closest to immediate experience turns out to be the hardest to describe. Reality reveals itself as illusory. From a semantic point of view, we might say that the particularity of experience reveals the problem of describing the static being of God – or indeed static being as such.

Conway's system is complex because it seems to combine some idealist, anti-essentialist, and essentialist arguments.[28] That is to say that her ultimate foundation of reality is spiritual (God), which is a classic Cambridge Platonist position. But in her definition of creation there is no immutable, intrinsic explanatory principle. Therefore, we need to be aware of which "level" we are operating on because the meaning in her terminology changes accordingly. In any case, the *plurality* of "substances" and "essences" in creation suggests that we should be careful not to use the term "monism" in an unqualified sense in discussing Conway.[29] At best, her position is ambiguous. If the term monism is applied strictly to Conway, meaning that all is really one creature which only appears in different modes or shapes, then there are significant consequences. Then, all differences would boil down to human arbitrary distinctions, ultimately making it hard to justify the distinction between good and evil. Further, it makes it very difficult to explain difference or otherness.[30] Thus we will have to discern whether identity (substance-monism) or difference (plurality and personal identity) is of primary concern to Conway. Again, there seems to be a struggle between her terminological definition of creation as an unchangeable substance and her wish to underline the mutability and agency of individuals that are defined through their sense of personal identity. This will be the subject of Part Four. Now we move on to Conway's definition of God.

28　I am very grateful to the group of Cambridge scholars who helped me to understand Conway's terminology and metaphysical scheme. Special thanks are due to Dr. Adrian Mihai for his helpful comments on her understanding of substance and Dr. Christian Hengstermann for providing a fruitful discussion of her understanding of essence.

29　Keller, Be a Multiplicity 89. 99 n. 35, alerts us to the potential problem of simply reiterating various scholars' categorization of Conway as a "monist". She points out that Conway's alternative to dualism hinges on multiplicity and not on simple oneness.

30　Cf. Rowe, Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist.

3.1.1. God

The ambiguity of Conway's use of substance also plays a part in her definition of God. Cecilia Rosengren has argued that Conway more often uses the term "being" (*ens*) than substance to refer to God. Rosengren implies that Conway's position differs from a static dualistic ontology, that defines God as a substance subsisting by itself in opposition to the *res extensa*, but that Conway still uses the dualistic terminology of substance to make her position compatible with the "schematic" philosophy of her time.[31] Rosengren's point seems to be that Conway finds substance to be a problematic term within her own metaphysical system and that she therefore replaces "substance" with "being". She does so to avoid making the same mistake as Descartes, namely, to formulate a substance ontology based on "clear and distinct" principles only to end up with having to operate with a second substance that is distinct from the *res cogitans*. Conway may favor the term "being" to "substance", Rosengren suggests, because it implies both the eternal, static, and unchanging definition of God and the mutable nature of reality – its becoming.

I have shown above that Conway does in fact use the term substance, but that she does so on two different levels, namely, to describe God as static and creation as mutable. God is a different substance from creation: He is the only one really subsisting in himself. Indeed, her metaphysical scheme is structured around this God-world dichotomy. As such, her position seems perhaps at first sight close to a cosmological dualism, but the tripartite scheme of God, Christ, and creation as "distinct substances" points in another direction that is linked to creation partaking in the divine being through the attributes of spirit, light, etc.

Chapter I describes what we may say about God and consists of seven small sections. Conway's listing of the divine attributes quoted above is a distinctively cataphatic account of God *in se*. These are not attributes that God possesses to a higher or lesser degree; neither are these characteristics that only describe God *pro nobis*. They are not distinct from God *in se*. Rather, God *is* goodness, wisdom, power, justice, holiness, etc., *per substantiam*. Conway later specifies goodness and wisdom as the most significant attributes of God.[32] God's wisdom has left a direct mark on the fabric of creation. She repeatedly describes how the natural laws

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31   Rosengren, Conway 71.
32   Conway, Principles, chapter III. This is a classic Cambridge Platonist position: In the writings of Henry More, George Rust, Ralph Cudworth, and Henry Hallywell these two attributes usually come in tandem, notably as that which governs God's will or power. For example, George Rust describes God's "infinite goodness and benignity armed with equal power and directed by no less wisdom": Fürst/Hengstermann, Die Cambridge Origenists 25. Likewise, Henry Hallywell is very emphatic when he explains that God's goodness must be his preeminent attribute, because "Wisdome which is devoid of Goodness, is nothing but a higher degree of craft": Hallywell, Deus Justificatus 69–79.

of creation are an expression of God's wisdom[33] and how the order of the universe must be in accordance with "the wisdom of God, which made everything" (VI, 2 p. 29). This understanding of God's wisdom as evident in the order of things is characteristic of Cambridge Platonism, although understanding the laws of nature as an expression of an eternal and immutable truth was a strong topos, used more generally in the seventeenth century.[34] Goodness is highlighted as the other essential attribute of God. In accordance with the Cambridge Platonist position, it is a rational goodness which we can understand because it accords with his wisdom. It is absolutely central for the Cambridge Platonists that God's goodness be an expression of objective morality which is understandable to creation. Their emphasis on God's goodness should be understood in the light of the threat posed by both Calvinist and Hobbesian voluntarism, that posited that whatever God wills is good simply because God wills it. Against this position, Conway and the Cambridge Platonists firmly argued that God wills things because they are intrinsically good.[35] This lead them to posit that God is absolutely, essentially, and infinitely good and that his goodness must control his will and his power and coincide with eternal and immutable moral principles. The opposite – that things are good simply because God wills them – would at best make him arbitrary and inaccessible to creation and at worst an utter tyrant. As Cudworth expressed it, will considered in itself is "a blind and dark thing".[36] Conway is fully in line with this position as she posits wisdom and goodness as the central attributes that keep God's will or power in check. In other words, God's attributes are ethically qualified, for God's goodness and wisdom are inherently good from an objective, eternal moral standpoint. Conway's description of God's divine attributes belongs solidly within the tradition of argumentative composition or form, which presumes universality and static being.

Conway mentions that God is "creator and maker of all things" in direct connection with her list of his attributes. In a clearly Neoplatonic vein, she considers God as the abundance of goodness, wisdom, and power and infers God's creative activity from these attributes:

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33 Conway, *Principles* IX, 5 p. 65: "[T]he pattern and order which the divine wisdom has arranged so that one change follows another in a fixed sequence. Hence A must first be changed into B before it can change into C."

34 HEDLEY, *Cudworth on Freedom* 48: The new scientific discourse borrowed traditional theological categories, and God's *potentia ordinata* was seen as the ground of the law of nature. It found expression in mathematical schemes and the generalization of the geometrical method, which took the place of *ideae exemplares*.

35 The question of God's will and God's goodness is discussed in Plato, *Euthyphro* 169–185.

36 Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* 26.

"God is infinitely good, loving, and bountiful; indeed, he is goodness and charity itself, the infinite fountain and ocean of goodness, charity, and bounty. In what way is it possible for that fountain not to flow perpetually and to send forth living waters?" (II, 4 p. 13)

God's being is perfection so great that it necessarily communicates itself *ad extra*. Using a Neoplatonic image, Conway describes God as a fountain that flows in "perpetual emanation and continual flux for the production of creatures" (II, 4 p. 13).[37] God is the source or the beginning of all being, and this creative activity is part of his nature on a par with being good, wise, and powerful. In her second paragraph about God, Conway links the divine attributes to substance. She asserts that his attributes are his being and that this is an eternal truth: "In God there is no time, change, arrangement, or division of parts. For he is wholly and universally one in himself and within himself without any variation or admixture" (I, 2 p. 9).

God's substance is one of immutability and unity. His attributes – which are his being or substance – do not change. God cannot suddenly decide not to be goodness or not to create, since this is and will always be his substance or being. Again, we see that Conway uses the notion of "substance" to describe what seems to be the static, independent, and impassive nature of God.[38] But it seems that God's substance, even though it is unchanging, is not static. It is one of continuous motion: God's self-motion is deduced from his attributes as he creates an infinite number of agents in a continuous act of creation. This outward-directed movement is part of God's substance, and in a certain sense a multiplication of it:

"For the goodness of God is communicated and multiplied by its own nature, since in himself he lacks nothing nor can anything be added to him because of his absolute fullness and his remarkable and mighty abundance. […] Therefore the essential attribute of God is to be the creator. Consequently God was always a creator and will always be a creator because otherwise he would change." (II, 4 p. 13)

Conway argues that being creator is indeed the essential attribute of God. This means that God and the world are in a continuous and continuing creative relationship – a relationship of emanation from God to creation. What we have here is not a description of a once-and-for-all creative act occurring at a certain point in time, but a continuous creative flow or flux. To some degree this entails the thought that God's static substance is one of movement. Since God's creative act

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37   Cf. Plotinus' description of the divine nature as a "fountain of loveliness": Plotinus, An
     Essay on the Beautiful 29. See also Edwards, Dissertation on the End 140–145.
38   Head, Anne Conway on Time, the Trinity, and Eschatology 221 (following DeWeese),
     suggests that a Conway is influenced by Neoplatonism in her description of "the concept
     of divine simplicity, immutability, and eternity".

is necessarily a part of his being, we begin to see that God *in se* is closely related to God-in-the-world.

God's attributes (particularly his spirit, wisdom, goodness, and power) provide the background for understanding the relation between God and the world. For example, Conway writes that "the divine power, goodness, and wisdom has created good creatures" (VI, 6 p. 32). There is a direct link between God's substance and his creation. The two are in an intimate relation which has existed from the beginning. This intimate relation does not mean, however, that God *is* his creation. In other words, there is both difference and identity between God and the world. In a crucial passage, Conway explains that God is "in a true and real sense an essence or substance distinct from his creatures, although not divided or separate from them but present in everything most closely and intimately in the highest degree" (I, 3 p. 9).

Conway's description of God leads to the question: How can God be distinct from his creatures but not separated from them? As we have seen above, in her answer to this question Conway posits God's being as emanating into creation. Therefore, creation participates in some of his attributes, but not in them all. In chapter VII she frames the dichotomy of identity and difference as she divides God's attributes into those that are *incommunicable*, meaning belonging to God-self or God *in se*, and those that are *communicable*, that is, shared by creation:

"The divine attributes are commonly and correctly divided into those which are communicable and those which are not. The incommunicable are that God is a being subsisting by himself, independent, immutable, absolutely infinite, and most perfect. The communicable attributes are that God is spirit, light, life, that he is good, holy, just, wise, etc. Among these communicable attributes there are none which are not alive and life itself." (VII, 2 p. 45)

Both groups correlate to the attributes defining God's inner being in chapter I of the *Principles*. The identity between God and the world comes to the fore in his communicable attributes. Conway explains how creation shares in God's goodness, holiness, justice, wisdom, etc. We recall that these attributes are absolute because they are ethically determined. When we speak of goodness in relation to creatures, it is not a goodness that is qualitatively different from God's goodness – it is the same goodness that is God's substance. This means that there is univocity between God's substance and the substance of creatures.[39] Because the categories are univocal the difference between God and creatures must lie in quantity rather than in quality. The difference is the *extent* to which creatures participate in these attributes. Creation's participation in the divine nature is contingent and gradual, meaning that they can add to or lose some of their participation in the divine

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39   This is an Origenian point, which is taken up in the early modern period, notably among the Cambridge Platonists: Kobusch, Die Univozität des Moralischen 29–33. 37–45.

attributes. Thus, some of the attributes of creation necessarily reflect God's inner being in a true and certain way.

However, according to Conway, there is also difference between God and the world. Independence, immutability, infinity, and perfection are attributes that make God's substance differ radically from that of creation, whose substance is defined by dependency, mutability, contingency, and death. Therefore, there seems to be a dual aspect to God: one that is characteristic of God *pro nobis* and another that is characteristic of God-self. Further, creation also consists of other attributes which are not found in God-self. Conway calls these the "differentiating attributes":

"As for the remaining attributes of matter, namely, hardness, shape, and motion, these can obviously have no place in God. Consequently, they are not among his communicable attributes, but are rather the essential differences or various attributes by which creatures, as such, are distinguished from God." (VII, 2 p. 45)

We see here how Conway frames the distinction between God and the world as one of ontological difference. By inscribing the dual aspects in God, she posits an intermediary level between God and creation. While God is incommunicably independent, eternal, perfect, etc., creation is partly defined by the attributes of extension, hardness, shape, and motion. But in between these two levels of reality are the ethical categories of goodness, justice, holiness, wisdom etc., of which creation always partakes.

Towards a Divine Dipolarity

A reading of these two aspects of God alongside the process-theological notion of God's dipolarity seems to point towards a central notion of movement or process as that which relates and unites the two aspects. According to process theology, there are two sides to God which are distinguishable but inseparable: his primordial nature and his consequent nature. God's primordial nature is his "abstract essence" (as opposed to his "concrete actuality").[40] It is his eternal, immutable, and changeless aspect that we may also call the most perfect being, the highest goodness, truth, or beauty. This seems to correspond more or less to Conway's conception of God *in se*. It is the part that creation does not know fully, nevertheless it is the ground of creation. Whitehead describes God's primordial nature as "the unconditioned conceptual valuation of the entire multiplicity of eternal objects".[41] That is, the "general potentiality" of all actual entities, their "ground of

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40   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 47. 62. Cf. Whitehead, Process and Reality 524. 532.
41   Whitehead, ibid. 31.

relevance" as well as their drive towards good, lies in God's primordial nature.[42] The root of all process lies in the primordial nature of God. As Whitehead writes, this is the non-actual, non-temporal "somewhere", in which "everything" has its beginning.[43] This seems to resemble Conway's idea of God as the source of all being and the most perfect being, from which all creatures come and to which they strive to return.

In addition to God's primordial nature, process theologians stress God's consequent nature. This is his concrete actuality, which is relative, temporal, and therefore constantly changing. "[God's] 'consequent nature' results from [God's] physical prehensions of the derivative actual entities".[44] At every moment, the world transforms itself by way of the free decisions of actual entities. God's consequent nature is not just his manifestation in the world, it is the concrete world actually taken into God-self. In his consequent nature God feels the decisions of actual entities. He "enjoys our enjoyments, and suffers with our sufferings".[45] That is, God feels every moment in two tempi: confirmation and transformation. In his primordial nature God feels the eternal possibilities of each actual entity at each moment. In his consequent nature God then prehends the actual entity's decision and takes it into himself. The process theological account of God's dipolarity functions as a never-ending spiraling movement from God into the world and back again, the relation growing and becoming enriched as it progresses. The dipolarity of God is an attempt to keep God distinct from the world while securing that he remains interactive with it and responsive to it.

This last aspect of God's responsive love as one that profoundly changes God-self is really the hallmark of process theology today. It integrates God's primordial nature with his consequent nature in a way that is not always clearly spelled out in Whitehead's texts.[46] The integration of God and the world by way of movement or process – even in God-self – is the process theologian's solution to the ontological gap. We do not see this responsive side of God's creative love in Conway's text. It is not a train of thought that can be developed from the idea of God as "immutable". Had Conway been confronted with the process idea of God's consequent nature, she might have argued that it would make God dependent on his creation and threaten to collapse the distinction between God and world. While process theology stresses the intimacy of God and the world, Conway stresses the distinction. This might be why she holds that "God is a being subsisting by himself" (VII, 2 p. 45). But we detect a tension in Conway's text. She has just established that God's "essential attribute" (II, 5 p. 13) is to be creator, and, therefore, God is a being al-

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42   Ibid. 46. Cf. Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 59.
43   Whitehead, Process and Reality 46.
44   Ibid. 31.
45   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 48.
46   Ibid. 62.

ways subsisting in relation to the world. Conway's commitment to the strong on-
tology of being seems to run counter to her insistence on an intimate relatedness.

Both Conway and process theologians hold that God is a continuous creator.
That is, God is always in a kind of creative movement or process in the world.
Cobb and Griffin characterize the movement from God's primordial nature as
God's "creative love".[47] How may we understand the nature of this creative love
that is God's activity in the world? Cobb and Griffin begin by ruling out two "tra-
ditional" understandings of God's creative activity. The first is that God should be
the cause of *everything* in the world at every moment. This would make him the
cause of evil, but, since God's creative movement is defined as *love*, this under-
standing of God is not valid. The second is the Cartesian idea of God's activity as
merely that which caused the beginning of the universe but thereafter remained
external to the world. This idea creates a fundamental gap between the world and
the creator and ultimately renders the creator redundant to any creaturely experi-
ence. Against these faulty understandings, Cobb and Griffin write: "Process the-
ology provides a way of […] understanding this creative activity as the expression
of divine *love* for the world".[48]

This seems to be parallel to Conway's positing of God as the source of all be-
ing. In his infinite goodness, God *in se* necessarily becomes God *pro nobis* as he
is defined as creator. Conway further explains this movement from God-self to
God-in-the-world as founded on his love. Does this make God the author of evil,
she asks? The answer is clearly "no" (VII, 2 p. 58), for everything that emanates
from God is "spiritual and alive", meaning that God's creative activity is only ever
good.

Further, God's creative act is continuous; that is, he is never merely the begin-
ning but also the actuality. The idea that it is God's creative love that links him to
creation is also found in Conway, and I will argue that this could point to a sort
of "unrest" in her understanding of God. These passages are not dominant in her
text, and this concept is not what she spends the most time explaining. Neverthe-
less, it seems that her explanation of the relation between God and the world has
something to do with movement. Conway describes his "action" as something
that can be said to be *in God* and as that which proceeds from him – which, when
it is manifested in creatures, becomes a temporal process:

"Moreover this continual action or operation of God, insofar as it is in him, proceeds from
him, or insofar as it refers to himself, is only one continual action or command of his will;
it has no succession or time in it, no before or after, but is always simultaneously present to

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47   Ibid. 48–52.
48   Ibid. 51.

God so that nothing is past or future because he has no parts. But insofar as it is manifested in or terminates in creatures, it is temporal and has a succession of parts." (III, 8 p. 18)

The process or operation that begins in God is his creative act. It is directed outward as an emanation from God into creation. The movement of creation is a response to this activity that is manifested in a continuous process back to God: "the nature of every creature is to be in motion or to have motion, by which means it progresses and grows to its ultimate perfection" (II, 6 p. 14). Conway continues to explain that there is no motion in God, "properly speaking". Nevertheless, she makes an analogy between the movement in creatures and the creative will of God:

"[God] is the first mover of all his creatures according to all their true and appointed motions. He, however, is not moved by them. Indeed, that which in God corresponds by analogy to the motions and operations of creatures is the rule of his own will. But if we wish to speak properly, there is no motion because all motion is successive and can have no place in God, as has been shown above." (III, 8 p. 18)

God's creative act is bound to his will, and his will therefore signifies movement in the sense that it overflows into the world. Process theologians hold that everything is in process, even God. But Conway does not want to affirm that it is more than an analogy of movement. If there is process in God for Conway, it is not in the same way or understood as directly as process theologians assert. Any talk of "process" or "movement" in God is perhaps for Conway more akin to the Origenian Platonism that was in vogue at her time. Here, God's movement is not understood as an ontological category but as an epistemological one. For Origen, the Son and the Holy Spirit reveal God through rest and motion. Christian Hengstermann explains:

"The Son and the Spirit 'rest' in their contemplation of the Father, whom they proclaim to be 'holiness' in person in their eternal hymn of the Trisagion. They 'move' as the Father chooses to reveal himself to the whole of humankind through their agency in creation and salvation."[49]

It is only through his movement, his creative act, history, nature, and his communication of attributes, that God reveals himself as eternal and as unity. We might say that acquiring knowledge of God becomes an event and any event is an act of interpretation. In Conway it is the moving substance of spirit that links creation

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49 Hengstermann, Pre-Existence and Universal Salvation 973; Fürst/Hengstermann, Die Homilien zum Buch Jesaja 74 f. Cf. Origen, On First Principles 70–72.

to the eternal and static being of God. But spirit is a divine attribute on a par with wisdom and knowledge, etc. that, in turn, are connected to Christ.

3.1.2. Christ

Conway's second species is Christ and she writes that understanding Christ as "Middle Nature" is "necessary for the correct understanding of what follows" (V, 1 p. 23). Seeing that what follows is her ontological scheme and the exploration of a correct understanding of the relation between God and the world, her main argument about the monist relation between spirit and body, and subsequently her refutation of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, it is safe to assume that Christ plays an important part in her reasoning.[50] Scattered throughout the treatise, the discussion of Christ takes up a relatively large amount of space and she uses many different terms to describe her second species. She writes:

"[I]n addition to the two extremes there is also a certain mediator which partakes of both, and this is Jesus Christ, whom the wiser among the Jews recognize, no less than some among the so-called Gentiles, maintaining that there is such a mediator, which they call by different names such as Logos, Son of God, first-born Son of God, Mind, Wisdom, the Celestial Adam, etc. And, thus, they also call him the eternal mediator." (VI, 5 p. 31)

The second species is "the mediator" between "two extremes". Mediator, medium, and Middle Nature are all names Conway assigns to this second species that also

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50   Conway's description of Christ is scattered throughout the thesis, which might minimize the impact of this second species of her system on the reader. Perhaps this is why many Conway scholars refrain from treating her Christology in depth. Notable exceptions to this tendency are two recent articles by Sandrine Parageau and Jonathan Head, which might suggest an increasing awareness of the importance of Conway's Christology: Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 247–265; Head, Anne Conway on Time, the Trinity, and Eschatology. My interpretation of Christ in Conway's scheme has been developed in dialog with these articles. Other scholars briefly mention Conway's Christology. Here, I particularly find Allison Coudert's analysis of the influence of the Quakers on Conway's Christology important: Coudert, Impact of the Kabbalah 177–220. See also Hutton's paragraphs on Christ in Hutton, Anne Conway 171–173. 199–203. Yet, the general tendency is to focus on Conway's spiritual monism without connecting it to her theological concerns. Another tendency observable is that Conway's Christology is treated in isolation from her metaphysical scheme. This is the case, I believe, in Head's article. Head focuses on Conway's Trinitarianism and its Neoplatonic influence, as well as on whether or not she is a subordinationist. Hutton tends to focus on the parallels and differences between Conway's conception of Middle Nature and the understanding of Christ prevalent in her immediate social context, e.g. among van Helmont and the Quakers. Perhaps this is due to the fact that it is not immediately clear what Christ has to do with the relation between body and spirit.

capture its function.[51] She identifies this mediator as Jesus Christ, but importantly, she extends Christ's identity to include both Jewish and "gentile" understandings of an "eternal mediator", which may be denoted differently (e. g. Logos or Wisdom) but signifies the same. Her description of Jesus Christ is not based on biblical revelation but on rational and logical deduction or, as she says, "purely philosophical arguments" (V, 3 p. 25). The difference between the substances – God as immutable and creation as mutable – constitutes a gap between God and his creation, which, according to Conway, proves the logical necessity of the second species as a bridge between these two.

Therefore, Conway contends that people of all monotheistic religions must rationally accept the metaphysical necessity of such a mediator (V, 3 p. 24). In general, Conway is very cautious in her vocabulary and she rarely relies on dogma to describe metaphysical truths. This is particularly apparent when it comes to Jesus Christ. To give a couple of examples, she explains that "[Christ] comes into existence by generation or emanation from God rather than by creation strictly speaking" (V, 4 p. 25). She then modifies this statement by adding that Christ "can be said to have been created", as Scripture stipulates, if one understands creation "according to a broader meaning". However, the point is his function as mediator, and, if this is understood, "then it is futile to argue about words" (V, 4 p. 25). Her awareness of the exclusive connotations of orthodox Christian terminology also becomes evident as she refuses to follow the Nicene definition of the Trinity as three distinct *persons*:

"If the phrase concerning the three distinct persons were omitted – for it is a stumbling block and offense to Jews, Turks, and other people, has truly no reasonable sense in itself, and is found nowhere in Scripture – then all could easily agree on this article." (I, 7 p. 10)

Instead of speaking of persons, one should understand the Trinity as the Wisdom, Word, and Power of God, says Conway. This definition is positively easier to combine with other religions. She implicitly synergizes different traditions to describe

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51   In the translation by Coudert and Corse we find Conway frequently using the term "mediator" (e. g. V, 2 p. 24; V, 3 p. 25; VI, 5 p. 32 and *passim*). The term "medium" is also used (V, 3 p. 24; VIII, 3 p. 60.) The term "Middle Nature", which is the most used by Conway-scholars, is only found once in the Latin text on p. 32 (Image p. 49): *Natura haec media*. Loptson, Conway 168, translates it "middle Nature". In the Coudert and Corse version, this phrase is translated "mediator" (V, 3 p. 24). Conway's "Middle Nature" is often compared directly to Henry More's intermediate principle "Spirit of Nature" and Ralph Cudworth's "Plastic Nature". See e. g. Hutton, Anne Conway 87. At a closer sight this parallel is problematic, since the mediator between the divine mind and the world of nature in More and Cudworth is an unconscious spirit. Conway's Middle Nature, however, is not an unconscious principle but Jesus Christ.

this mediating and universal principle. Thus, we find many parallels to Conway's mediator in Neoplatonism, Kabbalism, Quakerism, and alchemy.[52]

Conway's emphasizes the logical necessity of Christ, and her many different ways of describing Middle Nature seem to be part of her larger attempt to convey Christ as a universal principle.[53] But importantly, in her efforts to construct a universal concept of Middle Nature, she does in fact point to Jesus Christ as the true understanding of the mediator:

"If these matters are correctly considered, they will contribute greatly to the propagation of the true faith and Christian religion among Jews and Turks and other infidel nations; if, namely, it is agreed that there are equally strong reasons by which we can prove that there is a mediator between God and human beings, indeed, between God and all creatures, as there are for proving that there is a God and a creation. Therefore, those who acknowledge such a mediator and believe in him can be said truly to believe in Jesus Christ, even though they do not yet know it and are not convinced that he has already come in the flesh. But if they first grant that there is a mediator, they will indubitably come to acknowledge also, even if they are unwilling, that Christ is that mediator." (VI, 5 p. 31 f.)[54]

52 As stated in Part One, it is not the aim of this thesis to account for the many different strands of influence on Conway's treatise. However, they contribute to a deeper understanding of Conway's Christology and have been studied by several Conway scholars. For more information regarding the Neoplatonic influence on Conway's Christology, see HUTTON, Anne Conway 92 f.; HEAD, Anne Conway on Time, the Trinity, and Eschatology; LÖSSL, Christus und die Trinität in Conway's Principia 109–12; HUTTON, Platonism and the Trinity 209–224. Conway draws heavily on Kabbalistic terminology and ideas to explain her Middle Nature. Throughout her treatise she refers to the teachings of the "learned Jews", and she explains how "the ancient Kabbalists have written many things about this, namely, how the son of God was created; how his existence in the order of nature preceded all creatures; how everything is blessed and receives holiness in him and through him, whom they call in their writings the celestial Adam, or the first man Adam Kadmon, the great priest, the husband or betrothed of the church, or as Philo Judaeus called him, the firstborn son of God" (V, 1 p. 23 f.). For further reading on the Kabbalist influence on Conway's conception of Christ, see COUDERT, Impact of the Kabbalah 203; HUTTON, Anne Conway 156–176; PARAGEAU, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 254–256. There are also links between Conway's Christology and Quaker theology. Particularly the idea of Christ "within" bears witness to Conway's indebtedness to the Quakers. See PARAGEAU, ibid. 255–261; MOORE, The Light in Their Consciences 221 f.; COUDERT, ibid. 184–192; HUTTON, ibid. 197–202. Finally, for studies on Conway's Christology and the ways in which it overlaps with alchemical ideas, see PARAGEAU, ibid. 258; COUDERT, ibid. 145. 184. 206.

53 Parageau and others somewhat misleadingly term Conway's concern for interreligious mediation "ecumenism": PARAGEAU, ibid. 252; MERCER, Knowledge and Suffering in Early Modern Philosophy 186; HUTTON, ibid. 71. However, ecumenism is usually a term used to designate the efforts of the Christian Church to cross boundaries between *Christian* denominations. Conway's concerns lie much more explicitly in interreligious dialogue than in ecumenism.

54 For more examples of Jesus Christ as the "proper name for the middle nature" see also Conway, Principles V, 4 p. 24; V, 3.6 p. 26; VI, 5 p. 31; VI, 5 p. 32; VII, 1 p. 41; VII, 4 p. 50.

Conway tries to convince her readers that the universal principle that is also found in other traditions and religions is really Christ. She wants all traditions to recognize the relevance and importance of Christ, and she therefore does not cling to terminology but seeks to disclose the principle behind the name. Yet her goal is "conversion" after all, in the sense that other religions should realize that their belief in a mediating principle between God and the world really is Christ.[55] I therefore believe that it makes sense to speak of Conway's understanding of Middle Nature as her "Christology" and will henceforth treat Christ and Middle Nature as synonymous.

The Three Functions of Christ

The *Principles* gives a lot of information about how Conway understood the function and nature of Christ. I shall here highlight three areas of discussion that show that she underscores the importance of the universality of Christ: 1) his role as ontological and moral bridge between God and the world, 2) his role in the creative act, and 3) his presence in creation. Conway first considers the metaphysical necessity of Christ's existence as mediator deduced from the nature of God over against the nature of creation:

"As has already been shown above, the nature and essence of God is altogether unchangeable, as sacred Scripture and our understanding, which has been placed in our minds by God, shows us.[56] […] Moreover, since the nature of creatures is really distinct from the nature of God, inasmuch as he has certain attributes which cannot be communicated to his creatures, among which attributes is unchangeableness, it necessarily follows that creatures are changeable because otherwise they would be God himself. Indeed, daily experience teaches us that creatures are mutable and continually change from one state to another." (V, 3 p. 24)

Whereas God is unchangeable, both Christ and creatures are changeable. It is possible to distinguish between Christ and creatures based on two different kinds of change. One is described as the "intrinsic power of changing itself either for

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55   COUDERT, Introduction xix, argues that conversion was Conway's goal, and that this was in line with "the basic aim" of van Helmont and von Rosenroth in their use of Kabbalistic texts, namely "to convert Jews, Moslems, and pagans to Christianity while uniting Christians". Parageau also stresses Conway's interreligious concerns and argues that her intention is to convert Jews, Muslims, and gentiles to Christianity by pointing to Christ as the mediator between God and the world. See HUTTON, Anne Conway 71. Against this interpretation stands MERCER, Knowledge and Suffering in Early Modern Philosophy 187, who writes that Conway's aim is not conversion but rather "to engage thoughtful people of all faiths in the metaphysical idea that there is a second substance that mediates between God and creatures".

56   It is interesting to note how Conway refers to both Scripture and a rational revelation as sources for our knowledge of God. For her, placing Scripture over against reason would be to create a false binary. They are two sides of the same coin: Scripture is rational, and reason is planted in our minds by God.

good or bad", which characterizes creatures, and the other is described as "the power of moving only from one good to another", which is characteristic only of Christ (V, 3 p. 24). Since Christ can only change towards the good, so that that which is good by its very nature can become better, he is the "natural medium" between the immutable God and the mutable creatures (V, 3 p. 24). The function of Christ is to unite the two opposite extremes, God and creation: "a mediator (*medium*) is necessary by the very nature of things because otherwise a gap would remain" (V, 3 p. 25).[57] Conway explains:

"This mediating must not be understood in so crass a way, as if it stood at a midpoint between two extremes, just as the trunk of the body is between the head and the feet, but it is a median in respect to its *nature*, just as silver is a median between tin and gold, and water a median between air and earth." (V, 4 p. 25)[58]

Christ is a bridge between God and creation on two levels that I will refer to as his ontological and his moral function:[59] On the ontological level, Christ participates in both the nature of God and the nature of creation. He shares the attributes of both substances, meaning that he "shares mutability and immutability and eternity and time [and] spirit and body and consequently place and extension" (VII, 4 p. 50). On the moral level, Middle Nature "partakes of one extreme because it is mutable in respect to going from good to a greater degree of good and of the other extreme because it is entirely incapable of changing from good to bad" (V, 3 p. 24 f.).

These two levels serve to let Middle Nature overcome the divide between God and the created world, and yet they simultaneously uphold it in a way that ensures that God and creatures are intimately connected without conflating them.[60] In order for Christ to be a true bridge between God and the whole world – in the sense of every living creature – it is necessary that he be universal. Therefore, as followers of other religions also experience the gap between God and the world, they also know from experience of the necessity for the mediator.

The second function of Christ is in the creative act, that is both before and within creation. Her description of Christ as the "Wisdom" of God, or his "Word",

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57　See Conway, Principles 33. Image p. 50.

58　My italics.

59　This distinction is also made by Hutton, Henry More and Anne Conway 122. Parageau does not make this distinction, nor does she explore Christ's role as a moral mediator.

60　Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 250: "The function of the middle being is both to separate *and* to join God and the creatures, preventing a conflation of the two while ensuring continuity of substance." Parageau argues that Conway's God – Christ – Creation scheme is one substance, or "one chain of beings", as she describes it. As shown above I believe we can neither understand nor describe Conway's substance metaphysics in this way, as this would make her a pantheist. Still, Parageau's point is well taken, as it is exactly the difference in substance that ensures that the three beings are separated.

"Image", and "Logos" (VI, 5 p. 31) signals his omnipresence and universality while also underlining his special relation to God. She begins:

"In God there is an idea which is *his image* or *the word* existing within himself, which in substance or essence is one and the same with him, through which he knows himself as well as all other things and, indeed, all creatures were made or created according to this very idea or word." (I, 6 p. 10)

Jonathan Bennett notes that Conway, in her reference to Christ as the "Word", echoes the opening of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".[61] In describing Middle Nature as the Word of God or Logos or Wisdom (cf. VI, 5 p. 31), Conway places herself within a rich Jewish and Johannine tradition. John draws heavily on both Stoic and Platonic traditions to frame the meaning of Logos in a Christian context.[62] In relation to creation, John posits only one creative principle of the world (ἀρχή) in line with Platonizing Jews such as Philo of Alexandria.[63] Likewise, we find Conway positing Christ as an emanation, creation or generation of God, who is the source of everything, or as she writes, "the greatest and first principle of all things" (IV, 1 p. 21). Christ proceeds from God like all creatures, but "his existence in the order of nature preceded all creatures" (V, 1 p. 23). She further describes God's Word as "existing within himself", that is, the Word of God is in God. This echoes John 1:2 which says that the Word was with God from the beginning. Conway explains that the Word is "one and the same" with God in substance or essence.[64] Thus, she affirms the pre-existence of Logos before its incarnation in Christ:

"By the son of God (the first born of all creatures, whom we Christians call Jesus Christ, according to Scripture, as shown above) is understood not only his divinity but his human-

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61 Conway, Principles 1. Trans. Bennett.
62 Cf. Gregersen, The Extended Body of Christ 230 f.; Engberg-Pedersen, Setting the Scene 15–28.
63 Conway explicitly refers to Philo of Alexandria in the context of how to denote Middle Nature (V, 1 f. p. 23 f.). But Conway's reference to Middle Nature as Wisdom or Logos is fully in line with her Origenian Platonism as well: Head, Anne Conway on Time, the Trinity, and Eschatology 233. Cf. Hutton, Anne Conway 159 f. According to Plotinus the first emanation of the One is *Nous*, also called the Divine Mind, Intellect or Logos. Like the One and the World Soul, the Intellect is both an ontological and an explanatory principle. It serves as an intermediate between the two. See Plotinus' account of the Intellect in Enneads V 1,7 and, above all, V 3,3. This Plotinian idea has had an immense influence on Christianity. See e. g. Augustine, Confessions VII 13, where he discovers the similarities between Plotinus' *Enneads* and the prologue in the Gospel of John.
64 This exact terminology alludes strongly to the First Council of Nicaea in 325, where it was established (against Arianism) that Christ is the same essence or being (*homousios*) as the Father.

ity in eternal union with the Divinity; that is, his celestial humanity was united with the Divinity before the creation of the world and before his incarnation." (V, 1 p. 23)

This pre-existence makes Christ assume an identity of dynamic development from the Logos or Wisdom in God-self to its manifestation in the world as Jesus Christ.[65] Interestingly, Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that this element of "movement" is decisive in John's prologue and the key to unlocking the relationship between creation and incarnation.[66] This understanding of Christ as pre-existent adds a dynamic aspect to him which Conway seems to say reflects back on God. She writes that it is through his Wisdom that God "knows himself as well as all other things". Because he can change, Christ is more difficult to describe than God, which further illustrates the point made above that the farther down the ontological ladder we move, the more ambiguous the terminology becomes. But as he reflects back onto God, this terminological opacity is transposed to the original unity and unambiguity of God. God is arguably destabilized by Middle Nature. Yet, it is only through this destabilizing movement that he knows himself. Knowledge is generated through the movement of Christ out of God and back into him, and in this process the divine wisdom reveals itself as a becoming event.

Two things are interesting in this relation. First, since Christ is pre-existent, the self-knowledge of God seems to be internal to his nature. But Conway insists on Christ being another substance than God, and he thus constitutes a movement outside God towards creation. This points to the position that God is dependent on an external substance to know himself. Once again Conway appears to be prefiguring a process theological position while wishing to maintain the static and independent nature of God.

Second, Conway uses the term "image" a great deal throughout her text, in relation both to creatures and to Christ. She describes Jesus Christ as "the perfect and substantial image of God's word" (IV, 2 p. 21 cf. V, 4 p. 26). This is of some theological importance in relation to creation, because Scripture says that humans are created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1, 26–27). Conway rather seems to say that *all creatures* were made in accordance to God's image, and that this image is Christ. He is "the first born of all creatures, through whom all things are said to have been made, as John declares, and as Paul expressly affirms, 'through Christ all things visible and invisible have been made' (Colossians 1:16)" (IV, 1 p. 21). Christ could thereby signify a dynamic interpretation of the *imago dei* where not only humans are created in God's image and therefore have the capability of

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65 Engberg-Pedersen, Præeksistens i Johannesevangeliet 201 f.

66 Ibid. 206–209. On the one hand, Christ's pre-existence serves as an explanatory means of clarifying the special relationship between God and Christ. On the other hand, it adds to the correct understanding of (in Engberg-Pedersen's words) Christ's "ontological" identity, which in turn may inform our interpretation of the rest of John's Gospel.

knowing God. Rather, Conway's Christ seems to symbolize an understanding of the *imago* which pertains to all creatures. In his dual identity, his pre-existence, and his role in the creative act on the one hand and in his moral perfection on the other, Christ symbolizes both an origin and a destination for all creatures – a "whence" as well as a "whereto". Thereby, through Christ all creatures become capable of entering into the process of perfection.

This leads us to Christ's third function as present in creation. Conway explains that Christ is present quite literally in all creatures through what she calls "intimate presence". This is an incommunicable attribute that only God and Christ possess. She defines it as when "a certain homogenous substance enters into another of equal size, which should not increase in size or weight" (VII, 4 p. 50). Sarah Hutton writes that Conway understands intimate presence as the principle in creatures which fosters life and motion. In her words, Conway understands "life and motion not in terms of penetrating spirit but through the 'intimate presence' of the divine which serves as the medium for vital action".[67] In other words, what the intimate presence of Christ effects in creatures is a certain kind of movement, called "vital action". Vital action is to be distinguished from other kinds of movement because it is not neutral but striving towards perfection:

"[The] capacity to acquire the above mentioned perfections is an altogether different attribute from life and perception, and these are altogether different from extension and figure; thus vital action is clearly different from local or mechanical motion, although not separate or separable from it, inasmuch as it always uses this motion as its instrument." (IX, 6 p. 66)

This striving does not occur separately from or despite the motions of the body. Rather, the "local" and "mechanical" motion, e.g. the carrying of the body from one place to another, is the instrument of vital action (what she also calls the "operation of life" [IX, 9 p. 67]). Conway's description of the local motion of bodies as an instrument of vital action runs in parallel to her description of Christ as the instrument of God. Thus, Christ is "an instrument through which [God] works together with creatures" (V, 4 p. 25), because he is closer to them in nature: "[A]lthough God works immediately in everything, yet he nevertheless uses this same mediator as an instrument through which he works together with creatures, since that instrument is by its own nature closer to them" (V, 4 p. 25). As Christ works as God's instrument on creatures through vital action, the local motion of creatures holds the potentiality to become an instrument of Christ. It is a kind of motion that comes from God or Christ alone and is then activated or expressed in the mechanical or local motion of a creature to ensure that a creature moves towards perfection.

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67   Hutton, Anne Conway 201. Cf. Conway, Principles VII, 4 p. 50.

As the capacity to acquire perfection, vital action is defined as increased knowledge, love, feeling, spirit, and life (cf. IX, 6 p. 66). Conway further explains, "vital action is a far more noble and divine way of operating than local motion, and yet both come together in one substance and cooperate well with each other" (IX, 9 p. 67). On this basis, I would describe vital action as the physical and moral movement of creatures towards the divine. In other words, it effects an ontological transformation of creation which can be understood as Conway's soteriology.

Changing the Fabric of Time

To understand this transformation of creation as part of the soteriological function of Christ working as God's instrument, I will highlight Conway's understanding of time and eternity. On the one hand, the soteriological function of Christ is thoroughly described by Conway as being the "spiritual and inward appearance in creatures [through which] he saves, preserves, and restores their souls" (V, 6 p. 27), and "raise[s] them by his action to union with God" (V, 4 p. 26). On the other hand, she defines time as:

"[N]othing but the successive motion or operation of creatures and if this motion or operation should cease, then time itself would cease and the creatures themselves would end with time since the nature of every creature is to be in motion or to have motion." (II, 6 p. 14)

We gather from this that time and local motion are dependent on each other as they define one another. Indeed, they might be seen as identical. Thus, as Emily Thomas states, Conway holds a non-absolutist position on time, meaning that she views time as relative to the movement of objects. This means, that "in the absence of change there would be no time, […] there would be no time in an unchanging universe".[68] While local motion in itself is not evil for Conway, it "is the nature of all motion that it breaks down and divides something into finer parts" (III, 9 p. 20). Thus, time understood as motion, "the devourer of things", allows for the possibility of corruption and the decline of creatures. She further writes on creatures' embeddedness in time:

"Thus, everything which ends in time and is subject to death and corruption or changes into something else, just as we see water change into stone, stones into earth, earth into trees, and trees into animals or living creatures." (V, 6 p. 26)

We should note here, that this understanding of time fits neatly into Conway's view that God's being is static and that it is through this attribute that he is distinct from his creation. His being is static precisely because he is eternal, meaning

68   Thomas, Time, Space, and Process in Anne Conway 995.

outside time. But this raises the question of *how* God is related to time, whether his eternity is like an *a priori* "container" of time that exists independently of it or whether time is somehow incorporated within him from eternity. The "container" position would hold that God's creative act sets the world in motion and thereby gives rise to time. It also makes God's eternity sharply unrelated to time. The second position would entail that God is somehow *in* time while remaining eternal and differentiated from it. This issue is important for our present purpose of understanding the role of Christ in Conway's metaphysical system because a soteriological question underlies it: does salvation involve becoming static and eternal like God or does God change the nature of time by somehow expelling corruption and death from it?[69]

Conway may not expressly state that *God* is present in the world through Christ since they are different substances. Yet at the same time, it is the nature of the second species to draw creation towards God. This is the crux of the matter, according to Conway, who holds Christ to be an instrument of God who fosters union or an intimate relation between all creatures and God (V, 4 p. 25). So how is Christ, as a second substance distinct from God, able to save creatures? This leads us back to the discussion of the pre-existent Logos.

As mentioned above, Conway scholars have shown an interest in determining whether or not she was a subordinationist.[70] If Conway is a subordinationist in the heretical sense, this would imply that creation has no access to God *in se*, because Christ is not the fully revealed image of God. As has been shown by Sarah Hutton, Conway's view of the role between Father and Son shows "distinct echoes of Origen" and James Lyons has convincingly argued that Origen takes a twofold view of the Son throughout his writings.[71] Lyons' reading of Origen strongly mirrors the position of Conway. On the one hand the Alexandrine places the Son closer to the Father than the creatures, and on the other hand he envisages the Son as closer to the creatures than to God. Lyons frames this double perspective through the terms "equality" and "subordination". While the equality derives from the divine unity, Christ and God are not undifferentiated, and this is the basis of the accusations of "subordination". To Origen, God and Christ are truly one and exist as one,[72] and, to Conway, wisdom and will are "distinct modes or properties of one and the same substance" (I, 7 p. 10). Further, she holds that Christ is God's

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69 Thomas does not expound on the role of Christ in Conway's metaphysical scheme, nor on his role in mediating between time and eternity. She only mentions him in passing, suggesting that "perhaps Conway is also following More in ascribing holenmerism to Christ" (ibid. 1002).

