Integral Design Process

An Integral Adventure with Process Philosophy and Design Thinking

A Metapraxical Framework for

PHILOSO**preneurs**

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REALITY IN PROCESS

"The study of philosophy is a voyage towards the larger generalities.[1]"

"The oneness of the universe, and the oneness of each element in the universe, repeat themselves to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplfying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities.[2]"

"The elucidation of meaning involved in the phrase 'all things flow' is one chief task of metaphysics.[3]"

- Alfred North Whitehead

In the early 20th century, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity held the dominant consensus. The discovery of a 4-dimensional spacetime provided human beings with a "complete" picture of the universe. The nature of reality was geometrical, and therein lied our true understanding of time itself. Einstein famously said: "The distinction between past, present, and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one."[4] However, the uttering of these very words has created a schizophrenic experience of our lived time. Is time an illusion or is it the basis for our very existence? Well, it is A.N. Whitehead who will saves us from this "fallacy of misplaced concreteness."[5]

As a mathematician, Whitehead did not disagree with Einstein's revolutionary physics. However, as a philosopher, he believed Einstein "incoherently bifurcated metaphysics."[6] Whitehead argues that we must not "conceive of events as in a given Time, a given Space, and consisting of changes in given persistent material." Instead, we must see that "Time, Space, and Material are adjuncts of events." "On the old theory of relativity, Time and Space are relations between materials; on our theory they are relations between events."[7]

In Einstein's universe, "we are spectators gazing in upon the world from outside it, as though the phenomenological quality of lived time is just a distorted projection onto otherwise objective physical happenings," writes Whiteheadian scholar, Matthew Segall. However, in Whitehead's cosmology, experience is embedded in the world "as a relational participant essential to shaping its ongoing creative advance."[8] Thus, according to Whitehead, the nature of reality is not complete; it is constantly unfolding and creating itself.

In his philosophy of organism, Whitehead replaces physics (as the most general natural science) with ecology. Since ecology is the study of co-evolving relationships, it can help provide a more process-relational understanding of our world. Whitehead's metaphysics does justice to all of experience, whilst also leaving room for the inherent mystery that embraces our existence. While the role of speculative philosophy is to "frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted,"[9] Whitehead also writes that "Philosophy begins in wonder. And when philosophic thought has done its best, the wonder remains."[10]

PRAXIS

Although Whitehead had a natural inclination towards metaphysics, he also showed a keen interest in business education. While he was teaching in the Philosophy Department at Harvard University, he was also in correspondence with the dean of the Harvard School of Business, and wrote extensively on the role of business education in universities. Whitehead stated that by joining Harvard University he would be able to deal with general questions that were "half philosophical and half practical."[11]

This notion is deeply embedded in his metaphysics, as Whitehead writes in *Process and Reality*: "What is found in 'practice' must lie within the scope of the metaphysical description. When the description fails to include the 'practice,' the metaphysics is inadequate and requires revision. There can be no appeal to practice to supplement metaphysics, so long as we remain contented with our metaphysical doctrines. Metaphysics is nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice."[12] Thus, by engaging with business education, Whitehead was initiating praxis into process philosophy.

In order to avoid the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, one must learn to acquaint themselves with the process of praxis. "Knowledge should never be familiar," philosopher Brian Hendley writes as he quotes Whitehead: "We should not lose our sense of its novelty, our skepticism as to the extent of application, our awareness of its consequences, its presupposition, or even of "the miraculous history of its discovery." Faculty should cultivate "activity in the presence of knowledge;" in the process of learning there should be "a subordinate activity of application…unapplied knowledge is knowledge shorn of its meaning"…The world of business is a prime candidate for the concrete application of abstract ideas and theories."[13]