70 See e.g. Head, Anne Conway on Time, the Trinity, and Eschatology 222; Hutton, Platonism and the Trinity.

71 Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 232; Lyons, The Cosmic Christ 105–115.

72 Origen, Contra Celsum VI 69.

"perfect image" wherefore it is "necessary that he is like God in all his attributes" (V, 4 p. 26). This unity implies for Origen as for Conway that Christ is unable to become evil.

But just as in Origen, the possible subordinationism in Conway derives from the fact that the Father alone is unbegotten.[73] Lyons concludes that the subordinationism of Origen seems to be "centered on the Son's role of mediating between the Father and creation".[74] Conway does write that Christ should be understood as being "of a lesser nature than God and yet of a greater and more excellent nature than all remaining creatures" (V, 2 p. 24). I would argue that in Conway the distinction between the subordination and the equality of Christ is a matter of *perspective*, that is, whether you consider him from a theocentric or anthropocentric point of view. This change of perspective is relative to eternity and time. She writes:

"[Christ] can be said to share eternity (which belongs to God) and time (which belongs to creatures), and although, as said above, nothing comes between eternity and time or between creatures and the will of God, which created these things, nevertheless 'time' and 'creature' must be understood in a broader sense, namely, in respect to all the things that God created outside of himself." (VI, 5 p. 26)

Conway draws a distinction between the inside and the outside which we must take to equal the distinction between God *in se* (his immanent being in eternity) and God *pro nobis* (his economic being in time). Thus, any subordination of Christ is not in terms of temporality or chronology (which is the defining character of creation) but a distinction that is eternal or outside time. We can conclude that there is eternal movement in God but that it is essentially different from the local motion of creation. The perfection union with Christ, she writes, is

"a region of perfect tranquility, where nothing is seen of felt to move or be moved. For although the strongest and swiftest motions exist there, nevertheless because they move so uniformly, equally, and harmoniously, without any resistance or disturbance, they appear completely at rest." (V, 7 p. 27)

Following the scholastic definition introduced at the beginning of Part Three, we might say that the "subordination" of Christ to God is "logical" rather than "real". He is in time by virtue of the Incarnation, but he is also outside time in the sense

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73 He is the source of all things, the beginning (ἀρχή) of all beings, the Son as well as all created beings. The Son is the radiance of God's glory, and Origen therefore groups him with the rest of the rational creation, which through him partake in the radiance: Lyons, The Cosmic Christ 114. Cf. Origen, Commentary on John I 37,267.

74 Lyons, ibid. 115.

that he is God's pre-existent Logos, or, in Conway's words, "generated" immediately from God. Therefore, "we cannot imagine that this mediating being existed in time before creatures, but only that he preceded them in the order of nature" (VI, 5 p. 26). It follows that since he partakes from eternity in the real being of God, he cannot be subject to the decay of time. On the contrary, as he is incarnated, he changes the fabric of time as it is experienced by creatures. Thus, motion and time are integral to salvation when she writes that by means of motion, the creature "progresses and grows to its ultimate perfection" (II, 6 p. 14). Through the vital action of Christ, creatures partake in a sanctifying process or, as Conway expresses it, in Christ creatures are able to "grow by degrees in goodness, virtue, and holiness forever" (V, 6 p. 27). They become more harmonious and grow together in greater unity.

The substance of Christ is clearly different from that of God in that it is one of eternal progress while the substance of God is eternal and static. On the one hand, this is necessary for Christ to manifest himself in creatures, thus becoming part of their particular experiences while at the same time bridging the gap to the static unity of God. On the other hand, the second substance is necessary for God to know himself as the eternal harmonizer of time and movement. This position might seem confusing because the source of creation (the first substance of God) comes to know itself through Christ the second substance as a more dynamic being than first posited. Thus, the static being of God seems to be revealed through Christ as processual. Since the attributes of knowledge and wisdom are defining for God's substance, there can be said to be a tension in Conway's system between the strong and weak ontologies of, respectively, being (God *in se*) and becoming (God knowing himself through Christ).

By way of this ambiguity, Middle Nature points to the nascent epistemic principles identified by Duran. While the treatise opens with a static definition of God's being in accordance with strong ontologies ("God is …"), Conway also writes that "God cannot be directly known" (IV, 2 p. 22). This seems contradictory since the ontological commitments posit exactly that Conway *is* able to know God. We must assume that this is possible because of God's communicable attributes such as spirit, innate ideas, wisdom, and the faculties of reason. This can be connected to a weak ontology of becoming because there is intimate presence in all creatures – even the physical monad. Thus, the world contains an inherent potential for knowing God. But since God knows himself through his relation to Christ, the vital action of creatures also becomes a question of knowing Christ. If we maintain that God knows himself through Christ and that this is a process of becoming, then the vital actions of creatures can be seen as a similar event of interpretation: creatures "move" towards Christ in the event of acquiring knowledge but can never arrive at the absolute being of God:

"For the highest excellence of a creature is to be infinite only in potentiality, not in actuality. That is, it is always able to become more perfect and more excellent to infinity, although it never reaches this infinity." (VI, 6 p. 33)

In contrast to Christ, there will always remain a remnant of potentiality in creatures that is not actualized. But through its participation in Christ, the constant movement of the created substance becomes a movement that is brought constantly closer to God, and this changes the fabric of time. Instead of being mere purposeless movement or "breaking down of parts", the operation of creatures becomes directed. In other words, time changes from being purely destructive to being a constructive journey that creates deeper and more complex relations. On this view, the relatedness between God and creatures can only be established through the interpretative becoming that takes place in a creature's encounter with Christ the Word (Wisdom, Knowledge). If this points to a weak ontology where Christ is first and foremost a universal principle of relation, it also opens up the epistemological question of how creatures can come to meet God who is present in creation. At the same time, we must stress that Conway keeps the two substances of God and Christ separated because she wishes to safeguard the static being of God.

A Process Perspective on Christology

I have not so far drawn in a process Christology to illuminate the role of Christ in Conway's treatise. That is partly due to the fact that many process theologians fear a strong emphasis on Christology because of the danger of slipping into dogmatism. Thus, we already see overlaps with Conway's interreligious concerns. Process theology holds that Christology is not a detached dogma or teaching that can be separated from the organic philosophy that emphasizes relatedness. Therefore, rather than treating Christology as a separate area of theology, process theologians view it as already revealed within the relation between God and the world. Cobb and Griffin explain that

"What has been said about God is already Christological in two ways: First, as Whitehead recognized, his understanding of God is indebted to the life and insights of Jesus. Second, the creative love of God, insofar as it is incarnate, *is* Christ."[75]

The process theological understanding of Christ shares ground with Conway's Christology on two levels: 1) understanding Christ as an *integrated* and a *universal* principle, and 2) understanding Christ as a *transformative* or *dynamic* principle. As in Conway, these concerns lead to the position that the principle rather than

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75   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 95. Their italics.

the name is of importance and they therefore have consequences for the Christological terminology: "We are not so much concerned that the forms and language of the past be preserved as that the faith come fully to life", write Cobb and Griffin.[76] As we have seen, this is also the reason that Conway does not use the term "persons" with regard to the Trinity because it suggests divisibility between the aspects of God, all of which are simultaneously immanent and transcendent. To Cobb and Griffin, not only the use of the term "Trinity" but also the doctrine itself is a "source of distortion, and an artificial game".[77]

In *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, Cobb addresses the challenges of understanding Christ in modern life influenced by the experience of "profane consciousness and pluralism".[78] In relation to the challenge of religious pluralism, Cobb seeks to carve out an understanding of Christ that does not view the "other Ways" (i. e. other religions) in a "negative or condescending fashion" but at the same time maintains Christ as "supremely important".[79] By "supreme importance" Cobb means the experience of a principle with the capacity for creative transformation. He therefore dismisses three kinds of responses to the challenge of pluralism as unviable: 1) It is wrong to "assert that Christ and Buddha are but two names for the same reality". Clearly, the two religions view different things to be "supremely important". 2) It is wrong to respond to the deep level of pluralism by way of "unqualified relativism". Christians must believe that Christ is supremely important. But this leads to the opposite danger, namely, 3) it is wrong to isolate Christ and view him as important only to Christians and irrelevant to, for example, Buddhists. This last view distorts the "thrust toward [*sic*] openness, inclusiveness, and universality that is present in both Christ and Buddha [… and then] Christ becomes a principle of closedness, exclusiveness, and limitation".[80] A process theological answer to pluralism must point to Christ specifically as a "saving reality" while at the same time maintaining this reality as universal. Cobb's first suggestion as a move in this direction is to change terminology:

"Sometimes we can speak instead of the ultimate, or of the divine spirit. In some contexts technical philosophical words will help. […] But it is not the case that by abandoning distinctive Christian terminology we can find common ground with the other great Ways. […] [A]lthough some unnecessary obstacles to mutual appreciation may be removed by terminological change, no other image is identical with Christ."[81]

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76   Ibid.
77   Ibid. 109.
78   Cobb Jr., Christ in a Pluralistic Age 18.
79   Ibid. 19.
80   Ibid.
81   Ibid. 20.

Both Conway and process theology maintain that strong dogmatic language can be an obstacle to the right understanding of Christ. Both Conway and process theology argue that the main point is to understand Christ as a saving reality, revealing God as truly present for and in all of creation. When we understand Christ as the absolute and universal principle of mediation and relation, dogma and terminology come second.

In an earlier subsection of Part Three, I connected God's primordial nature to his creative act or his creative love pouring into creation. In this act there is a shift from a static to a dynamic reality. God, in this respect, is the "source of novel order and ordered novelty" in the world.[82] Cobb and Griffin explain the Christological side of this as they identify the primordial nature of God with the Logos. As the new dynamic order, Logos is present in all things. "The *incarnate* Logos is Christ. In this broadest sense, Christ is present in all things".[83] This distinction between the pre-existent Logos and the person Jesus rests on a shift from static reality to dynamic order, similar to that found in Conway. The new order symbolized by Christ is one of creative transformation: "The Primordial Nature, or Logos, is present or incarnate in creatures as their initial aim in relation to which the creature decides how to constitute itself."[84] For process theologians the primordial nature or Logos is present in all beings as their initial aim. That is, the primordial nature of God in the shape of Logos or Christ directs the potentiality of an actual occasion into a more complex actuality and enjoyment.

This aspect is tied to Jesus as the incarnation of the Logos, because his life and ministry is the active expression of universal relatedness and persuasive and transformative power. As Whitehead writes, "the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act of that which Plato divined in theory".[85] The universality of the Logos is tied to the particularity of Jesus Christ because his action is fully in accordance with God's will. As Conway writes, Christ is ethically immutable. He is the full expression of God's initial aim, of his goodness, wisdom, and power. The goal of Jesus was always to make God's kingdom present to and in the world. Or in Conway's words, Christ's function is ultimately to "sanctify everything", or again, in process theological terms, to enact creative transformation. In a similar vein, Keller explains how for a theology of becoming what "comes into focus may not

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82   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 98.
83   Ibid.
84   Ibid. 97.
85   Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas 214. Whitehead was greatly inspired by the Alexandrian fathers, Origen among them, and their theological interpretations of Platonic ideas. He believed that their Christology made God's relation to the world integral rather than merely "second-rate", an imitation or an icon. Thus "these Christian theologians have the distinction of being the only thinkers who in a fundamental metaphysical doctrine have improved upon Plato" (ibid. 215).

be the historical Jesus but his own ultimate concern; the way of the *basileia* might open".[86] The focus of Christ is the event of salvation. He enacts creative transformation of every living creature and this is his particular function. We participate in God not directly but in God's effectiveness of the world that is mediated through Christ. Christ is the dynamic being. Like a speech act, his Word not only conveys cognitive (rational) information but is a performance or action where transformation occurs through the Word itself, e. g. raising the daughter of the synagogue leader from the dead: "She is not dead but asleep" (Luke 8:52).

In process theology, Christ is described in terms of both identity with and of difference from God. He points to God as the source, the unity. He is himself one substance with many aspects. He is identity and difference, motion and rest. In him there must be identity between the lived experience of creatures and God's eternal life, not as a static reality, but rather as a constant flux or movement between the divine Logos and the material world. In this way, he might be described, to use Conway's term, as a "microcosm" (V, 6 p. 27).

3.1.3. Creation

Conway's explanation of the nature of creation takes up the most space in her treatise. Because all created beings are a complex mix of spirit and body, an infinity of spiritual "monads", and inherently mutable, creation is even more complex to describe than God and Christ. The relation between body and spirit in creation will be dealt with extensively in Part Four of this thesis. For now, as a point of departure, I will look at the structure of Conway's cosmology as a whole and explore key ideas pertaining to the God-world relation within this structure, namely her idea of the pre-existence of souls, the Fall, and her different levels of creation and ways of divine participation. Conway's structure, her anthropology and cosmology in general, bear strong affinities with Origen's cosmological scheme which operates with a processual structure of decent and ascent. Creation (emanation from God) and salvation (return to God) are the overall framing processes, within which individual, continuous, and smaller processes occur. Since creatures are defined by being created, and thus passing from non-being into being, their primary disposition is understood as movement or change.[87]

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86   Keller, On the Mystery 136.
87   Cf. Origen, On First Principles I 4,1.

Pre-existence of Souls, the Fall, and Free Will

The pre-existence of souls was one of the six "chief opinions" of Origen spelled out by George Rust in his *A Letter of Resolution concerning Origen.*[88] Henry More was famous at his time for propagating this heterodox teaching in order to defend the goodness and justice of God in the face of evil and suffering in the world.[89] The doctrine of pre-existence was, in his opinion, the only way properly to explain the suffering of apparently innocent and good people. For God's justice and goodness to be preserved, these people must be subject to punishment for transgressions made in their previous lives. Anne Conway engaged actively in Henry More's attempt to reconcile God's justice with the problem of sin and his Origenian solution of free will and the pre-existence of souls. After having read his poem *The Preexistence of the Soul* she wrote him a letter where she raised a series of questions:

"*Upon the Reading of your* Poem *of the* Praeexistence of the Soul, *and serious thinking of it, I desir'd to be satisfied in Four* Particulars, *which are* these.
First, Whether God did create the *Matter* for the *Enjoyment of Souls*, since they *fell* by it?
Secondly, Whether the *Soul* could Enjoy the *Matter* without being *Clothed* in Corporeity; and if it could not, how it can be the *Fall* of the *Soul* that makes it assume a *Body*?
Thirdly, Upon Supposition most of the *Souls fell*; Why did not *all* Assume *Bodies* together: And how *Adam* can be said to be the *first Man*, and all Men to *Fall* in *him*, since they *Fell* before: And how the *Souls* of *Beasts* and *Plants* came into *Bodies*?
Fourthly, How *Man* can be *Restor'd*, to what he *Fell* from; And why the *Devils* that *Fell*; cannot? Why *Christ's* Death should Extend more to *One* than to the *Other*?"[90]

These questions relate to issues that Henry More addresses in his *Immortality of the Soul* (1659), and, as Hutton notes, they all arise from the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. They also bear witness to Conway's early interest in the

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88   The letter is one of the main sources for the Origenist turn in seventeenth century Cambridge. On this see Part Two.

89   Cf. More, Pre-existence of Souls; id., Immortality of the Soul; Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 222–225. The doctrine was not viewed favorably by the established church. In fact, Hutton deems Henry More's championship of the doctrine as remarkable, considering the pressure he was under from various authorities. He was refused a license to print the first volume of his *Divine Dialogues* until he had changed his assertion that the doctrine was true to a presentation of it as merely a hypothesis. For Origen, too, the doctrine of pre-existence of souls derived from theodicy issues, rather than the other way around. See Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 24.

90   Conway, cited from Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 226. Cf. Ward, The Life of Henry More 1, 169. This letter is not in *The Conway Letters*. Hutton dates it to early 1650s, that is, a little before Origen's teachings gathered momentum in Cambridge. The letter is a testimony to Conway's thoughts before she developed her own thinking, when More was still tutoring her in Cartesian philosophy.

problem of evil, and her questions may indeed be the reason why More recommended *A Letter of Resolution* to her in 1661.[91] Many of these questions echo throughout the more mature writing of her treatise where her own solutions to the problems differ from her tutor's and are related to her emphasis on spirit.

Conway never directly writes about the "pre-existence of souls" in her treatise, but there are several hints that evidence her belief in a certain version of the doctrine. Conway first establishes God as creator of all things. As we have seen, God's goodness cannot but overflow in a continuous creative act. Therefore, "creation itself is not a single event at the beginning of time, but a continuous action, since God is an eternal creator".[92] Based on her three species, we know that Conway views all of creation as one single substance: "all creatures, or the whole of creation, are also a single species in substance or essence although it includes many individuals" (VI, 4 p. 31). This created substance, which consists of an infinity of individual spiritual monads, is always embodied in a certain sense: "every created spirit has some body, whether it is terrestrial, aerial, or etherial" (V, 6 p. 27).[93] Based on the continuous creation of God, Hutton assesses the nature of pre-existence in Conway's thought:

"Pre-existence of the soul is not, therefore, an original state obtaining at the beginning of time, but the universal condition of all things at their creation. Insofar as she regards soul as the pure state of monads preceding *incorporation*, Conway may be said to subscribe to pre-existence of the soul."[94]

For Conway, pre-existence is more a "universal condition", in what Hutton has elsewhere called "the primary created substance", than it is a belief in "a storehouse of incorporeal souls awaiting unification with bodies".[95] As such, her view differs from the other Cambridge Platonists' opinions on the subject.[96] Hutton's inter-

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91 Hutton, ibid. 227.
92 Ibid. 230.
93 This distinction is also found in Henry More's *Immortality of the Soul*. Here he posits the fall of the pre-existent soul into a terrestrial body, and its later ascent towards the divine source into first an aerial and then an ethereal body. Cf. Lewis/Secci/Hengstermann, Origenian Platonisme in Interregnum Cambridge 67.
94 Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 230. Her italics.
95 Ibid.122.
96 Several Cambridge Platonists followed Origen in positing the pre-existence of souls as the most viable solution to the question of how body and soul are related. There were two competing views: On one side was a (largely Calvinist) creationist view of the soul, which held that souls are created by God at some point between conception and birth. On the other side was the (largely Lutheran) traducionist view, that souls are generated from parents to offspring. While the first position seemed to over-estimate God's interference with creation, the second seemed to imply a materialistic view where bodies generated souls. See Hedley, The Cambridge Platonists and the 'Miracle of the Christian World'

pretation of the "soul" in Conway raises the following question: is the soul a state where the monads are not incorporated? While Hutton answers this question affirmatively, the answer does not seem clear-cut. While there are spirits without *visible* bodies in Conway's cosmology, she clearly maintains that all created spirits are embodied.[97] On several occasions, she speaks of the "original" or "etherial" state of the created substance, that is, its state before the Fall.[98] The prelapsarian spirits were, it seems, characterized by having *a different kind* of corporeality than the postlapsarian spirits:

"[I]f one asks whether these spirits become more corporeal than they previously were in their original state before they fell through their own wrongdoing, I answer, yes, since, as I have already shown, spirit is able to become more or less corporeal in many degrees, although not to infinity." (VII, 1 p. 43)

To address the young Conway's own question to her tutor, it is not entirely clear whether the later Conway believes that God created matter for "the enjoyment" of souls, but it is clear that he did create matter, or bodies, and that this is good. In chapter I, she asserts that God is "the creator of all things, who not only gives to [his creatures] form and figure but also essence, life, body, and whatever good they have" (I, 3 p. 9), and, on other occasions, she mentions the created substance as created in a "pristine state of goodness" (VII, 1 p. 42). Thus, it does not seem to be the spirits' corporeality in itself that is the cause of the Fall, as in the young Conway's enquiry. Rather, following Origen, the later Conway explains the Fall from the original state by reference to the free will of created beings.

We can infer that God created all spirits with free will, as Conway explains that at a certain point creation "fell" from God through "its own willful actions" (VII, 1 p. 42–43).[99] Conway also asserts that "the impartial will [is] created in them by God" (VI, 6 p. 32). The free will of creation to choose either good or bad is central to her metaphysics. She explains how creatures can either "degrade" themselves through "willful wrongdoing" (VI, 8 p. 36) or rise to a higher state through virtuous choices (VI, 6 p. 32). This movement up and down the scale of being seems to have already begun in the original state of being: "[All creatures were] in their

190. The pre-existence of souls is also the topic of Joseph Glanvill's highly Origenian work *Lux Orientalis* of 1662, which was dedicated by the publisher to Anne Conway's brother John Finch. Glanvill argues that God created all souls at the same time (a point that clearly differs from Conway). He also claims that some souls fell on account of their disobedience while others did not. On the account of his goodness, God gave the fallen spirits bodies – and hence the opportunity to ascend towards him again: Glanvill, Lux Orientalis, Preface.

97   See Conway, Principles V, 6 p. 27; VI, 10 p. 38; VII, 1 p. 43.
98   See ibid. VI, 4 p. 31; VI, 11 p. 38.
99   Cf. ibid. VII, 1 p. 42 which states that the creatures have "fallen and degenerated from their original goodness".

primitive and original state a certain species of human being designated according to their virtues" (VI, 4 p. 31). The point is that even in the original state there seems to have been some sort of differentiation in the created substance based on creatures' free choices. If Conway really holds the substance of creation to be mutability and in flux rather than static being, as suggested above, it makes sense that the possibility of movement is also included in the original state of being.

It is clear that the mode of created spirits, their corporeality, is connected to the Fall because, in the Fall, the original ethereal bodies of the spiritual monads condensed and became grosser and crasser, and eventually the spirits came to have bodies of air and earth. But in Conway, it might not be helpful to understand the Fall as an event that marks a sudden discontinuity between God and creation. Rather, when Conway writes that "all the crassness of the visible bodies comes from the fall of the spirits from their original state" (VIII, 1 p. 43) it could be understood as an elastic to-and-fro movement of created being and God.[100] Hutton describes this as follows:

"The degeneration of the soul does not entail a falling *into* body, as if into a material receptacle, but degeneration takes the form of modifications which manifest themselves in increasing *corporeality*. This falling away from original goodness does not involve a change of substance, but a change of mode (a process we might compare to congealing rather than transformation)."[101]

It seems to be the extent of the spirit's self-alienation from God that results in the different physical bodies.[102] The farther away from God created beings are, on account of their individual "willful actions", the crasser their bodies become. Thus, the multiplicity of creation is the result of the descent. Following this line of argument, the bodies we inhabit are not static but become subject to change depending on our behavior and choices, good choices resulting in more spiritual bodies and bad choices resulting in grosser, darker bodies:

"One may easily understand how the heart or spirit of a wicked man is called hard and stony because his spirit has indeed real hardness in it […]. On the other hand, the spirit

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100   The idea that the rational spirits turned away from God and fell gradually rather than suddenly is also found in Origen, On First Principles I 3,1; I 4,1; I 5,3; II 2,2.

101   Hutton, Origen and Anne Conway 229.

102   Origen also explains the multiplicity of creation by a fall away from God, the nature of which is disputed among Origen scholars. Alfons Fürst's and Christian Hengstermann's reading of Origen bears a strong resemblance to my interpretation of Conway: the pre-existent rational beings are always embodied, even before the Fall. For alternative readings, see Edwards, Origen against Plato 47–86, and Tzamalikos, Origen: Cosmology and Ontology of Time 39–164, who deny Origen's commitment to a pre-existent soul's fall.

of a good person is soft and tender. We can really sense the internal hardness and softness of spirit [and these phrases] have a real and proper meaning without any figurative sense." (VII, 1 p. 44)

As Conway argues, created spirits are "able to become more or less corporeal in many degrees" (VII, 1 p. 43) and mutability is inherent in the very existence of creatures. But it can be either constructive and unifying or it can be destructive and separating:

"For God does not make divisions in any body or matter except insofar as he works together with his creatures. Therefore he never reduces creatures into their smallest parts because all motion and operation would then cease in those creatures (for it is the nature of all motion that it breaks down and divides something into finer parts). To do this would be contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God. For if every motion or operation would cease in some creature, that creature would be entirely useless in creation and would be no better than if it were pure nothingness and utter non-being." (III, 9 p. 20)

On the one hand, creation cannot exist without motion. It is given by God (VIII, 2 p. 58), indeed, it is an extension of his will (III, 8 p. 18), and the whole of creation rests upon it; creatures cannot give being to themselves, nor can they give (creative) motion to themselves. On the other hand, it is the continuous motion that makes evil possible, because the free will of creatures gives them the potential to move in discordance with God's will. Evil, therefore, is a creaturely voluntary action and becomes closely connected to sin. Conway defines sin as *ataxia* or a "disorderly direction of motion", that is, motion that goes against the established order. *Ataxia* is a negation of the Greek noun *táxis* (τάξις), which means arrangement or ordering.[103] However, it is not possible for a spirit to engage in an infinite downward spiral: "no creature can become more and more a body to infinity, although it can become more and more a spirit to infinity" (VII, 1 p. 42). And she explains that although all motion is part of creation, and as such comes from God, God can in no way be said to *cause* sin:

"Indeed, no one thinks that because I say that the motions of every creature come from God that he is or could therefore be the author or cause of sin, for although the power to move comes from God, yet sin in no way comes from God but from the creature which has

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103 In the Old Testament, there is no single word or term for sin. The most common is the root verb חטא/ḥṭ', a technical term that fundamentally means something like "missing the mark": PARAGEAU, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 249. Cf. Judg. 20:16; Prov. 19:2. In the Septuagint, the rich repertoire of terms that pertain to sin in the Old Testament are often described as *hamartia* (ἁμαρτία), which bears the same meaning of missing the mark. Evil is one term that also pertains to sin, and the two are sometimes used as partially synonymous.

abused this power and directed it to something other than it should. Thus sin is ataxia, or a disorderly direction of motion or the power of moving from its appropriate place or state to another. If, for example, a ship is moved by wind but is steered by a helmsman so that it goes from this or that place, then the helmsman is neither the author nor cause of the wind; but the wind blowing, he makes either a good or bad use of it. When he guides the ship to its destination, he is praised, but when he grounds it on the shoals and suffers shipwreck, then he is blamed and deemed worthy of punishment." (VIII, 2 p. 58)

Based on the necessary creaturely participation in the divine attributes, Conway argues that nothing can become entirely dark or pure body: "it is not an essential property of anything to be a body, just as it is not a property of anything to be dark" (VI, 11 p. 38). God's creative act requires that creatures become mutable, but God cannot create anything that is mutable only for the worse – that would be against his goodness and justice. On these grounds it seems that evil has no substance in itself for Conway. Lascano concludes that "evil is a type of privation for Conway".[104] Indeed, Conway does view evil as privation in the sense that it does not have an independent existence and is not created or caused by God. It has no positive metaphysical status (Cf. VI, 11 p. 38; VII, 1 p. 42). It is a parasitic principle that clings to the sin of creatures, who on account of their own free will choose to move against God's order. Thus, evil is an absence or privation of the natural goodness inherent in creation.

At the same time, Conway's seems to hold that it is possible not to sin. In order for her free will argument to work, the predisposition towards sin (Original Sin) has to be either nonexistent or not dominant over the nature of creatures. Conway's system is built on the assumption that motion can be used positively or abused, and it can thus foster either advance or decline. If her view of evil follows the theory of privation, then sin could be defined as the point at which process stops being progress towards perfection. Sin is a bad choice moving towards evil. The consequence of sin, Conway says, is that it "weaken[s] love and sympathy in creatures to an astonishing degree" (VI, 4 p. 31). To her, love and sympathy are integral to the divine order. It is what binds creatures together and thus work as unifying and harmonizing principles in creation. Since the entire creation is really one and the same substance, the natural motion of creatures, as it is intended by God, is that they love each other (VII, 3 p. 46). Evil, then, could be the extreme state at the very end of the ontological continuum, namely a static absolute, although this state can never be a fourth substance. Yet evil serves the positive punitive function of being a consequence of sin. In a way, evil actually contributes to progress. She goes on to explain that the same infinite process cannot happen negatively "since there is no example of infinite evil" (VII, 1 p. 42). Nothing is pure darkness, according to Conway:

104 Lascano, Anne Conway on Liberty 164.

"[N]othing can become darker and darker to infinity, although it can become brighter and brighter to infinity. For this reason, nothing can be bad to infinity, although it can become better and better to infinity. Thus, in the very nature of things there are limits to evil, but none to goodness." (VII, 1 p. 42)

Walker suggests using the image of the scale of temperature as a metaphor for Conway's moral ontology.[105] The scale of temperature is closed at one end (the absolute zero) and open at the other (there is no limit to warmth). In the same way that a creature "cannot proceed infinitely toward [*sic*] evil nor fall into inactivity or silence or utter eternal suffering, it irrefutably follows that it must return toward the good, and the greater its suffering, the sooner its return and restoration" (VII, 1 p. 43).

   Yet, since it is impossible for creatures not to be in motion, they must move continuously either up or down the scale of being. On these two grounds – God's divine attributes and her rationalist metaphysics – the idea of an eternal hell simply does not fit into Conway's system. But equally importantly, the idea of an eternal hell implies an ontological dualism since it would be a place where God cannot go or does not exist. This is unfathomable for Conway. Neither is there any death in terms of annihilation in her system. God would not annihilate anything, because everything comes from him and is thereby inherently good. Further, if creatures stopped moving, that would make them no better than "non-being". Annihilation, therefore, is also refuted by Conway for the same metaphysical and moral reasons as the idea of eternal hell:

"[Creatures] will not be annihilated, as it is easy to conclude, for how can anything be annihilated since the goodness of God towards his creatures always remains the same and since the preservation or continuation of his creatures is a constant act of creation?" (VI, 6 p. 33)

However, the absence of eternal hell in Conway's system does not mean that she has no conception of hell at all. She asks:

"However, a man who lives such an impious and perverse life that he is more like the devil raised from hell than like any other creature, then, if he dies in such a state without repenting, does not the same justice hurl him down to hell, and does he not justly become like the devils, just as those who live an angelic life become equal to angels?" (VI, 7 p. 35 f.)

Conway's idea of hell seems to be a place that has a fundamentally positive effect on the temporary inhabitants, more akin to the idea of a purgatory (from Latin, *purgare* "cleansing") where souls are cleansed before Judgment Day than to a per-

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105 Walker, The Decline of Hell 140.

manent hell where torment itself is the agenda. The purpose of hell in Conway is not punitive for the sake of pain or suffering but purifying and retributive for the sake of good and progress.[106]

Conway's account of pre-existence and the Fall substantiates the argument that her system is essentialist rather than anti-essentialist. Although creation is "one in substance or essence" this "etherial" or "original" created substance is inherently multiple. Indeed, it may be its defining attribute to be multiple and mutable.[107] If creation was one undifferentiated substance, individual agency would not make any sense. The fact that the "original" substance before the Fall is already a multiplicity is crucial to Conway's account of an individual, personal identity, and what we may call a "soul", but the issue at stake is how this multiplicity can become harmonious unity. This will be discussed extensively in Part Four.

A Differentiated World: Humans and Beasts

The created world is differentiated. It is Conway's argument that this multiplicity is the result of free will. Thus, free will is crucial to a discussion of Conway's soteriology – the ascent of fallen creatures back towards the divine. The possible ascent of spirits to God through virtuous choices opens the door to Conway's theory of the transmutation of species. In her famous "horse-example" she illustrates how the move from bad to good or from good to bad has evident consequences for the spirit's embodiment. When the horse dies, its spirit is transformed into the body of another horse, and if the horse was good, into a better horse. It is unthinkable that a good horse, which continuously becomes better and more excellent through its good and free choices, should stay a horse forever: "The horse will surely change eventually into a human being" (VI, 6 p. 33), Conway asserts.

The transmutation of one species into another serves as a testimony to the justice of God, and this becomes part of her theodicy. God is good, just, and merciful because he created spiritual matter with the capacity to reach towards perfection. Conway repeatedly explains that evil and suffering are God's punishments for creatures' sins and transgressions. Conversely, becoming more spiritual and progressing towards perfection is the reward or prize for good behavior (V, 7 p. 27; VI, 7 p. 35). This is a crucial aspect of her understanding of God's relation to his creation. It is the divine order which is linked to God's attributes and secures his justice. Divine punishments for transgressions, such as torment and pain, have a real, authentic, positive, and effective function in creatures:

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106 This idea of a punitive fire can also be found in Scripture, cf. e. g. 1 Cor. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:7.
107 For Origen, too, the created substance or *ousia* is also dynamic and changeable. Cf. Origen, Contra Celsum IV 32. This idea is different from Greek philosophy in general, as outlined in Kobusch, Die philosophische Bedeutung des Kirchenvaters Origenes 99.

"[A]ll pain and torment stimulates the life or spirit existing in everything which suffers. As we see from constant experience and as reason teaches us, this must necessarily happen because through pain and suffering whatever grossness or crassness is contracted by the spirit or body is diminished; and so the spirit imprisoned in such grossness or crassness is set free and becomes more spiritual and, consequently, more active and effective through pain." (VII, 1 p. 43)

As Walker sums up: "The greater the suffering the quicker the progress towards good".[108] Conway argues that this system of reward and punishment is in the best interests of creation, because all punishment is really "medicinal, as to cure these sickly creatures and restore them to a better condition than they previously enjoyed" (VI, 10 p. 38). For her, evil and suffering are punishment for sin, but they are inherently restorative and therefore instruments of God's justice. Even if evil is not immediately experienced as good, Conway reassures us that when God "appears to hate [his creatures] and to be angry with them, this anger and what comes from it, namely, punishment and judgment, are for their good because he saw they needed them" (VII, 3 p. 47). In Conway's understanding, evil and suffering are necessary for the moral and intellectual development of creatures. The pain inflicted by God serves as guidance or a push in the right direction, as it breaks down the hardness of the body and makes the spirit more refined.[109] Suffering therefore helps creation evolve and grow towards God. The system operates "not only in human beings and angels but also in all creatures" (VI, 7 p. 35).

I wish to draw attention to an apparent tension in Conway's structural view of creation. Following Conway's line of reasoning, over time an oyster is able to change into an angel, and an angel into a rock, since they are all, inherently, the same created substance only in different modes.[110] Thanks to its self-agency, even the lowliest created being is able to climb up the ontological ladder. But are they really the same? And can a rock be said to have the same possibilities for climbing up the ontological ladder as a human being? Conway's answer, perhaps surprisingly, seems to be "no". She argues that "the difference between human beings and beasts is exceedingly striking" (VI, 6 p. 34). But what is this difference? And how does it match her theology of creation as one and the same substance? In this subsection I will try to explore her answer to the question in her third query: how the *Souls* of *Beasts* and *Plants* came into *Bodies*? In order to do so, I will turn to process theology to help shed light on her anthropology. The passage in Conway's text that brings us closest to this issue is in chapter VI, in which she discusses the extent of the transmutation of species:

108 Walker, The Decline of Hell 140.
109 Lascano, Anne Conway on Liberty 175.
110 Conway, Principles IX, 6 p. 66, specifies that even "dust and sand" are capable of being perfected, because they are really created spiritual beings.

"For this reason the difference between human beings and beasts is exceedingly striking. For it is said about human beings that God made them in his image and breathed into them the breath of life and they became living souls, so that they received his life, the principal part that makes them human beings, which is really distinct from the divine soul or spirit which God breathed into them." (VI, 6 p. 34)

One may read this passage as if Conway holds that there is a difference in substance between humans and beasts. However, this is not the case. We recall that she previously explained that "[All creatures were] in their primitive and original state a certain species of human being designated according to their virtues" (VI, 4 p. 31).[111] I believe that it is the prelapsarian (albeit mutable) creature that is "a certain species of human being" which was created "in God's image". God breathed into them "his breath of life" which gave them "living souls". That is, all creatures are made in God's image through participation in Christ: "*all creatures* were made or created according to this very idea or word" (I, 6 p. 10), and all beings share in God's attributes: "God has created no bare being, which is only mere being and without attributes" (VII, 3 p. 48). Still, most people would take offence at being compared directly to a rock. And indeed, as Duran points out, Conway does differentiate between humans and beasts, and between all created beings. Duran calls this distinction a distinction *de re*, implying that Conway is not aware of the apparent self-contradiction:

"There is no clear line of demarcation for Conway between the human and the nonhuman or the living and the non-living; rather 'all Kinds of Creatures may be changed into another'. Thus, although she has a *de re* view of individual essence (Paul, for example, to employ a person she utilizes for such purposes, cannot be changed into another individual), she – unlike some contemporary thinkers – does not have a *de re* view of natural kinds or species essence."[112]

However, I do not think that the distinction between individual essences reveals a self-contradiction in Conway's system. Rather, to understand why rocks do not change into humans, although they could, the organic view of reality in process thought may open some new perspectives.

We recall that according to process theology all beings are composed of groupings of actual entities, or as Whitehead terms them, "societies". There are different

111 Conway's assertion that all created beings were "a certain species of human being" echoes Origen's created *noes*, the rational spirits, which all possess the same nature: Origen, Commentary on Romans VIII 9 and, above all, II 9: All rational beings are created entirely equal, as is stipulated by disinterested divine justice.
112 Duran, Anne Viscountess Conway 69. Duran cites Conway from the Loptson-edition of the *Principles*.

types of complex societies in Whitehead's philosophy, which are arranged hierarchically or in gradations, ranging from "nexus" to "enduring objects" to "corpuscular societies" corresponding to the phenomenological "things" in substance philosophy.[113] Further, the complex societies are ordered "serially", which means that there is an inheritance from the past within these societies that directs them. The distinction between the mental and physical pole of each actual entity is important in understanding how process thought explains the leap from "corpuscular societies" (or inorganic aggregates) to living societies (an animal or a human). The former are primarily "physical", meaning that they make their decisions in conformity with their past. Rocks, for example, are almost devoid of novelty because all the individual spontaneities in the rock are mutually thwarting and their mutual prehension of the past overpowers any singular, novel "decision". A rock "brings nothing new into the world, but simply repeats the past".[114] An animal consists of groupings of entities where the mental pole actively contributes to the creative advance by prehending the eternal objects. Thus, a novel element is introduced – one that was not derived from the past.[115] A human being has an even higher degree of "ingression" of the eternal objects, amounting to a conscious unifying creative structure. Amos Yong explains:

"In living beings, and especially in the higher societies, a central direction appears which seemingly acts as a dominating unity that controls the particular corpuscular society in a manner indicative of creative becoming. In the personal ordering of human beings, we reach what Whitehead considers to be the chief exemplification of creativity in our cosmic epoch since it is here that we find the dominance of the mental pole as seen in the 'hybrid' (conceptual or impure) prehensions characteristic of mental originality."[116]

The difference between "corpuscular societies" and "living persons" is a continuum of mental pole activity – a continuum of "complexification". Although there is no ontological difference between the lower actualities and the higher, the difference of degree eventually becomes a difference in quality.[117] "Each stage of the evolutionary process represents an increase in the divinely given possibilities for value that are actualized".[118] The actualization is crucial. We may say that while all creatures have the same potentiality, they do not have the same actual possibility of advancement.

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113 See on this YONG, Personal Selfhood (?) and Human Experience 57.
114 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 67.
115 Ibid. 68. WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 156. 159.
116 YONG, Personal Selfhood (?) and Human Experience 57 f.
117 WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 179.
118 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 67.

There seems to be a similar idea of increasing "complexification" at play in Conway's monist superstructure. The difference between humans and beasts is "striking", because although they are the same created substance with the same *potential* for advancement, they do not have the same *actual* possibility of advancement. Something is ordering Conway's "societies" of monads, which indicates some sort of direction. Hutton describes this ordering principle in Conway's creature as *likeness*: "Anne Conway's monads are their own vehicles, and the combinations they form in order to constitute creatures are explicable by the principle of likeness in all substance."[119] What Hutton seems to say here is that in Conway there is a principle that holds specific individuals together and makes them essentially different from their surroundings and that this principle is likeness. The question is whether this principle corresponds to the prehension or incorporation of the physical pole (the past) into the present in process thought. Can likeness be said to determine the possibilities for advancement in individual creatures and thereby constitute their essences or souls? We shall return to the principle of likeness in Conway and her view on individual essence in Part Four.

In any case, Conway's created species is a hierarchy of complex beings, each of which is more or less embodied. This gradation may be influenced to a certain extent by all the previous choices made by the individual. Perhaps the idea of "free" choices gets more and more difficult the farther down Conway's scale of being we descend. But it is clear that self-agency is always connected to embodiment and that it remains crucial to her scheme.

Divine Participation

We have established that on account of free will the created substance is ontologically differentiated. Now the question is: What qualifies the will? By what means are we able to choose between good or bad and thereby climb up the ontological ladder? Origen pointed out that if creatures are to be held responsible for their actions, an awareness of right and wrong is required. If God could punish or reward creatures who may act freely but have no reasonable sense of judgment or ability to distinguish between good and bad, this would jeopardize God's goodness and justice. In other words, free will must be tied together with rationality.[120] For Conway, the rationality of creation, its ability to distinguish between right and wrong, seems to come from creatures' participation in the divine. According to her, creation participates in the divine rationality in two ways, namely, via God's communicable attributes that were given to them in creation and via Christ.[121] These two

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119 HUTTON, *Henry More and Anne Conway* 122.

120 For the idea that freedom consists in our rational judgement, cf. Origen, *On First Principles* III 1,4 f.

121 In Origen, these two "ways" seem to be the same. Created beings get their rationality through Logos, who is Christ.

perspectives overlap to a certain extent, but, for now, I shall focus primarily on the communicable attributes.

We have already established that God communicated and continuously communicates some of his attributes in his creative act. Some of these attributes are wisdom and justice. On several occasions Conway refers to "the created intellect" of creatures, and her general argument is based on "our understanding, which has been placed in our minds by God" (V, 3 p. 24). All creatures are intelligent or rational beings because they are created through God and his Word or Intellect (Christ) and Will (Spirit) in a process similar to emanation.[122] The eternal God generates Logos before time and space, and he creates rational, spiritual beings. Thus, created beings participate in God, sharing goodness, intellect, and will with God.[123] This participation seems to assert itself in creatures as something akin to an "instinct" for moral truth, according to Conway.

As stated in Part Two, universal notions or "innate ideas" that provide secure knowledge of religious and moral matters were widely accepted in the seventeenth century. Adhering to this idea, Conway describes what she calls "innate ideas and precepts of truth, which all men find in themselves" (VI, 2 p. 29). It is on these ideas that all "good judgment" and moral choices depend. Ultimately this rationality results in actions that are either moral or not:

"God endowed man with the same instinct for justice towards beasts and the trees of the field. He does not do this only for his own good but out of a principle of true justice; and if he is so cruel toward [*sic*] them that he requires work from them and nevertheless does not provide the necessary food, then he has surely broken the law which God inscribed in his heart." (VI, 7 p. 35)[124]

Conway goes a step further in her adaptation of this Neoplatonist idea. She believes all of creation, not just humans, is endowed with an essential knowledge of right and wrong, which is the basis for virtuous choices. In another paragraph she describes how "[t]he same justice imposes a law for *all creatures* and inscribes it

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122 This view of the created beings is reminiscent of Origen's fusion of Neoplatonism and Christianity. See e. g. Origen, Commentary on John II 2,17, where creation is conceived of in terms of emanation.

123 Origen, On First Principles I 3,5–8, argues that we participate in God as being (Father), reason (Son), and holiness (Spirit).

124 Cf. Rom. 2,14 f.: "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." These innate ideas and prescripts of truth come very close to an Origenian understanding of natural law as "the Word sown in the soul, evidenced by the moral notions common to mankind, and in Scripture language 'written in the heart'": Origen, Philocalia 9,2.

in their very natures. Whatever creature breaks this law is punished accordingly. But any creature who observes this law receives the reward of becoming better" (VI, 7 p. 35). The law engrafted in every created spirit provides an essence of true knowledge, which makes right actions – and thus the ascent to God – possible. We might say that innate ideas have a lot in common with the process theological notion of initial aim, in that both refer to a divine "impulse" inherent in all creatures, which is able to effect creative transformation.[125]

When Conway says that God is good and just, she simultaneously holds that this must be a goodness and a justice that is recognizable as exactly that.[126] Equally, what we consider to be good and just actions based on our rational decisions, *are* good and just. Indeed, God's and creation's attributes are of the same kind. As Theo Kobusch explains, the Cambridge Platonists share the conviction against the Scholastics that "Im Reich der Freiheit kann es keine qualitativen Unterschiede geben".[127] This rule applies not only to God's freedom but extends to all God's attributes.[128] Creatures participate in *the same* goodness, justice, and wisdom that characterize God, but they do so to a greater or lesser degree. While goodness, wisdom, justice, etc., are categories that are substantial and perfect in God, they are accidental and imperfect in creatures.[129] While creation is never able fully to become God, neither can it fully lose its participation in him. But created beings are able to ascend or descend on the scale of being and participate in the divine to a greater or lesser degree.[130] The soteriological ability of each being lies in the intersection between free will and the *extent* of divine participation. On the one hand, participation in divine attributes creates the ability to make moral choices; on the other hand, free will creates the possibility of acting in accordance with that which is moral or not. It is this participation that ultimately results in the differentiation between creatures.

Conway's view of the creaturely participation in the divine shares several structural elements with Origen. Like Origen, Conway shapes her metaphysical categories ethically and she shares with him the belief that God's and creation's moral attributes are univocal and that we therefore can know God by way of our own moral nature.[131] This means that creation's participation in the divine through

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125   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 53.
126   This further situates Conway and the Cambridge Platonists against the moral equivocality in Calvinist voluntarism. Ralph Cudworth has often been presented as an example of the Cambridge Platonists' emphasis on the difference between voluntarism and Origen's teaching of moral univocity: Kobusch, Die Univozität des Moralischen 38.
127   Id., Die Idee der Freiheit 78.
128   Ibid. 79. Cf. id, Die Univozität des Moralischen 29 f. 33. Kobusch further designates Origen as the source of this idea.
129   Cf. Origen, On First Principles II 9,2.
130   Cf. ibid. I 2,12.
131   Cf. Contra Celsum IV 29.

the communicable attributes and through Christ has consequences for how we may approach the epistemological gap between God and creation. Kobusch argues that Cudworth is an example of how Origen's teaching of the univocity of the moral categories is used in early modern England against the idea of voluntarism and Cartesian skepticism, and we might add that Conway agrees with this.[132] For Descartes the omnipotence of God served as a kind of natural "limit" to our knowledge: A gap remained. According to Cudworth, however, we are able to recognize God with certainty. Kobusch explains that the univocity of the moral categories is the condition for recognition of both oneself and God. The creature is able to recognize God through his reflection in its own divinity, so to speak. If the right moral actions mean something different for God and for creation, the road to God-recognition would be blocked.[133] But the moral categories are the same – the goodness found in God is the same as that found in creatures – which means that morality is not an act or a decision of arbitrary will, rather it is through morality that God and man are united: "Justice and honesty are no factitious things, made by the will and command of the more powerful to the weaker, but they are nature and perfection, and descend downward to us from the deity."[134]

The unification of the divine to the created through the univocity of the divine attributes is also found in Conway's idea of the communicable attributes of God. When the *Principles* identifies the wisdom of God with Christ, she thereby indirectly ties the rationality of creatures to Christ. Origen believes that all rational creatures have the power within themselves to discern good from bad.[135] He ties this rationality to Christ:

"That the working of the Father and the Son is both in saints and sinners is clear from this, that all who are rational beings are partakers of the Word of God, that is Reason, and in this way, as it were, bear certain seeds, implanted within them, of Wisdom and Justice, which is Christ."[136]

Conway and Origen envision the same consequences of the combination of free will and rationality. Most notably, the primacy of freedom and rationality results in similar explanations of 1) the differentiation of creation (i. e. multiplicity and individuality), 2) the transmutation of species or re-incarnation, and 3) the possibility of knowing God. Divine participation through rationality can lessen the gap between God and creatures, but not overcome it. Therefore, for both Conway and Origen, Christ is necessary. It is through participation in Christ that creatures

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132 Kobusch, Die Univozität des Moralischen 38.
133 Ibid. 33.
134 Cudworth, True Intellectual System 721.
135 Origen, On Firt Principles III 1,3.
136 Ibid. I 3,6; Contra Celsum IV 25.

are able to ascend to God again. When faced with the question of how God, as a purely spiritual being, can communicate himself to or be present in the world which is corporeal, Conway maintains an ontological gap between God and the world. By arguing for a spiritual monism, she posits spirit as the divine attribute through which creation is able to commune with God through Christ. Indeed, all of creation is linked with God through spirit as even the smallest part of the created world – the physical monads – are inherently spiritual. Since this creates a continuity between creatures and the Spirit of God, the relation between body and spirit can be seen as a displacement of the problem of cosmological dualism. I shall return to this in Part Four.

3.2. Changing the Perspective: from Being to Becoming

We have seen that Conway takes her methodological point of departure in a rationalism that founds itself on the ideal of static being but that this ideal is problematized as we move down her ontological hierarchy. Some similarities to and differences from process theology have been identified. With regard to God, the similarities include an understanding that we may call "dipolar" in that both Conway and process theology stress two aspects of God. This entails that God is in some kind of motion. But where process theology develops this idea fully and posits God-self as changing due to his consequent nature, Conway wishes to maintain God-self as static and immutable. With regard to Christ, we saw that both Conway and process theology stress Christ as a universal and transformative principle. While Conway holds Christ to be a singular substance that functions as a bridge between God and the world both in an ontological and in a moral sense, process theology is less clear as to the specific ontological function of Christ. Rather, he is simply seen as an example of supreme importance that shows how experience might be transformative. With regard to creation, both Conway and process theology operate within a cosmological structure describing the movement from creation and fall to salvation that bears resemblance to that of Origen. On this level Conway can be said to agree with process theology in that nothing is static, everything is in process.

The differences between Conway and process theology dissolve as we move down Conway's ontological hierarchy. If she assumes a strong ontology in the beginning of the treatise, this point of departure is destabilized as she moves closer to the realm of experience. As she seeks to validate the rationally deduced absolute truths of her ontological commitments, we find that the terminology behind these logical abstractions is inadequate to describe experience. I have argued that this can be seen as an unconscious and not fully formed slide from a strong ontol-

ogy of being to a weak ontology of becoming. The gradual slipping into an unclear terminology can be seen as the static being of God clashing with the dynamic becoming of creation. This, in turn, opens the way for the epistemological question of how knowledge of God can be said to be real and true.

I will argue that Conway's argument against dualism is founded on a reversal from the theocentric to the anthropocentric. In her critique of dualism, she argues that it is impossible to found philosophy on abstractions of the mind and that theology should take its point of departure in God's operations in the world. I will then explore some of the theological consequences that arise from this change of perspective. I will argue that it can be seen as the clash between strong and weak ontologies. Applying the key categories that I have identified in process theology to the *Principles*, I reverse the structure of Conway's treatise by starting with her description of experience and moving on to ask what we might say from this about God. Through this reversal, I use process theology as a hermeneutical lens to make a weak ontology the foundation for thinking about the relation between God and the world. I will discuss how the key categories inform the tensions that I have identified in Conway's system.[137] The first category is creativity. Here, I look at two different aspects of creativity in Conway's text as she describes the world both as creation and as creative. I then discuss how these two perspectives affect what we may say about God to argue that her focus on creativity points towards a strong relatedness between God and the world. The second category is freedom. Here, I ask what role freedom plays in relation both to God and to creation. This is done in order to discuss how a weak ontology risks reversing the ontological hierarchy between God and the world, thus compromising God as creator and free. As I will argue, Conway's focus on freedom might express a wish to preserve some distinction between God and the world that process theology is arguably at risk of losing.

In chapter III of the *Principles*, we find a key passage that exemplifies the emerging methodological turn from abstract arguments to seeing God as an event in the world. Here, Conway's view of creation as a continuous and infinite motion from God becomes part of her refutation of dualism. She argues for "the infinite divisibility of everything into always smaller parts" (III, 9 f. p. 20). To illustrate this, Conway imagines the universe as a circle:

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137 In the background to this reversal from abstraction to experience lies Rahner's axiom. When he begins the axiom "in God for us" (the economic Trinity), he reverses the speculative approach of the scholastic tradition which begins "in God *in se*" (the immanent Trinity). While both approaches hold that God reveals himself truly in creation, Rahner's axiom entails a methodological turn from abstraction to the event in which creation experiences the revealed God.

"Let us suppose, for example, that the whole universe of creatures is circular and that half its diameter contains as many diameters of the earth as there are grains of dust or sand in the entire world. If the universe were divided into such tiny atoms that one hundred thousand were contained in a single poppy seed, who could deny that the infinite power of God could make this number greater and greater by multiplying to infinity […]." (III, 4 p. 16)

By dividing the circular universe into ever-smaller parts, this example shows how an infinitely great number arises even in the smallest visible things, such as the poppy seed.[138] God's omnipotence means that he could always place one creature inside another, or place two as easily as one, or four as easily as two, and so on – to infinity. Thus, "there can be no number of creatures to which he could not always add more" (III, 4 p. 16). And his divine attributes mean that he necessarily does so. God's benevolence and free necessity ensure that infinities are contained in the poppy seed. By looking at the universe as through a microscope, a telescopic perspective is revealed:

"The same argument shows that not only the entire universe or system of creatures as a whole is infinite or has infinity in itself, but even every creature, no matter how small, which we can see with our eyes or conceive of in our minds, has in itself such an infinity of parts or rather of entire creatures that they cannot be counted." (III, 5 p. 17)

This quotation illustrates the built-in feedback mechanism in Conway's metaphysical system: the great infinity and the small infinity are held together tightly in a loop from which the perspective always changes. This vertiginous framework is crucial as it reveals the exalted majesty of God, whose "infinity shines forth in the works of his hands, indeed, in every creature he has made" (III, 6 p. 17). Simultaneously, there is a distinction between that which we "can see with our eyes" and that which we "conceive of in our minds". This distinction between the physical, that which is demonstrable by experience, and the theoretical or mathematical, which is abstract, is crucial to her argument. It serves as an aid to understanding her critique of Morean dualism. It also shows strong resemblances to Whitehead's concern with dualism as the chief exponent of the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness".

Conway asks rhetorically whether it is not easier for God in his infinite power "to multiply the real essences of creatures than for a skilled mathematician to make an even greater number, which can never be so great that it cannot be in-

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138 The argument bears some resemblance to Blaise Pascal's argument of the two infinites in the famous Fragment 230 on the disproportion of man. He argues that the concept of infinity contains "two infinities" within itself, namely a "large" infinity and a "small" infinity, and that man is caught in between these two: Pascal, *Les Provinciales, Pensées et Opuscules Divers* 941–950.

creased to infinity by addition or multiplication?" (III, 4 p. 16). The answer, of course, is yes. God is always infinitely greater than what we can conceive of in our minds. And this is the heart of her argument because it means that all our knowledge about God has to take its departure in the created world and what we can observe:

"God is always infinitely greater than all his creatures, so that nothing can be compared to him. […] And thus the truly invisible attributes of God are clearly seen if they are understood either through or in those things which have been made." (III, 6 p. 17)

Therefore, we cannot know anything about God *in se*. The only way we can understand God or say something about him is to observe his works. It is God's action in creation that reveals something about him, not mathematical abstractions, although these may promote our understanding of him. Conway uses many mathematical examples to illustrate this point, but she underscores that this is mere imagery and does not fully reveal God who is always greater than our abstractions. Paragraphs 6 and 7 in chapter III thus anticipate her critique of More: "The God they imagine is not the *true* God but an idol of their own imagination, whom they confine to a narrow space, like the tiny cage of an imprisoned little bird, which is the width of a few fingers" (III, 6 p. 17).[139] Those who hold that the world is finite and that it possible to define any self-contained and indivisible element of it, restrict the infinite God to the narrow space that is their own constricted human imagination. She continues:

"Furthermore, if they say that they do not confine God in this finite universe, but that they imagine him to exist no less outside this universe in infinite imaginary spaces and also within it, one may answer as follows. If these spaces are merely imaginary, they are nothing but the most idle conceits of the brain. But if they are real entities, what else can they be but creatures of God?" (III, 7 p. 18)

Let us note Conway's particular choice of words. She juxtaposes "imaginary spaces" to "real entities". Both terms carry significant contextual references. The first, "infinite imaginary spaces", is most likely another nod to Henry More, whose elaborate theory about infinite space being the interface between God and the world is arguably his most famous legacy.[140] But imaginary space has no real actu-

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139 My italics.

140 In response to the scholastic notion of merely imaginary space, revived by Descartes, More had put forward a strongly realistic conception of absolute space, viewing it as a mode of God, if not identifying it downright with God himself: More, Enchiridion Metaphysicum VIII. Whitehead's rejection of "Vacuous actualities" is fueled by the same skepsis towards things that are not fully actual.

ality – it is an abstraction. The "real entities" most likely correspond to what she later terms "physical monads", that is, the building blocks of the universe that are imbued with spirit.[141] In passing we might recall Whitehead's definition of actual entities as that which is "real".[142] Both Whitehead and Conway want to demonstrate that their conception of the world is based on concrete experiences, not abstractions. "Real" and "actual" both refer to the fact that they are not speculation. Therefore, Conway's choice of words ("real entities" and "imaginary spaces") in these paragraphs points to her conclusion: More's and Descartes's metaphysical dualistic systems are grounded in their own speculative constructions, in the "narrow spaces of the brain", and therefore always limited and finite. One cannot use this as a starting point to say anything about God. They bring us back to her distinction between the abstract and the concrete: Either the spaces are abstractions of the brain, thus limiting God, or they are real, and thus creatures of God which can be experienced.

"Moreover, God works either in these spaces or not. If not, God is not there, for wherever he is, there he works since it is his nature to act, just as it is the nature of fire to burn or the sun to shine. For God always works, and his work is to create and to give being to creatures according to that eternal idea or wisdom that is in him." (III, 7 p. 18)

Conway juxtaposes the abstraction of God developed through metaphysical notions to the God who works in creation through his eternal idea and wisdom and whom we can know through his actions:

"I would not prescribe what the *absolute* power of God will do or could do, as some people argue so inanely and crassly. But I would only suggest what the power of God does and will do, insasfar as he *operates* in and with creatures in producing and generating all things." (III, 9 p. 20)[143]

Conway speaks of knowing God through his operations in the world, and, as we shall see in Part Four, she uses the experience of pain to ground the metaphysical relation between spirit and body, from which she argues inductively concerning the nature of God (cf. also 4.2.3 below, on "Conway's six arguments"). The argu-

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141 It is also possible that Conway has the contrasting concept of "ideal entities" at the back of her mind and therefore taps into the whole metaphysical debate between realism and nominalism, which was prevalent particularly in the Middle Ages. I am not sure where Conway positions herself in this debate. She does not seem very interested in the ideals or universals that are fundamental to the realist view of reality, but she does not dismiss it either. Her interest, however, is clearly in the real or particular existence, that is, in the actual.

142 WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 18.

143 My italics.

ment against abstractions could be seen as an emerging turn from the theocentric to the anthropocentric approach. When we approach the question of the relation between God and the world from an anthropocentric perspective, we move by way of induction from God *pro nobis* to God *in se*. This is underlined by Conway's view of creation as infinite because her refutation of the idea that matter can be divided into the smallest entity is based on experience, not mathematical abstractions: "This division of things is never in terms of the smallest mathematical term but of the smallest physical term".[144] Thus, it is not just a mathematical probability for Conway, it pertains to the actual world. She argues that we cannot answer the question of being outside our own experience of it which is connected to God's operations. Although she seeks to found her philosophy on clear and static principles of being, she seems to leave room for experience as the necessary starting point for any metaphysics. It is this movement from the bottom up that underlies her critique of strong ontologies.

From Conway's argument against abstractions, we can move on to the two key categories of process theology to show how they, in their own way, resist the static metaphysics of strong ontologies.

3.2.1. Creativity

We have learned that, according to Whitehead, creativity is the ultimate explanatory category, or the "ultimate metaphysical principle" which lies in "the nature of things" and is embodied in all actualities.[145] It is ultimate in the sense that a process account of the world presupposes that there have always been actual occasions in the past and that there will be new ones in the future. Creativity is the vast multiplicity of actual occasions constantly and continually merging or concrescing and thereby becoming new occasions. Creativity therefore signifies process or transition. In other words, it is creativity that gives the world its character of temporal passage into novelty.[146] According to process thought, we cannot go beyond creativity to find another cause. There is no "reason" for creativity, it simply is. It is beyond all attributes or characteristics. Everything, every single actual entity, is an instance of creativity. Thereby creativity takes the place of static "being" in the substance ontologies.

This key category can be divided into two different overall aspects. Cobb and Griffin write: "The world is indeed *creation* […] but it is also *creative*".[147] Likewise,

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144 Cf. Conway, Principles III, 9 p. 20.
145 WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 343. Cf. GRIFFIN, Process Theology 163.
146 WHITEHEAD, Religion in the Making 90.
147 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 24. My italics.

creativity can also be said to structure Conway's system, but she places this attribute squarely with God. According to Loptson, Conway holds that "God is essentially, not merely creator, but creative, and ubiquitously so".[148] In the following, I will explore how these different understandings of creativity influence how we may think about the relation between God and the world.

The World as Creation: creatio ex nihilo *or* creatio ex profundis?

First, in relation to the world as *creation*, process theology makes the important distinction between two aspects of creativity, namely as "ordered" and as "unordered" creativity. As the first universal of all things, creativity is without any order in and of itself. It has no distinctive character of its own – it is plurality or diversity. Creativity is not separate from what it creates (its creatures), but neither is it identical with it. Due to its lack of determinate character, creativity cannot be conceived of as an actual entity and therefore it cannot be identified with God.[149] Rather, God is "that non-temporal actuality which has to be taken account of in every creative phase".[150] The unordered creativity would remain abstract in its realm of infinite possibility if it did not meet the definite determination of God. God is the fundamental principle that orders or directs creativity towards ever more complex actualities. This is God's "basic creative purpose".[151]

In relation to the aspect of the world as creation and the subsequent distinction between ordered and unordered creativity, I turn to chapter VI of Conway's treatise. Here, a certain idea of what we may call "unordered creativity" also seems to be at play.[152] In chapter VI paragraph 4, Conway construes her interpretation of creation from a dual principle, represented as "father" and "mother". At first glance, this passage seems somewhat obscure and ill-fitting in its textual context because it exhibits a creative principle that seems to be distinct from God.[153] In the course of explaining how all of creation is really the same species and how this species is bound together by a "universal love", Conway unexpectedly characterizes the source of creation as a dual (and gendered) principle:

"God has implanted a certain universal sympathy and mutual love into his creatures so that they are all members of one body and all, so to speak, brothers, for whom there is one

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148 Conway, Principles 32. Trans. Loptson. See also Duran, Anne Viscountess Conway 75 f.
149 Whitehead, Religion in the Making 91–93. Cf. ibid. 95.
150 Ibid. 94.
151 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 64.
152 One of the debates that form the background of Conway's discussion of this particular passage is the science of generation. On this, see Smith, The Problem of Animal Generation.
153 I have previously argued that the two passages are remarkable because they employ a gendered language that is not found anywhere else in the treatise: Felter, Body, Spirit and Gender in Anne Conway 128. However, one may also point to the fact that a principle of creativity seems to be at the forefront of these passages.

common Father, namely, God in Christ or the word incarnate. *There is also one mother, that unique substance or entity from which all things have come forth*, and of which they are the real parts and members." (VI, 4 p. 31)[154]

There seem to be *two* creative actors: "God in Christ or the Word incarnate" and "that unique substance from which everything has come forth", represented by Conway as "father" and "mother". Further, the "mother" is described as a "unique substance or entity". Does Conway here suddenly describe a fourth substance in her system after she has just established that there are only three? The definition of "mother" as a "unique substance" certainly seems to contradict Conway's explicit statement that "no argument can prove that there is a fourth species distinct from the other three. Indeed, a fourth species seems altogether superfluous. Since all phenomena in the entire universe can be reduced to these three aforementioned species" (VI, 4 p. 30). In order to understand this "unique substance", I suggest that we connect this passage to an equally puzzling passage later in the same chapter. Here she speaks of an earthly or spiritual matter that plays a key role in creation:

"And in the creation of this world did not the waters produce fish and birds *at God's command*? Did the earth not also at the same command bring forth reptiles and beasts, which were, on this account, real parts of earth and water?[155] And just as they have their bodies from the earth, so they have their spirits, or souls, from the earth. *For the earth produced living souls, as the Hebrew text says, and not simply material bodies lacking life and spirit.* For this reason the difference between human beings and beasts is exceedingly striking. For it is said about human beings that God made them *in his image* and breathed into them the breath of life and they became living souls, so that they received his life, the principal part that makes them human beings, which is really distinct from the divine soul or spirit which God breathed into them." (VI, 6 p. 34)

Conway's interpretation of Genesis could be a key to unlocking the mystery of this passage. Much hangs on the translation and interpretation of the first verses in the Bible, Gen. 1:1–3:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ
וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר

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154 My italics.
155 The belief in spontaneous generation was a commonly accepted idea, and Conway scholars have amply and pertinently shown how this passage could be informed by this debate. In the 1992 translation, Coudert and Corse note that "Conway accepts the traditional idea that animals were spontaneously generated from decaying matter": Conway, *Principles* VI, 6 p. 34 n. 8. See also Conway, *Principles* 17. Trans. Bennett; Boyle, Spontaneous and Sexual Generation 175–193.

The passage can be interpreted in different ways. In the Revised Standard Version, which is representative of the most common translations, the passage reads: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light".[156] In contrast, the Old Testament scholar Robert Alter translates it as follows: "When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovering over the waters, God said, 'Let there be light'".[157] The latter translation alters the meaning of the sentence by directing attention to the Word of God as an interruptive element in a pre-existing chaos. Something seems to have existed before God's creative Word; the "welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovering over the waters" become elements of a primordial earth. The first translation places the characterization of the earth as being "without form and void" *after* the (wordless) act of creation, and it thereby suggests that God created out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The latter translation suggests that creation is not the absolute beginning, but it is the creation out of something that was already there (here called *ex profundis*).

Conway's explicit reference to "the Hebrew text" as the source of her argument raises the question of which interpretation she may have held. It seems clear that she gives weight to the Word of God in creation. We have seen above that this Word is also identified with the pre-existent Christ. At God's command – his Word – life sprang forth from the earth (Gen. 1:11–25). From a scriptural foundation Conway can argue that earth, matter, is alive, and it is from this spiritual matter that the first human being, Adam, is formed (Gen. 2:7). It is clear from both of the above passages that she believes that the matter from which the first being is formed is inherently alive and spiritual. Indeed, this is her key argument. It is also clear that this spiritual matter contributes something particular to creation:

"Moreover, since the human body was made from earth, which, as has been proved, contained various spirits and gave those spirits to all the animals, without doubt *the earth gave* human beings the best and most excellent spirits which it contained. But all these spirits were far inferior to the spirit of human beings, which they received from above and not from the earth." (VI, 6 p. 34)[158]

Here, Conway again stresses the unification of the two creative principles in each creature, but she emphasizes the qualitative distinction between what comes from the earth and what comes from God. Human beings are different from beasts

156 Revised Standard Version.
157 ALTER, Genesis 3.
158 My italics.

because God "breathed into them the breath of life and they became living souls".
The breath of God contributes a particular *kind* of life, which is what makes
humans distinct from beasts, who receive their spirit "from the earth". But the
spiritual matter is the building block of all of creation. What remains ambiguous
is whether Conway believes God created that spiritual matter from nothing or
whether it was already there. In an attempt to determine this, I believe it to be
fruitful to move "backwards" from the consequences of her argument.

The interpretation of the creation narrative in Genesis has profound theolog-
ical consequences. Whether God created out of nothing or out of chaos results
in radically different understandings of the relation between God and the world.
Griffin and Keller argue that it is the difference between determinism and free-
dom, dominance and persuasion, hegemony and plurality, and ultimately dis-
tance or relatedness. Both represent process theological views, and as such their
representations of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* may seem a bit inflexible and
their assessment of its consequences too strong. Nevertheless, Keller particularly
points out some interesting perspectives that resonate well with Conway's text,
and therefore I shall present her argument in some detail.

In her book, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*, Keller critical-
ly engages in the development of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and uncovers
the alternative tradition which she calls *creatio ex profundis*. She argues that the
doctrine of *ex nihilo* is deeply embedded in early Christian ecclesiastical pow-
er dynamics. As she employs a historical exploration of the doctrine of creation
and its relation to chaos, it becomes clear that there are "motives, moods and
alternatives" surrounding some of the most influential Church Fathers' dogmatic
preference for creation out of nothing.[159] In chapter III, for example, she shows
how the Church Father Irenaeus played a key role in establishing *creatio ex nihilo*
as the "orthodox" doctrine of the church while consciously sidetracking the alter-
native tradition. In an exploration of Irenaeus' battle against the Gnostics, Keller
uncovers the Gnostic creation myth of Sophia, the twelfth Aeon, whose daughter
Enthymesis (Sofia's formless intention) so ardently longs to know the "Word, that
light, which gave form to her chaos" that her passions form the material world:
"Her tears become water; her smile, light; her sorrow, solid bodies; and her terror,
motion".[160] Keller explains how Irenaeus dismisses this mystic use of Christian
narrative as an ambiguous, erotic, maternal, and already vaguely embodied ma-
trix.[161] God created not *from* matter but *of* matter, he asserts.[162]

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159 Keller, The Face of the Deep xix.
160 Ibid. 52. Griffin, Creation 111, points to this alternative version of creation being in line
     with Middle Platonic thought, which fits well with Conway's Origenian-Platonic strand of
     influence.
161 Keller, ibid. 51. Cf. Irenaeus, Adversus haereses I 4,1–5.
162 Irenaeus, ibid. I 2,3–5.

God's omnipotence is what is at stake in these discussions.[163] Griffin explains: "'Creation out of chaos' suggests that the 'material' from which our world was created had some power of its own, so that it would not be wholly subject to the divine will".[164] God would then not be absolutely omnipotent but limited by some "intrinsic characteristics of the raw material" of creation.[165] This would lead to a "frustration of the divine will". In this – purely theological – line of reasoning, God must be able to do what he chooses to do. But according to Keller something lurks behind the theological question of God's power. She argues that this question is bound up on gender and power dynamics, because the chaos of the *creatio ex profundis* is associated with the female.[166] More than merely securing divine omnipotence, the Early Church felt an acute "anxiety of order" or a desire to unify the unruly, chaotic, alternative traditions under their leadership.[167] The homogenization of the creation narrative comes framed as anti-Gnosticism in Irenaeus' polemic. Keller acknowledges that Irenaeus' intentions were not "primarily dominative or misogynist" but theological.[168] But his rhetoric, Keller argues,

"mitigates against any bi-gendered complexification of the divinity. The Father needs nothing but his own logos to create. This is a rhetoric of sheer power. I hope I am elucidating how a specific cluster of signifiers – of masculine supremacy, of female abjection and of unilateral domination – form the metonymic links of the new doctrine [*creatio ex nihilo*]."[169]

For Keller, the competing traditions of the creation narrative in Genesis are cast as a cosmological drama of gender and power.[170] *Creatio ex nihilo* leads to a God of domination. This doctrine, she argues, signifies changeless authority, mastery, homogenization, and distance. Griffin seems to concur. In his exploration of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, his argument is centered on the problem of evil. He argues that the difference in doctrine is ultimately a question of theodicy:

"If […] God's will is never frustrated, then the Jewish Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews were murdered, must ultimately have been in harmony with the divine will. The idea of

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163 The doctrine of God's omnipotence was not actually fully formed at this point either but developed alongside the doctrine of creation: Keller, The Face of the Deep 15.
164 Griffin, Creation 108.
165 Ibid. 109 n. 4.
166 Keller, The Face of the Deep 43 f.
167 Ibid. 44.
168 Ibid. 53.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid. 44. Keller ties the two doctrines to questions of gender and dominance, which makes Conway's use of gendered terminology "(father)" and "(mother)" in her account of creation all the more interesting. For a brief discussion, see Felter, Body, Spirit, and Gender in Anne Conway 131 ff.

creation out of chaos, however, suggests that the creatures have some power that is not fully controllable by divine power, so that we should not expect the course of history to wholly reflect the divine will."[171]

Griffin and Keller both argue that creation out of chaos reveals a theology of becoming and relationality between God and the world rather than God's static dominance over the world. In Keller's words, this doctrine fosters "a relational sensitivity, i. e., a responsiveness to an incalculable multiplicity of influences, that imports the "chaos" into a system".[172] The way God orders or directs creativity to achieve more complexity happens through lure rather than *dictus*. Therefore, God's creative influence is "always persuasive, and can only produce such order as is possible".[173] In this way, "the world is indeed creation".[174] We might add that it is precisely *creation* rather than *created*, because creativity as category has always existed. This makes God's creative act dynamic rather than static. Keller and Griffin both connect the *ex nihilo* doctrine of creation to mastery, domination, power, and determinism. In their common search for a constructive theology, they turn to *creatio ex profundis* for openings and new beginnings. This doctrine, Keller writes, "unblocks possibilities within".[175] Creation out of chaos is not *the* beginning, but *a* beginning.

Keller connects this cosmography to the idea of creativity found in Whitehead, suggesting that both present a beginningless and endless cosmos that is "best noted in passing – in process".[176] God brings order to the chaos through his Word, but it is an order that does not subjugate. Neither is creation a completed act, but a process. Both God and creatures participate in the course of history from this point of view.

Now if we return to Conway's text while keeping in mind Keller's and Griffin's view of the consequences of the two different doctrines, we may have a better idea of which fits best with Conway's overall structure. She argues that the earth is a "unique substance from which all things come forth". She calls it "mother", saying that beasts and reptiles have their bodies "from the earth", and that the earth contains "various spirits" which *it* gave to different beings. All this seems to suggest that the created spiritual matter has a certain autonomy, and, at the very least, a distinctive role in creation. While I do not think that Conway's introduction of the term "mother" for her creative principle entails it being a fourth substance

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171 Griffin, Creation 109.
172 Keller, The Face of the Deep 5.
173 Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas 189. The idea of God's creative lure, rather than oppressing power, makes the process account of creation compatible with evolution theory.
174 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 24.
175 Keller, The Face of the Deep xviii.
176 Ibid. 4.

in her system, it could be read as challenging the typical "masculine supremacy" and "female abjection" of the creation narrative. This is more in accordance with a creation doctrine *ex profundis* than one *ex nihilo*.

If we look at the sources that have influenced Conway, particularly her Platonism, there is another indication that she could have subscribed to a creation out of chaos. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the Demiurge, the creative god, creates out of a material that is already there and which confronts the god with certain elements of "necessity". The demiurge then creates a world "as good as possible" out of the available material.[177] By the time of Middle Platonism, the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* had been systematized into three ontological principles that constitute the world: God, Ideas, and Matter. Gerhard May argues that the "eternity of matter" was generally accepted and notes that throughout the second century classically educated teachers like Justin Martyr "interpret the creation as *world-formation* and establish a relationship between the 'cosmogony of Moses' and the myth of world-creation in the *Timaeus*".[178]

May, Keller, and Griffin all call attention to the cosmogony of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria.[179] He, too, accepted the existence of a pre-existent and formless matter alongside God: "God did not himself form the formless material, since it is unthinkable that he should touch the endless confused matter, but that he used for this purpose his incorporeal energies, the Ideas".[180] This is interesting, as Conway explicitly refers to Philo in positive terms (V, 1 p. 23). Bearing in mind that she holds God to have created through his Word or Christ, that she and the other Cambridge Platonists wanted to understand Christianity *in accordance* with Platonism by way of *prisca theologia*, and that the controversy with Platonism was central for the establishment of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*,[181] this all seems to challenge a default-reading of Conway's creation narrative as *ex nihilo*.[182]

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177 Plato, Timaeus 30a. Cf. Griffin, Creation 108.

178 May, Creatio ex nihilo 179.

179 Ibid. 11–15; Griffin, Creation 110; Keller, The Face of the Deep 45.

180 Philo, De specialibus legibus I 329. Cf. ibid. I 47 f. Behind these stands Plato, Timaeus 30b. Cf. May, ibid. 11.

181 May, ibid. 3.

182 We can certainly question Wiertel's assumption that Conway adheres to traditional "Christian theism" and as such views creation as "the undisputed expression of God's creative will (*creatio ex nihilo*)" and, further, as "exclusively determined by God's power and will": Wiertel, Classical Theism 661. It is worth noting that Conway is probably also influenced by Henry More's exegesis of Genesis. In his *Conjectura Cabbalistica* of 1653, which is dedicated to Anne Conway, More distinguishes between matter and first matter (using the Greek term: ὕλη, hyle). Briefly put, More understands *hyle* as the raw material out of which all bodies were to be built. It is this physical *hyle* that was created on the first day, if we recall the words from Gen. 1:2: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." In chapter VII of his *Appendix to the Defence of the Philosophick Cabbala*, More

There is a clear duality in the principle of creation, where God creates either in unison with or in prolongation of a spiritual matter. This presents a challenge to a theology of absolute mastery and domination, and Conway does seem to have these concerns at the front of her mind. For example, her emphasis on interreligious dialogue and universalism, as well as her focus on kindness rather than mastery in human behavior towards animals and plants (VI, 7 p. 35), point to a metaphysics of openness and multiplicity rather than one that seeks to control and master. On the other hand, her argument for creation as an emanation from the will of God seems to insist on God's ultimate power as creator:

"All creatures simply are and exist only because God wishes them to, since his will is infinitely powerful and his command, without any help, instrumental cause, or matter, is alone capable of giving existence to creatures." (II, 1 p. 12)

Here, she affirms God's will as the decisive factor, and she argues repeatedly that creatures have no beginning other than "God himself and his eternal will". This seems to suggest conviction in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. However, according to Sarah Hutton, the continuous nature of God's creative act makes it difficult to speak of *creatio ex nihilo* in Conway's *Principles*:

"Since God is essentially a creator, he creates out of necessity of his nature, and most freely. It is, therefore, inconceivable that he should ever not be creating. It follows that creation is a constant process, and that there is no *creation ex nihilo* (creation from nothing), in the sense of bringing something into being from a previous state of nothingness. Nor is creation an event with a single beginning point in time; only from the perspective of created things can creation be seen as having a beginning. The creative process is a constant outgoing or diffusion of God's perfection, by emanation of his attributes."[183]

Hutton's interpretation of Conway's account of creation stresses the nature of process and continuity. God's emanation in a continuous process leads to openness and relationality towards the multiplicity of creation. Further, God's creative act is an ordering of the chaotic substance. This unique substance holds some potential for being creative itself. But Conway's peculiar insertion of the "mother substance" as the "tohu wa-bohu" or unformed void points to the dual aspect of the

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identifies "earth", as in the Genesis account of the first day of creation, with "Metaphysical Hyle", describing it as "the Possibility of this external and material Creation" and as "the lowest degree and shadow of Being", in accordance with the text's reference to the "deep". Particularly the description of *hyle* as "possibility" resonates well with my interpretation of Conway, as does the reference to the "deep" (cf. *creatio ex profundis*): More, An Appendix to the Defence of the Philosophick Cabbala, in: A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings IX, 1, 141. See REID, The Metaphysics of Henry More 94.

183 HUTTON, Anne Conway 221.

creative act that we find in process theology. In Conway, the mother substance on its own is creative but only in one respect: It cannot order or direct chaos towards the perfection found in the divine attributes. The mother substance is unordered creativity without any initial aim. This secures a continuity between God and the world which could express a view of creation that is "softer" and more dynamic than *ex nihilo*. But since substance lacks the ordering aspect of creativity, God is needed as Orderer of the chaos. His continuous act of ordering points toward a weak ontology of becoming rather than a strong ontology of being. From the outset, Conway's system seeks to maintain God as having a static being but finally it is only through the act of creation as ordering that God can be revealed. This means that the description of God becomes internally related to the world and this intimate relatedness is located in the creative act of ordering or "giving form" to the mother substance as it acquires multiple shapes. Thus, the operations of God in the world point to an ontology of becoming. When we move backwards from these arguments and into Conway's doctrine of creation, the purported con-sequences of a doctrine of creation *ex profundis* generally seem to accord better with Conway's overall metaphysics.

The World as Creative

The second aspect of creativity in process theology is the self-creativity of cre-ation. In process theology, this form of creativity occurs in two ways. First, there is the *creative self-determination* in all processes. This refers to that fact that each actual occasion is influenced by its past, and this past sets some boundaries that determine what is possible for the present individual. The actual occasion then creates something novel within the boundaries set by the past: "Each actuality is partially self-creative; it finally creates itself out of the material that is given to it".[184] This means that everything is partially created by the environment and partially self-created. If we step back and view all of the billions of creative processes that occur each instant in, say, a poppy seed in its interaction with its environment (the sun, earth, air), then it is clear that the processes are related in a profound and complex way. Cobb and Griffin stress that "no neat line can be drawn between the individual and the environment, since what is 'the environment' in one moment essentially enters into the individual in the next moment".[185] The aim of all creative self-determination is to incorporate the environment into itself and then direct it in a way that promotes "enjoyment". This enjoyment can be in line with the initial aim of God or it can be particular to the individual will of the actual entity. Second, another side of self-creativity is *creative self-expression* or the awareness of sharing in a common future and hence being an "efficient cause" in the world.

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184 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 25.
185 Ibid. 26.

This part of the creative process does not aim for individual enjoyment but for the larger enjoyment of the related world as a whole. As such, it always conforms to the initial aim that is given to it by God.

These two aspects of creativity differ in that the first aspect (creative self-determination) is informed by a strong focus on separateness and independence while the second (creative self-expression) is informed by the objectivity gained through the divine perspective. If we are to compare this to Conway's understanding of self-creativity, she clearly maintains two perspectives that seem in accordance with the process view. She describes how "God's justice imposes a law for all creatures" (VI, 7 p. 35), which I have previously compared to the initial aim. She then explains:

"God endowed man with the same instinct for justice towards beasts and the trees of the field. For any man who is just and good loves the brute creatures which serve him, and he takes care of them so that they have food and rest and the other things they need. He does not do this only for his own good but out of a principle of true justice; and if he is so cruel toward them that he requires work from them and nevertheless does not provide the necessary food, then he has surely broken the law which God inscribed in his heart." (VI, 7 p. 35)

This shows that there are two ways of being self-creative: it can be either in accordance with one's own individual enjoyment or in accordance with the "justice of God" which can be seen as the initial aim that promotes enjoyment for the entire common good of creation. It is a matter of choice whether one acts in accordance with one's own desires or in accordance with the good of creation. Thus, this dual aspect of self-creativity brings us to the second key category: freedom. One might say that, if the agency of an individual is founded on his or her own interests, the independence of the individual from God's will is accentuated. While the free choice itself accentuates this independence, it is God's will for each actual entity to act in accordance with the initial aim that he has decided for it. Likewise, in Conway it is only through the law of justice imposed by God on all creatures, as an intuition given through the spirit and innate ideas, that the compatibility of the individual with the will of God is ensured. This raises the question of whether freedom is in opposition to the teleological aim of a harmonious union of the individual with God. Conversely, one might ask whether, if the agency of the individual is so determined by the initial aim or law of justice that all choices dissolve into a complex relation of the self to the world and to God, this relatedness ultimately dissolves any possibility of thinking of the individual as a free agent. In the following I shall focus on how we can think about this tension with Conway.

3.2.2. Freedom

Freedom is a key concept in Conway's cosmology. Although the term does not occur explicitly very often in her treatise, she circles around it in her theology and her anthropology, referring, for example, to the will of God, the necessity of God or the actions or moral choices of creation. It pervades her account of God, of creation (even the relation between spirit and body), and her understanding of self and of agency. In Conway's system the freedom of God is different from that of creatures. Freedom is in both cases strongly connected to will and action, that is, the possibility of choosing one thing over another. Whereas God's will is necessary so that he cannot choose indifferently, creatures are free to choose either good or bad.

God as Free and Necessary
After having introduced God and his divine attributes as well as the Trinity (chapter I) and discussed the relation between time and creation (chapter II), Conway moves on to an explicit examination of God's freedom and how we may understand God's action in the world in relation to that freedom. The freedom of God, she asserts, is to be understood in relation to God's divine attributes:

"If the aforementioned attributes of God are duly considered, and especially these two, namely his wisdom and goodness, then it is possible utterly to refute and eliminate that indifference of the will which the Scholastics and those falsely called Philosophers believe to be in God and which they incorrectly call free will." (III, 1 p. 15)

The "indifference of the will", was a common term among the Scholastics, which reflected an understanding of freedom as a theory of action in which one has the power or ability to do something with no external constraints or impediments. It is freedom in a "vacuum", in the sense that there is no bias drawing a decision in one direction or another. Conway agrees that God is free in the sense that nothing *external* can coerce him:

"[T]he will of God is most free so that *whatever he does* in regard to his creatures is done without any external force or compulsion or without any cause coming from the creatures (since he is free and acts spontaneously in whatever he does)." (III, 1 p. 15)[186]

God cannot be coerced by anything from the outside, and in this sense he is free. Nevertheless, one must understand this freedom in relation to his being – his attributes. Conway highlights the attributes of goodness, wisdom, and power. As

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186 My italics.

shown above, these attributes are God's full being *per substantiam*. Therefore, she holds that God is not free in the sense of being "indifferent" with regard to acting or not acting, creating or not creating. God cannot but create, since his goodness and wisdom overflow. Again, Conway seems to draw a distinction between God's being (God *in se*) and his actions (God *pro nobis*). She asserts that, while the *actions* of God are free and without external constraints or impediments, they reflect his *being*, and thus they are not "free". God's actions are "spontaneous", meaning that they are a direct expression of this essence or being. Ascribing to God any kind of arbitrary or "indifferent" will would imply that he is imperfect and thus like the corruptible man, "who often acts from pure will but without any true and solid reason or the guidance of wisdom" (III, 1 p. 15). If God's will were exercised without reason and guidance from wisdom, it would result in a perverted demonstration of power and would make God volatile. According to Conway, this is entirely mistaken. On the contrary, she explains how God's freedom must be understood in relation to his essential goodness, his wisdom (Logos), and his will (Spirit).

She also argues that God's goodness and wisdom are not "indifferent" either. As shown above, Conway and the Cambridge Platonists were deeply convinced that God's attributes are morally univocal. In order to distance herself from the voluntarist position, Conway argues that God's goodness is not relative or subject to interpretation but as objective and reasonable as mathematical proof:

"Therefore true justice or goodness has no latitude or indifference in itself but is like a straight line drawn from one point to another, where it is impossible to have two or more equally straight lines between two points, because only one line can be straight and all other must be more or less curved to the extent that they depart from that straight line." (III, 2 p. 16)

Employing the geometrical method, Conway shows that God's "goodness" and "justice" are categorical terms that leave no room for interpretation. Therefore, since God's free will is always and necessarily an expression of God's goodness, wisdom, and justice, Conway can conclude that:

"*God is both a most free agent and a most necessary one*, so that he must do whatever he does to and for his creatures since his infinite wisdom, goodness, and justice are a law to him which cannot be superseded." (III, 2 p. 16)[187]

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187 My italics. Conway's definition of God as both free and necessary would seem both familiar and audacious to her contemporaries. Whether God is necessary taps into a vast debate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries about necessitarianism. This theory propounds that all events are determined by previously existing causes and that even the causal chain itself is predetermined and could not have been different. This seemed the natural con-

God's necessity consists in his will being constrained by something *internal* to himself – his essence, which is his goodness and wisdom. His freedom consists solely in his will not being coerced by anything external. On this basis, we can conclude that, for Conway, God's being and his actions correspond to each other. We can also conclude, with Lascano, that "there is only one truly just or best action in any given situation. All other possible actions are less just and less good depending on how far they fall from the ideal".[188] Conway's emphasis on God's necessity to create could be read as determinism, but in her description of God as both "a free agent and a most necessary one" she seems explicitly to distance herself from both voluntarism and determinism. Instead, the nature of God's freedom points towards a textbook definition of "compatibilism" – meaning that free will and determinism coincide. God's freedom is a freedom of action *and* a freedom of being, because the two coincide in him. God's being is action, and his action corresponds to his being or essence, which is goodness and wisdom.