Whitehead's own experience of finding himself at the intersection of philosophy and business can be a testament to the fact that philosophers can be doers and entrepreneurs can be thinkers. So what's stopping the armchair philosopher from creating a business model? And the entrepreneur from engaging in metaphysics? I believe the missing ingredient is language. So let me suggest that we may be walking into the era of the *Philosopreneuer.*
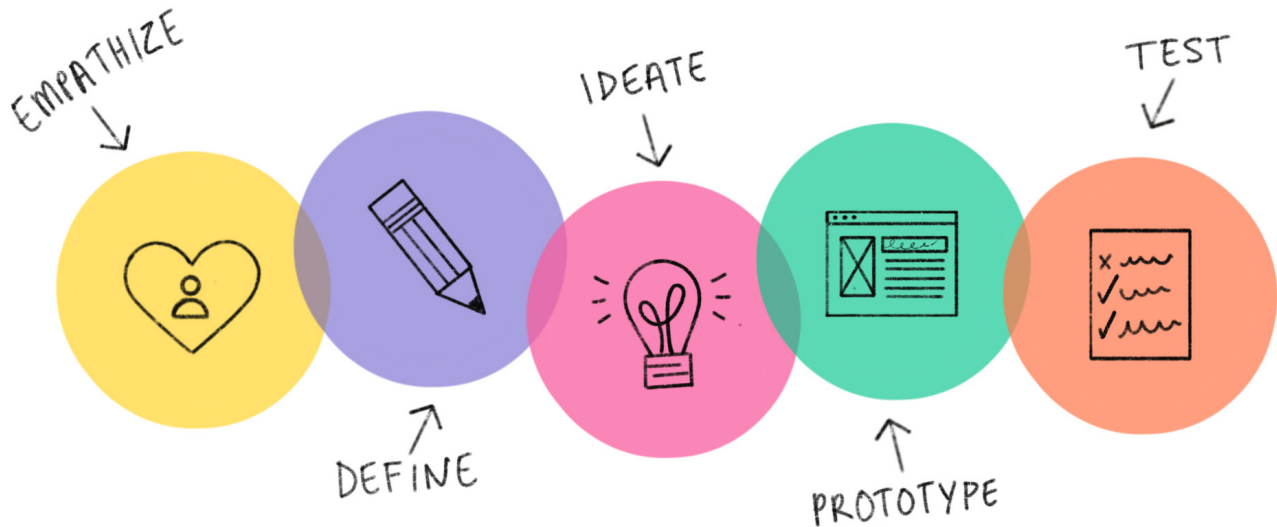
DESIGN THINKING

"**Design thinking is the search for a magical balance between business and art; structure and chaos; intuition and logic; concept and execution; playfulness and formality; and control and empowerment.**"[16]

- Idris Mootee

One chief task of the philosopreneur is to merge idea and action, while allowing process and design to permeate their thinking and doing. One way in which this adventure can begin is by utilizing design thinking. Design thinking is a framework that dominates the world of innovation. Companies such as Apple, Google, Airbnb, and IBM have implemented design thinking into their processes. Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, a leading design consulting firm says, "Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success." Ultimately, design thinking lives at the intersection of desirability, viability and feasibility.[14]

The first stage of the process begins with empathy. If you are trying to solve a problem (e.g. homelessness), you must empathize before setting out to devise a solution. In the end, it is those who are living the problem that have the best insight into the solution. Without empathy, there is no desirability. Once your ethnographic research is completed, you analyze and synthesize your understanding to define the core problem you are trying to solve. It is important to fall in love with the problem, not the solution. That way, you avoid confirmation bias. At this point, you enter into the most playful stage: ideation. This is where you start generating "outside the box" ideas as solutions to the problem. As you narrow down to the most feasible idea, you move into the prototype stage. This is the most creative and challenging phase as you begin to materialize your idea. Once you've built something substantial, you have to test your product or service with various users and customers to better understand its viability. As you receive feedback, you will find yourself at the beginning of the process and endlessly iterating throughout the entire journey.[15]
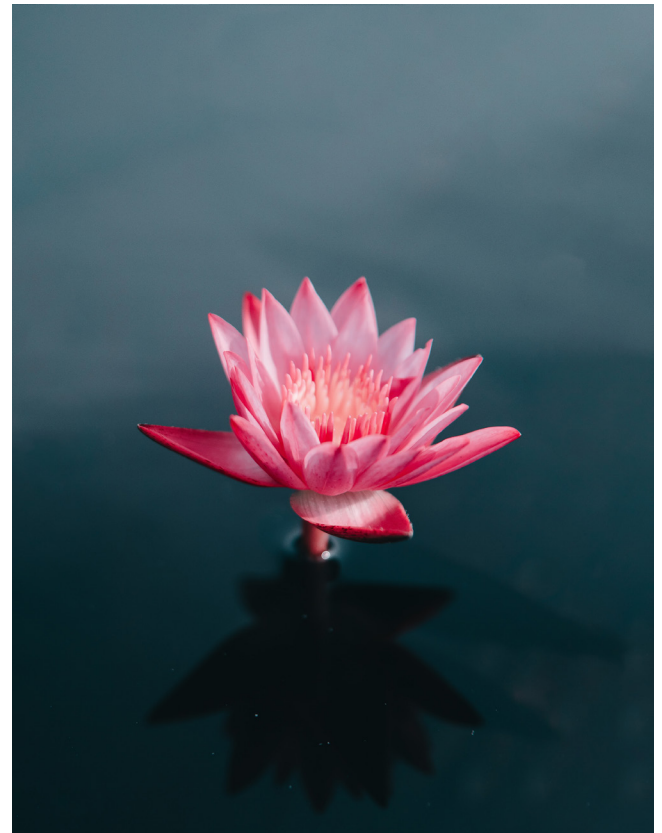
While design thinking does fall under an anthropocentric framework, it does carry a process-relational outlook towards solving problems. And in a Whiteheadian way, the ultimate principle of design thinking is creativity. But what would it take the philosopreneur to truly integrate a cosmological perspective?

INTEGRAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

While it may seem that matters of business could potentially taint the soul of philosophy, rest assured that an integral worldview can transform business into a force for good. By marrying philosophy and entrepreneurship, commerce will enable itself to become ensouled. That being said, this is not a new revolution. And perhaps, we can look to Mahatma Gandhi, the nonviolent liberator of India for a deeper look. Although Gandhi was not considered to be an entrepreneur, I believe his strategy to boycott British-made clothing by introducing handspun khadi to the masses was a strategic business decision. In the end, it was commodity and labor that led India to freedom. Now, when you wear khadi, you are wearing a worldview. A worldview that is instilled in nonviolence, sustainability, and liberation. Gandhi's policies have enabled a product to hold an entire cosmology.[17]

By replicating McDonald's' model of standardization, product recognition, accessibility, and scale, Dr. Govindappa Venkataswamy (Dr. V) founded Aravind Eye Care System to eradicate needless blindness in India. Deeply rooted in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, Dr. V spiritually innovated a solution for cataracts in a poverty-stricken region. By implementing a sliding scale model, in which 70% of eye surgeries are performed for free or below cost, and 30% are performed for above cost without compromising on quality, Aravind has become the world's greatest business case for compassion; all while maintaining a 50% profit margin.[18] With Aurobindo's *Integral Yoga* imbuing Dr. V's practice, he unlocked the door to integral entrepreneurship.

Design thinking demonstrates the effectiveness of merging innovation with empathy, while Gandhi's movement for India's independence displays the potential of combining business principles with service. However, it is Aravind, a healthcare system in Pondicherry, that shows us the revolutionary power of integrating outer transformation with inner change.

"When we grow in spiritual consciousness we identify with all that is in the world. And there is no exploitation. It is ourselves we are helping, It is ourselves we are healing."[19]

- Dr. V

PROCESS-RELATIONAL METAPHYSICS

It is not surprising that Aurobindo and Whitehead share some commonalities, as both philosophers were evolutionary thinkers and rejected any form of dualism. That being said, their stance on evolution did differ. Indian philosopher, S.K. Maitra elucidates: "Whitehead's theory of evolution is naturalistic or from the standpoint of the beginning, whereas Sri Aurobindo's is spiritualistic or from the standpoint of the end." "The starting-point of the British philosopher," writes Wilfried Huchzermeyer "is the principle of a kind of feeling or grasping, which is the inner driving force of the whole world of process. It is already there in the electrons and has the power of joining the separate and independent entities into an intimate unity so that each lives in the others."[20] So let's zoom into this process, which Whitehead calls *concrescence*.