Creation as Free to Advance or Decline

The freedom of creatures is of a different nature, according to Conway. Their free will is connected to their inherent mutability, and it follows that they are imperfect since their wills are corruptible: "[T]his indifference of will is the basis for all mutability and corruptibility in creatures, so that there would be no evil in creatures if they were not mutable" (III, 1 p. 15). In general, the free will of creatures is directed towards the good. However, they are free to choose to do evil as well. This ability to choose good or evil is what sets them apart as a separate ontological species distinct from God and Christ. As shown above, Conway's explanation of the ontological gap between God and creation hinges on the free will of creation. We now know that free will in creatures was created by God and that created spirits abused this free will to turn away from God's goodness. This resulted in the Fall and coincidently in visible bodies. Thus, through the notion of free will Conway is able to account for the multiplicity of creation. Now the question arises as to why God, who is perfect, would create creatures with this "indifference of will", which

sequence of the mechanical philosophy propounded by Descartes and Hobbes, among others. Conway's exact choice of words alludes to the first part of Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677): Spinoza, On the Improvement of the Understanding 46. Conway could be consciously incorporating Spinoza into her conceptual framework by rephrasing his argument that divine freedom is really God's acting from the necessity of his perfect essence alone. Since she understands God's essence as his goodness and wisdom, she sets her treatise up as a corrective to Spinoza's metaphysics. For further illumination on Spinoza's account of God's freedom and necessity see Koistinen, Spinoza on Action 167–187; Curley, Spinoza's Metaphysics 82–117; Curley/Walski, Spinoza's Necessitarianism Reconsidered 241–262; Carriero, Spinoza's Views on Necessity 47–96; Garrett, Spinoza's Necessitarianism 191–218; Huenemann, Spinoza's Metaphysics 224–240.

188 Lascano, Anne Conway on Liberty 166.

Conway maintains is an "imperfection" (III, 1 p. 15). Or, as Lascano puts it: "if God is good, and always does the best for his creation, why would he create beings with the ability to knowingly or mistakenly choose what is not good?"[189] Lascano points to a passage in Conway where she seems to be saying that if it were not for their free will then creatures would be God:

"[S]ince mutability is appropriate for a creature insofar as it is a creature […] it appears that there is no other distinction between God and creatures. For if any creature were by its nature immutable, it would be God since immutability is one of his incommunicable attributes." (VI, 1 p. 29)

Whether free will follows from the creatures' mutability or it is the other way around is a little unclear. Lascano stresses that according to Conway free will is the *basis* of mutability.[190] Therefore, Lascano concludes, "God must make beings that are mutable" for, if not, he would have created himself. However, the act of creation – coming from non-ordered being into self-creative being – is already a change that signifies inherent mutability.[191] Following the same line of argument, Conway holds that if free will was of such a character that it could only choose good it would be Christ. Both free will and mutability in creatures define them and distinguish them from God. Therefore, freedom of choice in creatures is necessary to secure God's independence from the world. It is this freedom to choose that which is wrong that makes creation different from God and Christ. Indeed, it seems that mutability is the underlying determinant for freedom of creatures. One might say that it is because God wishes to save creation that he endowed it with free will which ensures mutability.

An inherent freedom constitutes the basis of both creation's prelapsarian condition and its postlapsarian condition. This freedom should be used in accordance with moral good, in order for each creature to strive towards "perfection" or salvation. However, it is also possible for creatures to resist the good and choose evil:

"And this is the nature of all creatures, namely that they be in continual motion or operation, which most certainly strives for their further good (just as for the reward and fruit of their own labor), unless they resist that good by a willful transgression and abuse of the impartial will created in them by God." (VI, 6 p. 32)

Free will in creation seems to equal agent causation. No creature is inherently evil, because all creatures are created by God and take part in him through his

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189 Ibid. 163.
190 Ibid. 166.
191 Cf. Origen, On First Principles II 9,2.

communicable attributes. However, created beings are free to act *against* their good natures by (ab)using their will. Thus, the free actions of creatures have quite concrete consequences. As shown above, the individual bodies of creatures are the direct results of their individual moral actions. The better one's actions, the more spiritual a body one possesses – and conversely, the more evil the choices one makes, the harder the body becomes (VII, 1 p. 44). The inevitable ascent and descent of spirits on the ontological scale of being brings Conway to assert the theory of transmutation of species.

Freedom as Constitutive of Reality: the Link to Origen

The earlier clarification of Conway's terminology is crucial in relation to the discussion of Conway's understanding of freedom. She touches upon a very central discussion in ancient philosophy as she deliberates whether mutability belongs to the *essence* of beings or only to the *modes* of beings. We learned that, for Conway, it is the substance of all created beings to be mutable. In fact, this is the defining characteristic of creation. The question arises how far this mutability goes – i.e., do individuals maintain a distinctiveness? She holds that mutability rests on a connection between the individual's actions and its essence:

"[C]an one individual be changed into another, either of the same or of a different species? I say that this is impossible, for then the essential nature of things would change […]. This confusion would not suit the wisdom of God." (Preface p. 5)

The essence of created spirits always remains the same, and thus individuality plays a part in essence. Otherwise one could not be held accountable for one's actions. Therefore, species seem to reflect the individual's management of its freedom through its actions. This would entail that the actions of free beings rather than spirit and body constitute their essence. Conway's idea of freedom as constitutional for the individual's essence or substance (I have argued above that Conway uses these interchangeably) bears some distinct similarities to what scholars have called Origen's freedom metaphysics.[192] Alfons Fürst argues that Origen had a significant impact on the way the Cambridge Platonists consider freedom in relation to their anthropology.[193] Fürst singles out three main aspects of Origen's theology of freedom that have been taken up by Cambridge Platonism.

First, freedom is, in terms borrowed from Immanuel Kant, a "postulate of practical reason" ('Postulat der praktischen Vernunft'). This means that Origen, basing his argument on a series of examples from daily experience, concludes that

192　I here follow the Münster School's interpretation of Origen as proponent of a freedom metaphysics. I rely particularly on Alfons Fürst's and Theo Kobusch's contributions.

193　Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 3. The following outline of Origen's metaphysics of freedom relies heavily on this article.

freedom is a necessary presupposition of human action. If our actions are not free, we cannot be held responsible for them. Praise or blame for one's actions would be meaningless without the background of freedom. Origen uses the example of a parent that scolds his son for being disrespectful – his reprimand implies that the son could have acted otherwise.[194] In fact, our whole legal system depends on the supposition that we are ultimately responsible for our own actions. As always, Origen finds a series of scriptural supports that "with the utmost clearness prove the existence of free will".[195] He ties this moral responsibility not only to freedom but to rationality. To be held accountable for our actions, we must not only have freedom to choose one thing over another, we must also have some awareness of the moral value of our choice. The "determination to act may be brought forth from the judgment of reason", Origen says, and he gives an example: If a man, who is determined to live chastely encounters a beautiful woman and is lured by her, she is not the "cause or necessity of his transgression". The man had the ability to "drive away the opposing lusts by the interposition of the reason implanted within" him.[196] Nevertheless, Fürst reminds us that Origen was not unaware of determining *factors* in our lives. Education, background, and character are but some of the influences that play into the decisions we make. Origen "is well aware of the fact that our will is not *absolutely* free", writes Fürst.[197] Fortunately, all people have the opportunity to train their reason and become better through practice. Origen believes that the intersection between reason and will occurs on a spectrum. Therefore the "natural constitution" can be transformed by becoming either better or worse, depending on choices and practice.[198]

   The second aspect of Origen's theology of freedom pertains to this inherent ability to change on account of one's freedom. Again, Fürst explains that for Origen the will is distinct from nature, and indeed the will *determines* the nature: "The freedom of decision has made everybody's nature", says Origen in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.[199] Fürst stresses this as the seminal thesis of Origen's metaphysics: "The nature and essence of rational beings is determined by their will and freedom – this is the seminal thesis of Origen. It has deeply influenced the Christian philosophy as a whole."[200] In this way, freedom is not an attribute of being; it is the very substance of our being. "We do not simply have freedom, we *are* freedom".[201] This "metaphysics of freedom" is contrasted with

194 Origen, On Prayer 6,2.
195 On First Principles III 1,6.
196 Ibid. III 1,4.
197 Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 5.
198 Origen, On First Principles III 1,5.
199 Commentary on Romans VIII 10.
200 Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 7. Cf. Daniélou, Origène 204.
201 Fürst, ibid. 6.

the metaphysics of essence as something given and static, which was the general opinion at Origen's time.[202] Here, Fürst follows the interpretation of Kobusch, who has made some significant studies of this idea in Origen.[203] Kobusch argues that it is not the essence of a being which determines the freedom of that being, but the other way around: It is the freedom, which determines the essence.[204] His reading advocates an ontological reversal in Origen, which entails that: A) Freedom has primacy over nature, and B) *Prohairesis* (variously translated as "moral character", "will", "volition", "choice", "intention", or "moral choice") has primacy over essence.

Kobusch asserts that for Origen, "a being that is what it is on account of its 'constitution' (κατασκευή) must be distinguished from one that 'has on account of change and its own decision become what it is and [expressed with a neologism] its nature'".[205] The difference is that the essential being has its being as that which was created, while the volitional being makes itself. The primacy of freedom in Origen means that every creature creates itself, so to speak, on account of its choices, good or bad, grounded in free will. It is a realm of created spirits in which there is "nothing either permanent or substantial".[206] Only those who are good by their own will are truly good. This means that morality is not a function of nature either – rather, morality is "an independent realm", as Fürst expresses it.[207] This matches Origen's notion of the univocity of moral values, which we saw above. Good is good, and evil is evil: "either one commits a sin or not, because there is nothing in between committing a sin and not committing a sin".[208] Based on the moral values that are inherent to man through the natural law given to him by God, all rational beings make decisions and change over time from good to bad or the other way around. As Fürst summarizes, "free will in Origen is understood as freedom of moral self-determination".[209]

The third aspect of freedom in Origen is its universality. Since freedom is the very substance of beings, Origen believes that all beings are able to use their freedom for good. This is what drives his hope for the famous *apokatastasis panton* or universal salvation.[210] The important argument is that the possibility encompasses

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202   Although Fürst points out that Plotinus, too, stresses freedom in his anthropology.
203   See Kobusch, Das Christentum als die wahre Religion 442–446; id., Origenes – der Initiator der christlichen Philosophie 27–44; id., Christliche Philosophie 138–151; id., Der Begriff des Willens 277–300; id., Die Idee der Freiheit 67–69.
204   Id., Kann Gott leiden? 330.
205   Id., Die philosophische Bedeutung des Kirchenvaters Origenes 96.
206   Ibid.
207   Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 6.
208   Origen, Commentary on John XX 13,107. Cf. Conway, Principles III, 2 p. 16: "goodness as a straight line".
209   Fürst, Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking 8.
210   Origen, Contra Celsum VIII 72.

the entire universe. Thus, the whole cosmos is malleable rather than static, and the course of history is dependent on free actions: "According to the actions following from the decisions of our free will, history will develop".[211]

One of the theological consequences of the metaphysics of freedom is that it revises the classic idea of God's will or providence as absolute in the sense that it cannot be challenged or changed. Fürst quotes Origen, who writes that God influences the world rather than determines its cause:

"God does not tyrannize but rules, and when he rules, he does not coerce but encourages, and he wishes that those under him yield themselves willingly to his direction so that the good of someone may not be according to compulsion but according to his free will."[212]

This idea changes the relation between nature and history and between God and the world. God is not some transcendent principle sitting "outside" the world and determining its cause. Rather, God is *in* the world, in a rational and living way akin to Plotinus' world-soul that holds the cosmos together.[213] This makes for an inherently positive perspective on the material world. The materiality of the world presents opportunities for creation to exercise its freedom and ascend towards God by virtue of good choices. But more than that, the world is actually part of God, or as Origen says, the world is "God's motion" (*motus dei*).[214] Against the Aristotelian idea of God as the "unmoved mover", Origen argues that we can know God through his works because they are part of him. As Fürst says, for Origen "the cosmos which is commanded by the dynamic of history is the triune God in his cosmic-historical actuality".[215] This means that we can say something about God by virtue of our experience of the world.

The idea of God being in the world resembles what we saw in process theology. Here the key category of creativity especially points to the intimate relation between God and the world. As God orders the world out of his primordial nature, he creates possibilities for actual entities (creatures) to react to him. In prolongation of this, when creatures react to God, he incorporates their decisions into his consequent nature. The relation between these two aspects of God (his dipolarity) takes the form of a flux which creates an ontological dependency between God and the world. We recall the passage from Whitehead's "litany": "It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World […]. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates

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211 FÜRST, *Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking* 9.
212 Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah* 20,2. Cited from FÜRST, ibid.
213 *On First Principles* II 1,3.
214 Cf. *Homilies on Isaiah* 4,1.
215 FÜRST, *Origen's Legacy to Modern Thinking* 11.

God."[216] By being primordial and consequent, God constitutes a relatedness that is paramount for the ontological basis of process theology. But does this position go too far? Does it challenge God's freedom by reversing the ontological hierarchy between him and the world? If God is only God because of having created the world, then it becomes very difficult to distinguish him from his creation. Indeed, it becomes difficult to define him as someone or something free of time and death. Conway, on the other hand, seems determined to maintain God's freedom from creation. We recall that she writes: "he is not moved by them [creatures]" (III, 8 p. 18). She wants to safeguard God as static being. Another problem that arises is whether the inherent relatedness between God and the world challenges creaturely freedom. If the freedom of creatures is partially determined by the context in which it occurs (as per Origen, Conway, and process theology), then the unity of the individual seems to be at risk.

The three aspects of Origen's view on the freedom of creation all seem to overlap with how Conway thinks about freedom. Origen and Conway both believe that all beings are created rational and thus have the opportunity to distinguish between good and bad; that they make their free choices based on this rationality; that freedom has primacy over essence in that all beings are free to advance or decline on the ontological scale of being; and that this freedom extends to all beings, not just humans.

This means that there is a connection between agency and reality, and this connection pertains both to God to creatures. It does so in different ways, however, because the freedom of creation is different from the freedom of God. Paradoxically, God's freedom is more perfect because it is bound by his goodness, whereas the freedom of creation is balanced on a knife-edge between right and wrong. The substance of creation is defined as freedom, thus making substance an event, a process of becoming, which is something entirely different from letting a static substance define being. The metaphysics of freedom entails that the event of choosing good over bad is an ontological moment. While God *is* goodness, creation has the *potential* for good and evil. Thus, both God and the world have agency, and both create reality, but, while God continuously creates by giving form to life from chaos, creation is in constant risk of countering this creative act through evil choices.

This processual view of reality leads to the process theological distinction between self-determination (defined as individual enjoyment) and self-expression (defined as shared enjoyment). Thus, for Origen and Conway as well as for process theology, it is in the moment of action that the freedom of the individual is consolidated. This action or decision creates a new reality (and this process of creation is the substance of creatures). But, paradoxically, the initial decision

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216 Whitehead, Process and Reality 348.

can be said to dissolve the agent behind the ensuing action because the action shapes a new reality – a new context in which the individual is now embedded and from which it must now act. The constantly changing context not only influences the actual choice of a being but also seems to drown it in a complexity of relations. In the moment of decision, the moment where "I" am most "myself", "I" am dissolved in relatedness. With the French philosopher Michel Serres we might say that the *cogito* "explodes" or is torn apart by the infinite number of complex relations in which it participates in every moment. We recall the revelation in Ex. 3:14 where Yahweh says to Moses from the burning bush: "I am who I am" (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה). In the light of the above discussions, the transcendence of this statement becomes clear: Only God as the transcendent Other can really *be* who he "is" and remain so statically from eternity.

The question that is brought to the fore is how the process theological way of thinking about creation's encounter with God can maintain a distinction between the two. How can the transcendent being of God be truly related to the human experience of reality, which is always changing and in flux? How can this encounter with the transcendent be conceived? As a decision is made from free will, the transcendent "I" seems to be dissolved in the fluid reality of particular beings. Thus, on the one hand, it seems that the encounter with the transcendent Other dissolves the identity of the individual but, on the other hand, the process theological view insists that it is precisely in this encounter that the particular being is consolidated through its free decision (the moment of concresence). This means that the divine reveals itself first and foremost as relationality, as the process of becoming an "I" and that it is only through this process that it points back towards its own origin. In Part Four, I will ask what the relation between individuality and relatedness is. If individuality is characterized by freedom of choice, and if freedom of choice is the essence of any particular creature because it constitutes reality, then how do we maintain individuality in the encounter with the other? If all is multiplicity and relationality, then who are "you" and who am "I"?

4. SPIRIT AND BODY

In Part Three, I analyzed the relation between God and the world in Conway's *Principles* and discussed some of the theological consequences of a view of reality that stresses the processual relation between God and the world. This was, in part, done through two key categories taken from process theology: creativity and freedom. The analysis showed that, whereas creativity tends to point towards the inherent relatedness between God and the world, freedom goes some way towards maintaining a distinction between them. Thus, the two categories can be said to pull in opposite directions. At the end of Part Three, the complex relation between these two categories drew out interesting perspectives on the question of personal identity. How am "I" to maintain my identity as an inevitable part of a reality which is multiple, always changing, and inherently related? We now turn to this question.

In seventeenth-century metaphysics, the problem of how God relates to the world was transposed to discussions of the relation between spirit and body. While the question of the God-world relation is clearly distinct from the question of the body-spirit relation, the distinction between them rests on a matter of perspective. Arguably, they are reworkings of the same subjacent theme. As Richard Popkin has pointed out, the theological aspect of the seventeenth-century debate about the relation between body and spirit is central but often overlooked.[1] He argues that there is a tendency among historians of philosophy to focus so much on the question itself that it becomes a detached metaphysical problem.[2] Thus, underneath the complicated philosophical debates over which properties belong to body and which to spirit – for example whether spirit is extended or not, penetrable or not, divisible or not; or how body is moved and what is capable of initiating motion; or whether there is such a thing as empty space or a vacuum – the disturbing question lurks: are there things without or outside God's involvement? Are there places where God does not have power? Patrides summarizes the problem:

"If matter is extended [as per Descartes] and therefore everywhere and infinite, how can God be immanent in the universe? If spirit is without extension and therefore to all intents

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1   POPKIN, *The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* 37.
2   Ibid. 46.

and purposes an abstraction which 'is' nowhere, are we not in effect denying the existence of spirit?"[3]

Inquiring into the ineffable mystery of how God relates to the world is also to ask how God's eternal truth manifests itself in history; how are fallen creatures to experience, perceive, and articulate the absolute truth of God?

The question of how spirit relates to body can be seen as a reworking of the same fundamental question only from an *anthropocentric* perspective rather than a *theocentric* one. Discussions of the relation between body and spirit set the tone for both theology and science in the seventeenth century. If these discussions seem abstract or distant to our modern eyes, the underlying questions are not. What is at stake in the issue about the relation between body and spirit is not only the question of God's presence in the world and ultimately his existence, it is also the question of how we are adequately to articulate this truth.

According to Conway, positing God in the world leads to pantheism, while positing that he is not in the world leads to materialism or atheism. The most intriguing solution at Conway's time was the mind-body dualism propounded by Descartes, which seemed to offer a rational explanation of the problem on the levels of both God-world and spirit-body. Since matter is completely dead, according to Descartes, it must be moved by something external. Just as the movements of the world have been initiated by God, Descartes proposes the mind as the explanatory category for the motion and action of human bodies. As we saw in Part Two, his philosophy presented a new anchoring point, the thinking subject, from which to structure the world and reality while safeguarding the idea of knowledge.

In view of this anthropocentric turn in early modern philosophy, it is not surprising that the relation between body and spirit is *the* central theme of Anne Conway's treatise. Almost one third of her *Principles* is dedicated to solving this problem. She proposes an anti-dualist position – which we may refer to as spiritual monism – which seeks to account for the experience of creation as multiple. It is a highly original contribution to the philosophical issues of her time. She frames the discussion by accentuating the distinction between God's operations in the world, about which we have knowledge, and his divine will, which is inaccessible to human knowledge. From there, she goes on to develop the idea that spirit and matter are really the same substance.

Like Descartes, Conway and the Cambridge Platonists anchor their philosophy in the subject, but they do so in a different way. They might be said to view the subject as a mode of *self-determination* based on divine objective goodness. This somewhat technical description seeks to express their fundamental belief that the

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3   Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 31.

core of every subject, every "self", lies in its free *action* rather than in its inner life or thought. Indeed, Benjamin Whichcote revised Descartes's *cogito* to read: "I act, therefore I am" (rather than: "I think, therefore I am").[4] This revision shows how the Cambridge Platonists believed that the insights gained from contemplation immediately overflow into action. The subject is thus embedded in a context, and it is through this context that it reveals itself. In other words, it is interdependent and in movement rather than self-contained, as Descartes's *cogito* has been interpreted to be.[5] Part Four will show that this idea is prevalent in Conway.

I will seek to draw out this perspective in Conway's text by using process theology and the key catogories of freedom and creativity. Process theology, like Conway's *Principles*, reworks and reshapes the question of body and spirit within a non-dualistic framework: "The universe […] is through and through interdependent. The body pollutes the mind, the mind pollutes the body. Physical energy sublimates itself to a zeal; conversely, zeal stimulates the body."[6] Conway and process theology both posit a continuum of body and spirit which challenges the static ontology of essence. Taking his departure from Descartes's dualistic terminology, Whitehead argues that understanding reality does not involve an either/or choice between dualism and pantheism/materialism. The body and the mind "pollute" each other, that is, the inherent relatedness between actual entities means that we cannot clearly distinguish the realm of actuality from the ideals of possibility, nor community from individual. Indeed, nothing is static; everything is event. In Part Four, I shall ask what happens when the static essence is challenged. When relations are primary, is there a danger of personal identity being dissolved? Or, to put it differently, what is the relation of the universal to the particular or of the multiple to the individual?

Personal identity, or being a coherent subject, a unity, related to but somehow distinct from its surroundings, is a fundamental experience of human life, and any comprehensive ontology or theology must therefore do justice to this experience. If the created substance is fluid, and everything created is in process, even body and spirit, what does that entail for our experience of a stable or continued personal identity? If one admits to recognising the individual's experience of being a self as an identity, distinct and recognisable through time, the process view seems to encounter a challenge: spiritual monism tends to blur the boundaries between the experience of unity in the individual self, i. e., "identity", and the multiplicity of the exterior world that the individual is thrown into and experiences.

The key categories of creativity and freedom help us to view the individual from a twofold perspective. Mirroring the conclusion of Part Three, I shall argue

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4   Whichcote, Several Discourses 328. Cf. Roberts, From Puritanism to Platonism 73.
5   Cf. Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 18.
6   Whitehead, Religion in the Making 87.

that creativity binds the subject together with the entire universe and emphasizes its relatedness to its surroundings.[7] But, at the same time, the decision of each individual rests ultimately on its own freedom to choose in whatever way it wishes to be related, and it thereby establishes its own distinctiveness within the relatedness. As I shall argue, Conway and process theology differ on how to understand the individuality that is established in and through this freedom.

I shall begin by giving a full account of Conway's critique of dualism, where I shall seek to make her experience-based approach evident. I shall suggest that her arguments anticipate the later process theological critique of Descartes, as both philosophies agree that dualism undermines the epistemological value of bodily experience. Conway argues that, on account of being bound by his infinite goodness and power, God must create an infinity of creatures. Since every creature therefore consists of an infinity of other creatures, and they consist of other infinities of creatures, we cannot understand a creature as singular or isolated. Rather, every creature is inherently multiple and relational. Conway further argues that dualism is unable to account for how body and spirit interact with each other if they are completely different substances. Instead, she posits a spiritual monism where body does not figure as a "solitary substance" but as an attribute of the many spirits that flow throughout creation. I shall then describe her understanding of spirit and matter in detail, before moving on to explain the six arguments she gives for spiritual monism. Throughout this account of Conway's position, I shall draw parallels to process theology.

Conway's spiritual monism not only points to an inherently relation-based understanding of reality, it also creates a continuous and strong connection between body and spirit. This position sharpens the problem we encountered at the end of Part Three, namely, how we are to think of individuality or personal identity if the reality of every creature is multiple and ever-changing? I shall explore this question in the second half of Part Four.

I shall do so, first, by discussing similarities and differences in how the individual is conceived of in process theology and in Conway. Apart from Conway and process theology, I shall briefly include the monism of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz because of an interesting historical link between him and Conway. Indeed, his position helps us draw out some of the nuanced differences between Conway's position and that of process theology. I shall thus begin by focusing on the building blocks of reality that all three of these systems posit – the so-called monads – as either open and self-creative or self-contained and predetermined.

Second, the key-categories will then be applied to amplify the differences among these views. I shall explore whether and how a complex relation of a multitude of monads, which in itself seems inherently anti-essential, can constitute

7   Ibid. 101.

a self or an "I", which is essential. I shall ask whether Conway and process theology present us with an idea of stable identity that endures throughout time – what we might call a "soul" – and I shall draw out similarities and differences between the process theological position and Conway's on this question. I shall also enquire how we might think about this "soul" and whether and why the idea of a stable or unchanging identity is necessary to the two positions.

I shall finish Part Four by looking briefly at Conway's account of spirit and body from a Christological perspective. The belief that God was incarnated in Jesus Christ is absolutely central to all Christian theology, and it can be said to epitomize the point where spirit and body converge. I shall tentatively explore how we might fruitfully think about the Incarnation as including both the universal and the absolute aspect of God's spirit and the (embodied) particularity and changeability of Jesus the man.

4.1. Conway's Critique of Dualism

It has now been made clear that dualism is the great threat lurking in the background of both Anne Conway's metaphysical system and process theology.[8] In their critical reception of Descartes they are both subject to a general suspicion concerning a system which seeks to explain reality outside experience. Both Conway and process theology refute any system that builds its suppositions on abstractions. Rather, reality is an event or an encounter with something Other. According to Whitehead, Descartes's dualism builds on the flawed assumption that there is matter which is devoid of experience and of life. Whitehead calls this idea, found in Descartes's concept of *res extensa*, "vacuous actuality".[9] As an abstraction that has no foundation in experience, it leads to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, which mistakes the abstract for the concrete. There are further examples of misplaced concreteness other than Descartes's dualism. I have referred collectively to these as strong ontologies that confound static being with reality. For Whitehead, the danger of this lapse into a self-referential metaphysical system is its legacy of inactivity and dullness that ultimately threatens our quality of life:

"The assumption of the bare valuelessness of mere matter led to a lack of reverence in the treatment of natural or artistic beauty [...] it produces minds in a groove. [...] The groove prevents straying across country, and the abstraction abstracts from something to which

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8   The following subsection is not intended as an account of Cartesian dualism. Rather, it draws on Cartesian and Morean dualism in its discussion of the relation between body and spirit as understood by Conway and process theologians.

9   WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality viii. xiii. 29.

no further attention is paid. But there is no groove of abstractions which is adequate for the comprehension of human life."[10]

As we have seen in Conway's argument about the "narrow spaces of the brain", she also objects to dualism because it is built on what she describes as a "mathematical term", that is, a theoretical abstraction of the mind. Descartes is only one of many philosophers whom she condemns for having thus "erred and laid a poor foundation from the beginning" (IX, 9 p. 68). For her, the danger inherent in Descartes's dualist philosophy seems to be related to something like hubris, an overvaluation of one's own system, a certainty that there is a one-to-one relation between abstractions and reality. This threatens to erode the disproportionate relation between God as infinitely great and the human mind which in unable to define and describe reality from one centralized perspective:

"From such an absurd foundation, many other most crass and dangerous errors have arisen, not only in philosophy but also in theology with great injury to the human race, to the detriment of true piety, and in contempt of the most glorious name of God." (IX, 9 p. 68)

This hubris leads to blasphemy or to a failure to realize the central role of God in the world. God is always infinitely greater than what we can conceive of in our minds. Yet, as I have argued, both Conway's philosophy and process theology are founded on a metaphysics of freedom that allows for participation in the divine reality. The question then becomes: in what way can this participation be understood if it cannot be described through the strict definitions of Cartesian dualism that seek to dissect reality into static substances? In the first half of Part Four, I will explore Conway's answer to this question by analyzing her critique of dualism in chapters VIII and IX of the *Principles*. As we shall see, she posits a spiritual monism which holds that bodily experience is an integral part of the encounter with divine reality.

On the foundation of her tripartite ontology of substance, the question arises: how does body relate to spirit? If God is pure spirit and all of creation partakes of this same spirit (to a greater or lesser degree), how can there simultaneously be differentiating attributes not found in God? Since these are hardness, shape, and motion – all bodily attributes that are linked to creaturely experience – it becomes difficult to think of the event of becoming outside body. How can what differentiates creatures from God – namely body – be reconciled with that which defines God *per substantiam* – spirit?

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10   Id., Science and the Modern World 196 f.

4.1.1. Infinite Divisibility as Undermining the Foundation of Dualism

Conway begins her own explanation of reality in God's creative act, that is, his motion in the world. Because his goodness and wisdom necessarily overflow in an act of creative power, God creates an infinity of creatures. For Conway this "infinity of creatures" is not just a figure of speech. As we have seen in Part Three, there really are infinite creatures and worlds, because God's creation is continuous.[11] God necessarily does everything he can do, and it therefore follows that "he has multiplied and always multiplies and increases the essences of creatures to infinity" (III, 4 p. 16 f.). Each creature consists of an infinity of other creatures. And each of these has within itself another infinity, and so on to infinity. Her conclusion is that "the smallest creatures which can be conceived have an infinite number of creatures within themselves" (III, 9 p. 18). Therefore, we cannot comprehend things as merely singular, although they might appear to be so. "It should be noted," says Conway, "that although the spirit of man is commonly said to be one single thing, yet this spirit is composed of many spirits, indeed, countless ones" (VII, 4 p. 53).

Conway's argument for the infinity of creatures, and thereby their inherent relationality, is theologically driven. Creatures, simply by being creatures, "must be like their creator in certain things", namely in their shared attributes (VII, 2 p. 45). And she continues to assert that "every creature which has any life, sense, or motion must be multiple or numerous; indeed, from the perspective of every created intellect, it must be numerous without number or infinite" (VII, 4 p. 55). If one should refer to Scripture and object that "'God made all things by number, weight, and measure' (Wisdom 11:20)" (VII, 4 p. 53), and therefore say that countless bodies cannot be said to exist in one body, Conway has her answer ready: "God made everything in number, measure, and weight; and consequently, we cannot say of any creature that it is only one single thing because it is a number, and number is a multitude" (VII, 4 p. 54).

In several passages it becomes clear that the specific target of Conway's critique is the dualism of her tutor, Henry More. To understand better what Conway perceives as the problem in this philosophical position, I shall first examine her critique of Morean dualism, which tends to be very technical. As we saw in Part Three, she has explained that there is an infinity of creatures in every creature. These can all be endlessly extended and divided, she says:

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11 Conway's positing of an infinity of creatures constitutes an example of where she differs radically from Origen. According to Origen, God must create a limited number of creatures and worlds in order to comprehend them. Invoking Wis. 11:10, he argues that God created everything "according to number and measure": On First Principles II 9,1.

"Against what we have said, namely that the smallest creatures which can be conceived have an infinite number of creatures within themselves so that the smallest particles of body or matter can be extended or divided in infinite ways into ever smaller and smaller parts, the following objection has been made by certain people. Whatever is actually divisible, if divided as far as any actual division can go, is divisible into indiscerpible parts. Moreover, matter or body (matter, to be sure, is one thing or composed of many things) is actually divisible as far as actual division can go. Therefore, *et cetera*." (III, 9 p. 18 f.)

The objection, which Conway tells us is made by "certain people", is unquestionably a reference to Henry More.[12] Her tutor followed Descartes's fundamental distinction between body and spirit as different substances with completely distinct properties. Descartes identified all body with spatial extension: "The extension in length, breadth, and depth which constitutes the space occupied by a body, is exactly the same as that which constitutes the body".[13] Extension is the characteristic feature of matter or body. When something is extended, it can also be divided into parts. That is, the rule of divisibility pertains to all things that occupy space. Even things we may not be able to perceive as material are necessarily extended and can therefore be divided. For example, a straight line can be divided into singular points (we are able to think of a whole divided into sections). Extension and divisibility are therefore closely related conceptually. Mind or thought on the other hand is not extended and therefore cannot be divided:

"[T]here is a great difference between the mind and the body, inasmuch as the body is by its very nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible. For when I consider the mind, or myself in so far as I am merely a thinking thing, I am unable to distinguish any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something quite single and complete […]. By contrast, there is no corporeal or extended thing that I can think of which in my thought I cannot easily divide into parts; and this very fact makes me understand that it is divisible. This one argument would be enough to show me that the mind is completely different from the body."[14]

More agrees with Descartes that there are both material and immaterial entities, and that these are completely distinct from each other. He defines spirit and body in parallel but opposite terms:

"I will define therefore *a Spirit* thus, *A Substance penetrable and indiscerpible*. The fitness of which Definition will be the better understood, if we divide *Substance* in generall into these first kindes, viz. *Body* and *Spirit*, and then define *Body* to be *A Substance impenetrable*

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12   Conway's use of the word "indiscerpible" makes the reference to Henry More unmistakable, according to HUTTON, Anne Conway 87.
13   The Philosophical Writings of Descartes 1, 227.
14   *Œuvres* de Descartes 7, 86 f.; The Philosophical Writings of Descartes 2, 59.

and discerpible. Whence the contrary kind to this is fitly defined, *A Substance penetrable and indiscerpible*."[15]

According to More, spirit is penetrable and indiscerpible (meaning indivisible). Body, on the other hand, is impenetrable and discerpible (meaning divisible).[16] The question then arises: how can we account for interaction between these two wholly distinct substances? In order to answer this, More argues against Descartes, that *both* matter and spirit are extended substance. Hutton explains that for More material substance was distinguished from other types of extended substance by "what could be called its tactile quality: what Locke later called 'solidity', and for which More used the term, 'impenetrability'".[17] The fundamental distinction between body and spirit lies therefore not in extension but in activity. More writes:

"Now I appeal to any man that can set aside prejudice, and has the free use of his Faculties, whether every term in the Definition of a *Spirit* be not as intelligible and congruous to Reason, as in that of a *Body*, for the precise notion of *Substance* is the same in both, in which, I conceive, is comprised *Extension* and *Activity*, either connate or communicated."[18]

On this account, body and spirit are distinguished by spirit being the incorporeal and efficient cause, whereas matter is inactive, dead, devoid of properties, and therefore unable to initiate motion. More believed that this explanation made the link between body and spirit closer.

The question of extension and therefore divisibility is Conway's first point in her critique of More. She objects initially to his choice of words: "whatever is *actually divisible*, if divided as far as any actual division can go, is divisible into indiscerpible parts" (III, 9 p. 18–19).[19] She argues that this phrase is guilty of "comparing incomparables" as the two words are inherently contradictory. "Actually" is an adverb that signifies that something *is* something in reality, e. g. divided. "Divisible", however, is an adjective and signifies only that something has the capability or *potential to be* divided. Thus, Conway argues that to say "actually divisible" makes as little logical sense as to say "sensibly insensible" or "visibly blind" (III, 9 p. 19). If we then assume, Conway continues, that "they" (meaning More) refer not to two things, but only to one – as they claim – it will necessarily be one of these two possibilities:

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15 More, Immortality of the Soul I 3 p. 21. For a better understanding of Henry More's position see above all his comprehensive account of metaphysical dualism in Enchiridion Metaphysicum, chapters 27 f.
16 Cf. More, ibid. IX 6; Immortality of the Soul I 3,1 p. 21.
17 Hutton, Anne Conway 83.
18 More, Immortality of the Soul II 3,2 p. 21. Cf. Enchiridion Metaphysicum, chapters 27 f.
19 My italics.

either

That which has truly been divided

or

That which is indeed divisible

This makes the problem clear because the two propositions cannot exist simultaneously. Conway elaborates: if we accept the first proposition – that matter is whatever has truly been divided, as far as any actual division can go – then the second proposition – that matter is that which is potentially divisible into indivisible parts – is false. Matter cannot both be truly divided as far as divisibility can go and still be divisible. On the other hand, if the second proposition is true and matter is still potentially divisible, then the first proposition – that it has been divided as far as any division can go – cannot be true. More's contention that there is a limit to the divisibility of bodies thus falls, and Conway concludes that there "can be no actual division in matter which cannot always be further divided" (III, 9 p. 20).

In this distinction between actuality and potentiality we once again reach the limit of our knowledge. To say something about the realm of potentiality or *as far as any division can go*, is impossible and belongs to the realm of God alone. Such a definition is not grounded in our experience of actual reality but is an abstraction that takes recourse in a universal principle conceived of within the *cogito*. Whitehead would say that only God's primordial nature can know anything true about potentiality. We recall that it is in the event of experience that potentiality becomes actual or "real". Conway carefully keeps her explanation of reality within the boundaries of experience and seeks to criticize More for keeping the levels of the potential and the actual separate.

Her argument reverts eventually to the theological. She maintains that knowledge of what God does is limited to his operations with creatures, not to what he could or should do in his almighty power. Of course, God *could* indeed reduce creatures to their smallest parts, *as far as any division can go*, but this reductionism would be contrary to his wisdom and goodness. Conway makes it clear that it is the nature of all motion that it "breaks down and divides something into finer parts" (III, 9 p. 20). If creatures were divided and reduced to a mathematical principle, an abstraction, all motion or operation would stop. This would make the creature "entirely useless in creation" and "no better than if it were pure nothingness and utter non-being". Eventually it would mean that the created world would cease (III, 9 p. 20). Thus, when motion stops, experience stops, and then God could not become manifest in creation.

Our discussion stays within the realm of the actual and physical world, at least at present. Here, Conway argues that we cannot think about anything that could

not be divided further: "The division of things is never in terms of the smallest mathematical term but of the smallest physical term" (III, 9 p. 20). And when matter is divided sufficiently, it disperses into what Conway calls "physical monads". These, to use Whitehead's expression, are "the final real things of which the world is made up".[20] At the point where physical matter is reduced to physical monads, it is still spiritual, that is, it is alive, active, and capable of initiating motion.

Conway asserts the "infinite divisibility of everything into always smaller parts" as the foundation for her theory of why creatures are necessarily bound to each other and ultimately that matter and spirit are the same (III, 10 p. 20). She shows that having defined spirit and body in opposite terms, More ends up with the same problem as the one he saw in Descartes, namely, how to explain their interaction.

4.1.2. The Problem of Interaction

Henry More initially celebrated Descartes's dualist philosophy and his account of matter as completely passive and inert. Indeed, More is a key figure in popularizing Descartes's thought in England.[21] He believed that the Frenchman's ontology provided "a solid foundation for demonstrating the existence of spiritual agents":[22] If body or matter is inert, passive, and devoid of activity, how is it that it comes to be alive, if not by some divine interaction? More embraced dualism as part of his apologetic enterprise designed to counter the materialist – and therefore, to him, atheist – claims of his contemporaries.[23] The life, activity, and movement clearly visible and demonstrable in manifestly dead bodies must be explained from *an outside* principle, namely, spirit. Yet it became increasingly clear to him that Cartesianism was, in Patrides's words, "more '*Mechanical*' than 'transcendent'".[24] More therefore proposed his definition of spirit as extended substance in an attempt to overcome what he saw as the primary problem in Descartes's philosophy, namely that it did not adequately explain *how* matter is moved by spirit. Descartes viewed motion as a constant, and, while he granted that this constant motion was ultimately determined by God, he argued that it was also demonstrable through the collision of things. In his *Principles* he defines motion as "the transfer of one piece of matter, or one body, from the vicinity of the other bodies which are in immediate contact with it, and which are regarded as being at rest, to the vicinity of other bodies".[25]

20 Whitehead, Process and Reality 18.
21 Hutton, Anne Conway 40.
22 Ibid. 82.
23 Leech, The Hammer of the Cartesians.
24 Patrides, Cambridge Platonists 30. Cf. More, Conjectura Cabbalistica III 189.
25 Descartes, Principles of Philosophy Part II 25, 233.

When God created the universe, a certain amount of motion was transmitted to its material occupants which was then transferred by them to each other.

"It is obvious that when God first created the world, He not only moved its parts in various ways, but also simultaneously caused some of the parts to push others and to transfer their motion to these others. So in now maintaining the world by the same action and with the same laws with which He created it, He conserves motion; not always contained in the same parts of matter, but transferred from some parts to others depending on the ways in which they come in contact."[26]

Descartes's definition of motion leaves considerable room for interpretation, but in the present context it is enough to observe, as did More, that it is easy to overlook God's role and activity in the created world. He was far from satisfied with the mechanical idea that matter is capable of initiating motion by itself. As he writes in one of his letters to Descartes:

"I feel more disposed to believe that motion is not communicated, but that from the impulse of one body another body is so to speak roused into motion, like the mind to a thought on this or that occasion, and that body does not take as much motion as it needs for movement, being reminded of the matter by the other body. And as I said a short while ago, motion bears the same relation to a body as a thought does to the mind: neither is received into the subject, in fact, but both arise from the subject in which they are found. And everything that is called body I hold to be alive in a sottish and drunken way."[27]

We can see from this early letter, that More has not yet fully developed the harsh dualism of his mature philosophy. In order to counter Descartes's mechanistic worldview, he denies motion as a matter of mere collision. He then tries to define the role of spirit as necessary to initiate motion, but in this early quotation it does seem as if he allows bodies some type of activity in themselves. Reid and Henry take this as a sign that he has not "yet properly grasped how best to use such signs of sottish life in inanimate bodies to show the limits of Cartesian mechanism, and the need for separate (non-material) principles of activity in the world".[28] More eventually proposed that the spirit activates matter by *affect* rather than by the *impact* of another body already in motion. This distinction sought to make the link between spirit and body tighter than it was in the philosophy of his hero. According to More, dead matter is brought into motion by a sort of "infusion" by the vital spirit. *Vital congruity* was the name he gave this theory of the natural disposition of the body and spirit to be in "symbiosis" or harmony:

26   Ibid. 62, 242.
27   More, Letter to Descartes, 23 July 1649. Quoted from Gabbey, Philosophia Cartesiana Triumphata 211.
28   Henry, Art. Henry More.

"This *Union of the Soul with Matter* does not arise from any such gross *Mechanical* way, as when two Bodies stick one in another by reason of any toughness and viscosity, or streight commissure of parts; but from a *congruity* of another nature, which I know not better how to term than Vital […]. Not that there is any *Life* in the *Matter* with which this in the *Soul* should sympathize and unite; but it is termed *Vital* because it makes the *Matter* a *congruous* Subject for the Soul to reside in and exercise the functions of *life*."[29]

In both of these quotations from More, we see an understanding of life being, in a way, "latent" in matter. In other words, his early writings exhibit a tendency towards monism, what we may term More's early "monist inclination". Matter just needs a "push", because the body is already "alive in a sottish and drunken way". But in response to the growing popularity of the dreaded atheists, his apologetic project eventually became more hard line. He found it increasingly necessary to prove that this push comes from the spirit and is not internal to matter. In order to "save God" from the atheists, More's philosophy eventually developed into strict dualism that is very careful not to blur the distinction between matter and spirit: he insisted that body was moved from the *outside* by the presence of spirit.

A problem arises in that his definition of spirit and body in mutually exclusive terms ultimately left him with the same problem as Descartes. In relation to our present task, deciding the nature of Conway's critique of More's dualism, the operative term is *outside*. More's theory that spirit is outside and wholly separated from body diminishes the connection between body and spirit – and between God and the world. Conway asks More:

"For if spirit and body are so opposed to each other that while spirit is alive or a living and perceiving substance, body is merely a dead mass, and if spirit is penetrable and indivisible, while body is impenetrable and divisible – all of which are opposing attributes – then what, I ask, is it that unites and joins them so much?" (VIII, 1 p. 56)

To be able to explain the interaction between bodies and spirits, More instates different classes of spirits which act as mediators between spirit and matter, and indeed, between God and the world. As we have seen, one of his mediating principles between spirit and matter is vital congruity. As mentioned, this hypothesis signifies the pre-established harmony or predisposition which he believed existed between spirit and matter, so that the former had "an Aptitude of vital Union" with the latter.[30] Conway is not impressed by this answer, and she does not believe that vital congruity is capable of explaining anything:

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29   More, Immortality of the Soul II 14,9 p. 120.
30   Ward, The Life of Henry More 1, 174. Cf. More, ibid. II 14,8 f. p. 120; Antidote, Appendix.