As a way to transcend the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, Whitehead's cosmological scheme is grounded in a creative process rather than a static substance. Therefore, Whitehead recontextualizes the categories of existence, and utilizes the language of *actual occasions*, *prehensions*, and *eternal objects* instead of *minds*, *representations*, and *matter*.[21]Actual occasions are the final realities, in which each occasion is a microcosm of the macrocosm. Thus, perception is no longer bifurcated between the perceiver and the perceived. Through prehension, the object becomes part of the subject. Finally, the way in which each occasion relates to another is through eternal objects. The eternal objects are synonymous with Platonic forms and indicate *how* an actual occasion becomes. This entire process of becoming is understood through the notion of concrescence. As Segall says: "By way of concrescence, a particular actual occasion's many prehensions of other occasions becomes one, thereby adding one more realized unity of experience - another "here I am!" - to the ongoing creative advance of the cosmic community: "The many become one, and are increased by one."[22]

The many prehensions of other occasions is the objective datum; the immortal past. Thus, as an occasion is actualizing, it begins in *stubborn fact* as the eternal objects ingress themselves into the entity. Then, the intense lure for feeling creates a subjective aim. And finally, when satisfaction is obtained through novelty, the occasion perishes into objective immortality. Progressing from potentiality to actuality, reality continuously transitions with a push from the past, and a pull from the future. However, as Whitehead says: "There is a becoming of continuity, but no continuity of becoming."[23]
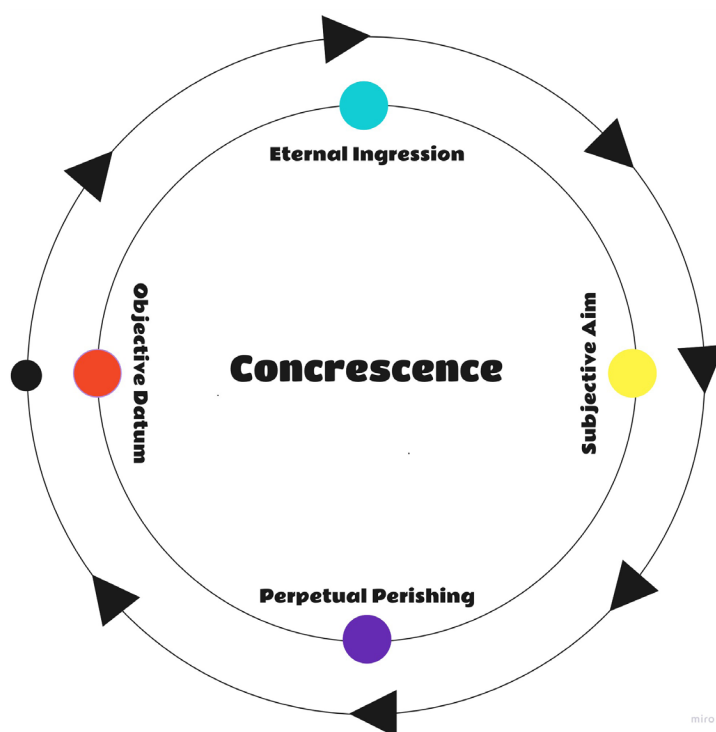
THE SHAPE OF PROCESS
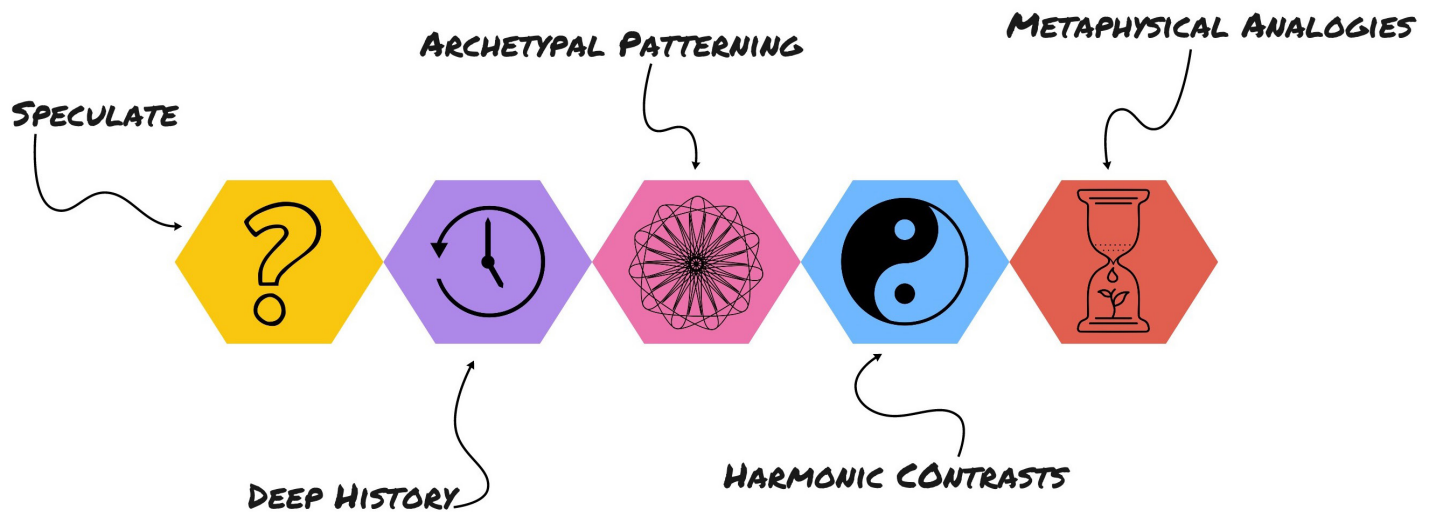
Whitehead's detailed and intimate metaphysics of a process-relational universe can seem quite abstract. So one may wonder how the philosopreneur could possibly embrace such knowledge through praxis. However, along with the design thinking framework and an integral entrepreneurial mindset, we can apply Whitehead's process thinking to create a substantial grounding for the philosopreneur. I call this ground the *Integral Design Process*. Like design thinking, integral design process has five stages, and the integral worldview permeates all the phases. Most importantly, all the stages are rooted in Whitehead's process philosophy.

As one embarks on the journey of the philosopreneur, it is important to recognize that the philosophical endeavor precedes the entrepreneurial efforts. Thus, the first stage is speculation. This is the most crucial phase as it is the opening into the question. The question is the guiding force behind the process, and so to speculate is to honor the mystery. Once the question is framed, we dive into the objective datum and conduct a deep historical analysis of the question. Then,

we surrender to the gods and investigate the question through an "archetypal eye," and begin to witness the inherent patterns that potentiality utilizes to actualize itself. As the archetypal patterning unveils, and the intensity of feeling is felt, satisfaction emerges in the form of harmony. But as Whitehead states: "satisfaction is two-dimensional. It has a dimension of narrowness, and a dimension of width."[24] So harmony is actually a feeling of contrast. Thus, this is the stage in which the harmonic contrasts of the specific question/topic is analyzed. Finally, as the question attains novelty with a premise, it perishes into objective immortality through the attainment of a metaphysical analogy. If the premise can be analogized with another question/topic, then it has completed the process of concrescence.

Both Whitehead's cosmology and the integral paradigm embrace an interdisciplinary reality. And design thinking most definitely favors the connected mind. So let's venture into this multidimensional world, and begin to feel the shape of process that unfolds through harmony.

"**The right chaos, and the right vagueness, are jointly required for any effective harmony. They produce the massive simplicity which has been expressed by the term 'narrowness.' Thus chaos is not to be identified with evil; for harmony requires the due coordination of chaos, vagueness, narrowness, and width.**"[25]

- A.N. Whitehead
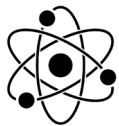
PHYSICS

With the race towards discovering a *grand unified theory* of the universe, theoretical physics has been in a dynamic interplay with general relativity and quantum mechanics. One area in which Whitehead has allowed for harmony to emerge in physics is through his schematization of order and chaos. Currently, the dominant paradigm in physics is understood through the second law of thermodynamics, wherein matter and energy progress in the direction of entropy. However, entropy only holds in a closed system, and there is a possibility that the universe is an open system (we don't know yet). Thus, Whitehead introduces the notion of extropy in contrast to entropy. As Segall explains: "Rather than dismiss the profoundly beautiful forms of complexity achieved by our self-organizing universe as nothing but accidental smudges in the flow of entropy, Whitehead grants reality to a "counteragency" infusing the physical universe with a tendency toward order."[26] Thus, it is this contrast between order and chaos that gives rise to harmony. "The art of progress," writes Whitehead "is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order."[27]