"I answer that one must first ask in what this vital affinity consists? For if they cannot tell us in what this affinity consists, they are talking foolishly with inane words which have sound but not sense. For, surely, according to the sense in which they take body and spirit, there is no affinity whatsoever." (VIII, 1 p. 57)

The concept only pushes the problem back to a third level where it is seemingly dissolved.[31] But seeing that penetrability and impenetrability are contradictory terms, no mediating between them is metaphysically possible. However, it is not only More's unsatisfactory explanation of the interaction between spirit and body that Conway criticizes. The problem is that More has not yet successfully "proved, that body and spirit are indeed different substances" (VII, 4 p. 50). As long as this is not proved, he runs into a series of problems, only one of which is the question of how spirit and body interact when they are so different.[32]

  To sum up, Conway's critique of dualism has many facets. As Hutton has shown, most of her criticism of Morean dualism consists of exposing inconsistencies in his argument and showing that he has to install arbitrary properties in his substances and to add substances and various categories of spirits in order to maintain his position.[33] In many ways, her own position is a more thoroughgoing, strict, and developed version of her tutor's early monist inclination. I believe Hutton's argument correlates nicely with the theological background that I propose, namely that Conway wants to move away from an abstract philosophical foundation of reality. Therefore, her critique of dualism not only pertains to More but to all "so-called philosophers" who have constructed metaphysics from their own "narrow spaces of their brain" instead of from the works of God. According to Conway they have "generally erred and laid a poor foundation from the beginning; and thus their entire house and building is so weak and, indeed, so useless

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31 Indeed, More is forced to install several classes of spirits to account for the proximity between spirit and matter. One of them is his Spirit of Nature, the "Quartermaster General of the world", which makes sure that the vital congruity is upheld. More's Spirit of Nature is akin to Plotinus' world soul in that it is an unconscious spiritual presence in the world that ensures that the natural laws are followed: Immortality of the Soul III 12,1. See Reid, Metaphysics of Henry More 313–317, for an overview of the ancient sources More draws on. Conway's critique is that this supposed center of agency is unconscious. What is the relation of each creature to this general spirit, and why is it needed? It results in a rivalry of agency between the spirits that compose a particular creature and this general entity. More also posited his theory of infinite space as a kind of analogy to God. This is beyond the scope of the present discussion. See Hutton, Anne Conway 82–86.

32 Conway further criticizes More's definition of bodies and spirits as arbitrary and inconsistent. For example, it is inconsistent to ascribe impenetrability to one kind of extended substance (body), but not to another (spirit). Further, it is arbitrary to impute fixed limits to corporeal extension but not to spiritual extension. See Conway, Principles 49–57; Hutton, ibid. 88.

33 Hutton, ibid.

that the whole edifice must collapse in time" (IX, 1 p. 63). Dualism is a projection of limited human knowledge, a theory built on abstractions and not on demonstrable principles linked to experience. The basic mistake of taking something abstract to be real is neatly described in Whitehead's critique of misplaced concreteness:

"The enormous success of the scientific abstractions has foisted onto philosophy the task of accepting them as the most concrete rendering of fact. Thereby, modern philosophy has been ruined. It has oscillated in a complex manner between three extremes. There are the dualists, who accept matter and mind as on an equal basis, and the two varieties of monists, those who put mind inside matter, and those who put matter inside mind. But this juggling with abstractions can never overcome the inherent confusion introduced by the ascription of misplaced concreteness to the scientific scheme."[34]

Besides resulting in the epistemological problem of not knowing what is real and what is not, dualism is unable to account for any interaction between body and spirit. It proposes "solitary substances" that are wholly unrelated to each other. A strict division between mind and body alienates the mental capacities of a human being from bodily experience. Since body in Descartes's view is dead mass, it is detached from life-giving spirit. This, however, is contrary both to logic and to experience, argues Conway.

4.2. Conway's Spiritual Monism: Moving Towards Process Theology

Based on her rational proof of the infinite divisibility of everything into ever smaller parts, Conway has laid the foundation for her alternative to dualism: spiritual monism. This theory, she says, is

"of the very greatest use for understanding the causes and reasons of things and for understanding how all creatures from the highest to the lowest are inseparably united one to another by their subtler mediating parts, which come between them and which are emanations from one creature to another, through which they can act upon one another at the greatest distance. This is the basis of all the sympathy and antipathy which occurs in creatures." (III, 10 p. 20)

Conway's explanation of infinite divisibility seeks to prove the radical relationality of all creation. As in process thought, all creation is ontologically interrelated in

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34   WHITEHEAD, *Science and the Modern World* 55.

Conway's cosmology. Further, by positing that body is not a distinct substance, both Conway and Whitehead object to the idea that matter should be conceived of as dead. Rather, as shown in Part Three, Conway holds that created substance is more embodied and less spiritual than God and Christ. This makes the created substance difficult to define, as it is now clear that it is not static, but rather fluid. As in process theology, reality is not static but a series of events.

She moves on to contemplate exactly how creatures are composed and, like Whitehead, overcomes the epistemological difficulty of More and Descartes by developing her own ontology. As we saw in Part Three, there are three distinct and different substances in Conway's ontological system: God, Christ, and creation. At its very core, therefore, all creation is really one and the same substance. She argues that creation "originally had one and the same essence and being" which was an "ethereal substance" (VI, 10 p. 38). Indeed, since body and spirit are not opposites but only lie at opposite ends of the same continuum, Conway defines spirit by way of many of the same categories that the materialists use about body: extension, infinite divisibility, and impenetrability. But according to her, these are not static and absolute categories that pertain to only one thing; they may vary and be applied to both body and spirit.[35] Rather than constructing abstract metaphysical principles she seeks to take her point of departure in "daily experience" (V, 3 p. 24), and, from this, she finds the basic characteristic of the created substance to be movement or process: "And this is the nature of all creatures, namely that they be in continual motion or operation" (VI, 6 p. 32).

This process is connected to divisibility and mutability: "it is the nature of all motion that it breaks down and divides something into finer parts" (III, 9 p. 20). Therefore, all creatures are constantly changing, and this process accounts for the multiplicity of the created realm. But, even if creation is manifold in its form, its substance is one. This principle extends to everything, even body and spirit, which, as in process theology, are not considered the final two substances. Body and mind are really one and the same substance, which varies only in modes of existence, one of which is corporeality. We recall that she argues:

"Truly, every body is a spirit and nothing else, and it differs from a spirit only insofar as it is darker. Therefore, the crasser it becomes, the more it is removed from the condition of spirit. Consequently, the distinction between spirit and body is only modal and incremental, not essential and substantial." (VI, 11 p. 39 f.)

Conway's argument is that both body and spirit are more or less extendable and more or less penetrable. Therefore, the difference between the two is only in degree or mode and not in essence. If we follow Whitehead's lead and "descend the

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35 Hutton, Anne Conway 89.

scale of being" in Conway's system, we will see that this is true for every being in creation. She argues that every creature consists of an infinity of parts that are both corporeal and spiritual at the most microscopic level. Further, they are characterized by motion and relationality (as shown above), and therefore creatures, on Conway's account, may be better characterized as events than as static beings.

Conway explains that when spiritual matter is divided enough, it "disperses into physical monads" (III, 9 p. 20). These monads, invisible to the naked eye, are the building stones of creation. Like the actual entities of process theology, physical monads are inherently relational. They are in constant movement or process in the dialectics of what Whitehead calls the "formal cause" and the "efficient cause", which distinguish the monad without dividing it from all other monads. One might view this dialectic as the *inward* and *outward* disposition of the monad. The inward disposition signifies the moment where the monad relates to its own individual past (its former decisions and relations). These past relations, we recall, limit the possibilities of action for the monad and can therefore be seen as constraints that are in some manner "external" to its present state. Yet, as the past relations are a product of the monad's free choice, they are a determining factor that comes from within. Thus, an inward disposition remains distinguishable from the outward disposition of the monad. The outward disposition is the new relations in which the monad partakes after making its free choice. In other words, we can identify a dialectic between inward and outward, between freedom and relation, where the monads concresce and continuously create reality. The monads are both active subject and passive object in this ontology of becoming. Conway uses an analogy of what she calls the "male" and the "female" principle, which is necessary for procreation, to explain the process or "production" of physical monads:

"In every visible creature there is body and spirit, or a more active and a more passive principle, which are appropriately called male and female because they are analogous to husband and wife. For just as the normal generation of human beings commonly requires the conjunction and cooperation of male and female, so too does every generation and production, whatever it may be, require the union and simultaneous operation of those two principles, namely spirit and body." (VI, 11 p. 38)

Conway proposes that there is a passive and an active principle in every generation of physical monads.[36] Just like the formal and efficient cause of actual entities, there is something already determinate or "passive" and something that directs it anew – something "active". In Conway's system these two principles are termed

36   I leave aside the equation of male with activity and female with passivity, which to modern ears may sound problematic. In passing, we note that Conway's ontology posits the female and male principle as belonging to every single being, thus leaving room for fluid interpretations of gender roles.

body and spirit, which unite – or concresce – in a "simultaneous operation" that somehow generates or produces something new from the range of possibilities already given to it. We may think of this instant of union or simultaneous operation of the physical monads as corresponding to the moment of "decision" occurring in actual entities.

Conway views the spirit-matter continuum not as an egalitarian structure but as a hierarchy. She argues that "the spirit is the more excellent of the two in the true and natural order of things" (VII, 1 p. 42). To understand Conway's reasons for considering the relation between body and spirit as hierarchical as well as the nature of this hierarchy, we must look more closely at these two aspects of her definition of created substance.

4.2.1. Spirit

Spirit in itself is a multifaceted term in Conway's thought that she uses in many different ways. For example, she speaks about God as spirit (I, 1 p. 9), but she also refers to the spirits of the earth (VI, 6 p. 34) and distinguishes between the spirit from above and the spirit from the earth (VI, 6 p. 34). She distinguishes further between a human and an animal spirit (VI, 7 p. 36). Elsewhere she seems to equate spirit and soul (VI, 6 p. 34) and to connect spirit to the individual "essence" of a being – for example one can be a "brute in spirit" (VI, 7 p. 36). Despite these many uses of spirit in Conway's system, I believe that she is consistent in her definition of the term and that these differences neither reveal contradictions in terms nor suggest that Conway operates with various kinds of spirits. However, I would suggest that spirit in Conway's system can serve several purposes and act on different levels. Overall, these purposes can be divided into two, a cosmological/universal and an individual/particular.[37]

The first purpose of spirit is to identify God first and foremost as spirit: "God is spirit, light and life" (I, 1 p. 9). God is the only being that is purely spiritual, which means that he has "no darkness or corporeality" in him (I, 2 p. 9). Spirit in its highest form (VII, 1 p. 42) is part of God, a distinct "mode" of him, which together with his Wisdom constitutes the Trinity (I, 7 p. 10). Spirit is also one of the communicable attributes of God. Conway further describes God's spirit as his power or "will" (I, 7 p. 10) through which creatures receive their "essence and activity" (I, 7 p. 10). The spirit that God communicates to his creation is pure life, activity, and vitality; it is also will or creative power – the active principle in all creation

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37   The two-fold nature and purpose of spirit as all-encompassing or universal and simultaneously individual or particular shows Conway's Plotinian heritage clearly. Cf. Plotinus, Enneads V 1.

that causes development, movement, and process. It signifies the emanation, flow or movement from God to creation. It is a cosmological principle: every physical monad and thus every creature, from the electron to the elephant, participates in this spirit, because God communicates this attribute to all his creatures out of love for them. This use of spirit resembles that of the Holy Spirit, the Christian principle that signifies God's intimate presence in the world. Expressed in process theological terminology, this highest aspect of spirit could correspond to God's initial aim, which is universal in aspect and shared by all of creation. God's initial aim – his creative-responsive love – is the way God acts in history.

However, on the level of creation this vital and active aspect of spirit becomes a multitude. This leads us to the second purpose of spirit, which shows that although every created spirit participates in the universal and cosmological principle that is God's spirit it does so in varying degrees. Conway talks about the different spirits "of the earth" that assert themselves as more or less dominating. This is linked to the corporeality of creation, where spirit becomes embodied: "for every created spirit has some body, whether it is terrestrial, aerial, or etherial" (V, 6 p. 27). Created spirits always have a material connotation. Therefore, the manifestation of spirit in creatures varies. In the process of emanation this spirit manifests as corporeal and mutable creatures within the created world. Creatures are necessarily corporeal and mutable because they are not God: "For if any creature were by its nature immutable, it would be God since immutability is one of his incommunicable attributes" (VI, 1 p. 29). This is why, according to Conway, the created manifestation of spirit is "lower" than the divine and pure manifestation. Each created spirit is particular and has its particular momentary outward expression. However, we should be aware that speaking of "individual" spirit is problematic because it risks connoting detachment, self-containment, and static being. As in process theology, for Conway the created spirit is never a "solitary substance".[38] Rather, the "physical monad" or the particular spirit in every creature always partakes of the divine spirit while being affected by its own nature and decisions and by other spirits' nature and decisions. Conway explains the affective nature of relations between created spirits when she argues that they "emanate in colors, sounds, odors, tastes, and various other properties and powers" (VIII, 5 p. 61). She then explains that it is through this constant exchange of spirits that we "see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and feel, indeed, think, love, hate, and do everything we do" (VIII, 5 p. 62). Thus, in Conway's words, all created spirits are "inseparably united one to another" (III, 10 p. 20).

The movement or process of creation is characterized by relatedness, and this relatedness has an intrinsic order to it. We recall that in Conway's system every being consists of an infinity of spirits and that these spirits also have an infinity of

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38   Lascano, Anne Conway 332.

spirits within themselves and so on to infinity. Every spirit contains intellectual spirits, brute or sensitive spirits, and vegetative or nutritive spirits. In each being these are arranged in a hierarchical system:

"It should be noted here that although the spirit of man is commonly said to be one single thing, yet this spirit is composed of many spirits, indeed, countless ones; as the body is composed of many bodies and has a certain order and government in all its parts, much more so is the spirit, which is a great army of spirits, in which there are distinct functions under one ruling spirit." (VII, 4 p. 53)

This affective influence by the spirits on each other means that there is no "individual" spirit which is unchangeable or stable. The spirit in creation is constantly relating itself to itself as well as to other spirits, thus its "essence" is one of becoming rather than of being. Still, each spirit has a particular expression at a particular moment. Therefore, I will call this created spirit "particular" rather than "individual". These spirits are ordered in a hierarchy, according to Conway. They are under the rule of a "municipal" or "principal spirit", the particularity of which dominates the expression of the others:

"But if someone says, it is necessary that a central or ruling spirit be a single atom, for why else is it called a central or principal spirit having dominion over all the rest, I answer, no. For this central, ruling, or principal spirit is multiple, for the reasons stated above. It is called central because all the other spirits come together in it." (VII, 4 p. 55)

Thus, Conway can speak of multiple or infinite spirits in every being, which all participate in God as well as taking part in each other. These spirits can be "of the earth", or "animal", depending on the extent of their corporeality. Conway's different descriptions of spirit do not refer to different kinds of spirits but to different levels of spirits. The spirit, because it is corporeal, can become gross or heavy (cf. III, 5 p. 17; VIII, 3 p. 59) and thus more dominated by the corporeal side of the continuum. But every spirit is still an emanation from the divine spirit, and as such it is characterized by life, activity, and the capacity for love and perfection (cf. VI, 5 p. 31–32). The various spirits that Conway describes do not pose a self-contradiction in her system or reveal that she is careless in her use of terminology. Finally, there are passages where Conway seems to equate spirit with soul or essence. How this fits with the idea that every created being is a multiplicity of spirits requires a longer analysis. I will return to this issue below in the second half of Part Four, 4.3, "The question of identity: between freedom and creativity".

Although it sounds as if the spirits Conway speaks of are different kinds of spirits, we now understand that they are similar in substance. This creates a challenge for philosophical and theological language: How are we to describe multiple

manifestations of one and the same spirit? If multiple spirits are all emanations from the divine spirit, they differ only in that they are more or less corporeal, that is, they are closer to or farther from God in the ontological hierarchy. But in essence they are the same since they all participate in God, and the function of spirit as activity and life is the same in all created beings, even if the particular expression of a spirit varies.

4.2.2. Matter

The continuity between spirit and body means that one is hard pressed to define matter or body in itself in Conway's system. There is no such thing as matter without spirit. The first thing to clarify is whether Conway distinguishes between matter (*materia*) and body (*corpus*). In a number of passages she uses the terms interchangeably: "[T]he smallest particles of body or matter (*corporis sive materiæ*) can be extended or divided in infinite ways" (III, 9 p. 18);[39] "[T]he smallest particle of body or so-called matter (*corporis sive materiæ*) is always divisible" (III, 9 p. 20);[40] "[H]ow can any dead thing (*res mortua*) proceed from [God] or be created by him, such as mere body or matter (*merum corpus, vel materia*)?" (VII, 2 p. 45);[41] "And since every creature shares certain attributes with God, I ask what attribute produces dead matter, or body (*id faciat materia mortua, sive corpus*), which is incapable of life and sense for eternity?" (VII, 2 p. 45).[42] However, I do notice a distinction in Conway's use of the terms. When she addresses general metaphysical assumptions or philosophical discussions, typically when she portrays the philosophical position of her adversaries, she uses the term "matter" or *materia*: "or what attributes or perfections can be assigned to dead matter (*materiæ mortuæ*) which are analogous to those in God" (VII, 2 p. 45);[43] "Is a horse a mere machine or dead matter (*mortuave materia*), or does it indeed have some kind of spirit"? (VI, 6 p. 32).[44] That is, matter is a term used when Conway is within the realm of the abstract, so to speak. Conversely, when she refers to the concrete materiality or corporeality of a creature, be that earth, a horse or a spirit she uses the term "body" or *corpus*. To cite just a few from an abundance of examples in chapter VI: "It necessarily follows that this body (*corpus illud*), which the vital spirit forms, will be that of a brute and not a human" (VI, 7 p. 36);[45] "In every

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39   Conway, Principles 21. Image p. 38.
40   Ibid. 24. Image p. 41.
41   Ibid. 80. Image p. 97.
42   Ibid. 82. Image p. 99.
43   Ibid.
44   Ibid. 52. Image p. 69.
45   Ibid. 60. Image p. 77.

visible creature there is body and spirit (*corpus est & spiritus*)" (VI, 11 p. 38);[46] "Just as every spirit needs a body (*spiritus opus habet corpore*) to receive and reflect its image, it also needs a body (*ita corpore etiam opus habet*) to retain the image" (VI, 11 p. 38);[47] "Consequently, every spirit has its own body (*habet corpus*) and every body (*corpus*) its own spirit. Just as a body (*sicut corpus*), whether of a man or brute, is nothing but a countless multitude of bodies (*multitude corporum*) collected into one and arranged in a certain order, so the spirit of man or brute is also a countless multitude of spirits united in this body (*unitorum in hoc corpore*)" (VI, 11 p. 39).[48] Paying attention to Conway's use of terminology should direct our analysis as it may contain a hint as to her own position in relation to what she is presenting.

It would seem that Conway uses the term *corpus* when she is presenting her own position. That is, it seems that she uses *corpus* to describe that aspect of her physical monads which we can know from experience. The distinction between her uses of these terms could, of course, be a coincidence, or it could be a redactional choice by van Helmont.[49] But one could speculate that she wanted to stress the intimate relation between reality and body that is prevalent in her system. We cannot know anything outside our embodied "being". Again, we must remember that this "being" is a ghost of the strong ontologies' claim to describe a static being. It would be more accurate to describe this experienced reality as an event of becoming. This all-important self-creative aspect is closely tied to the spiritual nature of the monads, seeing that these make up body. Since *corpus* is very tangible and definitely within the language of experience, she might have made the conscious choice to highlight this aspect of the spirit becoming concrete.

Body is not simply a negative alternative to spirit or a weighing down of God's pure being. Rather, body serves an ethical purpose in Conway's system. She stresses repeatedly that no dead thing could proceed from God. Body is simply dark and condensed spirit, which means that it is not a dead thing lacking life but inherently living. Body also has sensation, feeling, and intellect, either actually or potentially (VII, 4 p. 51). We have seen that the extent of a creature's materiality is dependent on the free choices or "willful actions" of each being (VII, 1 p. 43).

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46   Ibid. 66. Image p. 83.
47   Ibid. 67. Image p. 84.
48   Ibid. 69. Image p. 86.
49   Conway's explanation of the exact relation between body and spirit is very similar to the natural philosophy of Jan Baptista van Helmont. According to Hutton, Anne Conway 143 f., several aspects of Conway's spiritual monism have a "distinctly Helmontian ring". These aspects include Conway's theory of change; her explanation of the interaction and communication between creatures; her idea of body being an image of the dominant spirit; the transmission of this image from the active principle, spirit, to a passive and retentive principle, body; and communication between creatures or their constitutive elements through transmission of images.

Conway is not especially explicit in explaining what constitutes proper moral decisions that might further one's spiritual status. However, she describes the spirit of divine self-communication as "a living goodness, which possesses life, knowledge, love and power" (VII, 2 p. 45). Therefore, wrong moral decisions must involve the opposites of these attributes, such as malice, sloth, carelessness, hate, anger, and passivity. The decisions made by a creature become reflected in its embodiment. A man who lives a "just and holy life" will thus be "elevated to the rank of angels" (VI, 7 p. 35), whereas someone who lives a "brutish" or animal-like life will (eventually) have the body of an animal, because "the brute spirit cannot produce or form any other shape because its formative power is governed by its imagination, which imagines and conceives as strongly as possible its own image, according to which the external body must take shape" (VI, 7 p. 36).

Even if Conway aligns spirit with activity and body with passivity, the spirit needs the body to receive its image. In her article "Anne Conway: Bodies in the Spiritual World", Marcy Lascano argues convincingly for the actual necessity of body in Conway's spiritual monism. In her discussion of the nature and function of the body in Conway's cosmology, Lascano identifies three particular functions of the body:

"There are three important functions that body plays in Conway's philosophy. First, body reflects the image of the principal spirit and the individual's moral and ontological status. Second, body holds the images received from outside of the individual that result from interaction with the rest of creation. Finally, body serves as the repository of thoughts, memories, and knowledge."[50]

These functions of the body identified by Lascano will be discussed more comprehensively in the following subsections, but for now it is sufficient to note that the body is an expression of the moral status of its spirit and that this is linked to the physical monad which is not a solitary substance but inherently relational. This means that the body plays a central role in the formation of the spirit's mode of expression. Conway writes:

"Spirit is light or the eye looking at its own proper image, and the body is the darkness which receives this image. And when the spirit beholds it, it is as if someone sees himself in a mirror. But he cannot see himself reflected in the same way in clear air or in any diaphanous body, since the reflection of an image requires a certain opacity, which we call body." (VI, 11 p. 38)

Because the body is darker and crasser than the spirit, it can "receive and reflect its image". The heaviness, darkness, and grossness of the body, which Conway

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50   Lascano, Anne Conway 330.

refers to continuously, is a precondition for its function as a mirror. But not only that. The body is also a repository, which retains the image of the spirit: "Just as every spirit needs a body to receive and reflect its image, it also needs a body to retain the image. For every body has this retentive nature in itself to a greater or a lesser degree" (VI, 11 p. 38). In order to retain whatever image it projects, the spirit requires a body. Therefore, corporeality is required of every spirit, even the ones that are usually considered incorporeal. Even "internal productions of the mind" such as thoughts, knowledge, and memories – which Descartes and More sought to disembody, thus making them pure abstractions – are embodied:

"For, if they did not have a body, they could not be retained nor could we reflect on our own thoughts. For all reflection takes place because of a certain darkness, and this is the body. Thus memory requires a body in order to retain the spirit of the thing conceived of; otherwise it vanishes, just as an image in a mirror immediately vanishes when the object is removed." (VI, 11 p. 39)

The positive evaluation of body is further supported by Conway's conviction that it is a gift from God in creation, along with life and essence (I, 3 p. 9). Although the created spirits "fell" from God and became *more* corporeal, it is clear that she believes that the body was always there, even in the prelapsarian state (cf. I, 3 p. 9; V, 6 p. 27).

Even though she understands the bodies of created spirits to be good and necessary, we can now appreciate why spirit is "the more excellent" in the hierarchy of the two (VII, 1 p. 42). Spirit is one of God's communicable attributes, and one of the ways in which creation is able to participate in God. If we understand Conway's created substance of physical monads in the light of process theology, it seems that the spiritual side of the physical monad corresponds to the mental pole of the actual entity. That is, spirit is the active and decisive moment in each physical monad, which then makes a moral choice based on its interaction with the other spiritual monads, which results in a change. If the body of the physical monad, on the other hand, corresponds to the physical pole of actual entities, then it is clear that activity and the possibility of perfection lie in the spiritual side of each creature. Conway clearly states that the spirit's role in creation is giving activity: "there is spirit or will in God […] through which creatures receive their essence and activity" (I, 7 p. 10). We might say that the more dominated a creature is by divine spirit, the more active it is.

Conway argues that the activity of the spirits in a creature eventually decides its nature or essence. But we must be careful here: As argued in Part Three, Conway's understanding of the "essence" of creatures is not straightforward. Rather, it seems close to Origen's metaphysics of freedom, which holds activity to be primary over static essence. Similarly, in Conway it seems that the "essence" of

a creature is constituted by what it receives from the divine spirit in creation: freedom, relatedness, and creativity. These categories seem to be the most basic and yet highest characteristics that a creature can have, and the better use it makes of these categories, the better and more spiritual it becomes. But creatures participate in this spirit to a higher or lesser degree, and they are free to cultivate or ignore their spiritual side in their decisions. Therefore, their activity is not necessarily an expression of their participation in the divine spirit. Their activity is the choices or decisions that creatures make, which then result in their particular detailed histories.

Participation in the divine spirit fosters the *possibility* of greater love, living goodness, life, knowledge, power, and sympathy – all the things that Conway stresses come from God. The divine spirit signifies activity and is thus not limited but infinite in its capacity to move towards perfection. But the actual creature is limited. It is restrained by its past decisions, its physical pole, its body, which puts a limit to the possible action of each spirit but also makes the slow movement towards perfection possible as it retains the previous progress made.

After having thus explained the nature of the relation between body and spirit, she proceeds to give six reasons for why it should necessarily be so.

4.2.3. Conway's Six Arguments for Spiritual Monism

Conway gives six reasons for her spiritual monism. The nature of her arguments is primarily theological and set in a soteriological scheme from creation to salvation. Moreover, in terms of approach the arguments fall into three categories which all serve to substantiate why spirit and body are really one and the same substance. Arguments one and two are theocentric in nature and based on deduction and rationalism. Arguments three, four, and five, on the other hand, are anthropocentric in their approach, based on observation, experience, and induction. Finally, argument six is based on Scripture or revelation. This final argument combines the above two methods in a move characteristic of the Cambridge Platonists, who sought to prove that Scripture is both rational and spiritual, involving objective truth as well as interpretation. Thus, it seems that Conway wants to show from all possible angles that hers is the right understanding of how spirit relates to body. Again, she directly counters the strong ontologies of Descartes, More, Hobbes, and Spinoza by reverting to arguments based on strong ontologies herself and then by adding arguments based on weak ontology and, finally, Scripture. The connecting point among all these arguments, I believe, is her attempt to show how relatedness is an undisputable constituent of reality. In what follows, I shall substantiate this view.

Conway's first argument for spiritual monism is based on her tripartite ontology of substance. The three substances are differentiated from each other by their capacity or incapacity for change, as has been shown in Part Three. Since creation differs from God and Christ, it must necessarily be one and the same substance (VII, 4 p. 41). Conway concludes that: "the three aforementioned species exhaust all the specific differences in substances which can possibly be conceived by our minds [… and] all phenomena in the entire universe can be reduced to these three aforementioned species" (VI, 4 p. 30). She further argues, on a theological basis, that if there were only two species or if there were more than three, this would upset "that excellent order, described above, which appears in all things" (VI, 5 p. 31) as it would reduce the importance of Christ as mediator (VI, 4 p. 30). The ontological structure of the *Principles* is tripartite and therefore, according to some scholars, would be better described as "Trialism" than monism.[51] As we have seen, the spiritual monism of her system only pertains to the level of created beings. This first argument is obviously only as good as her argument for Trialism.

The second reason has also been explored in Part Three. It derives from the attributes of God "from which the truth of everything can be made clear" (VII, 2 p. 44). The attributes that God communicates to creation include spirit, light, life, goodness, holiness, justice, wisdom, etc. Among these there "are none that are not alive and life itself" (VII, 2 p. 45). All creatures partake in God's "living goodness", and it is impossible that anything dead should proceed from him: "It has been truly said that God does not make death" (VII, 2 p. 45).[52] Therefore, there is no such thing as dead matter. Rather, creation is a single substance of living, spiritual matter.

Conway's second argument has the "creationist" and the teleological thrust that permeates her entire cosmology. It is the connection of protology and soteriology in the economy of salvation that is revealed both in a macro-historical perspective and in the smallest single creature. Conway takes this perspective – the movement of creatures away from God and back to God – in her second argument. First, she explains that it is unfathomable that God should create anything without life or perception, since created beings emanate from him and partake of

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51 Boyle, Spontaneous and Sexual Generation 177.
52 Conway continues: "There can be no dead reality of which he is or could be a part, which would imply that he would have his own dead reality." This argument shows Conway's commitment to Christ or Middle Nature as a metaphysical necessity in her system rather than a teaching of dogmatic importance. It certainly problematizes the importance of Christ's death on the cross. To give but one example, Moltmann, The Crucified God 202, follows Karl Rahner in stressing the importance of death itself being "taken in" or "subsumed" by God through Jesus on the cross as the only possible way really to overcome it: "As we may not assume that this death 'does not affect' God, 'this death itself expresses God'. 'The death of Jesus is a statement of God about himself'." Conway seems to want to protect the stability and absolute power of God.

his communicable attributes, none of which are without life or perception: "Or, how can any creature receive so vile and diminished an essence from him (who is so infinitely generous and good) that it does not share any life or perception" (VII, 2 p. 45). She argues that created beings must "be like their creator" in certain things, since they come from him. The second dimension of Conway's argument is really an extension of the first, namely, that creatures participate in life and perception because this is their "aspiration" or "end" or what we might term their subjective aim (VII, 2 p. 45). The growth of life and perception is the telos of created beings:

"Did not God create all his creatures to this end, namely, that they be blessed in him and enjoy his divine goodness in their various conditions and states? Moreover, how could this be possible without life or perception?" (VII, 2 p. 45)

Greater participation in God, or the growth towards perfection, is both the "initial aim" and the "subjective aim" of every being. In this description, Conway comes very close to the telos of process theology, namely enjoyment and aesthetic satisfaction. But dead matter (or vacuous actuality) cannot make any progress in goodness or perfection. Motion and shape in themselves contribute nothing to life. Even if body changes its form, without life and perception it would have no "intrinsic power" and would not do anything "for itself" since it remains "indifferent" and has no intention and no course of action (VII, 2 p. 46). But because all matter is alive, it has within it the intrinsic power to improve itself, that is, to become more spiritual. Spiritual advancement is subject to relatedness.

Conway's third argument comes from "that great love and desire which spirits or souls have for bodies, and especially for those bodies with which they are united and in which they dwell" (VII, 3 p. 46). This argument is partly phenomenological and partly theological in nature. She first defines love or desire as "that which brings one thing to another" (VII, 3 p. 46). The basis of this attraction can be either particular or universal. Conway explains the four bases of love or desire as: a) that two beings are of the same nature or substance; b) that they share a likeness; c) that one has its being from the other; or d) that one recognizes goodness in the other (VII, 2 p. 46).[53] It is unclear whether she distinguishes between the first and the second foundations for love, or whether the second is simply a different expression or stage of the first foundation. Could two things share a likeness if they do not also share a substance?[54] However, there seems to be a hierarchy, where the most fundamental love (the universal love) comes from the same nature or sub-

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53   BROAD, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* 75 f.
54   BOYLE, *Spontaneous and Sexual Generation* 181, evidently interprets it as being two distinct arguments.

stance, and the likeness (the particular love) then contributes to further this love. We find examples of this in the created world, where creatures love what they give birth to, and that this love "grows greater *if* their children look like them, either in body, spirit, or manner" (VII, 3 p. 46).[55] Conway observes that we love that which is like us: "birds of one species fly in flocks, fish of one species swim together, and men prefer to associate with men rather than with other creatures" (VII, 3 p. 46 f.). Even wicked men and women love their children, because they are like them. But, she says, in addition to this particular love there is also a universal love between all creatures. This stems from the same principle, that all creatures across species and other particularities share substance and likeness through God's communicable attributes. All creatures are of one nature from the primary substance, namely God. Conway's distinction between universal and particular spirits discussed above thus seems to surface again in her third argument.

Conway finds support for her reasoning in Genesis. Here she also finds the two foundations for why "in every species of animal […] males and females love each other" (VII, 3 p. 47). The first is taken from Gen. 2:23 and refers to the unity of their two natures: The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man". This shows, says Conway, that the woman was taken from the man, and therefore he loved her, and she him. The second is taken from Gen. 2:18–20, where their similarity is stressed: "God said: it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Conway argues that before Eve, Adam was alone, because there was "no one like himself with whom he could associate" (VII, 3 p. 47). There is a further ground for love founded in theology, which is inherent in the act of creation. Giving existence is an expression of love, and this is how God loves his creatures: "For he gave existence, life, and motion to everything and he therefore loves everything and is unable not to love everything" (VII, 3 p. 47). Since the act of creation is God's alone, and he is recognized as the only true and genuine cause of life, the appropriate response to this realization is to love him back in gratitude. According to Conway this response is not so much a conscious obligation as an instinct:

"Those creatures, on the other hand, which are not altogether degenerate and lost to every sense of God, love him. This is a certain divine law and instinct with which he has endowed all rational creatures so that they love him, which is the fulfillment of all the commandments." (VII, 3 p. 47)

We might suggest a parallel between this instinct to love God and prehension. Just as prehension in process theology is not necessarily a conscious action or endeavor, it is nevertheless the foundation of any experience. Likewise, for Conway

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55   My italics.

the love of God is the basis of any experience. The difference lies in the fact that, for Conway, loving in this way primarily takes place in rational creatures. This is an ability the creature can lose if it "degenerates" beyond a certain point, whereas prehension happens even on the lowest level of being.

The spirit or soul cannot give being to the body in the strict sense of creating. Therefore, the strong love between body and spirit must be due to the similarity and affinity between them rather than to existential gratitude. This affinity, in turn, is due to their shared nature. Conway continues to assert that souls have great love and desire for bodies, especially for those in which they dwell, precisely because they are really the same. One might point out that this argument is problematic as it is really her foregone conclusion.

The fourth argument relates to the problem of interaction and is derived from experience and induction. It falls into two parts. Conway asks first how it is that spirit and body can be united if they are essentially different substances? This question is clearly directed against Henry More, as Conway explicitly refutes the idea of a "vital affinity" between spirit and body that he developed and that, as we have seen, she holds to be "foolish and unsound" (VIII, 1 p. 57).[56] If spirit and body are completely distinct and different substances, then why would the spirit need the body in the first place? She further points to the problem of interaction described above: How can the spirit produce motion if it is impenetrable?

"For if spirit so easily penetrates every body, why, when it moves from place to place, does it not leave the body behind since it can so easily pass through it without any or the least resistance? Clearly, this is the cause of all those motions which we see in the world when one thing moves another, namely that the two are impenetrable, in the sense already explained." (VIII, 1 p. 57)

Conway uses an analogy of the motion of a ship. The sails of the ship have to be more or less impenetrable in order to move the ship. If the sails were replaced by a net, the wind would pass through freely and the ship would barely move, even if there was a storm raging. Therefore, she concludes, "impenetrability causes the existence of motion and produces it" (VIII, 1 p. 57). Conway also refutes the theological answer that God is the prime mover of all things and therefore also the mover of particular bodies. God, she says, moves a body in a way completely different from the way a soul moves a body. That is, God gave motion to creatures in the same sense that he gave being to creatures, but any particular motion of the particular creature cannot be said to come from God. This would make every act

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56   It is worth noting that the term "vital affinity" is Coudert and Corse's translation of Conway's term *vitalis congruitas* in the Latin text: Conway, Principles 111. Image p. 128. Although it seems to denote the same principle, it obscures the fact that Conway here responds directly to Henry More, who used the term "vital congruity" and not "vital affinity".

and ultimately the entire world already determined and mean that God would be the "author of sin" (VIII, 2 p. 58). Clearly, she does not see this as a viable explanation.

Although a particular spirit's motion is autonomous, motion itself is a gift from God, through whom "we move, live, and have our being", as Conway argues along with Acts 17:28 (VIII, 2 p. 58). Here we see the distinction between God and creation, between the universal spirit that contributes to all life and motion and the particular spirit of a created being as particular actions of motion. And we observe another interesting thing, which is Conway's transition from speaking about spirit to speaking about soul. In her first three arguments, she has used the term "soul" only a few times to replace spirit but not in a way that seems consistent. This changes in argument four, where she consistently refers to the "soul":

"But it is a very different case when the soul moves the body, for the soul is not the author of motion but merely limits it to this or that particular thing. And the soul itself moves together with the body from place to place, and if the body is imprisoned or bound with chains, the soul cannot depart from the prison or chains." (VIII, 2 p. 58)

This change in terminology seems consistent with her transition from speaking about a universal spirit to speaking about the particular spirits of creatures. We begin to see a connection between what we might call the "essence" of a creature and its "soul". Conway argues that the soul of a creature follows the body, so that if the body is "imprisoned or bound with chains" the soul cannot separate itself from these chains or depart from its bodily prison. In this way Conway can maintain that while motion itself derives from God all particular motion is due to particular creatures, which is a strong argument in her theodicy. We shall return to this point in the next subsection.

The second question Conway asks is reminiscent of Elisabeth of Bohemia's objection to Descartes.[57] If body and spirit are distinct, then why does the soul suffer when the body hurts? This experience-based argument asks: if the soul could be so easily penetrated by the body, then how can the body hurt it? It does not solve the question to say that it is the body that feels the pain and not the soul, because this would contradict the supposition that body is lifeless and has no perception. Therefore it is clear that the soul and body are united, and that "the soul moves the body and suffers with it and through it" (VIII, 2 p. 58).[58] There is a structural

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57 Coudert/Corse, Introduction xvi. Broad; Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century 16–34. See also The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes 61–73.

58 Process theology takes this position of the intimate relation of spirit and body to its fullest consequence. It posits that God, because he is responsive, is not disconnected from

nexus or mirror-effect between this passage and Conway's third argument.[59] Both love and suffering point to the intimate unity of body and soul in her cosmology, and indeed, the unity of all living creatures: "One body can wound or bring pain or pleasure to another body, because things of one or of a similar nature can easily affect each other" (VIII, 3 p. 59). Spirit and body are not two independent substances, but united, alike in love and suffering. The soul recognizes its likeness in body and *vice versa*. Conway concludes that there is a "true affinity" in the very nature of the soul and the body.

Conway's fifth argument is based on her biological views and may be summed up as her "vitalism" or her assertion that everything is alive. She finds an exemplification of the spiritual nature of matter in her belief in the spontaneous generation of animals, that is, the propagation of species without parental origin.[60] Conway asks how earth and water would be able to produce animals if they were not inherently alive and spiritual. For example, she refers to Genesis as evidence that a pool of water produces fish even if there were no fish there to propagate (VIII, 4 p. 60). She asserts that when a body putrefies other species are generated from this putrefaction (VIII, 4 p. 61). Even rocks turn into animals when they putrefy, she claims. Thus, animals and "all other things" that are spiritual originally come from putrefying earth or water (VIII, 4 p. 60). Conway's fifth argument reiterates her argument from earlier on, in chapter VI, where she presented her interpretation of creation and asked: "And does not rotting matter, or body of earth and water, produce animals without any previous seed of those animals?" (VI, 6 p. 34).[61] In both places, the intent is to prove the monist nature of the relation between body and spirit and to show this theory's superiority to dualism. Therefore, Conway directly refutes anyone who would argue:

"that this argument does not prove that all spirits are bodies, but only that all bodies have in themselves the spirits of all animals; hence every body has a spirit in it, and although spirit and body are united, they always remain different from each other in their natures and cannot therefore be changed into each other." (VIII, 4 p. 60)

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the sufferings of creatures but shares in them and therefore suffers with his creatures. Cf. WHITEHEAD, Process and Reality 351.

59   ROSENGREN, Conway 87.

60   This is thoroughly discussed by Deborah Boyle, on whose arguments I rely despite my conviction that she glosses over the importance of Scripture in Conway's argument. BOYLE, Spontaneous and Sexual Generation 183, argues that belief in spontaneous generation was common in the first half of the seventeenth century and was an echo of teachings found in Aristotle, Augustine, and Medieval Islamic philosophers. Contemporary philosophers such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, and Conway's physician William Harvey, among others, accepted this biological theory, to which Conway adheres.

61   Conway's interpretation of creation in Genesis was explored in Part Three.

Deborah Boyle argues that the target here is specifically More rather than Descartes or Hobbes.[62] The argument that bodies are not spiritual in themselves but rather *possess* spirits does not work, says Conway. Her argument is interesting in that it shows some affinity with process thought: she makes a distinction between the *actuality* and the *potentiality* of spiritual matter. According to her argument, when the dualist (i. e., Henry More) asserts that "all bodies have in themselves the spirits of all animals" and indeed of all other things, he will have to explain whether these spirits are contained in the bodies actually or potentially. If actually, then two problems arise. First, the dualist would have to explain how so many spirits could exist in even the smallest body without adding any weight or extension to this body. This would require the unification or homogenization of spirit and body through intimate presence. But intimate presence is the prerogative of God and Christ only, as it is an incommunicable attribute and therefore not characteristic of creatures (VII, 4 p. 50).

Second, if the dualist holds the multiplicity of spirits to be actually present in every body, he would have to explain why decaying matter gives rise to a particular kind of animal and not to any of the other kinds whose spirits are actually contained within it. Why are not all kinds of animals immediately produced from the same body, if they are all actually present in it? This would be the necessary outcome of actual spirits, but it is contrary to both experience and, argues Conway, to the divine order, where one species proceeds gradually from another "either ascending to a higher perfection or descending to a lower state" (VIII, 4 p. 60). She gives the concrete example of a horse, which is good and endowed with some degree of perfection because it "exhibits anger, fear, love, memory, and various other qualities which are in human beings and which we can also observe in dogs and many other animals" (VI, 6 p. 32). Conway asks what happens to the horse when it dies:

"If it has such a spirit – something which must clearly be conceded – what happens to this spirit when the horse dies? If it is said that it returns to life and obtains the body of another horse, so that it becomes a horse as it was before but stronger and more beautiful and with a better spirit than before, excellent! If it dies a second, third, or fourth time, does it always

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62   First, Conway continues to frame her argument in distinctly Morean terms, referring scornfully to his concept of "plastic nature" (VIII, 4 p. 61), another of More's classes of spirits which he had to install in his system in order to account for the interaction between passive matter and active spirit. Cf. More, Immortality of the Soul II 15, p. 122–128. Second, Hobbesian materialists would never agree on her premise that "every body has a spirit in it". Likewise, Descartes did not believe animals had souls, and he was therefore not obliged to explain how animal souls can be generated from matter. As Boyle, Spontaneous and Sexual Generation 186, points out, Conway's target is someone who "endorses dualism, believes that humans and nonhumans alike have souls, and accepts the existence of cases of spontaneous generation; More fits the bill in these respects".

remain a horse, even though it becomes continuously better and more excellent, and how often does its spirit return? Now, I ask, whether the species of horse possesses such infinite perfection that a horse can always become better and better to infinity, yet always remain a horse?" (VI, 6 p. 32 f.)[63]

Her conclusion is that "the horse will surely change eventually into a human being" (VI, 6 p. 33). It is impossible that a creature, which has the ability to perfect itself to infinity and come closer to a higher species, should not eventually reach this species. Since the whole created species is the same substance there is only a finite distance and not an infinite distance between the individuals within it. If the distance between species was infinite, so that there was no possibility of progression from a horse to a human being, this would raise the higher creature to an "infinite excellence" which is characteristic only of Christ and God (VI, 6 p. 33). Conway concludes that all spirits must be contained not *actually* but *potentially* in matter. And this, in fact, is the same as to say that they are one nature and substance:

"But if one says that all spirits are contained in every body in their different essences, not actually but only potentially, then one must concede that the body and all those spirits are the same; that is, that body can be changed into them, as when we say that wood is potentially fire (that is, is changeable into it) and water potentially air (that is, is changeable into it), etc." (VIII, 4 p. 60)

If any body can potentially be changed into any spirit and any spirit can reside in any body, this inevitably leads to spiritual monism. If spirit and body are not one substance, then why do they not separate and disperse into a morass of dissolutions? One might argue, as did More, that spirits are held back, or even imprisoned by the body, and only "released from their chains" when the body decays (VIII, 4 p. 61).[64] To this, Conway asks in turn how spirits were held captive in the body in the first place, if not because they were themselves bodies that could not simply penetrate the grosser body and fly away:

63   It is possible to understand this paragraph in two ways: either as an expression of Conway's belief in metemphychosis (from Greek, μετεμψύχωσις, meaning the passing of the soul at death into another body, human or animal) or as an expression of transmutation, meaning the transformation of the one and same spiritual body. This distinction is important, because the first implies that the soul is detached from the body, and is therefore a dualistic view of the relation between body and spirit. The second implies viewing the soul and the body as a unity and is therefore a monist view.

64   Boyle, Spontaneous and Sexual Generation 186, believes that Conway here responds directly to More, Immortality o the Soul II 15,2 p. 122, where he claims to have solved the puzzle of "how the Soul can get out of the Body, being imprisoned and lockt up in so close a Castle".

"This captivity of spirits in certain hard bodies, and their liberation when the bodies be-
come soft, offers a clear argument that spirit and body are of one original nature and
substance, and that body is nothing but fixed and condensed spirit, and spirit nothing but
volatile body or body made subtle." (VIII, 4 p. 61)

Again, all spirits are *potentially* present in all bodies. As in process theology, all
creatures are made of physical monads, or actual entities, that are *both* spiritual
and embodied, each of which has the infinite potential to become something dif-
ferent than what it is at present. It has in its becoming the possibility of directing
itself anew through its free decisions and eventually changing. However, Conway
seems to think – as do process theologians – that the spirit is not free to choose
absolutely anything, as it is bound to the body in some sense. Process theologians
would call this limit of the potential the "objective data" or the "efficient cause" of
the past, which is taken into account in every formative decision. In other words,
every being has "inertia", or a past that functions like "chains". Conway holds
a similar position but founds her argument on the presupposition of a divine or-
der. This entails that, although there is an infinity of spirits in every creature, the
infinity of their formative or self-creative powers is potential and not actual. Simi-
larly, Conway explains that there are indeed some of these spirits that cannot leave
the body – they are "as if imprisoned", because they cannot "flow out or fly away"
from their bodies until they decay (VIII, 5 p. 61). However, there are other spir-
its, which emanate from these grosser spirits and continually work through their
"formative power" to direct the re-creation and appearance of the grosser body:

"Therefore the gross body and the spirits contained in it are like the mother of the more
subtle spirits, who take the place of children. For nature always works toward the greater
perfection of subtlety and spirituality since this is the most natural property of every op-
eration and motion." (VIII, 5 p. 61)

Because of the formative spirit, no particular being can change direction abrupt-
ly. There is inertia in each being. As Conway says, there is an order where "one
species proceeds from another", slowly moving towards perfection (VIII, 4 p. 60).
    We should note that this fifth argument, too, has a strong teleological impetus.
Attainment of perfection and salvation is the driving force behind even her sci-
entific and experiential argument for spontaneous generation. At the foundation
of her vitalist monism is Conway's theodicy.[65] The theological dimension of Con-
way's argument is not just an appendix composed of some random references to
Scripture. It really pertains to her understanding of the order of the universe and
the possibilities for each creature. In the fourth and fifth arguments for spiritual

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65   This aspect has tended to be overlooked in Conway scholarship.

monism, her interpretation of Genesis directs the argument. In the fifth argument for spiritual monism she connects spontaneous generation with the creation in Genesis. As she picks up the thread from chapter VI, which discusses what I have called the *creatio ex profundis*, she suggests a parallel between the spontaneous generation of decaying matter and God's creation of the world. Creation occurs in the unification of God's Word with the "unique substance from which everything has come forth" (VI, 4 p. 31). According to Genesis, God first created through his Word.[66] At God's command, his Word, life sprang forth from the earth.[67] From a biblical point of view, therefore, Conway has argued that earth – matter – is inherently alive and spiritual (VI, 6 p. 34 cf. Gen. 2:7). It is clear from both passages in Conway that the matter from which the first being is formed is not dead but living. Whether God's Word is necessary to facilitate creation, that is, whether creation occurs in the unity between Word (Christ) and spiritual matter (earth) or whether life was already there is unclear. But Conway's fifth argument stipulates the creative potential that is inherent in the spiritual matter. God's creative act in Genesis is maintained and transferred to each creature, who has the inherent power to re-create or co-create itself. This, in turn, points to the relatedness between God and creatures through his life-giving Spirit.

Conway's sixth and final argument for spiritual monism is that Scripture supports it. She draws out passages from "both the Old and the New Testament", which, she says, prove "in clear and certain words that everything has life and is truly alive in some degree" (VIII, 7 p. 62). Here she paraphrases Acts 17:25 "'He gives life to all things, etc.'" (VIII, 7 p. 62). Then she moves to 1 Tim. 6:13, where she tells us that "it is said of God that 'he makes everything live'" (VIII, 7 p. 62). Another passage which Conway believes supports her theory is Luke 20:38, "where it is said, 'He is not called the God of the dead but of the living' (although this applies primarily to human beings, it is nevertheless generally true of everything else)" (VIII, 7 p. 62).

Conway paraphrases rather than cites these passages exactly from Scripture and tends to add small comments like "etc.". This suggests that she knew the verses by heart and is more interested in what she perceived to be their key message than in their precise wording. This is also evident from her interpretive comment on the quotation from Luke. There is no need for close exegesis, morphological analyses or historical context, as long as one understands the core meaning of the passage. While Conway says that she quotes passages from both the Old and the New Testament, she actually quotes only the New Testament. This could be due to the fact that Genesis runs as a foundation throughout her argument for spiritual monism, and she takes it for granted that her readers will know this.

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66   Gen. 1:3.
67   Gen. 1:11–25.

After having listed passages that substantiate her argument for vital monism, she immediately, and somewhat unexpectedly, turns her attention to the meaning of resurrection, and how we may understand the relation between regeneration and restoration. Here, she refers to John 12:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" – but she does not quote it directly. Conway says that this verse shows that even when something is considered dead, it is not really dead but full of life and can be transformed into something new (VIII, 7 p. 62). Death is never annihilation but "a change from one kind or degree of life to another". Therefore, she concludes, all things have "their resurrection and regeneration in their own species" (VIII, 7 p. 62). This argument shows Conway's conviction of the coherence between regeneration and restoration as the continuing development of all species towards perfection. Again, we notice the continuity from protology to eschatology characteristic of Conway's system. "Her soteriology is underscored by her physics", as Hutton expresses it.[68] The turn to eschatology is interesting, given that it implies a question that has been lurking in the background: can one particular creature remain the same in its essence throughout all these changes, and thus maintain some individuality? We shall return to this question shortly.

Conway states her six arguments in an attempt to prove that spirit and matter are two different aspects of one and the same substance. Taken together they constitute an effective rebuttal of the strong ontologies of dualism and materialism. As Hutton explains, Conway's "monist superstructure" does not need to explain how souls are united with bodies since they are the same substance. Therefore, motion does not present a problem, either. The infinite spiritual monads do not need a "vehicle" in terms of a bodily receptacle to move themselves.[69] Rather, the infinite physical monads within the primary created substance are their own vehicles. Therefore, Conway does not need any intermediary concepts such as More's vital congruity to explain the affinity between body and spirit.[70]

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68 Hutton, *Henry More and Anne Conway* 121.
69 The Platonic doctrine of the "vehicle of the soul" was prevalent among the Cambridge Platonists. For a good survey of this doctrine in Henry More, see More, *Immortality of the Soul* II 14 f. p. 257–267; III 1 p. 326–340; *Conjectura Cabbalistica* 41. 170; *Grand Mystery of Godliness* I 6,9 p. 18; I 7,1 p. 19; VI 5,2 p. 226; VI 5,6 p. 227; Cudworth, *True Intellectual System* 785. 788. 789. 792. 793; cf. Tertullian, *Resurrection of the Flesh* 35, which condemns those who propose "some body of a subtle, secret nature". See also Hutton, *Anne Conway* 85.
70 Ead., *Henry More and Anne Conway* 122.

4.3. The Question of Identity: between Freedom and Creativity

Conway's critique of dualism and her proposed solution to the interaction of body and spirit stress the plurality of each creature as well as the relatedness of each creature to its surroundings. Indeed, every being is an infinite multiplicity of beings that continuously affect each other and change themselves as well as their surroundings. As Catherine Keller asks at the beginning of her fresh interpretation of the *Principles*: "To be in relation is already to be a multiplicity: who had recognized this, before Anne Conway?"[71] Keller argues that using the term "monism" in an unqualified sense is not helpful in grasping the finer details of Conway's position. The term "monism" risks connoting a "oneness" of static being that is not coherent with Conway's way of thinking about being as a related multiplicity that continuously rearranges itself by making new connections. One could argue that the phrase "spiritual monism" points to the multiplicity inherent in her position, but, again, one must then be careful to qualify Conway's concept of spirit, which holds that the one divine spirit is multiple in creation. That is, its embodied state disperses it into an infinity of monads. This position has the strength of ensuring a strong connection between body and spirit – and between God and the world – but it raises the question of whether plurality and the infinity of spirits is prevalent to such a degree that any notion of unity becomes impossible. Or, as Keller formulates it: "Will any mystical cosmology, indeed any polydoxical manifold, ultimately betray the particular – and especially, the human – individual?"[72] As mentioned in Part Two, the plurality of the created substance – or what Keller calls the *plurisingularity* – threatens the very idea of a self-contained thinking self that remains distinct from its surroundings.[73] With Michel Serres, we could say that the *cogito* is in risk of "dissolving"[74] or, following Cobb and Griffin, we might put it like this: "no neat line can be drawn between the individual and the environment, since what is 'the environment' in one moment essentially enters into the individual in the next moment".[75] Does the posited plurality of being *as becoming* dissolve the self and, thereby, individual identity? This will be the main question of the second half of Part Four.

  Personal identity, or being as a coherent subject, a unity, related to but somehow distinct from its surroundings, is a fundamental experience of human life, and any comprehensive ontology and theology should therefore do justice to this experience. If one accepts the individual's experience of being a unity recognizable through time, the processual nature of the weak ontology seems to encounter

71   Keller, Be a Multiplicity 81.
72   Ibid. 86.
73   Ibid. 88.
74   Crahay, Michel Serres 20 n. 8.
75   Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 26.

a challenge as it tends to blur the boundaries between the experience of unity in the individual self, i.e., "identity", and the multiplicity of the exterior world into which the individual is thrown. This happens as the individual is both determined and continuously created by its surroundings while also creating itself and influencing its surroundings anew. We have established that for Conway the created substance is not indivisible. One might therefore hesitate to call her creatures "individuals" because they are, in fact, multiple. Conway herself mainly uses the term "creature" when she speaks about a singular being. She does occasionally speak directly of "the essential nature of individuals" (VI, 2 p. 29), but she simultaneously holds that a particular creature is never "entirely limited" or "totally constrained and confined" by its individuality (VI, 5 p. 32). She uses the term "individual" mainly to designate a single creature or member of a class or species. Yet, her insistence on the transmutation of species holds that one man cannot change into another. As shown in Parts Two and Three, Conway holds that even if a rock can turn into an angel by virtue of its free choices, Paul can never turn into Judas. That is, one individual cannot inherit the sin or the virtue of another individual (VI, 2 p. 29; VI, 5 p. 32). This necessity for individuality seems at odds with the monist pluralism which holds that God continuously increases the essences of creatures. For Conway, the insistence on something akin to a "soul" is necessary for theological reasons, because if everything is fluid and changeable, God would be unable to bestow rewards or punishments upon each creature for its actions.

Applying the key categories of freedom and creativity to this question offers a framework within which to think about the problem of individuality.

On the one hand, creativity underlines the *relational* aspect of identity. This holds true for the relation of the individual to God whose creative activity gives eternal possibilities to creatures. As we have seen in Part Three, it is the self-agency of creatures which determines reality because the choices of the individual actualize some of the possibilities given to it by God. Each creature, for both Conway and process theology, is influenced by the past which sets some boundaries for what is possible for the present individual. In this sense, creativity relates each creature not only to God but also to its communal past and to its surrounding environment or context. As well as being related to its past, every creature is also set in forward motion towards an undetermined future that it constantly creates by virtue of its actions. In so doing, it creates present reality. According to process theology, creatures can be self-creative in two ways: they can be either self-expressive or self-determining. A self-expressive action confirms the relationality with God and the rest of creation by being in accordance with the initial aim that God has set for it to further the communal good. A self-determining action can respond to this relationality in a negative or neutral manner by either actively countering the initial aim or simply not contemplating it. For Conway this self-creative

action is linked to whether or not the individual acts in accordance with the ethical categories that constitute the communicable attributes of God.

On the other hand, this makes it evident that an aspect of freedom is necessary for creativity. This can be inferred from the metaphysics of freedom that I presented at the end of Part Three. Every creative act is an expression of agency, and for any self-creative action to happen freedom must be presupposed. Thus, an aspect of the agency of the individual is maintained which demarcates it as independent of the context in which it is always embedded. In other words, the key category of freedom tends to separate particular elements of reality as individual agents and to demarcate them over and against each other. The key category of creativity emphasizes the inherent relatedness of these particular elements of reality. If freedom is necessary for the creative act, then the question becomes: how can the separating and individualizing movement that takes place in freedom be contained in the intimate relatedness that is emphasized in the creative event?

Transposing the key categories to another dichotomy, one might think of this tension as a dialectic between the *inward* relation of the individual to itself and the *outward* relation of the individual to its surrounding environment. The self seems to oscillate between these two spaces. On the one hand we find the agency of freedom as the subject imposes itself upon an external reality, and, on the other, we find the instantaneous incorporation of this activity into an internal relation of the self to itself that ideally partakes in God. Thus, the individual seems caught in a dialectic movement between freedom as transition in time and relation as concrescence in eternity. Phyllis Mack writes that the Quakers "suspended the self" in their experience of being intimate with God. They "portrayed themselves not merely as individual, biological men or women but as souls with the potential for both masculine and feminine expression".[76] If such fluid self-expression occurs in points of activity, the action seems to suspend the self-contained *cogito*: in the moment of action, the *cogito* is momentarily dissolved. But in the next moment this seemingly dissolved *cogito* remerges as it enters into new relations and must act anew. Following the founder of Cambridge Platonism, Benjamin Whichcote, we might sum up this understanding of the *cogito* in the following phrase: *I act therefore I am*. But again, we must ask: if "I" am most myself in the moment of active decision, and the moment of active decision suspends the "I", then who or what is this "I"? In what way can it be transcendent and objective while being under continuous creation?

In what follows, I shall attempt to delve more deeply into this question by looking at the particular creature, or what we may call the individual or the self, in two ways: first, the "micro-perspective", the way in which an individual creature is composed and how it relates to itself inwardly, and second, the "macro-perspec-

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76   Mack, Visionary Women 236 f.

tive", how all creatures are related to their environment in what we may call the outward relatedness. I will use process theology to illuminate this question in relation to Conway's philosophy.

4.3.1. The Monad

We begin in the micro-cosmic perspective on the individual. Conway's and Whitehead's monadologies are particularly interesting to compare in the light of the probable historical link between the two through the German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). Whitehead was considerably influenced by Leibniz's theory of monads in the development of his concept of actual entities, but he made some significant changes to it.[77] Leibniz's monadology, in turn, was very likely inspired by Conway's physical monads. It will be my argument here that the "corrections" (on his own account) which Whitehead made to Leibniz's monadology in fact bring him "back" closer to Conway's conception of physical monads. Leibniz's position is interesting for our present purpose because it offers a background against which to think about weak ontologies over and against strong ontologies.

The term "monad" is derived from the Greek μονάς, which means "unit" or "one". In Neoplatonism and Christian Platonism, it refers to an entity which is simple, irreducible, and self-determining. Today, the theory is primarily associated with Leibniz, whose *La Monadologie* of 1714 is considered a classic of modern philosophy. Whether Leibniz's monadology is directly influenced by Conway, and if so to what extent, is debated among scholars. One of the scholars arguing a strong case for a direct and significant influence of Conway on Leibniz's monadology is Carolyn Merchant in her article "The Vitalism of Anne Conway: Its Impact on Leibniz's Concept of the Monad" (1979).[78] She argues that Conway's

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77 See above all WHITEHEAD, Science and the Modern World 70. 143. 155 and *passim*; id., Process and Reality 80. 251 and *passim*. Whitehead does not offer his readers a systematic discussion of his reception of Leibniz but refers to him in scattered commentaries throughout his works. An enormous amount of literature has been written about the influence of Leibniz on Whitehead, Whitehead's use of Leibniz, his modifications to Leibniz' monadology, etc. See e.g. BASILE, Learning from Leibniz 1128–1149; id., Leibniz, Whitehead and the Metaphysics of Causation; GRIFFIN, Process Theology 160; HUSTWIT, Art. Process Philosophy; COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 19–21. It is not the ambition of this subsection to give an exhaustive account of Whitehead's use of Leibniz or his modifications to Leibniz' system but to point out some aspects useful for our understanding of Conway.

78 MERCHANT, The Vitalism of Anne Conway 255–269. DURAN, Anne Viscountess Conway 64–79, too, contends that Conway's "monad" preceded and influenced Leibniz. Other scholars also consider the link important enough to point out but do so with less certainty

metaphysical system represented a "significant input in the important period of Leibniz's thought, leading up to the writing of the 1714 'Monadology'".[79] Merchant's argument is that Leibniz did not start using the term "monad" to describe his vitalist monism until 1696 when he was visited by Francis Mercury van Helmont in Hannover.[80] Leibniz and van Helmont engaged in regular philosophical discussions, during which van Helmont found the opportunity to tell Leibniz of that "extraordinary woman" the "Countess of Kennaway" and to encourage him to read her *Principles*.[81] Leibniz was apparently impressed with Conway's vitalist metaphysical system, and in a letter to Thomas Burnet in 1697 he exclaims:

"My philosophical views approach somewhat closely those of the late Countess of Conway, and hold a middle position between Plato and Democritus, because I hold that all things take place mechanically as Democritus and Descartes contend against the views of Henry More and his followers, and hold too, nevertheless, that everything takes place according to a living principle and according to final causes – all things are full of life and consciousness, contrary to the views of the Atomists."[82]

Several passages from his letters suggest that Leibniz feels a strong kinship with Conway, whose rational metaphysical system he deems much more intelligible than the "bristling and paradoxic" philosophy of van Helmont.[83] The conceptual parallels between Leibniz's and Conway's systems and the change in Leibniz's terminology after having read the *Principles* spur us on to investigate similarities between the *Monadology* and the *Principles*.

than Merchant and Duran in their assessment of Conway's direct influence on Leibniz. See e. g. HUTTON, The Conway Letters xii. xxxvi–xxxvii; THOMAS, Time, Space, and Process in Anne Conway 990–1010; LASCANO, Anne Conway on Liberty 170 f.; PUGLIESE, Monism and Individuation in Anne Conway as a Critique of Spinoza 743.

79 MERCHANT, ibid. 258.
80 Six years earlier, in 1691, van Helmont had brought Conway's *Principles* to Holland where the treatise was translated into Latin and later re-translated into English. MERCHANT, ibid. 264, explains how, prior to 1696 and his meeting with van Helmont, Leibniz did not use the term "monad" but rather "entelechie", "formes substantielles", "unité substantielle", "point metaphysical", and "forces primitives" interchangeably to mean individual substance. She argues that this shows that Conway played an important role in the development of Leibniz's metaphysics. Merchant's argument even gives some priority to Conway's influence on Leibniz over van Helmont's because she further uncovers how previous scholarship incorrectly attributed the *Principles* to van Helmont instead of Conway. The link between Leibniz, van Helmont, and Conway and especially their shared adaptation of Kabbalism and its profound influence on their philosophies has been thoroughly investigated: COUDERT, The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century 308–329; BECCO, Leibniz et François Mercure van Helmont 119–142.
81 Leibniz, Die Philosophischen Schriften 3, 176. 180; MERCHANT, ibid. 258.
82 Leibniz, ibid. 3, 217. Cited from Merchant's article. Her translation.
83 Leibniz, New Essays Concerning Human Understanding 67.

The Monad as Self-Contained and Predetermined

Merchant points out how many of Leibniz's thoughts about monads converge with Conway's.[84] They both believe that within every creature in the universe there exists a whole world of creatures – and within each of them, another world.[85] They agree that the composite created world is ultimately divisible into one simple substance without parts – monads or physical monads.[86] These monads are the smallest building blocks of the entire universe, the elements of which everything else is composed. They consist of both spirit and matter.[87] Both Leibniz and Conway believe that they are created instantaneously and that they never cease to exist.[88] The monads are intimately related in order to create the organic unity which is our world. The structure of the world is hierarchical in nature. At the very top of this creation is God in whom all monads participate. Further, according to Leibniz all composite beings are hierarchies of spirits under the rule of a dominant monad or entelechy which unifies the monads. This bears a strong resemblance to Conway's governing or principal spirit.[89] Further, for both Leibniz and Conway, the universe is organic which means that it is alive and changing. Leibniz explains that there is nothing dead in the universe: "Ainsi il n'y a rien d'inculte, de stérile, de mort dans l'univers", just as Conway asserts that there is nothing dead in the world: "It has been truly said that God does not make death. It is equally true that he did not make any dead thing, for how can a dead thing come from him who is infinite life and love?"[90]

   Similarly, they both hold that death is not the annihilation of physical monads "but a change from one kind or degree of life to another", as Conway puts it (VIII, 7 p. 62). Leibniz, too, contends that death is not the annihilation of monads.[91] An individual is a "composed being" consisting of many monads which have come together and which can cease to cohere as a whole. Like Conway, Leibniz asserts that no single monad but only composite beings can die, by which he also means that they can change gradually through the assembling or scattering of parts. The reason for this view, in Leibniz as in Conway, is ultimately theological. Death or dead matter without life would be contrary to the goodness of God and his participation in all creatures. Conway does not use the term "composite beings", but

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84   In the following examples of where their thoughts converge I rely on the work of MERCHANT, The Vitalism of Anne Conway 262 f.

85   Leibniz, Essais de théodicée 502 sections 66 f. Cf. Conway, Principles III, 4 f. p. 16 f.

86   Leibniz, La Monadologie 491 sections 1–3. Cf. Conway, ibid. III, 9 p. 20.

87   Leibniz, ibid. 503 section 72.

88   Ibid. 491 section 6. Cf. Conway, Principles II, 1 p. 12; VIII, 7 p. 62. The account of creation may differ in Conway and Leibniz, but they agree that God gives existence to the monads. How to understand this existence is another matter.

89   Leibniz, ibid. 502 section 70. Cf. Conway, ibid. VII, 1 p. 43; VII, 4 p. 55.

90   Leibniz, ibid. 502 section 69. Cf. Conway, ibid. VII, 1 p. 45.

91   Leibniz, ibid. 491 section 6.

since she sees every creature as an infinity of monads these must come together to form a being that experiences itself as an individual (that is, "Paul" and not "Judas"). To both Leibniz and Conway, "death" is the dispersal of a particular gathering of monads. While this may look like death, it is really the transformation of one being into another, one step in the continuous becoming of creation. But for both, the monad ensures an enduring unity throughout these changes in time. Dead matter would not be able to perfect itself and therefore there is no room for it in their systems. Conway argues that if there were dead matter devoid of knowledge or perception it would not be able to perfect itself and thus move closer to God. For Leibniz, "every possible thing has the right to aspire to existence in proportion to the amount of perfection it contains in germ".[92]

However, there seems to be a major difference in exactly how this idea of perfection and self-movement should be conceived. This, I would argue, is a question of how Conway and Leibniz balance the dialectic between freedom and creativity.

Whereas Conway did not believe in a "natural" or even divinely established limit to the development or perfection of a creature, Leibniz did. He argued that while animals could undergo a great deal of change of form (metamorphosis) their spirit would never undergo transmigration (metempsychosis) from one body to another: "il y a souvent métamorphose dans les animaux, mais jamais métempsychose ni transmigration des âmes".[93] He maintained that the movement of all souls and bodies was in accordance with their own laws given by God and, as such, was limited within the "pre-established harmony" of the universe and among all substances.[94] This harmony is characterized by establishing God's supreme justice. It effectively results in a more mechanistic world view than Conway's. For Leibniz, every monad has the freedom only to affect itself, while all causation or interaction between monads results from pre-established movements by which monads harmonize with each other.[95] Thus, according to Leibniz, the freedom of the individual monad can be said to pertain only to its inward self-relation. In other words, the self-determination of the monad is constrained by a divine pre-determination. He argues that "no state of a created substance has as a real cause some state of another created substance".[96] He thereby denies any inter-substantial causality and effectively transposes causality to God's pre-established order. Thus, this creative interaction is not bound to the free will of the monads but mirrors the divine order that is imposed upon them from the creation of the world. That any notion of self-creativity in Leibniz is restricted internally to the monad is shown in his famous description of his monads as having no windows:

92   MERCHANT, *The Vitalism of Anne Conway* 263. Cf. Leibniz, ibid. 499 f. section 54.
93   Leibniz, ibid. 503 section 72.
94   Ibid. 504 section 78 *passim*.
95   For a detailed discussion of freedom in Leibniz, see JORÁTI, *Gottfried Leibniz* 293–303.
96   KULSTAD/CARLIN, Art. Leibniz's Philosophy of Mind.

"There is no way of explaining how a monad can be altered or changed internally by some other creature […]. The monads have no windows (*Les Monades n'ont point de fenêtres*) through which something can enter or leave. Accidents cannot be detached, nor can they go about outside of substances, as the sensible species of the Scholastics once did. Thus, neither substance nor accident can enter a monad from without."[97]

We must leave the question of exactly how Leibniz understood the relation between monads and their individual potential for improvement here, since it plays no further role in this thesis. For the present purpose, it will suffice to note that Conway stands against Leibniz on this point. To her, the individual monads deeply affect each other in the decisions that they make. Thus, if we accept the convincing analysis made by Merchant, Conway goes further than Leibniz in maintaining that the inherent relatedness of monads allows for a more radical understanding of free will. I shall develop this point further by showing how Whitehead modifies the monism of Leibniz in a way that is much closer to Conway's monism.

The Monad as Open and Self-Creative

In Whitehead's reading of Leibniz, it is exactly the idea that monads are "windowless" that troubles him. While he clearly and explicitly adopts many aspects of Leibniz's monadology into his own system of actual entities, there are some major differences.[98] For one thing, Whitehead believed that Leibniz stayed within the substance paradigm of Aristotelianism, where the monads might have the capacity for change, in that they could lose some properties and acquire new ones, but that they were, finally, static and permanent *substrata* subject to the preestablished order of the divine harmony.[99] As noted above, Leibniz argued that the monads are enduring substances with essential attributes given to them by God in creation and that this is the basis of their identity. To protect the God-given identity (or self-determination) of each monad, it is necessary that it should not be influenced from the outside. He thereby denied a "real" relatedness between the monads. This means that it is not the relation between the monads that is constitutive of their being but rather their relation to God.[100] Pierfrancesco Basile explains the difference from Whitehead's position:

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97   Leibniz, La Monadologie 492 section 7. Translation taken from KULSTAD/CARLIN, ibid.

98   Whitehead especially held Leibniz's *Monadology* in great respect, and it has been estimated that his specific references to Leibniz are only to this work. See BASILE, Learning from Leibniz 1129.

99   Ibid. 1134 f.

100 This way of operating with "real" relations seems connected to the way in which Aquinas distinguishes between "real" and "logical" relations, mentioned in the beginning of Part Three.

"But the main obstacle that prevents understanding monads as substrata, Whitehead argues, is their experiential nature. The concept of the monad as embodying a point of view is a thoroughly relational concept. We experience the world by grasping and incorporating aspects of it into the unity of a new perspective. This process must involve for Whitehead some sort of actual relationship between the experiencing subject and the experienced object. But there is no place for relations within a metaphysical scheme that acknowledges only the reality of properties and their underlying bearers."[101]

To experience means to be intimately related to something other, and therefore the monad, on Whitehead's view, is thoroughly relational. The problem with Leibniz's monad is, then, that even if every monad has the potential to conform to the pre-established divine order, it constitutes a point of view which seeks to order reality according to its own perspective. I believe this to be an attempt on Leibniz's part to safeguard a strong ontology which thinks of God as a static being of unity. As the absolute principle, God installs his divine order in each and every monad which is, in turn, given the freedom to conform *internally* to this static and eternal order. But to Whitehead, this position undermines the importance of external relations. Cobb and Griffin summarize this by saying that the idea that "the experiencing processes are momentary is the basic difference of Whitehead's philosophy from that of Leibniz".[102] In Whitehead's metaphysical system, actual occasions are momentary and therefore both inwardly and outwardly related to each other. In a stream of actual occasions an experience of "defining essence" may arise, but it would be an abstraction from reality to consider it permanent and detached from its surroundings. This interdependence is, for Whitehead, an ontological characteristic. He asserts real relationality between the constituent parts of a complex society of monads as well as claiming a real continuity between nature and life:

"Thus, as disclosed in the fundamental essence of our experience, the togetherness of things involves some doctrine of mutual immanence. In some sense or other, this community of actualities of the world means that each happening is a factor in the nature of every other happening."[103]

In his explanation of the relationship between Whitehead and Leibniz, Griffin muses: "Whitehead modified the Leibnizian structure by installing windows".[104] By this he means that Whitehead's actual entities are "open" so that they can be influenced by each other and also use their freedom to exercise influence upon themselves. This leads to another divergence from Leibniz. For Whitehead the fu-

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101 Basile, Learning from Leibniz 1134.
102 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 20.
103 Whitehead, Nature and Life 87.
104 Griffin, Process Theology 160.

ture is open and not pre-established or determined. His "monads" (the actual en-
tities) can determine their own future. The question of whether the monads have
"windows" or not points to the decisive theological difference between creation
being ultimately free or determined. Leibniz argued that monads are solitary and
therefore independent but also ultimately unchangeable. They cannot change the
pre-established plan God has set for them. In this sense, Leibniz was a deter-
minist. Conversely, Whitehead holds that every physical monad or actual entity
has self-agency. They are not controlled by some determining or external force
although they are *influenced* by God and their surroundings. The inter-activi-
ty of creation is simultaneously a continuous process of "self-actualization", as
Keller affirms.[105] Therefore, the order of God's universe is based on the freedom
and self-determination of creation rather than, as Leibniz would have it, on the
pre-established order of divine harmony.

These two characteristics – relatedness and freedom – which Whitehead
modified in Leibniz's monadology coincide with the two major changes Leibniz
initially made to Conway's monadology. The physical monads of Conway's system
are not windowless, rather, they, too, are like open windows into which influences
rush: "For whatever [creature] receives something is nourished by it and thus be-
comes part of it" (VII, 4 p. 54). All creatures are, on Conway's account, fundamen-
tally and intimately related to each other. They continuously penetrate each other
and influence each other (cf. VI, 8 p. 37). She even describes the relation as one of
absolute interdependence: "Thus there is a certain mutuality between creatures in
giving and receiving, through which one supports another so that one cannot live
without the other" (VII, 4 p. 55).

Keller suggests that Whitehead's ontology of the internal relatedness between
actual entities and his principle of mutual immanence might help us to under-
stand the interconnection between Conway's physical monads better.[106] Mutual
immanence is a concept which Whitehead develops to describe the ultimate gen-
erality of the universe as related. It is the "'natural matrix of all things'", akin to
Plato's *khora* or the "common function" of any group of actual occasions.[107] It is
not creativity, and it is not God. Rather, mutual immanence is the "medium of
intercommunication" between God, the world, all actual entities, their infinite
potential, and their realization of that potential.[108] The "sole function" of mutual
immanence is "the imposition of a unity upon the events of nature".[109] This does
not mean that the identity of the individual – a particular concrescence of actual

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105 KELLER, Be a Multiplicity 86.
106 Ibid. 83.
107 WHITEHEAD, Adventures of Ideas 258. 172. Whitehead refers to Plato, Timaeus 49 a 5 f.,
     53 a 8. d 3.
108 WHITEHEAD, ibid. 172.
109 Ibid. 241.

entities – in itself constitutes reality. But nor does it mean that the identity of the individual is a mechanistic expression of the pre-established divine order. Rather, it leaves room for both aspects because it is simply an event in which reality is ordered from a certain point of view. In other words, it is a connecting event that does not have to conform to a pre-established harmony but which does, in the event of connection, actively contribute to the order of reality. Mutual immanence is *universal relatedness as such*, that is, the idea that "nothing is isolated beyond its *communication* with everything".[110] It mediates the creativity and the infinite process of finite things, but it cannot make any hegemonic claim concerning the absolute order of things.

Keller uses Whitehead's concept of mutual immanence to describe Conway's intuition that all things in the universe are related. She dwells on Conway's insight that all creatures receive something from others and that they are thereby nourished by them and thus become part of them (VII, 4 p. 54). She writes:

"We get a glimpse, here, of a universe of mutual participation, in which all creatures become members of others, 'part' of each other. If it hints at Whitehead's mutual immanence of becoming creatures, he was undoing the Western presumption that reality was divided into unities of substance, mental or physical. For the constituent relationality of things belies the metaphysics of static identities. […] Thus Conway's 'becoming part of' another foreshadows Whitehead's relationalism, despite a still essentialist framework."[111]

The relatedness of all things, for Conway as for Whitehead, "expresses a primal *sym-pathos*, a pulsating emotional energy whereby the many become a particular one. In passing".[112] Conway and Whitehead stress the sympathy and influence of creatures on each other, whereby the many become one. There is a constant dialectic from the many to the one and from the one to the many. Thus, mutual immanence is connected to creativity. But interrelatedness presupposes God's creative intervention, whereas creativity alone does not. Actual entities always seek to intensify their prehensions or feelings, and this is achieved by engaging in relations. Mutual immanence is the most complex relation that creatures participate in, as it encompasses everything there is. Within Conway's system we might think of this as the many spirits of the earth partaking in the one spirit of God. In process theology, God intervenes in creation insofar as he continuously finds harmony in the infinity of changing relations. The process theological notion of aesthetic satisfaction is important here, because it describes the moment when God eternally incorporates the multiple in order for it to become one in an increasing complexity. But, as I will argue shortly, when put to the *Principles* the

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110 Faber, Immanence and Incompleteness 21.
111 Keller, Be a Multiplicity 89.
112 Ibid. 86.

process theological position reveals some tensions in Conway's system. As I have argued in Part Three, Conway's position is caught between the ideals of the strong ontology, with its claim to a static *cogito* and a view of God as independent, and the ambition – later developed more fully in the weak ontology of process theology – to establish an intimate connection between God and creation.

To summarize these chapters, we have seen how closely freedom is tied to relatedness in Conway's argument against reductionism and how closely this mirrors the process theological modification of Leibnizian monadology. Conway argues that God "never reduces creatures into their smallest parts because all motion and operation would then cease in those creatures" which would make them "no better than […] pure nothingness and utter non-being" (III, 9 p. 20). In both Conway's and Whitehead's view, an individual must be multiple and in relation because otherwise the possibility for action ceases. For Conway, there is no inwardness to the physical monad. Such an idea would be reductionist as it confines the monad to itself, and since relatedness is paramount for action this would dissolve being into nothingness. Relatedness and freedom, Whitehead's two points of contention with Leibniz's monads, are prefigured in Conway's monadology as the foundations of her weak ontology of becoming. Indeed, there is no room for "oneness" in Conway's system.[113] The "micro"-perspective that we set out to develop at the start of this subsection, has proved to be an illusion.

4.3.2. The Creation of a Self

In his book *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque* (1988, Eng. *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*), Gilles Deleuze argues that Leibniz "anticipates contemporary views of event and history as multifaceted combinations of signs in motion and of the 'modern' subject as nomadic, always in the process of becoming".[114] In Deleuze's interpretation, Leibniz's philosophy becomes one of many examples (although perhaps the example *par excellence*) of the Baroque idea that there is no such thing as static form. Instead, he uses Leibniz's concept of the monad – which we find also in Conway's *Principles* – to view matter as processes that "fold" and "unfold" in an infinity of complex ways. Instead of viewing the monad as the smallest entity of matter that serves as the building blocks of reality, he sees them as microcosms that define each other's reality by their relation to each other. They become ever-evolving labyrinths, reflections, and refractions that constitute the fabric of reality.

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113 Ibid. 89.
114 See Reda Bensmaia's presentation of Tom Conley's English translation of *The Fold*, reprinted by Continuum Publishing Firm, New York/London, 2006.

In her reading of *The Fold*, Catherine Keller finds that "[t]he Leibnizian monad – not a point, not a minimum building block – enfolds the universe from its own point of view",[115] but she goes on to stress the difference between Leibniz and Conway, positing that Conway is more radical in her monism. Whereas Leibniz, on Keller's view, sought to "protect" the static internal logic of his philosophical system by excluding the possibility of experiences or events from outside, Conway embraced these experiences and the destabilizing interaction and relatedness they entail.[116] In her article "Be a multiplicity: Ancestral anticipations", Keller argues that Conway anticipated the fluidity and relatedness of the weak ontologies that was later embraced by postmodernism and process philosophy in particular. By doing so, she follows in the path of Michel Serres, whose famous reading of Leibniz shows, in the words of one critic, how the monad makes the *cogito* "explode".[117] In the following I shall go into a detailed account of Conway's understanding of the individual.

Even if Conway holds that each creature is composed of many, in fact an infinity, of spirits that all become and cease and influence each other as they do so, she also speaks about particular creatures having an "essence" or a "soul". We recall how she writes that the created substance "includes many individuals" (VI, 4 p. 31) and that the particular essences of these individuals cannot change into each other: Paul cannot change into Judas. This seems to "quake" and to challenge her emphasis on the mutual interdependence of creatures and their participation in the universal. She views the particular essences of creatures, or their souls, as particular centers of experience. As we recall from her fourth argument for spiritual monism, she argues that "the soul itself moves together with the body from place to place, and if the body is imprisoned or bound with chains, the soul cannot depart from the prison or chains" (VIII, 2 p. 58). Here it seems that the soul is connected to a particular body. These passages all point to an understanding of each creature as an individual or particular being, which suggests that we should read Conway's view on personal identity as essentialist.

The apparent tension between an anti-essentialist and an essentialist reading of Conway leads me to ask, first: why is it important that there should be an essence or personal identity at all? The reasons for maintaining this complex relation between identity as self-creativity and difference as freedom are twofold. The first reason is theological. Conway needs to explain her theory of multiple spirits in a way that does not conflict with the wisdom and justice of God. She explains that if one individual could simply change into another then the "essential nature" of things would change. And if there is no individual essence that would mean

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115   Keller, Be a Multiplicity 92.
116   Ibid.
117   Hervé, Review of Anne Crahay 525.

that an individual would not receive the proper rewards or punishments for his deeds (VI, 2 p. 29). The metaphysics of freedom are running as an undercurrent to her position here.

The second reason for upholding an understanding of personal identity is based on empirical observation, and I shall focus on this. The sense of something particular and delineated, of an individual persisting through time, is coherent with our everyday experience. Conway takes this experience seriously and does not fail to notice that we experience other creatures as particular individuals. In fact, she describes each individual as something we are able to recognize as particular even though it is actually multiple:

"We know that I am a multiple being who knows something, [however it does not follow, that] I should consequently see one object as if it were multiple, so that instead of one man I would see many. When many men see one man, they do not see him as many men but only as one." (VII, 4 p. 54)

How are we to think of this individual yet manifold "I"? To address this question, I suggest that we think of Conway's view on identity as both particular and universal in parallel to Whitehead's notion of a "complex society". For both philosophers, an individual or a particular creature is a *structured multiplicity*. For Conway, each creature is an expression of a certain order or hierarchy. As such, each creature mirrors the whole of creation in its composition of embodied spirits. She expresses this reflection of the universe in the creature, referring again to the macro- and micro-perspective, "because the nature of man contains the nature of all creatures, which is why he is called a microcosm" (V, 6 p. 27). There are multiple spirits in each creature; indeed, *all* spirits are potentially contained in each creature. The more spiritual a creature becomes, the higher it is in "the natural order of things" or the ontological hierarchy (VII, 1 p. 42). As we have seen, these spirits all have their different and distinct functions (VII, 4 p. 53). Thus, there are more intelligent spirits and less intelligent spirits, sensitive and subtle ones as well as crass and gross ones, nutritional and vegetative spirits, and so on. These many spirits can to a greater or lesser degree dominate the structure of the creature. According to Conway, one's individuality is decided from the ordering of these spirits and one's particularity is formed by the principal or dominating spirit:

"Just as a body, whether of a man or brute, is nothing but a countless multitude of bodies collected into one and arranged in a certain order, so the spirit of man or brute is also a countless multitude of spirits united in this body, and they have their order and government, such that one is the principal ruler, another has second place, and a third commands others below itself, and so on for the whole, just as in an army." (VI, 11 p. 39)

In like manner, Whitehead prefers to speak of "personal order" or "social order" rather than personal identity. He explains that an "'enduring creature,' is a society whose social order has taken the special form of 'personal order'".[118] This can happen because: "A nexus enjoys 'personal order' when (α) it is a 'society,' and (β) when the generic relatedness of its members orders these members 'serially'."[119] The term "serially" indicates the endless movement or process of this structure wherein the actual occasions emerge, prehend other entities, exercise their activity by making a decision in accordance with their subjective aim and then reach satisfaction before they, in turn, are prehended by the next generation of entities. These interdependent nexuses are all connected in mutual immanence. An enduring object is basically a series of "one-way relations".[120] That is to say, a nexus where there is a contiguous prehension from A to B and from B to C and so on creates a linear inheritance. However, this prehension is not mirrored back. A does not inherit anything back from B. Likewise, C would inherit from B and some things from A, by virtue of A being incorporated in B, but C does not give anything back to either B nor A.[121] This sort of "historical route" or linear nexus constitutes what Whitehead calls an enduring object or a corpuscular society, which is composed of multiple strands of enduring objects. But this sort of society could be a plant or a stone that does not have a sense of self. Such a society endures a personal order over time, but is it to be considered a "person"? Not if we take "person" to mean a conscious, or self-conscious being. There are other kinds of societies in Whitehead's ontology. Olav Smith captures this neatly in a description that gives the sense of a Russian doll effect:

"*Corpuscular societies* are multiple strands of enduring objects. *Structured societies* have a subordinate society within a dominant society. And *living societies* are structured societies with living nexus. Given this nesting of societies, one within the other, in Whitehead's view of the world, one could say that the universe is a vast network of experiential entities in relationship with one another."[122]

Human beings are examples of what Whitehead calls "living societies". These are environments that have allowed a dominant, personally ordered, enduring object which we might call a *self* to emerge. Whitehead largely avoided the term soul, possibly because of its strong connotations to traditional western substance metaphysics. In one of his later works, *Modes of Thought* (1938), he states that "the soul is nothing else than the succession of my occasions of experience, extending

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118   Whitehead, Process and Reality 34.
119   Ibid.
120   Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity v–viii.
121   Whitehead, Process and Reality 34.
122   Smith, The Social Self of Whitehead's Organic Philosophy 935.

from birth to the present moment".[123] There is no numerical or absolute idea of the soul in Whitehead's philosophy. But we might take the abovementioned inheritance of a common pattern or character, the continuous prehension of physical feelings from the past, as a category for thinking about the experience of a "soul" or a "self". This means that the body becomes an integral part of how we might understand identity.

We have seen that Whitehead holds that in a very complex society, a living society such as a human, there is inertia – a mutual direction of the decisions in the communal prehensions of actual entities – which means that it takes in a particular past in a communal web. Because of this inertia a complex society cannot change immediately. We might say that habit is largely what makes up a person and that this habit is why we do not wake up a different person every morning. In other words, experience is creating the substance, not *vice versa*. The body therefore provides what Smith calls the "relatively friendly environment" of the self-conscious and enduring series of prehensions and experience:

"The self is nested within a relatively friendly environment. With the body, it forms a society. The body is nested within a relatively friendly environment. With this environment, it forms a society. There are other human beings within that environment. The community of human beings forms a society."[124]

When the prehensions give rise to a unified experience, such as one of a self, Whitehead characterizes this as the occurrence of "dominant occasions". It is "dominant" or "preceding" occasions that last over long periods of time and exercise "a role of synthesis and control".[125] As Amos Yong describes it:

"In living beings, and especially in the higher societies, a central direction appears which seemingly acts as a dominating unity that controls the particular corpuscular society in a manner indicative of creative becoming."[126]

Cobb further explains that the dominant occasions can come into being "almost entirely out of the events of the body, but never wholly so", because every occasion takes account of both the body and the unification of experience towards enjoyment and aesthetic satisfaction.[127] Therefore, we need a second resource besides body for thinking about the self, which is some special mode in which the past is

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123 WHITEHEAD, Modes of Thought 917.
124 SMITH, The Social Self of Whitehead's Organic Philosophy 935.
125 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 86 f.
126 YONG, Personal Selfhood (?) and Human Experience 57.
127 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 87.

inherited.[128] This other resource corresponds to the mental pole of the actual occasion and signifies that a living person is not merely an appropriation or a repetition of its past but sums up the ever growing past *and* has the capability to introduce new elements. Likewise, Smith can conclude that "all of this relative security within relatively friendly environments provides the human being the luxury to experiment creatively with new ideas".[129] This is the source of creative advance, informed by the "eternal objects" or the "pure potentials for the specific determination of fact, or forms of definiteness".[130] The inheritance of the predecessor's conceptual prehensions or his prehensions of eternal objects has the ability to introduce novelty into the complex society. The combination of these two aspects, the physical and the mental, a material inheritance and self-creation, make up the living person or self as inherently dipolar. It is an understanding of identity as simultaneously determined and open, static and malleable. Because both elements contribute to how we are to understand a particular creature's identity – say a human being – this weak ontology disrupts the strong ontologies of both Cartesian dualism, where mind dominates all, and materialism, where body dominates all.

Thus, we find an interesting point of convergence between Conway and a process theological conception of individuals in what Conway calls the dominant spirit that structures the multiplicity of a creature and what Whitehead calls the dominant occasion that structures or rules the complex society. But, whereas Whitehead refuses to speak of a "soul", Conway does so. In order to understand how and why Conway and Whitehead differ on this point, I shall move on to ask how the dominant spirit relates to its body in Conway.

Interactions between Monads

In order to investigate how Conway reconciles her ontology of the multiple with the idea of the unity of the soul, let us begin by taking a closer look at how the interaction between monads happens. In Conway's system, any physical monad will, like the actual entities in Whitehead's system, engage with its surrounding physical monads in the way that Carol White has described as "a process analogous to emanation or radiation".[131] Again, I refer to this central passage of the *Principles*:

"All creatures from the highest to the lowest are inseparably united one to another by their subtler mediating parts, which come between them and which are emanations from one creature to another, through which they can act upon one another at the greatest distance." (III, 10 p. 20)

128 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 38.
129 Smith, The Social Self of Whitehead's Organic Philosophy 935.
130 Whitehead, Process and Reality 22.
131 White, The Legacy of Anne Conway 58.

These mediating parts are the "links" or "ties" between the heavier, physical monads and the lighter, more spiritual ones which would otherwise be too far away from one another on the spirit-matter continuum to unite in a larger creature. Therefore, Conway explains, the "most subtle and spiritual body can be united with a very gross and dense body by means of certain mediating bodies, which share the subtlety and crassness in various degrees between the two extremes" (VIII, 3 p. 59). These ties work by affective influence: the mediating spirits affect one another in an act of exchange through sensual perceptions. Conway explains that we are continuously exchanging spirits with our surroundings whenever we see, hear, taste or smell:

"There are also many other very subtle spirits which continually emanate from them and which, because of their subtlety, cannot be contained by the hardness of the bodies in which they dwell; and these subtle spirits are productions or conjunctions of the grosser spirits detained in the body. For although these are detained therein, they are not idle in their prison since the body serves as their work place to make those more subtle spirits, which then emanate in colors, sounds, odors, tastes, and various other properties and powers." (VIII, 5 p. 61)

There are several interesting things at play in this passage. First, the occurrence or creation of presumably *new* subtle or mediating spirits seems surprising. The mediating spirits are, apparently, productions or unifications stemming from other, grosser spirits. Conway describes this "production" of mediating spirits as the "work" of the grosser spirits. This coming-into-being of the mediating spirits that seems to be at play is unexpected, given that Conway has previously asserted that no creature can give being to itself (cf. Conway's third argument for body and spirit being the same substance). And it becomes even more puzzling when she continues to explain that the union between a spiritual soul and a crass body "is broken when these mediating spirits are absent or cease" (VIII, 3 p. 59). She has previously asserted that nothing will ever be annihilated, as this would be contrary to the goodness of God, which seeks to "preserve" and "continue" his creatures in "a constant act of creation" (VI, 6 p. 33). But if nothing is annihilated how do mediating spirits "cease"? One explanation would be that they simply go elsewhere once the body in which they are held captive putrefies and becomes soft. Then they "fly away", as Conway expresses it, and thus cease to mediate but not to exist.

A second interesting thing about these mediating spirits is their function. The "job" of the subtler spirits in the "work place" of the grosser creature is to relate the creature to its external surroundings, by affecting it and in turn being affected.[132]

132 The affect is reciprocal. Each creature affects and is in turn affected. There is a commitment here to the monist tradition of universal experientalism. Given the assumption of one liv-

When we perceive things, we take them in, and they become part of us. Likewise, other creatures take in those "subtle spirits" that we continuously produce and are formed by. As Lascano says, they "literally become part of us and can influence our future desires and thoughts".[133]

The sense-perceptions that Conway describes here need not be conscious. I breathe in the air, and it becomes part of me even if I am not aware of it. The unifications of physical monads happen at the lowest scale of being in her system – she mentions the mediating spirits of stones and herbs, metals, and trees (VIII, 5 p. 61). She also accounts for the emanation of spirits through "various other properties and powers" than the senses.

If we interpret the mediating spirits in Conway's system by way of process theology and the key category of creativity, things might become clearer. Her position on the mediating spirits mirrors the process theological concept of prehension as an event, which need not be a conscious one. The experience of prehension takes place even at the lowliest level of reality, where it is not conscious but rather a "taking account of". Concrescence, too, happens even at the unconscious level. To Conway, these other "properties and powers", which she later exemplifies could be thoughts, emotions, and memories (VIII, 5 p. 62) are physical monads. In a process view, actual occasions have a distinctive temporal character. They are occurrences or "momentary events which perish immediately upon coming into being".[134] Like water bubbles in a fish tank, they arise spontaneously from the bottom and then disappear. This picture is helpful insofar as it indicates how actual occasions are unceasingly "produced" by their surroundings in an organic and discontinuous creativity in the nature of reality.

The "creation" of mediating spirits in Conway could be understood in the same manner. It is not a coming-into-being of "new" spirits, nor is the perishing of them to be understood as death in the strict sense. The coming-into-being and perishing of mediating beings is an expression of continous creativity in the world. Conway hints at this understanding when she describes the becoming of mediating spirits as "conjunctions (*suturæ*)", that is, *unifications* of other spirits.[135] Conway's phrase "productions or conjunctions" suggests the same basic idea that

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ing substance of which each and every thing is a mode, all entities must be related to one another in one way or another. While the relation may be a strictly negative one, or what Whitehead calls negative prehension, its very negativity leaves its mark on an organic part in an organic whole from which it originally came and to which it will eventually return. Therefore, the idea is necessarily based on mutuality. Spinoza takes this position too, viewing all things as thinking and extended modes of the all-oneness of the one substance.

133 Lascano, Anne Conway 331.
134 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 14.
135 Another explanation, contrary to this conclusion, is that there are indeed different kinds of spirits and not just different degrees of spiritual monads in Conway's system. Lascano, Anne Conway 332, seems to move close to this view in some places of her article.

we find in Whitehead's idea of prehension. We recall that he explains how one actual occasion takes account of another, and even appropriates the other actual occasion in the prehension of it.[136] Like Conway's "link" or "tie", Whitehead describes prehension as the "perfectly definite" and "determinate" bond between the actual entities (cf. VIII, 3 p. 59). The actual entity then harmonizes or unifies the entities it prehends in concrescence, which means something like growing together. Conway uses the word *suturæ* [suo], which means sewing together or fastening together, to describe the same movement of influential interaction between the physical monads. To continue the metaphor, the "mediating spirits" might be seen as the sewing thread that fastens the monads to grosser creatures. But again, nothing "new" comes into being.

The lens of process theology also illuminates Conway's account of mediating spirits that "cease". If we understand her exchange of spirits as the process of actual entities, we can simultaneously hold this process as a "constant act of creation" or the constant becoming of reality. A simultaneous perishing or ceasing takes place once the unification has happened because the former state of the actual entity has ended. The emanation of spirits is the pulse of the world:

"Actual entities happen very quickly; they appropriate their actual world, concresce, reach their final unity, and then become part of that actual world which gives rise to the next generation of actual entities."[137]

All identities or souls are composed of multiplicities, which affect each other as they come into being and perish again. Thus, individuals might be said to create something new because they constantly re-create the spiritual matter they are given by giving it new form. New spirits occur in this event but nothing extra is added to reality. Rather, the emanation of spirits results in new constellations of reality.

In Conway, the question of procreation is a case in point. In chapter VI, section 11, she describes how the generation of humans works in the same way as, for example, the generation of thoughts and memories (VI, 11 p. 39). All generations are "conjunctions" of body and spirit, of "male" and "female", i.e., activity and passivity, multiplicities which unite to become something new:

"Whatever spirit is strongest and has the strongest image or idea in the woman, whether male or female, or any other spirit received from outside of one or the other of them, that spirit predominates in the semen and forms a body as similar as possible to its image. And thus every creature receives its external shape." (VI, 11 p. 39)

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136 Whitehead, Process and Reality 20.
137 Sherburne, Whitehead, Descartes, and Terminology 8.

The constant exchange of spirits or the concrescence happens both between each physical monad inwardly in each creature and outwardly between creatures and the whole of creation. Conway explains that when we receive or prehend the images from the subtle spirits of other creatures they are stored in our own bodies. It seems indeed parallel to the process of harmonization of each actual entity's prehensions into a unity of being.[138] The spirits prehended become part of us and influence us to the point where we are changed, even physically. Invoking 1 Cor. 6:16 f.,[139] Conway writes:

"Also, if a man is united and joined with something, he then becomes one with that thing. He who unites himself to God is one with him in spirit, and he who unites himself to a prostitute is one in flesh with her. Shouldn't someone who is united to a beast become one with that beast for the same reason and similarly in every other case?" (VI, 8 p. 37)[140]

Each creature is united with what it prehends. In this connective process, which Conway calls emanation of spirits and process theologians call concrescence, the actual entity or the physical monad becomes both subject and object, caught between freedom and relatedness.[141]

Whitehead is quite consistent in this position, in that he, in the words of Cobb, "attributes total unity or self-identity only to individual occasions", meaning that there can be "no absolute self-identity through time".[142] For him, the actual occasions constantly occur like bubbles in a fish tank only to disperse and enter into new relations. In our attempt to describe the individual and essential souls that Conway posits in her system, a central question arising is whether concrescence or conjunction is a conscious endeavor.

In the example mentioned above of uniting with a prostitute, it certainly seems as if Conway understands the unification process as a conscious decision. Again, we are reminded of the principles of the Origenian metaphysics of freedom where free choices are based on the assumption that agents know the difference between right and wrong. If it is a matter of free choice whether one chooses to unite with God or with a prostitute, then love and desire are free and conscious choices. Thus, the free choice holds the potential to unite the individual with that which

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138 Whitehead, *Process and Reality* 211.
139 "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him."
140 Origen, *On First Principles* III 1,4, also uses the picture of someone uniting with a prostitute as an example of the extent of one's rational decision-making power and the subsequent conclusion that praise or blame for one's actions necessarily entails consciousness of right and wrong.
141 White, *The Legacy of Anne Conway* 58.
142 Cobb Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* 71.

she loves.[143] But as we have seen many times already, this can be problematized. As Lascano rightly notices, Conway holds that wrongly directed desire is due to a "disorder" of the spirits in the creature, for example a brute or sensitive spirit that rules the intelligent spirit.[144]

The predisposition to unite with what we love could, therefore, seem to correspond to Whitehead's assertion that actual entities strive to achieve value, which is the unification of complexity. But this would compromise the pre-existence of self-contained identities ("souls") as anything other than individual occasions (the singular monad). The gathering of monads into complex societies gives rise to more value and complexity in reality. Gradually, the individual monads grow into more and more complex societies that ultimately establish a personal order leading to consciousness and the free choice of making a decision that overpowers the inertia of the past. Thus, at some point within the spectrum of reality, love or passion does indeed become a conscious and free choice. This free choice then influences whether the complex society moves up or down the ontological hierarchy, that is, choosing between the complexity of love for the other and the banality of self-love.

But how much autonomy, freedom or decision-making power does the individual "I" have in this process of becoming? We must ask if the "I" pre-exists the relations that are established through the movement of emanation. The relations give rise to complex societies, but if consciousness only occurs once these relations have been established then the self must be determined by them. In other words, it does not pre-exist these relations. By positing the pre-existence of embodied souls, Conway, contrary to Whitehead, seems to insist precisely on absolute self-identity through time. If it is the arrangement of spirits in either an ordered or a disordered constellation that constitutes the agency behind free choices, then the "I" becomes subject to something other than itself. Does this mean that we should see the "I" in Conway as essentially identifiable with the dominant spirit, whether sensitive or brute? And if so, is the dominating spirit simply a result of a random constellation of spirits or is it pre-defined by God? So, we must ask Conway: how does a spirit become the ruling spirit of an individual?

Insisting on the Absolute

Conway does not answer these questions explicitly, but she does give a description of the relations between the weaker and stronger spirits, which gives us some indication of how she might answer. Entirely consistently with her system, she argues that even the "central, ruling, or principal spirit is multiple" (VII, 4 p. 55). She

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143   Cf. Conway's third argument for spiritual monism and her description of love or desire as "that which brings one thing to another" (VII, 3 p. 46).
144   Lascano, *Anne Conway* 332.

holds that if the principal spirit is a brute in nature, that is, if it is more dominated by the physical nature, it will make an impression or image of a brute in the body. Thus, one's "self" will be brutish:

"It necessarily follows that this body, which the vital spirit forms, will be that of a brute and not a human, for the brute spirit cannot produce or form any other shape because its formative power is governed by its imagination, which imagines and conceives as strongly as possible its own image, according to which the external body must take shape." (VI, 7 p. 36)

And:

"Moreover, spirit is light or the eye looking at its own proper image, and the body is the darkness which receives this image. And when the spirit beholds it, it is as if someone sees himself in a mirror […] since the reflection of an image requires a certain opacity, which we call body." (VI, 11 p. 38)

The weaker spirits stand in relation to the principal spirit "as lines from every part of the circumference meet in the center and go forth from this center". Indeed, they are like servants of the principal spirit (VII, 4 p. 55). She states that the leading spirit rules the other spirits (cf. IV, 3 p. 22; VI, 11 p. 39). Although weaker spirits are present and working in the creature, their decision-making power is not strong enough suddenly to overturn the image of the principal spirit. Therefore, the weaker spirits cannot suddenly change the creature's dominant structure or embodiment.

As we have seen, Conway holds that having some sort of stable center is necessary for the justice of God to be exercised. Therefore, identity is linked to something else than the bodily expression of the image. She explains that even if the principal spirit, too, is a complex society of spirits whose periphery may change, its center always remains the same:

"[T]he unity of spirits composing this central predominant spirit is firmer and more tenacious than that of other spirits, which are like angels or servants of the principal spirit and leader. This unity is so great that nothing can dissolve it (although the unity of the greater number of ministering spirits which do not belong to the center may be dissolved). Thus it happens that the soul of every human being will remain a whole soul for eternity and endure without end, so that it may receive proper rewards for its labor." (VII, 4 p. 55)

And indeed, a certain unity and enduring identity seems to characterize not only humans but all creatures. Every individual has an essence that is unchangeable and therefore "one individual cannot change into another" (VI, 3 p. 30). We recall the aforementioned good horse when she states:

"If one man cannot change into another, much less can that man change into an individual of another species. Thus, if Alexander cannot change into Darius, he also cannot change into his own horse, Bucephalus." (VI, 3 p. 30)

Given the example of the good horse that eventually turns into a human being in its journey back to God, it might be a surprising conclusion that Alexander cannot turn into the horse Bucephalus. It is clear that Conway is speaking about individuals here. To be sure, Alexander can turn into a horse but not into the particular horse Bucephalus. Similarly, Bucephalus has the possibility of transmuting into a mighty general, but not the specific general Alexander. This is because they each have their own specific principle spirit.

Conway differentiates the principle spirit from the other spirits by its "firmer and more tenacious" quality as well as by the way in which it composes a center of the multiple soul which is characterized by more "unity" than is found in the rest of the creature. Her characterization of this multiple "center" of each creature emerges as especially important when we recall how she criticizes Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza for misunderstanding what the "center" is: "They only touch the surface, never glimpsing the center" (IX, 6 p. 66). These unholy three, who each believed themselves to be so sure in uncovering a stable reality, completely missed the mark because it turns out that the center is relational and multiple.

The expression of the image in body does not entail a dualistic substance ontology. Rather, spirit and body are two sides of the same coin. Spirit needs body to anchor it, and body needs spirit to be lively. But since the enduring dominant spirit needs the ever-perishing body, Conway's position seems to point to an anti-essentialist position on the self. The intimate relation between body and spirit and to other bodies and spirits in the created substance tends to dissolve the stability of the self. Yet she maintains that there remains the special unity of the leading spirit – the enduring essence of a living being. In other words, this is a center that is relational but enduring, and it leads to an essentialist understanding of the self.

Lascano takes Conway's description of the governing spirit as opposed to the ministering ones to mean that there is a multiplicity of *kinds* of spirits comprising the principal spirit in Conway.[145] I believe that this passage coheres with the conclusion articulated above that Conway's spirits are fundamentally of the same kind, namely spirits participating in God's spirit but to a greater or lesser degree. It is a continuum of participation which is reflected in the body. The decisive factor, then, is the *unity and endurance* comprising this multiple central spirit. It seems that there is indeed a particular unity in the relation of these spirits *internally* within the creature as opposed to momentary and fluid external or contextual re-

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145   Ibid. 231.

lations. This special unity gives rise to the experience of essence and individuality. Conway thus seems to be close to Leibniz's view in stating that the internal relation is determinant of the identity of the individual creature. But, in fact, this is not quite the case. Whereas Leibniz located the freedom of the monad internally (meaning that it is free to act within the boundaries set by God's predetermined order), Conway's fluid ontology allows for the monads to be linked to each other through the dominating spirit (thus entailing a more radical free will). While the dominating spirit is an internal determination of the soul of the particular creature, it is still in some sense external to the individual monad since it connects it to other monads in a relation that will persist throughout time.

Thus, Conway's principal spirit is comprised of physical monads, but they are in a greater unity of relation than the relation between the other physical monads to which it is externally linked. The unity of relations prevents it from being merely "an abstraction" (cf. strong ontologies) because relation is experience-based. We learn that the principal spirit is also in relation to its surrounding spirits – it is not exempt from their influences. However, its ties to these external spirits are not strong enough for them really to change its particular concrescence or unity. In other words, Conway does not hold their external relation to be constitutive of their being. I think Lascano is right when she says that "the principal spirit plays the role of soul in Conway's ontology".[146] But we still need to determine in what this identity consists, that is, how a spirit becomes the ruling spirit of an individual. Maybe we find a clue to discovering what Conway would answer to this question in her distinction between "memory" and "knowledge". She writes:

"Moreover, I understand all creaturely knowledge as knowledge received or aroused by the things or objects which are known (whereas God's knowledge is neither received nor aroused by creatures, but is innately in him and comes from him). Since there are various objects of our knowledge, and since every object sends us its own image and that image is a real entity, it follows that we have many images in us." (VII, 4 p. 54)

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146 Ibid. 232. Here we should note a difference between the traditional Christian understanding of the soul and Conway's dominant spirit. I understand the Christian tradition as proposing the "soul" as occupying a higher place in what Conway would call "the natural order of things" and as something that is exclusively the possession of human beings. It is the image of God, the spark of the divine in us and traditionally considered distinct from – or even opposed to – the material. Clearly, this is somewhat different from the definition of the soul as the principal spirit in Conway's ontology. For her, the soul is the dominating spirit, the most powerful and unified among manifold spirits, but not necessarily the one closest to God. The soul, the eternal essence of a being, could also be a brute that is lower down the scale of being, thus still spiritual but to a lesser degree. One thing Conway does have in common with the traditional understanding of the soul is that it must endure in order to receive rewards or punishments for its actions. Thus, in Conway's system a soul – or dominating spirit – can be either pure or crass.

As Lascano states, this means that "our knowledge is essentially different from God's knowledge, since God, who is pure spirit, does not retain images of creatures within himself (he does not have a body to do this)".[147] So, there is a difference between God's knowledge and creaturely knowledge about identity. Conway emphasizes, as do process theologians, that all creatures are formed of both mental and physical images. These come from the experience of being in relationship with other creatures, and they manifest themselves as memories, feelings, and experiences within the individual. Lascano explains how Conway considers the embodiment of "inward" images or spirits to be just as important and formative as those that come from the outside. According to Conway, knowledge, feeling, memory, etc., are "real entities" that make a concrete embodied impression. The retentive nature of the body is necessary for the feelings, memories, knowledge, and experiences that constitute the major part of our experience of personal identity to be preserved. Lascano writes that "in addition to the retention of our own thoughts, we also retain the images of our past perceptions in our body, which constitute our memories".[148] Thus, for Conway and for process theology, personal identity lies very much in the physicality of our bodies. In a certain sense, the body becomes a sign of the past and a vessel for memories. Conway describes these as the "semen of our brain" (VI, 11 p. 39), a metaphor that shows their absolutely fundamental, if not constitutive, meaning for our "self".

But there is also some knowledge that comes in the form of innate ideas. These provide us, we recall, with an understanding of right and wrong. As such, they come directly from God and are not subject to experience. They are an absolute and stable *a priori* that casts creatures in the mold of divine unity and eternity. Indeed, we might say that this God-given image defines the principle spirit in the sense that it determines its nature in accordance with its previous decisions (these being simply right or wrong, that is more or less in accordance with God's spirit). This entails free will as a series of previous choices made by the dominating spirit which define it as either spiritual or crass.

In summary, it is important to remember that there is a difference between our two sources of knowledge. The images we receive from our fellow creatures (the many spirits) that manifest themselves in us as memory and knowledge are inextricably linked to the bodily dimension of the created substance. Yet there is also an aspect of knowledge which is divine and, thus, disembodied. I would argue that in Conway's system it is impossible to understand memory and bodily knowledge as that which defines the principle spirit, although they may influence it. This is so because memory is determined by external, bodily relations while the principle spirit is, first and foremost, defined internally as a stable and endur-

147   Ibid. 333.
148   Ibid.

ing unity that partakes to a higher degree in God's spirit. This is why memory is subject to body (we cannot remember without bodies) while body is subject to the dominating spirit (the dominating spirit determines its gender, for instance).[149]

However, the dominating spirit subsists as a center of self-determination and agency throughout time. The image it expresses in bodies as spiritual or brute is determined by the previous decisions it has made. The innate ideas coming from God might be viewed as the image that God imprints in dominating spirits, but for this image to be true and living free will is necessary. We began this subsection by asking how a spirit becomes the leading spirit of an individual. It seems we can go no further than saying that, for Conway, the nature of the dominating spirit is inherently related to free will. In other words, the self equals free will.

4.3.3. Differences

My process theological reading of Conway's position on the relation between body and soul has made it clear that the major difference between them rests on whether or not there is a stable and enduring essence in each individual. To be sure, there are many similarities and the difference between them relies on nuances. But these nuances are important because they go to the very core of the human experience of personal identity. As John Bennett puts it, "any systematic philosophy simply must do justice [to this experience]".[150] Personal identity is at the core of the Christian belief in individual salvation, and, therefore, any systematic theology should also take it into account.

According to Whitehead, every creature has a "dominating unity" which controls the creature and determines its decisions. It directs the motion in each being, and it is that which we identify or recognize as something coherent and stable. Animals are also directed by a dominating unity, which tends more towards the physical pole of corpuscularity than the one directing humans. The only difference is that animals are more banal and less complex than humans, which Whitehead sees as the most complex living societies because we have consciousness. Up to this point, Conway is in concurrence with process theology. But for Whitehead, this is as far as we can go in attributing any notion of numerical or absolute self-identity to a complex society.[151] With reference to Plato's Dialogues, he describes personal identity as anything but enduring and everlasting:

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149 Lascano, ibid., makes the point that the reason why we cannot remember our past lives is because memory is subject to body, so as the body withers away so do memories of the past.

150 Bennett, Whitehead and Personal Identity 510.

151 Ibid. 511.

"This personal identity is the thing which receives all occasions of the man's existence. It is there as a natural matrix for all transitions of life, and is changed and variously figured by the things that enter it; so that it differs in its character at different times. Since it receives all manner of experiences into its own unity, it must itself be bare of all forms. We shall not be far wrong if we describe it as invisible, formless, and all-receptive. It is a locus which persists, and provides an emplacement for all the occasions of experience. That which happens in it is conditioned by the compulsion of its own past, and by the persuasion of its immanent ideals."[152]

For Whitehead, all actual entities are ultimately dependent on their relations to other actual entities, and in engaging with these they change and become something new. This means that self-identity through time can only be attributed – momentarily – to individual actual entities. But even this idea of identity is pure abstraction because actual entities are constantly entering into new relations and thus forming new societies.

Whitehead's atomism is more radical than Conway's. His view of the world as organic and interdependent seems ultimately to dissolve any notion of absolute or stable identity. He holds that the individual building blocks of reality are set free to self-determine and that they do so in every single moment. By doing so they continuously create reality, but this also entails that their external relations are defining for their identity. Conway, on the other hand, insists on a defining character of individuality which is internal to what she calls the dominating spirit. To a certain degree, the dominating spirit resembles the dominating unity in Whitehead's terminology, but for her it is necessary that this unity does not dissolve over time. She specifically considers the extent of the mutability of creatures in order to clarify whether something subsists in the process of transformation and she concludes that Paul cannot change into Judas.

Conway holds that although the soul is eternal this does not necessarily entail that it never changes or is completely stable (VII, 4 p. 55). Every individual is a composite being that consists of many physical monads which continuously move and change either towards the more spiritual or the more physical pole. Moreover, they are continuously informed and affected by their surroundings. Conway's souls can be thought of as complex societies in so far as they are not entirely unchanging. They have continuity by virtue of the inheritance of a common pattern or character of the past. But for her, this prehension of the past is less decisive or dominating for the identity of an individual than the essence given to it by God. In fact, we might think of Conway's understanding of the soul as a continuous identity-marker or an essence in progress. For her, the soul is the dominating spirit that forms some sort of essence. But since this essence may fall

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152 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* 240 f.

farther away from God or move closer to God (as in the horse example), the soul is not necessarily the reflection of the divine Logos. Nonetheless, it can be seen as the image of God in so far as it always partakes in God's communicable attributes via the innate ideas imprinted upon it. In other words, God partakes of the soul as the potential for goodness, justice, wisdom, etc., and the soul may partake of God by choosing to activate his communicable attributes through its actions.

There is also a difference between how Whitehead and Conway view God, and this difference has consequences for their view on identity. Whitehead holds that God is an actual entity that becomes enriched by creating unity out of the new relations in which it partakes. This means that God is influenced by creation just as creation is influenced by God. Conway, on the other hand, argues for the enduring essence of the soul for two reasons that both pertain to the divine attributes which maintain God as static and absolute. The first reason concerns the divine attributes *per se*: God's wisdom and justice would be challenged if one individual could change into another, for then the right person would not receive the proper reward or punishment for his or her choices and actions. That is, God-self requires stable identities in his creation in order to be able to exercise his being – particularly his wisdom and justice. If individuals could turn into other individuals, God's justice would be confused. The second reason follows from the first, but is founded on epistemology since it concerns our knowledge about God and the world he created (God *pro nobis*):

"Besides, if the essential nature of individuals could change one into another, it would follow that creatures would not have a true being inasmuch as we could not be certain of anything nor could we have true knowledge or understanding of anything." (VI, 2 p. 29)

If nothing is stable then we could not know anything, and this would mean that the knowledge creation has received and continuously receives from God via Christ and in the form of innate ideas would be uncertain. Univocity would be challenged and the intimate relation between God and the world would be dissolved. Since true knowledge comes from God, ultimately this would mean that we would not be able to know anything about God or his divine attributes. The foundations of Conway's rationalism would erode. Therefore, some kind of stable identity or essence is an important part of the construction of her theodicy, which rests on God's real and intimate relation to the world. It not only safeguards God's goodness, justice, and wisdom as a stable and enduring unity, but it also secures our knowledge about God as good, just, and wise regardless of changes in the world.

To be sure, Whitehead's position on personal identity constitutes a problem for at least one later process theologian, namely Cobb, who sees two fundamental problems with Whitehead's explanation. The first is that he considers Whitehead's

solution as unsatisfactory in accounting for the experience of human identity. Our understanding of personal identity goes beyond the simple inheritance of a common pattern from the past. Cobb uses the example of twins who share commonality of character, but that does not mean that we do not consider them to be distinct persons.[153] As Bennett notes in his account of Cobb's critique, personality can change without identity changing.[154] The second problem is that Whitehead's solution refers to identity as simply based on repetition of common patterns. He writes that "the decisive feature of life is novelty and not the repetition of past patterns".[155] By so doing, Cobb argues, Whitehead is unable to account for why new relations do not dissolve the continuity of the present with the past.

Cobb argues that Whitehead tries to salvage personal identity by introducing some kind of "special mode" of prehension in which the inheritance of the past occurs as a "peculiar completeness".[156] Cobb attempts to clarify this notion, which he finds vague, by suggesting "direct" or "unmediated" prehensions as a corrective to Whitehead's position. To him, this special mode of inheritance is able to account for novelty and is therefore "the only satisfactory approach to personal identity allowed by [Whitehead's] system".[157] The unmediated prehensions are, as explained by Bennett,

"not restricted to the immediate, or contiguous, predecessor occasion. […] Through them successive occasions of the living person have direct, unmediated access to earlier moments of experience. Likewise, the events of yesterday, or of months or even years ago, have in this way a direct, unmediated influence on one's self-experiencing and self-understanding of today."[158]

This means that Cobb, in a manner slightly different from Whitehead, considers memory constitutive of personal identity. But whereas Whitehead considers memory constitutive only through relations and thereby from "without", Cobb adds the possibility of remembering from "within" the particular complex society. Bennett understands this to mean that we might remember past prehensions "as such" rather than merely remembering "something about them".[159] Cobb concludes that "only memory can serve in my self-understanding to determine self-identity through time".[160]

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153 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 73.
154 Bennett, Whitehead and Personal Identity 512.
155 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 74.
156 Whitehead, Process and Reality 161. 350.
157 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 75. Cf. Bennett, Whitehead and Personal Identity 512.
158 Bennett, ibid. 513.
159 Ibid.
160 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 76.

One might speculate as to whether this position resembles that of Conway, who recognized the importance of memory as an internal and external constituent of the spirits' embodiment. But we recall that memory is not the only internal element constitutive of identity. She also operates with the notion of knowledge as internal to the dominating spirit of each creature. Knowledge, in this sense, is to the dominating spirit what the dominating spirit is to the body. That is to say, divine knowledge is imprinted upon the dominant spirit in the form of innate ideas just as the dominating spirit imprints itself on its body. In this sense, a certain kind of "memory" of God (i. e., Conway's communicable attributes) defines the personal identity of each creature. Although something is always retained, namely the innate ideas and the ability to choose right over wrong, Conway's view of memory as embodied makes the important contribution that memories can be lost. In this sense, she differs from Cobb. What she does retain as the essence of individuality is the sum of choices made by the free will of the dominating spirit. As such, freedom is the foundation of her ontology of becoming. This ontology of ethics is quite different from Whitehead's in that it allows her to account for personal identity throughout time.

Keller specifically criticizes Conway for saying that "nothing can dissolve" the dominating spirit. Keller argues that identities are, in fact, "frequently dissolved in personality disorders, traumas, transformations".[161] In other words, she faults Conway for not accounting for the reality that memories can be – and frequently are – lost. She worries that Conway may "overstate the case" when she claims that the soul is eternal, stable, and indissoluble (we might include Cobb as subject to this criticism too since he does not consider the possibility of losing memory at all). The point is well taken that individuality is more complex than memory and that it must be seen as something other than a stable unity which is absolute and impossible to dissolve. But it seems to me that Keller overlooks the distinction that I have identified above between knowledge and memory. If my reading is accepted, then it is not first and foremost memory which constitutes identity in Conway's system, and the unity of the dominating spirit itself is not such that it cannot change. Indeed, this unity is multiple and enters into an infinity of complex relations at every moment. This is also recognized by Keller. My point is that these complex relations do not constitute the eternal and stable identity of the dominating spirit. Rather, it is the knowledge of God manifested as the ability to make free choices between right and wrong, and this ability can never be lost. One may lose one's identity only if this ability is lost, and in Conway's monist ontology this is impossible because everything is spiritual and thus participates in God.[162]

161 KELLER, Be a Multiplicity 88.
162 We might speculate that Conway's notion of passivity in creation, which she identifies as the mother principle, may indeed be characterized by a being that has lost the ability to discern between right and wrong. God's creative act would thus consist in breathing life into this formless void. With life it receives the ability to know God and thus to choose

Yet, Keller does find great inspiration in Conway's idea of the multiplicity of the leading spirit. The idea of a manifold soul is seen by Keller as a resource for thinking of personal identity as more complex than is possible within the boundaries set by Whitehead and Cobb. Thus, she views Conway's multiple leading spirit as theologically important. She stresses that Conway's reason for arguing that the leading spirit is multiple is to safeguard its ability to participate in the divine. Multiplicity is a precondition for relationality. Thus, Conway keeps a firm theological grasp on what we could call the dipolarity of the soul. On the one hand, it is an enduring essence in order for God's justice to be fulfilled; on the other, it is inter-relational, multiple, and self-directing so that it can enjoy the goodness that was prepared for it by its creator (cf. VII, 4 p. 54).

We might interpret Keller's reading of Conway as pointing out how the latter navigates between a strong ontology of substance emphasizing unity and a process theological weak ontology emphasizing multiplicity. She argues that Conway's view of substance as fluid and relational can be seen as an antecedent of her own so-called "polydoxy" which stresses the "manifold" and the dependence of all life on other parts of creation and on God. This gives a new perspective on identity. Conway's leading spirit might be seen as a precursor to this idea. Keller writes:

"That I function identifiably as 'myself' during most of my waking moments and many of my dreaming ones is all the more impressive, given the multiplicity of 'spirits' (influences, genes, memories, complexes, not to mention issues and theologies) comprising this figure of 'me.' Might we now imagine – in the place of a merely singular individual – a *plurisingularity*?"[163]

Keller reflects upon the relational multiplicities that characterize the entire cosmos and finds an example of plurisingularity in the biblical narrative, where Abram becomes Abraham and Ibrahim. This is the biblical promise of Gen. 22:17, paraphrased by Keller as "you shall be multiple as the grains of sand [...]":

"It is not that I was already there, a centered substance. I *become* in response to this call. Not *ex nihilo* – though in my dissipation it may feel so – but out of the indefinite welter of my interdependencies. Plurisingularity."[164]

Following this train of thought, becoming a unity in multiplicity is the promise of God. This would lead Conway to hold that the task of individual souls – the dom-

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     constellations that enable it to form itself. Life is thus activity, the potentiality to act in accordance with or against God's communicable attributes.

163 Keller, Be a Multiplicity 88.

164 Ibid.

inating spirits – is to ascend back to the one spirit of God even though they are created as a multiplicity of spirits, i.e. physical monads.[165] Keller points out that this "manifold one" (the individual) ought not to be confused with many "ones". This would lead to schizophrenia, split personality disorders or other disorders that overrule the coherence or unity found in God's promise. Thus, Keller does not charge Conway with holding that the plurality of the soul leads to multiple identities within it. This is the criticism that Cobb makes of Whitehead. Rather, it should be understood as the universal in the particular, meaning that even if one individual can be dissolved by holding many personalities within it, it still remains a unity over time. The promise of God is to find unity in multiplicity.

Keller further writes that the multiplicity which occurs in the complex relations of the created substance means that no ethical universal is given to creatures.[166] But a universal with ethical consequences, I believe, is posited by Conway in the form of God's knowledge which is imprinted upon the dominating spirit. Indeed, it is this knowledge which "unifies" and creates the firmness of the soul's unity. Whereas the individual by itself might "dissolve" in the multiplicity of relations (memories, feelings, emotions, etc.), Conway would hold that God holds it together. To the quotation from Gen. 22 stating that God wants creatures to be multiple (to be free to choose their relations) we might therefore add that God is simultaneously the one who creates unity by remembering each individual. This might be exemplified by the story of Hagar in Gen. 16:13 who said: "You are the God who sees me".

4.4. … and the Word Became Flesh

In these last subsections of Part Four I shall briefly explore how we might think about the body of Christ – that is, his particularity – in continuation of the discussion above on personal identity in spiritual monism. With regard to Christ, Part Three focused on his universal aspect as Middle Nature in Conway's system, but from a theological point of view it is crucial also to consider Christ as particular. The Incarnation signifies that Jesus Christ embodies both the universal and

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165 This recalls Plotinus' beautiful closing to his *Enneads*, which is usually translated as life's "flight of the alone to the alone": *Enneads* VI 9. Conway seems to follow the Neoplatonic idea of God as the One principle of all things, which is also found in Origen. By being the One, the unity in multiplicity, God can assimilate the pious soul to itself. The soul thereby overcomes its painful multiplicity and difference once and for all, feeling God as well as the whole community of its fellow creatures in the closest of existential unions, which no longer admits of any difference whatsoever.

166 Keller, *Be a Multiplicity* 88.

the particular at the same time. In him, the Word assumes flesh whereby God takes on the particular experience of creation and thus also its multiplicity. In other words, the movement from the universal to the multiple is via the particular. Another way to consider this movement is to ask what relation body has to spirit, the unity of God to the multiplicity of creation, and identity to difference. In Conway's system, at least, all of these opposite poles are brought together in Christ because he is the incarnation of God's knowledge, his eternal Wisdom or Word (Logos), meaning God or Spirit as embodied and particular in time and space. As I have argued, the incarnation of the divine Logos in the *Principles* has been somewhat overlooked by scholars, but this does not mean that Conway does not address the concrete materiality of Jesus Christ. She writes:

"Jesus Christ signifies the whole Christ, who is God and man. As God, he is called *logos ousios*, or the essential word of the father. As man, he is the *logos proforikos*, or the word which is uttered and revealed, the perfect and substantial image of God's word, which is eternally in God and perpetually united to him so that it is his vehicle and organ, just like the body in respect to the soul." (IV, 2 p. 21)

We might stumble over the description of the relation between God and Christ as a direct mirroring of the relation between soul and body. But we now know that in Conway's spiritual monism the soul needs the body to retain its image. In Conway's metaphor, spirit is the light looking at its own image, and therefore the "darkness" of the body is needed to reflect and retain this image. If body is what retains the soul, Christ must be that which retains God's knowledge, wisdom, justice, etc. As incarnated, he does this in the world by retaining the image of God in the world. We might describe the incarnated Christ as the anchoring point of God's unity in the multiplicity of creation. He is necessary for God to imprint his image on creation. Thus, as "the perfect and substantial image" of God he serves the same function as the body does to the soul but on a different level of the ontological scale (we recall that Christ is his own substance who mediates between God and the world by being able to change, but only for the better).

Conway's choice of the terminology *logos ousios* and *logos proforikos* is interesting. The Stoics distinguished between the *logos endiathetos* and the *logos proforikos* – a distinction that was later taken up by Philo.[167] Conway's use of the *logos ousios* seems to correspond to the *logos endiathetos*. The logos *ousios/endiathetos* may be said to convey the "intrinsic sense of the world anterior to consciousness" and the *logos proforikos* "its cultural articulation through all forms of

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167 See e.g. Philo, Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat 38–40. 126; De migration Abrahami 76–81. 84. 169 (in 78 the reference to the ἀδελφὰ γεννήματα); De mutatione nominum 208. Cf. Kamesar, Allegorical Interpretation 164.

expression".[168] Likewise, Conway's *logos ousios* signals the essential unity of the universe which is secured through its continuity with God as the one source. As such, it is through God that "the universe 'holds'", as William Hamrick expresses it. Following the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, he goes on to describe the flesh as inherently meaningful because it is *in itself* the expression of this continuity. Thus, the Stoic notion of the *logos endiathetos* seeks, as does Conway's system as a whole, to avoid the view that meaning is imposed on materiality from an "outside" abstract or transcendent principle (such as the *cogito*). Rather, meaning is an "interior condition" to body itself or, to use a terminology conforming to Conway's, innate.[169] But when this interior condition is expressed in a particular bodily context, it is also subject to some degree of interpretation. Thus, *logos proforikos* is the expression of "the inherent intelligibility" revealed in the particular. This means that the *logos endiathetos* is the universal truth finding particular expression in Christ.[170] Christ as the *logos proforikos* is always embedded in a particular context in which he, like all other creatures, has to take active decisions. Therefore, he is the active expression of the *logos endiathetos*.

Transposing this to Conway's system, the uniqueness of Christ that sets him apart from the substance of creation is that he always makes the right choice. Thus, like the created substance, he is self-creative as he activates the innate ideas imprinted in him by God. Conway's use of this terminology evokes the "two natures" of Christ established by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. To support her argument of the identity between God's wisdom and the revealed Word, she points to several biblical passages.[171] She further explicates the particularity of Christ in her system in a passage which bears some resemblances to a credo:

"Yet when Christ became flesh and entered his body, which he brought with him from heaven (for every created spirit has some body, whether it is terrestrial, aerial, or etherial), he took on something of our nature and, consequently, of the nature of everything (because the nature of man contains the nature of all creatures, which is why he is called a microcosm). In assuming flesh and blood, he sanctified nature so that he could sanctify everything, just as it is the property of a ferment to ferment the whole mass. Then he descended into time and for a certain period willingly subjected himself to its laws to the extent that he suffered great torment and death itself. But death did not detain him long, for on the third day he rose again, and the purpose of all his suffering, up to his death and burial, was to heal, preserve, and restore creatures from corruption and death, which came upon them through the Fall, and so thereby put an end, at last, to time and raise creatures

168 Hamrick, *Creativity and Adversity* 17.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid. 17 f.
171 "The New Testament and the Old Testament mention this revealed word, which is the wisdom of God, in different passages: Proverbs 8:22, 31 & 3:19; Psalms 33: 6 & 22: 2 & Psalm 110, pt. 1; Job 1: 1, 2, 3, etc.; Ephesians 3: 9" (IV, 2 p. 21).

beyond time to himself, where he dwells, he who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, without loss, corruption, or death." (V, 6 p. 27)

This passage is striking within the chapter on Christ because Conway does not generally write extensively about the materiality or particularity of Christ; but, despite its lack of prevalence in her text, this passage shows that there can be no doubt that the incarnation of the divine Logos in Christ is important to her.[172]

The incarnation of the divine Logos (the Word or Wisdom of God) into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ can potentially be problematic if one considers his universality to be of pivotal importance, as Conway does, as shown in Part Three. In the words of Niels Henrik Gregersen, who is inspired by process theology, the particularity of Christ is a stumbling block for many still today.[173] The claim that God was incarnated in a particular Jewish man at a particular point in history seems to be the arch-example of a Christian exceptionalism that makes the divine Logos exclusive and contradicts the idea that God is incarnate in everyone – or in everything – through his creative act.

Gregersen points to three aspects of the Christian idea of incarnation that have been considered scandalous. The first is the *scandal of materiality*. Especially from a Platonic or dualist perspective, the idea that God has become flesh, that he is materialized, is scandalous. The second is the *scandal of suffering*. It is a scandal for those who consider God the most perfect being that he also associated with unclean people, suffered, and died on a cross. The third is the *scandal of uniqueness*. It does not sit well with Conway's and others' explicitly universalist and "bridging" concept of Christ "for all religions" that he is to be found in a particular man from Israel. The scandal of uniqueness is arguably the most troublesome

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172 The Logos-tradition found in John could provide an aspect of Conway's Christology as it addresses the relation between creation and Incarnation. In Part Three, we learned that in relation to creation, Conway draws on Platonic thought, positing God as the source or the only beginning. This was problematized in her positing of spirits, which came from the earth. In his depiction of the Incarnation, John moves "parallel to Stoic thought", which, in contrast to the Platonic thought, posited two creative principles in creation: Logos/*Archai*, the creative pattern, and *hyle/sarx* (matter). This reminds us of the creative principle, the "mother substance", in Conway's *Principles*, which, as discussed in Part Three, could be her way of stressing that all creatures are of one nature and thereby carry the cosmological framework within themselves and are thus deeply related to their surroundings. John transposes these two creative principles to the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, for John, the "divine Logos genuinely 'became flesh' and was present in Jesus *as* flesh, *with* the flesh of others, and *for* all flesh": GREGERSEN, The Extended Body of Christ 231. In other words, according to John, Logos and *sarx* are equally present in Jesus Christ. Likewise, Conway describes the divine Logos or Christ as a "microcosm" because he assumed "the nature of everything" (V, 6 p. 27). The *creatio ex profundis* results in creatures being not only *imago dei*, but also *imago mundi* and this is also reflected in the nature of her second species.

173 GREGERSEN, Introduction 1.

for us today. What is the relationship between the life of Jesus and the universal questions of reality? Gregersen advises that maintaining the distinction between universality and particularity seems unhelpful in answering this question: "Incarnation should neither be seen as a general rule nor as pure exception".[174] Rather, it suggests an intimate relationship as well as a movement between the divine Logos and the material world. If we are to think Christologically in continuity with Conway's spiritual monism, the universal presence of Christ in the world needs qualification. Gregersen explains:

"It is one thing to say that the incarnate Christ is present *in, with*, and *for* all created beings (in particular the victims of creation and creativity); it is quite another to say that God is incarnate *as* a terrorist attack, *as* a rape, or *as* a natural disaster."[175]

To be sure, Conway is not a pantheist and she would never hold that God is in the world as any of these events. Nonetheless it is important to think about the relationship between the Incarnation of Christ and its universal claims. As Gregersen asks: "What does the incarnation in Christ have to do with the world of star formations?" And, given the discussion in the preceding subsection, we may add: How are particular experiences (memories, feelings, etc.) connected to the belief that Christ is both spirit and body? Keller and Gregersen propose a process theological perspective on these questions that seeks to deconstruct the binary opposition between the "particularity" and "universality" of Christ. Our language tends to construct opposition, but the danger of this linguistic inclination is to gloss over the paradox that needs to stand.

Keller argues for the danger inherent in the dichotomy of particular/universal by showing that the message or proclamation (the kerygma) of Jesus Christ is in danger of disappearing in theological dogma.[176] According to her, the Christological doctrines of his two natures, his relationship to God, his pre-existence, etc., has made Christ all "frame" and no "content". The theological distinction between "the historical Jesus" and "Jesus Christ" made in twentieth-century "Evangelienforschung" epitomizes the point. Here, Jesus signifies the human figure – the name of the man who was born in Bethlehem, Jewish, and poor. The interest in the historical Jesus pertains more to his historical and cultural context than to his ontological significance.[177] Christ, on the other hand, is a title. It is the Greek

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174 Ibid. 5.
175 Ibid. 2. His italics.
176 Keller, On the Mystery 133.
177 The term "Quest for the Historical Jesus" was originally coined by Albert Schweitzer in 1906 and grew into a field of study which was very important throughout the twentieth century.

translation of the Hebrew "Messiah" (lit. "the anointed one").[178] In the Jewish texts Messiah is an honorary title given to high priests,[179] but it also refers to persons who express God's will on earth, e. g. prophets and kings.[180] It later came to signify an eschatological figure, chosen by God and descended from the house of David, who would unite the tribes of Israel, rebuild the Temple, and bring peace to the world.[181]

Keller warns us against valuing either of these two more highly than the other. She observes a current tendency within specific Christian circles to "give up on *Christ* – in the name of *Jesus*".[182] But a focus on "Jesus" alone is in danger of being reduced to a single account, relative and irrelevant for people who do not believe in him as the particular expression of the divine. A focus on Christ, on the other hand, quickly becomes empty noises that have connotations of pure abstraction or "frame" but no identity or portrait. This Jesus-less "abstraction" is what we find in the creeds of the mainline theological tradition. Keller expounds how the version we find in the Apostles' creed "cut right from his [supernatural] birth to his death and resurrection. They lack all mention of his living and speaking and loving, of his preaching, wisdom, healing, and prophecy" – there is no ministry, no kerygma.[183] Neither of these positions is viable by itself. Instead, "Jesus Christ" links the dogmatic Christ to the person, Jesus, and signifies the conviction that the person Jesus embodies the ontological and soteriological conceptions of the Messiah in his life and acts. In other words, the Christian belief is that it is in the person Jesus that the universal becomes particular, eternity is situated in time, and the divine spirit becomes flesh and "lives among us" (cf. John 1:14).

In the light of Conway's concern for universality, it is perhaps not surprising that she never speaks about "Jesus" but always about "Jesus Christ"[184] or simply "Christ". While she never quotes Jesus or speaks directly about his life or ministry, she does maintain that Jesus Christ is the proper understanding of the mediator, which we must understand as giving importance also to his particularity. Moreover, Christ is also characterized in her text as *man, logos proforikos*, and *flesh*. (cf. IV, 2 p. 21; V, 6 p. 27). Her point is to cement his role in the metaphysical scheme as that which bridges the ontological gap between God and the world. In so doing, she maintains his particularity (indeed, Christ is, for Conway, his

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178 Conway frequently employs the term Messiah to describe her Middle Nature: Principles III, 7 p. 18; IV, 1 p. 21; V, 3 p. 25.
179 E. g. Lev. 4:3; 1 Sam. 24:7.
180 1 Kings 19:16
181 E. g. 2 Sam. 7:4–17; Es. 7–11.
182 Keller, On the Mystery 134.
183 Ibid. 136.
184 See e. g. Conway, Principles IV, 1 p. 21; V, 1 p. 23; VI, 5 p. 31; VI, 5 p. 32; VI, 9 p. 37; VIII, 3 p. 60.

own distinct substance) as well as his universality (being a mediator between all creatures and the unity of God). But, more importantly, we need to discuss *what it means* that Middle Nature is embodied. Conway writes about the body of Christ: "For his body is a different substance from the bodies of all other creatures. (Indeed, he is the beginning of them and closest to God.)" (VII, 4 p. 50). The particular body of Christ is different from the bodies of the rest of creation in that it reflects his unique substance, which is "more excellent" (V, 4 p. 25), i.e., closer to God, than the rest of creations' spiritual bodies. She writes further:

"If one asks, how can the human soul, even in the highest state of purity, be united with God, since God is pure spirit, whereas the soul, though pure in the highest degree, always partakes of corporeality? I answer that this happens through Jesus Christ, who is the true and appropriate medium between the two. Christ and the soul can be united without any other medium because of their great affinity and likeness, which those learned men cannot demonstrate who say that the nature of body and spirit are completely contrary to each other." (VIII, 3 p. 60)

Christ's body is a particular body, and its particularity lies in that it extends to all creation through spirit, wisdom, justice, etc. He is the full and active extension of God into creation. As such, his particularity consists in this extension, that he embraces all in the universe without being its source and without being one and the same with it.

4.4.1. Deep Incarnation

This view of the Incarnation follows organically from the creative movement of God pouring himself into creation out of love. With process theology, we might describe Conway's view of Christ's body as his "cosmic body". In process theology the cosmic body of Christ signifies that it extends farther and comprises more than that of other humans – it extends into every creature. As all creatures are interdependent in Conway's system, so are they all linked to the body of Christ. In this view, the entire world is "included in the body of Christ".[185] One way of thinking about this kind of incarnation is found in the concept of *deep incarnation* which might be helpful in understanding Conway's concept of Middle Nature. Gregersen gives the following definition of deep incarnation:

"The extended body of Christ comprises the life of all creatures, including their cosmic nexuses, insofar as "the fullness of deity" was pleased to dwell in Christ (Col. 2:9) and

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185 Gregersen, Introduction 17.

'through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven' (Colossians 1:20)."[186]

This is a full-scope or all-inclusive definition of the Incarnation as encompassing the entire creation and not just humans or select humans. Based on the premise that there must be identity between the lived experience of creatures and God's eternal life, the relation between God and the world is not a static reality. Rather it is in constant flux, a movement between the divine Logos and the material world. In his particularity, Christ can be said to become the moment of subjectivity in God. Precisely because subjectivity is a process, this means that the Incarnation is an ongoing process rather than a temporal point. Thus, the idea of deep incarnation has consequences for how we might think of salvation. Gregersen sums up: "There is thus a high degree of congruence, or 'natural fit', between the notion of deep incarnation and a soteriological universalism."[187]

In Conway, we can describe the saving universalism of God taking place within the particularity of history as a slow soteriology. Conway says that "whatever is joined and united with him [Christ] is always new, lively, and growing". That is, Christ effects by his participation in creatures the same kind of change that is taking place within himself. All creatures have the potential to change for the better, but this decision (which is made possible through the essential freedom inherent in creatures) needs continuous actualization. Conway holds that when creatures make the right moral choices and thus move towards perfection in accordance with God's order it is due to Christ who works in them. But this is a process that happens slowly through increased experience and wisdom. Therefore, salvation cannot happen all at once but must be a gradual process. In a longer paragraph, Conway explains why the process of ascent – concretely the transmutations of beings – must take time and why God does not accomplish restoration immediately:

"If anyone asks what are these more excellent attributes, I reply that they are the following: spirit or life and light, by which I mean the capacity for every kind of feeling, perception, or knowledge, even love, all power and virtue, joy and fruition, which the noblest creatures have or can have, even the vilest and most contemptible. Indeed, dust and sand are capable of all these perfections through various successive transmutations which, according to the natural order of things, require long periods of time for their consummation, even though the absolute power of God, if he so pleases, may accelerate everything and accomplish them in a single moment. But this wisdom of God sees that it is more fitting for all things to proceed in their natural course and order, so that in this way they may achieve that maturity which he bestows on each and every being and so that creatures may have the opportunity to attain, through their own efforts, ever greater perfection as instruments of

186   Ibid. 20.
187   Ibid.

divine wisdom, goodness, and power, which operate in them and with them. For in this the creatures enjoy greater pleasure since they possess what they have as the fruits of their labor." (IX, 6 p. 66)

Even though God *could* obtain salvation for the world in a single moment, he chooses not to do so. We might note here that Conway returns once again to the theme of what God *could* do in his abstract essence versus what he chooses to do in his operations in the world, that is, in his relation to creatures. We are catapulted back to the core issue explored in Part Three between God *in se* and God *pro nobis*; between a strong ontology and a weak ontology; between reality understood as something determined by the absolute and static or reality understood as process, event, and experience. Once again, we see that Conway emphasizes the value of experience and process. It is better, she argues, that salvation occurs as a process or as a continuous event because this contains the potential for creatures to increase in experience, wisdom, maturity, and awareness. God decides that it is best that the soteriological process occurs in "the natural order of things" (slowly) in order for creatures to achieve maturity and greater pleasure from salvation by knowing that they have contributed to it themselves. Because Christ is pure freedom, or the realization of right decisions, he effects the same in creatures.

This bears some resemblance to Origen's soteriology. As Anders-Christian Jacobsen has shown, in Origen Christ has a pedagogical role as the teacher of salvation.[188] The pedagogical aspect points to the dynamic nature of the soteriological process. Salvation is not a fixed moment when God brings about every good thing in the world but a movement wherein Christ slowly actualizes the potential for good in creatures by working with them. For Origen, this dynamic is closely linked to his view of freedom:

"Origen's historic metaphysics of the soul 'possessed of free will', which views dynamic freedom, rather than static nature as the defining characteristic of reality, is as fundamental to his concept of the triune God, his theology, as it is to his notion of man, his anthropology, and his view of the historical world, his cosmology."[189]

I would argue that the dynamic character of freedom is necessary for Conway, too, in order to avoid a static ontological dualism between God and creation, on the one hand, and a conflation of God and the world which identifies God with the world, on the other. It is interesting to note, therefore, that salvation occurs in cooperation between God and the world, that is, between Christ and each crea-

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188 See Jacobsen, Christ – The Teacher of Salvation, *passim*. Further, the innate knowledge of right and wrong in every creature must be developed during upbringing and education, for Conway as for Origen.

189 Hengstermann, The Three Hypostases in Origen 1.

ture. The capacity to perfect oneself is grounded in freedom and actualized in creation's participation in Christ. Because Christ is close to creatures in nature, in that he can change but is simultaneously the expression of freedom as it should be managed (change from good to better), God uses him as "an instrument through which he works together with all creatures" (V, 4 p. 25). This suggests what might, in theological terms, be called a *gratia co-operans*, a co-operative grace. In other words, God's salvific action occurs with and through creaturely freedom and not in opposition to it; divine agency supplements creaturely agency but does not overrule it.

Conway uses the terms salvation and restoration synonymously to describe the state of the creature when it has "return[ed] toward the good". (VII, 1 p. 43). Here it might be helpful to nuance the two concepts somewhat. Restoration is usually understood as a return to a former state or condition, in this case, a reversal of the Fall so that creatures end up where they started in creation before they fell. This concept entails no new development. Salvation on the other hand seems more open and leaves room for interpretation and possibly for development. It can entail a gradual movement towards becoming more spiritual and perfected. Based on the analysis above, I believe that Conway subscribes not to restoration but to salvation in some form.

She explains that because God is just the creature "can never fall again because, through its great punishment, it has acquired a greater perfection and strength" (VII, 1 p. 42). Because creatures grow into perfection in increased wisdom and experience, salvation is progress and not a return to status quo. This idea of salvation is also found in Keller's process theology, where it is the continuous action of freedom and creativity that opens up new possibilities. It is the actualization of possibilities that result in salvation occurring not only as a future event, but now. In other words, the relation between actuality and possibility reveals salvation, for Conway as for process theology, as something occurring in the present, not only something reserved for the future.

We might refer this dialectic back to the tension found in the New Testament concerning God's Kingdom as already/not yet realized. On the one hand, Jesus Christ preached the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), but, on the other, he destroyed the expectation of a future kingdom by claiming that it was already present in the world. The sign of its presence was his life – his ministry and miracles (Matt. 12:28; 13:16). In Jesus Christ the tension between present and future salvation is dissolved.

For process theology, this aspect is described in every actual entity that concresces and thereby conflates actuality and potentiality, as well as eternity (God's primordial nature) and time (God's consequent nature). In other words, this experience is precisely both already/not yet or rest and transition. For Conway, this moment happens in Christ. Thus, she explains how

"those who achieve a perfect union with Christ are raised to a region of perfect tranquillity [*sic*], where nothing is seen or felt to move or be moved. For although the strongest and swiftest motions exist there, nevertheless because they move so uniformly, equally, and harmoniously, without any resistance or disturbance, they appear completely at rest." (V, 7 p. 27)

Achieving union with Christ "feels like rest, but really is motion" (V, 7 p. 27). Union with Christ is the experience of slowly actualizing one's creative potential – of becoming – in a way that is harmonious motion, and, therefore, creative becoming is both motion and rest.

I have suggested that the process of salvation entails an actualization of a potential in creatures for becoming more perfect or spiritual. Conway argues against More that all creatures necessarily contain all potential spirits but that these are not yet actualized. It was part of Conway's fifth argument for spiritual monism that any body can potentially be changed into any spirit and that any spirit can reside in any body and that this inevitably leads to spiritual monism. In other words, the relation between potentiality and actuality is necessary to maintain the close relation between spirit and body. We then saw how Conway stresses that the potential is embedded in a certain context (also within time) and that there is, therefore, a limit to the actualization of the potential. Now we see that the argument of infinite potential is also necessary for the soteriological process to happen, but the weight shifts from the confines of relatedness to the openness of freedom:

"For if a creature were entirely limited by its own individuality and totally constrained and confined within the very narrow boundaries of its own species to the point that there was no mediator through which one creature could change into another, then no creature could attain further perfection and greater participation in divine goodness, nor could creatures act and react upon each other in different ways." (VI, 5 p. 32)

The possibility of perfecting oneself lies in the freedom to change. Creatures are potentially infinite because they are always able to perfect themselves more, just as Christ does. Through its participation in Christ, the constant movement of the created substance becomes a movement that brings it constantly closer to God. As Conway puts it, a creature's journey towards God is like a staircase "which is infinitely long and has an infinite number of steps, nevertheless the steps are not infinitely distant from each other, for otherwise there would be no possibility of ascent or descent" (VI, 6 p. 34). Whereas potential in time is limited by relations and context, the actualization of this potential in the meeting with the eternal Christ opens up a space that is unlimited. The actualization of wisdom, etc., in Christ reveals that there are different sorts of motion, that is, time. While crea-

turely motion in itself is futile and "destructive" because it breaks down into parts, vital motion is constructive motion or a unification of the multiple.

Although freedom is necessary for the gradual actualization of wisdom to take place, the interrelatedness with Christ leaves room for God's creative intervention. He lures the soul towards greater perfection by rewarding or punishing it. Together, freedom and divine participation give creatures the necessary tools for progressing creatively towards perfection. This finally becomes part of Conway's theodicy: God is good, just, and merciful because he created spiritual matter with the capacity to move infinitely towards perfection through virtuous choices.

4.4.2. Evil Motion?

It seems that Conway does not hold descent down the moral scale to immediately entail a stimulating and punitive pain that makes for a swift reformation. We might understand this in accordance with the discussion in the subsection 3.1.3 of Part Three, which has shown that the farther down a creature falls, the more disposed towards the physical pole and the more passive its spirit becomes. Here, I suggest, we find an understanding of embodiment as evil. The problem is that body can become so dense and over-powering that it stalls any spiritual progress. Therefore, Conway also claims that it is possible to die in one's sins (VII, 1 p. 44). This means, as I understand it, that a creature can fall so far down that, at a certain point, it loses the momentum to turn around and that this process of "slowing down" continues even to the point where creative motion *almost* stops. Conway writes: "those who are dead in their sins lack this sense of the hardness or softness of good and bad spirits" (VII, 1 p. 44). That is, they lack the proper understanding of God's creative order, of how wrong moral choices literally lead to more corporeality and how good moral choices lead to spirituality "without any figurative sense" (VII, 1 p. 44).

Death in one's sins seems to be the closest one comes to annihilation or non-being in Conway's system. We know what Conway thinks happens "when concrete matter is so divided that it disperses into physical monads" (III, 9 p. 20). At this point, motion almost stops (although not completely, because then a creature would become a non-being cf. VII, 2 p. 45). "Death", therefore, is the point zero where the physical monad becomes stiff and uncreative. This is the point where it no longer takes account of its prehensions and makes no aesthetic decisions. This state may be Conway's version of hell, but it can never be permanent. She writes that "a creature cannot proceed infinitely toward evil nor fall into in-activity or silence or utter eternal suffering, it [therefore] irrefutably follows that it must return toward the good" (VII, 1 p. 43.). Process theology has a specific interpretation of this kind of evil that is non-action or non-evolvement. It is called the evil of banality or triviality. Whitehead explains that when an actual occasion

does not move in accordance with its initial aim and thereby attains – or attempts to attain – a higher degree of aesthetic satisfaction, this is trivial evil:

"It must be noted that the state of degradation to which evil leads, when accomplished, is not in itself evil, except by comparison with what might have been. A hog is not an evil beast, but when a man is degraded to the level of a hog, with the accompanying atrophy of finer elements, he is no more evil than a hog. The evil of the final degradation lies in the comparison with what might have been."[190]

Whitehead still considers this relative evil as genuine evil because it is an evil for the man himself, and, ultimately, in the larger eschatological picture it becomes an evil for all.[191] Thus, triviality is comparatively evil – a hog is not an evil beast. Cobb and Griffin elaborate that triviality is only evil in some cases, namely if it is "*unnecessary* triviality", meaning that it is a less intense experience than it could have been given its possibilities.[192] But they maintain that the evil of unnecessary triviality is as evil as the other type of evil, which is "discord".[193] This is absolute evil (moral evil) in the sense that the actual entity actively resists its initial aim and moves actively against God's lure. I have shown above how this could be understood as the creature using its freedom to act creatively in accordance with its own desires (self-determination) rather than in accordance with the overall harmony.

Thus, according to process theology, evil is destructive whereas good is creative.[194] The good occurs not only when God lures individual creatures away from moral evil so that they act in accordance with their initial aim but also when he gives pleasure to all actual occasions by creating greater unity in multiplicity. As shown, process theologians believe that God lures the world towards an increasingly harmonious and aesthetic experience by stimulating the creative chaos into increasingly complex forms of order: The greater the complexity in the world to be unified, the greater the enjoyment. The maximization of complexity is the evocation of value, beauty, and greater enjoyment. Part of this salvific aim entails ensuring that the world does not become trivial or banal. Therefore, God creatively seeks to further creatures' enjoyment by giving them more possibilities, and this involves the risk of the creatures misusing those possibilities and ending up in discord.

"Rebelling against the universe because of this kind of evil reflects a misunderstanding not only of what perfect power can and cannot do, but also of the nature of evil, i. e., of the fact that triviality is as much to be avoided as discord."[195]

190 WHITEHEAD, Religion in the Making 97.
191 Ibid. 93 f.
192 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 70. Their italics. Cf. WHITEHEAD, ibid. 94.
193 COBB/GRIFFIN, ibid. 70.
194 WHITEHEAD, Religion in the Making 96.
195 COBB/GRIFFIN, Process Theology 120.

Did Conway realize that triviality or banality is a profound form of evil? Her assertion that it is possible "to die in one's sins" by becoming less and less self-creative seems close to a process perspective on passivity as comparative evil. Whitehead explains the descent of creatures into evil as passivity in terms very similar to Conway's:

"[E]vil does not necessarily lead to progress. On the contrary, the evil in itself leads to the world losing forms of attainment in which that evil manifests itself. Either the species ceases to exist, or it sinks back into a stage in which it ranks below the possibility of that form of evil. For example, a species whose members are always in pain will either cease to exist, or lose the delicacy of perception which results in that pain, or develop a finer and more subtle relationship among its bodily parts. Thus evil promotes its own elimination by destruction, or degradation, or by its elevation."[196]

Evil must, on this account, eventually lead to its own destruction. It seems to be the same for Conway. When the "point zero" of motion is reached, the creature has become so hard (literally) that it is, in Whitehead's words "below the possibility of that form of evil". At this point something must happen, since no further inactivity is possible (and nothing is ever annihilated). Thus, a spiritualization occurs: "then it is ready to resume its activity and become spirit just as happens with our food" (III, 9 p. 20).[197] Or as Whitehead says, the species will "develop a finer and more subtle relationship among its bodily parts". For Conway, there is a "point zero" when the physical monad is no longer able to resist God's lure and must necessarily turn towards him again. That is, it is impossible to fall entirely

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196 WHITEHEAD, Religion in the Making 96.

197 This idea is also found and further explored by Conway's fellow admirer of Origen Joseph Glanvill. In his bestseller *Lux Orientalis* (1662), Glanvill explores the pre-existence of souls as the "key to unlock the grand mysteries of providence" particularly in relation to "man's sin and misery", as it says on the title page. According to Glanvill, each soul possesses three different faculties: 1) The spiritual and intellectual faculty, such as virtue, knowledge, and divine love. This corresponds to the Platonic *nous* and disposes the soul towards the higher life. 2) The sensitive faculty, which is the senses. 3) The plastic faculty, whereby it moves and forms the body. This directs the soul towards the lower life. Glanvill explains that each of these faculties acts in each soul, but the soul is finite and therefore it cannot do everything at once. This is evident from daily life, he says, and gives as an example that those who are strong in imagination are weak in cool reason. Therefore, if some of the faculties are trained and gain strength, others lose their strength. The soul is always active but is only able to employ one faculty to the full at any one time. Glanvill connects these stages to the Fall. The more the soul sinks into the body, the more the plastic faculties take over. What is interesting in relation to Conway is that Glanvill describes this as the spirit sinking into a "state of inactivity and silence", a phrase very close to Conway's. The view seems to share some ground with Whitehead's description of the species "sinking back" into a stage where it loses "the delicacy of perception": Glanvill, Lux Orientalis IV 3 p. 31.

out of God's creative order. At a certain point, the tide turns, and the process towards God begins again.

However, this inevitability of temporality constitutes for process theology a "deeper evil" than physical suffering, injustice, mental anguish, and natural disasters.[198] This evil is not based upon "immature desires" of creatures or "inadequate understandings" of reality. These evils can be mitigated or reduced, claim Cobb and Griffin.[199] Even death is not the ultimate stumbling block for process theologians – temporality itself is:

"The final problem is not death, for even untimely death need not destroy the meaning and worth of the life that has been lived. The deepest problem is temporality as such, which Whitehead, borrowing a phrase from Locke, calls perpetual perishing. 'The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing'."[200]

That which is really evil, in the deepest sense, is the continuous motion of the created world. This evil is deeper because not only does evil occur and pass but so do joy and zest. The moments we experience as meaningful and life-giving pass and fade away in our memories. This means that even if we succeed in diminishing or overcoming specific evils this experience will become a memory, too, and ultimately fade away. "The conviction that success does not ultimately succeed undercuts our zest more radically than do many failures".[201] From the process theological perspective, motion itself becomes the real evil. It is not understood primarily as the positive order of opportunity and perfection as in Conway but as that which fundamentally destroys any progress we might have made. Cobb and Griffin capture this realization: "If this perpetual perishing of everything that we value is the whole story, then life is ultimately meaningless".[202]

Whereas Conway considers no motion at all the absolute evil because it stalls the opportunity for progress, perpetual and undirected motion is the absolute evil for process theology. In process theology, conscious reflection on the perpetual motion undercuts any immediate or present experience of enjoyment and fulfillment. This awareness of the banality of time requires that salvation be a state where movement is changed. We find the same need for transformation in Conway, who envisages it in Jesus Christ and, through him, in creatures who strive towards perfection.

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198 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 120.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid. See also Whitehead, Process and Reality 517.
201 Cobb/Griffin, ibid.
202 Ibid.

4.4.3. Conviviality

Conway's understanding of salvation is clearly processual, since she does not hold that salvation entails achieving a state of static eternity. If a creature were ever to reach perfection in this way it would become God, which is unthinkable. But this does not mean that there is no salvation in Conway's system. Because Christ signifies the actualization of continuous perfection in creatures, Conway envisions salvation not as a recurrence to the state before creation but as the birth of a new life in a better state of harmonious movement with God. It is not a restoration, but a *transformation*:

"Consequently, from that indifference of will which it once had for good or evil, it rises until it only wishes to be good and is incapable of wishing any evil. Hence one can infer that all God's creatures, which have previously fallen and degenerated from their original goodness, must be changed and restored after a certain time to a condition which is not simply as good as that in which they were created, but better." (VII, 1 p. 42)

According to process theology, Christ is the creative transformation in each actual entity, and as such he signifies a shift "from static to dynamic order, and from order as such to order with novelty".[203] Although Christ as Logos is present in all things, the work of the Logos is to be discerned through the decision of the creature. A creature can choose to be more or less receptive to the Logos, and, therefore, Christ can be more or less present in a creature: "Christ is most fully present in human beings when they are most fully open to that presence".[204] The cooperative grace between the creature and God again becomes prevalent. Keller expounds: "Grace […] needs our *cooperation*. It is not a power over us, but an empowerment *of* us".[205] Creative transformation is increasing growth or life, according to process theology. Growth is not simply adding elements of the world together into new constellations, it requires the transformation of those elements, and this happens through Christ. Therefore, Christ is not "limited to the sphere of 'the religious'", but he is present wherever increasing growth and life occur.[206] Because of the possibility of change in process theology, the future is open-ended. Progress is possible, and it rests on the freedom of creatures to enter into creative transformation.

We can note that this sheds new light on Conway's argument against Descartes and More whom she accuses, as we have seen, of locating God in an infinite space outside creation. By doing so, they subject him to the limitations of the created

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203 Ibid. 98.
204 Ibid. 99.
205 Keller, On the Mystery 149. Her italics.
206 Cobb/Griffin, Process Theology 101.

world or, in her words, they confine him "within the narrow spaces of the brain". In Conway's position, there remains a gap between God and creation, but she attempts to rearrange the structure of this gap by conceiving of it as a space of encounter. God reveals his eternal, static, and omnipotent being by transforming this infinite distance. If we develop the process theological consequences of her thinking, the distance between God and creation is changed from being an unbridgeable abyss to becoming a rich and open space of infinite possibilities. We might call Conway's position a soteriology of proximity because, in the never-ending process towards perfection, an infinite and eternal space is revealed and opened up *within creation*. It is not empty. Rather, it is filled with the love revealed in creation through the second substance, which is Christ. Thus, this space of complexity is, in the most fundamental way, embodied.

In Keller's words, "the challenge is to think the difference of 'God' and the 'world' with a radicality that actually deepens their interdependence".[207] Put in terms of Conway's system, the challenge becomes to think of the harmonious movement of the three substances – God, Christ, and creatures – as a complex relation rather than as a "flattening monism" or a dualistic division.[208] Keller argues that pneumatology is a promising avenue for thinking about the God-world relation in terms that become neither dualistic nor monistic. Following Keller's suggestion, it is stimulating to highlight the importance of the spirit, that "unusual attribute", in Conway's system.[209] I agree with Keller, who argues that Conway's entire metaphysical system is theologically driven. The multiplicity of every creature, the infinity of its spirits, is what connects every creature to God. As Keller writes: "We live each of us as spirited flesh, enfleshment of a single spirit of All – creatively differentiated into the many spirited bodies as our 'own', as our selves. […] The difference of our spirits to the Spirit of God is then not one of *ontological separation*".[210] But it is not only spirit and body that are in an interdependent relation. In the "macro"-perspective, the emanations of spirits put each being in an intimate connection to and union with everything else, including God. In this connection, this tangible orientation outward, each creature is entirely dependent on its fellow creature:

"But a creature, because it needs the help of its fellow creatures, must be multiple in order to receive this help. For whatever receives something is nourished by it and thus becomes part of it. Therefore it is no longer one thing but many, and as many indeed as the things which it receives and even greater than that. Thus there is a certain mutuality between

207   Keller, The Flesh of God 93.
208   Ibid. 95.
209   Hutton, Anne Conway 221.
210   Keller, The Flesh of God 96. Her italics.

creatures in giving and receiving, through which one supports another so that one cannot live without the other." (VII, 4 p. 54 f.)

Theologically speaking, we are a far cry away from Augustine and Luther's conviction that the "natural" postlapsarian state is being *incurvatus in se*, or loving only oneself. The multiplicity of each creature fosters and demands the nourishing interdependence of all creatures in what Keller terms "the atmosphere of conviviality: the thematic of sociality, of sentient, intercreaturely cooperation in the symbioses of becoming".[211] Conway integrates this thought into the very core of her metaphysics as she argues that creatures can support each other by passing on the vital action given by Christ:

"[V]ital action can proceed together with local motion from one thing to another when a fitting medium exists to transmit it, and this even at a great distance. Here one may observe a kind of divine spirituality or subtlety in every motion and in every action of life, which no created substance or body is capable of, namely through intimate presence. As shown above, no created substance is capable of this, and yet every motion and action whatsoever is. For motion or action is not a certain matter or substance but rather a mode of being." (IX, 9 p. 68)

And:

"But every motion which proceeds from the proper life and will of a creature is vital, and I call this the motion of life, which clearly is neither local nor mechanical like the other kind but has in itself life and vital power. This is the virtual extension of the creature, which is greater or lesser according to the kind or degree of life with which the creature is endowed. For when a creature attains a more noble kind or degree of life, it acquires greater power and ability to move itself and transmit its vital motions to the greatest distance." (IX, 9 p. 69)

Just as Christ is the instrument of God, so creatures can be the instruments of Christ and pass on vital action to each other, although they cannot bring about this transformative divine motion in themselves.[212] Like life, the perfect motion is ultimately a gift from God. But Conway uses the example of a crystal that can increase the light that emanates from a candle to show that creatures can transmit it. Transposed to the soteriological context, we can understand how creatures, on Conway's account, are able to act on each other in a kind of collective or cosmic affective soteriology.[213] Thus, as it is the role of the soul to raise the lower spirits

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211   Ead., Be a Multiplicity 90.
212   Parageau, Christ in Anne Conway's Principia 260.
213   Ibid. 260 f. Wiertel, Classical Theism and the Problem of Animal Suffering 280, makes
      the point that the reverse structure is also true, as he explains how Conway's account of

to a higher level (VI, 6 p. 34), it is the role of one creature to help raise its fellow creature to more life and spirit (towards God). This points to a communal ethics in Conway, where creatures are responsible not only for themselves but for each other.

The inherent and irreducible multiplicity of each creature in Conway is both the condition and the effect of a profound, even ontological, interdependence of the entire creation, which Keller suggests might be understood as a "proto-Deleuzian imperative" supplemented by compassion.[214] Each self is participating in others and is indeed dependent on others for its own existence. Conway's ontology, Keller argues, goes beyond that of formal structure alone. Indeed, it is not merely the "how" but also the "why". The motive force in Conway's system is for creatures to help each other, which is why the system eventually extends to ethics.

Conway's organic philosophy is that of a nourishing fellowship, which perhaps echoes her last years among the Quakers. This "Society of Fellowship" frequented her home, understood her suffering, and helped her through it by being there, by her bedside, in silence and contemplation. But the nourishing fellowship developed in this organic world view extends far beyond compassion for other human beings. *All* creation is co-dependent which means that ethical responsibility and love must also extend to animals, plants, and dust.[215] In Part Four, we have seen how Conway argues that all creatures have souls, which deconstructs the notion of human privilege in the cosmos. Conway's cosmology is not anthropocentric. As Duran sums up, there is continuity between humankind and the rest of the cosmos in Conway's system: "There is no clear line of demarcation for Conway between the human and nonhuman or the living and non-living; rather […] 'all Kinds of Creatures may be changed into another'."[216] Likewise, following Whitehead, Cobb explains that every creature contains the infinite space of ever-growing richness, and this, we might add, "does not allow any a priori human distinctiveness. There is no kind of entity present in man that is not present in animals. There is only a peculiarly powerful and complex development of ontologically similar entities."[217] Human beings are, in both of these views, not fundamentally different from animals. Conway does posit a distinctiveness in value between humans and beasts, although we recall that the former received the spirit "from above" and not from the earth (VI, 6 p. 34). This, I have argued, is to be understood as meaning that

a "cosmic-wide fallenness" means that innocent creatures are affected by other creatures' fall.

214 Keller, Be a Multiplicity 82.
215 White, The Legacy of Anne Conway 11. 95.
216 Duran, Anne Viscountess Conway 69. Duran is citing Conway's *Principles* in Loptson's edition: Conway, Principles 224. Trans. Loptson.
217 Cobb Jr., A Christian Natural Theology 59 f.

there is more unity in complexity in the souls of humans, but that is not to say that animals do not also have souls.

But ultimately, the scope of the interdependence is participation in the divine: "Truly, it is the nature of a creature that it cannot be merely singular if it has to act and enjoy that good which the Creator prepared for it" (VII, 4 p. 54). Participation in the divine requires participation in each other, says Conway. Thereby she anticipates Whitehead's organic philosophy according to Keller.[218] Keller further ties Conway's ideas to those of Deleuze and Guattari, who write that "each multiplicity is symbiotic", and thereby express the togetherness of life that permeates the world. In this view, Keller believes that Conway exposes the very core of theological thinking today:

"But in Conway the symbiosis, the together-life, of all creatures becomes what we may call the *con-viviality of the creation*, in which living together takes on an atmosphere of gracious commensality, of unsentimental care and celebration. […] And what on earth is the point of theology, now, today, if not the cultivation of this convivial manifold?"[219]

According to Conway and process theology alike, our possibilities depend upon our multiplicity. Cosmological con-viviality is the key to any realization of these possibilities in actuality. Keller writes about Conway's theology: "For we do not exist, let alone grow and thrive, without the help of the others and therefore of God".[220] Whitehead expressed this thought in his idea of mutual immanence, and Keller, too, uses it as matrix for her "polydoxy". The interrelatedness of creation is not just of one part to the whole. It is of parts to parts, creatures to creatures, all requiring the assistance of each other:

"[I]n whatever way bodies or spirits may be divided or separated from each other throughout the universe, they always remain united in this separation since the whole creation is always just one substance or entity, and there is no vacuum in it. Therefore how can anything be separated from itself?" (VII, 4 p. 52)

The salvific moment is impossible for an individual to obtain on its own and it is not something occurring at a certain point in time. Rather, it is a complex relation that happens continuously. As such, it is something creatures can hope to take part in, but it is also something that can never be defined nor, indeed, fully and finally understood. Yet, it is something that can be truly experienced as empowerment (to use the words of Keller) and a kingdom of new possibilities. The *Principles*, in my view, is an attempt to give a metaphysical description of this experi-

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218 Keller, Be a Multiplicity 89.
219 Ibid. 83.
220 Ibid. 87.

ence. It is an attempt to describe, within the discussions of seventeenth-century philosophy, how individuals can participate in the new creation springing from the foundation of love. Therefore, creation and salvation, beginning and ending, are two sides of the same coin. These extremes are reconciled but not conflated in the intermediary substance of Christ, who makes it into a continuum rather than a dichotomy. As Jesus Christ reconciles the extremes of life and death, eternity and time, the universal and the particular, God and creation, freedom and creativity, spirit and body, so does he (if creatures allow it) activate the potential in creatures to begin the process of salvation. From the process theological perspective of Anne Conway's *Principles*, creatures are fundamentally, from the beginning to the end, open-ended processes of interaction, and it is precisely because of their related nature that they hold, despite the Fall, the possibility of being reconciled with God through Christ.

CONCLUSION

The reading of Anne Conway's *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy* offered in this thesis has used process theology as a hermeneutical lens to identify overlaps between Anne Conway's philosophy and process theology and to analyze how and to what extent her philosophy can be viewed as a precursor to process theology. In Parts Three and Four, I have conducted this analysis with regard to the two main themes of the treatise: how God relates to the world and how spirit relates to body. This analysis is founded on an account of the main process theological terminology that is based on selected material from four key process theologians. From this account, I have identified creativity and freedom as the two key categories of process theology, and I have then applied these to the *Principles* throughout the thesis.

By situating the treatise within the wider intellectual context of the seventeenth century, I have attempted to show that the two main themes of the treatise are reworkings of the same fundamental theological and epistemological problem, namely how God's eternal being manifests itself in history, how it is experienced by creatures, and how it relates to them. I have argued that while the two themes focus on this same fundamental problem, the difference between them is a matter of perspective. Thus, on the one hand, Conway's enquiry into the God-world relation is conducted from a rationalistic and theocentric perspective that operates within the framework of strong ontologies, but, on the other hand, Conway's handling of the spirit-body relation is conducted from an anthropocentric perspective that focuses on subjective, bodily experience and goes some way towards a weak ontology that sees reality (creaturely as well as divine) as processual rather than static.

My analysis has yielded the following overall results: first, the tripartite substance metaphysics presented in the *Principles* makes inconsistent use of the term "substance", and I have argued that this is due to the fact that Conway uses the term on different levels of the ontological scale. I have described this inconsistency as a "sliding" from a strong ontology of being as static and absolute, found in her rationalist and theocentric ideal, to a weak ontology of becoming that is only fully developed in later process theology. Thus, I have concluded that Conway wishes to describe God as static and creation as mutable while at the same time maintaining a strong relation between them. Yet, her insistence on the immutabil-

ity of God is not found in the process theological idea of a God who incorporates corporeal experience and is changed by it.

This insistence on God's static being creates tensions in her system between immutability and change, which leads us to the second over-all result of the thesis: the substance of Jesus Christ is the pivotal point in the gradual movement towards an experience-based ontology. Through his three functions, he serves as a bridge (Middle Nature) between God and creation. As the pre-existent Logos and God's self-knowledge, he reveals that God is indeed subject to movement, but, in contrast to the movement of time, the joint movement of Christ and God is harmonious and thus eternal. This allows for the eternal God to be incarnated in time, which is the movement of creatures, and it creates the possibility of salvation for creatures who can be affected by Christ's mutability. I have argued that Christ in this way changes the fabric of time in Conway's system and that it is through participation in him that creatures are saved from the lack of movement which is death.

Third, the participation of creatures in Christ is subject to their use of the free will. To Conway, free will is itself a sign that God is present in creatures through their spirits. The spirits of creatures testify to the intimate presence of Christ in them. From the beginning of time, he sets creation in motion and thus remains in creation through the freedom of creatures to become ever more spiritual. But this continuous creative act also gives creatures the possibility of turning away from God. This essential freedom is reflected in the changing bodies of all creatures, which thus serve as ethical mirrors reflecting the state of the relation of each creature to God. Although a strong relation is established by the idea of Middle Nature, Conway's metaphysics of freedom gives rise to an individuality which holds the potential to separate God and creation.

Fourth, this emphasis on freedom and relation emerges in Conway's argument against dualism, which problematizes the interaction between mind and matter and instead posits what I have called "spiritual monism". By conceiving of body as an attribute of spirit, Conway creates a continuum where creatures fluctuate between being closer to or farther away from God. I have suggested that this creates challenges for Conway's soteriology. Since creatures are always in movement, they can never attain the eternal rest which is divine. This means that they can only ever move closer to God but never reach him fully, even if they partake in Christ. But this also rules out the idea of hell or eternal damnation, because at some point they will begin to move back towards God. Conway's soteriology thus holds salvation to be a continuous and never-ending journey of creation towards God. But if salvation is never reached permanently, her view seems to open the door to an eternal fluctuation of creatures between good and evil. Only the creature which continuously betters itself can remain in soteriological proximity to God. Process theology problematizes this position by holding that undirected eternal

movement is true perdition, thus emphasizing the need for a divine ordering of the world or a close relationality between God and creatures in salvation.

The final point made in this thesis is that individuality and identity play an important role in Conway's system. This is important for her theodicy because God's justice rests on the accountability of creatures in relation to their freedom. An individual must be responsible for its actions. Therefore, Conway insists on the existence of the soul as the enduring and defining essence of an individual. I have emphasized that there seems to be a paradox in how she understands freedom as the individualizing aspect of creatures, which distinguishes them from God, while at the same time holding that it is through the proper use of this freedom that creatures are related to God. Her soteriology does not resolve this paradox. Rather, because she seeks to maintain individuality, the final eschatological exaltation cannot be conceived of in any other way than as the soul's infinite edging closer to God. I have argued that Conway's soteriology thus opens up a space for ethical progress which is ever expanding. Instead of resolving the paradox, she makes it the ground for positing God's grace and the freedom of creatures not as opposites but as two sides of the same coin. Grace, I have argued, can be defined as the gift of acting freely within this infinite space of harmonious movement. Thus, when creatures move toward God this is a result of cooperation.

Here, perhaps, lies Conway's greatest convergence with process theology, namely eschatology as an ethical space which is present in the world. I have shown that the process theological notion of conviviality accentuates the mutual responsibility of creatures not only for themselves but also – and mainly – for each other. While I have argued that Conway's position shares in such a communal ethics, process theology does not posit the soul as necessary for the responsibility of each creature. This means that the grounds for arriving at a communal ethics is different in process theology, which holds that the infinite space of continued ethical progress is included in God-self (in his consequent nature). Surely, Conway would see this position as undermining God's freedom from the world and thus being at risk of slipping into pantheism. Therefore, she posits the second substance of Christ to secure God's difference from the world while simultaneously bridging that difference.

On these grounds, the final conclusion of the present thesis must be that Conway's *Principles* in many ways prefigures a process theological weak ontology. This is especially true for her view on the nature of the created substance and God's revelation in the world, which she holds to be relational, experience-based, and contextual. But because she insists on maintaining a conception of God in line with strong ontologies, one should be careful about calling her an early process theologian. In my view, the strength of her position is that it maintains an absolute aspect of God as different from the world, which serves as an ethical corrective to the relativity of history. Although the strength of process theology lies

in its accentuation of the interpretative necessity of revelation, it makes God, to a certain extent at least, dependent on the world. The challenge for a theology of today is how to maintain both the interpretative and the absolute aspect of the God-world relation without one taking over the other. Here, I would argue that Conway's insistence on the close relation between spirit and body holds some potential because it anchors revelation in bodily experience. The idea that God's spirit is present in all creatures, and embodied in them, relates him intimately to his creation as the activity or in-spiration of the world without simultaneously being identified with it. In many regards, Conway's treatise provides an informative backdrop to this theological discussion and serves as a fruitful source of inspiration and provocation for present-day theology.

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