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is one discipline wherein the abstract gets fully concretized. In modern day though, monotony has plagued the architectural world through "predictable and boring boxes of high standard," as Danish architect Bjarke Ingels would say. Thus, by putting on our Whiteheadian lens we can seek to build novel and harmonious architecture. And that harmonic contrasts may already find itself in Ingels' philosophy of *pragmatic utopian* architecture. "Architecture seems to be entrenched in two equally fertile fronts," says Ingels "either naively utopian or petrifyingly pragmatic. We believe that there is a third way wedged in the no-man's-land between the diametrical opposites. Or in the small but fertile overlap between the two. A pragmatic utopian architecture that takes on the creation of socially, economically and environmentally perfect places as a practical objective."[28] Thus, by creating at the intersection of pragmaticism and hedonism, harmony can be attained through our physical structures.

ART

In *Adventure of Ideas*, Whitehead writes: It is the essence of art to be artificial. But it is its perfection to return to nature, remaining art. In short art is the education of nature. Thus, in its broadest sense, art is civilization. For civilization is nothing other than the unremitting aim at the major perfections of harmony."[29] For Whitehead, art is the discipline in which the hidden depths of penumbral and tragic beauty can manifest. By utilizing patterned contrasts of light and darkness, one can enable an aesthetic experience of hidden beauty to emerge from the artwork. The patterned harmonic contrast is a function of a foreground/background aesthetic, in which 'narrowness' and 'width' are realized through art. As Steve Odin, a Whiteheadian philosopher writes: "While the aesthetic principle of penumbral beauty as the vaguely felt background whole adds *depth* of feeling, the tragic beauty of evanescence evokes *intensity* of aesthetic feeling in each transient occasion of experience."[30] Through harmonic contrasts art can "make the unconscious conscious."

PSYCHEDELICS

With a resurgence in psychedelic therapy and exploration, this disicpline is a uniquely mysterious way in which Whitehead's metaphysics can be experienced. "In a psychedelic experience," writes Leonard Gibson "the sense that consciousness "expands" results from increasing intensity of feeling fed by the developing contrast between the physical and mental aspects of experience."[31] Since psychedelics widen and deepen conscious experience, bodily happenings are felt more intimately. According to Whitehead, it is in this mode of bodily perception that we feel causality. As psychedelic philosopher Peter Sjostedt-H elucidates: "Psychedelic molecules, which trespass through the blood-brain barrier, wreak havoc on the brain and let slip anarchy into this otherwise ordered channel. As well as the upward integration into alien exogenous Eternal Objects, this may also allow downward integration into the endogenous subjectivities of the subordinate entities of one's body: *enmerosis.*"[32] So through an upward and downward, physical and mental contrast, psychedelics can unleash the unseen reality of harmony.

ASTROLOGY

Astrology is an ancient discipline. However, it got over-powered and ridiculed by modern science ever since the Enlightenment. Now, with the birth of *Archetypal Astrology*, we are witnessing the emergence of a participatory paradigm. As archetypal astrologer Becca Tarnas says: "Astrology is a continuously ongoing, universally visible form of synchronicity, what [Carl] Jung describes as a meaningful coincidence between an inner event and an outer event. Archetypal astrology is an empirically based, yet mythopoetically informed, practice - tracking the on-going archetypal interconnection between psyche and cosmos, microcosm and macrocosm."[33] Each planetary archetype manifests through light and shadow qualities. It is because of this harmonic contrast that the archetypes maintain a sense of mystery through multivalence. "The archetypal expression of the divine," writes Tarnas "can be imagined as a white light, eternally refracting into the multiplicity of archetypal colors, in shades from light to shadow, ever shifting and interweaving with each other in a harmonious display of rainbows."[34]


ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

The words "ecology" and "economy" are both derived from the Greek word "oikos" meaning "home." Thus, both disciplines deal with study and management of our home: Earth. Yet, even though both disciplines come from the same family, they have found them-selves in an utterly destructive relationship. One reason for this may be the fact that the contrast between space and time are not generating harmony. Marxist econ-omist David Harvey states: "The market, represented by the neoclassical economists these days, looks to the future only via the discount rate which at most has a time horizon of twenty years though it is often as short as a seven or eight, whereas the ecologists have a much longer conception of time, arguing that sustainability must be achieved in perpetuity, into an indefinite fu-ture."[35] Thus, the conflicts which we witness today are over the nature of time and space and the social man-ner in which space and time are constructed. In order for our home to be harmonious, time and space must make peace with each other.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Although we face screens majority of the day, most of us are clueless about the inner workings of a computer. For instance, cultural theorist Luciana Parisi claims that "algorithmic computation is not simply an abstract mathematical tool but constitutes a mode of thought in its own right."[36] Through Whitehead's schema of *mereotopological* relations, she identifies the crucial role that randomness plays in the algorithmic world. Mereotopology is the "study of the relation between parts, of that between parts and wholes, and of the boundaries between parts."[37] Specifically, within the field of parametricism, Parisi argues that "randomness triggers contingency within computational rules and…in the digital design of urban space."[38] Thus, unlike a parametrically preprogramed event, "mereotopology reveals that the computational abstraction from the world implies the eventuation of new actualities…the arrival of a new spatio-temporality out of sync with the entire system of relations *qua* smooth variations."[39] Whole and parts dance together to create a random encounter with space and time.
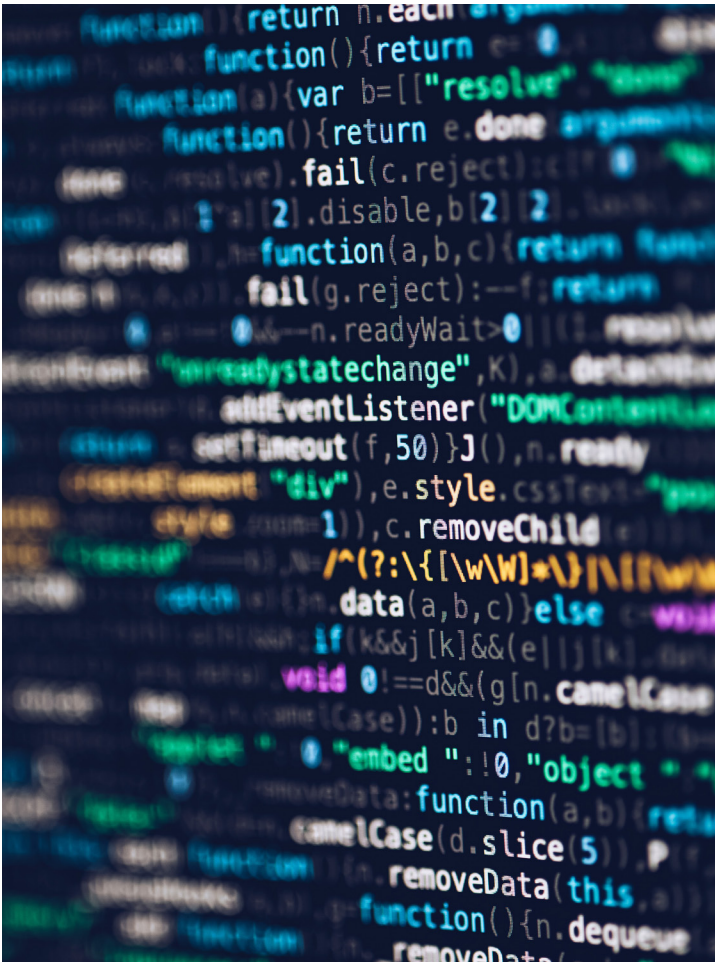
MUSIC

Music embodies the essence of harmony. In jazz, musicians strive to create an aesthetic in which beauty can be felt to be at the edge of chaos. Through improvisation, jazz musicians "balance structure and openness to maximize beauty."[40] While standing on the solid ground of jazz theory, the musician lifts off into the unknown by creating novel melodies and harmonies. As Sam Laurent beautifully says: "Improvisation is a recognition that the possibilities for the greatest beauty lie in the exercise of the freedom given by God at every moment to self-create, to actualize harmony, and to send waves of beauty rippling into the future, where they might become datum for further beautiful becomings."[41] Furthermore, contrasts can be felt in jazz through a vertical and horizontal concept in which the verticality is heard through chord arpeggiations, while the horizontality produces lyrical melodies.[42] One can listen to this contrast in the music of John Coltrane and Miles Davis. In the end, it is music that carries the "harmony of harmonies."[43]

THE WAY OF THE PHILOSOPRENEUR
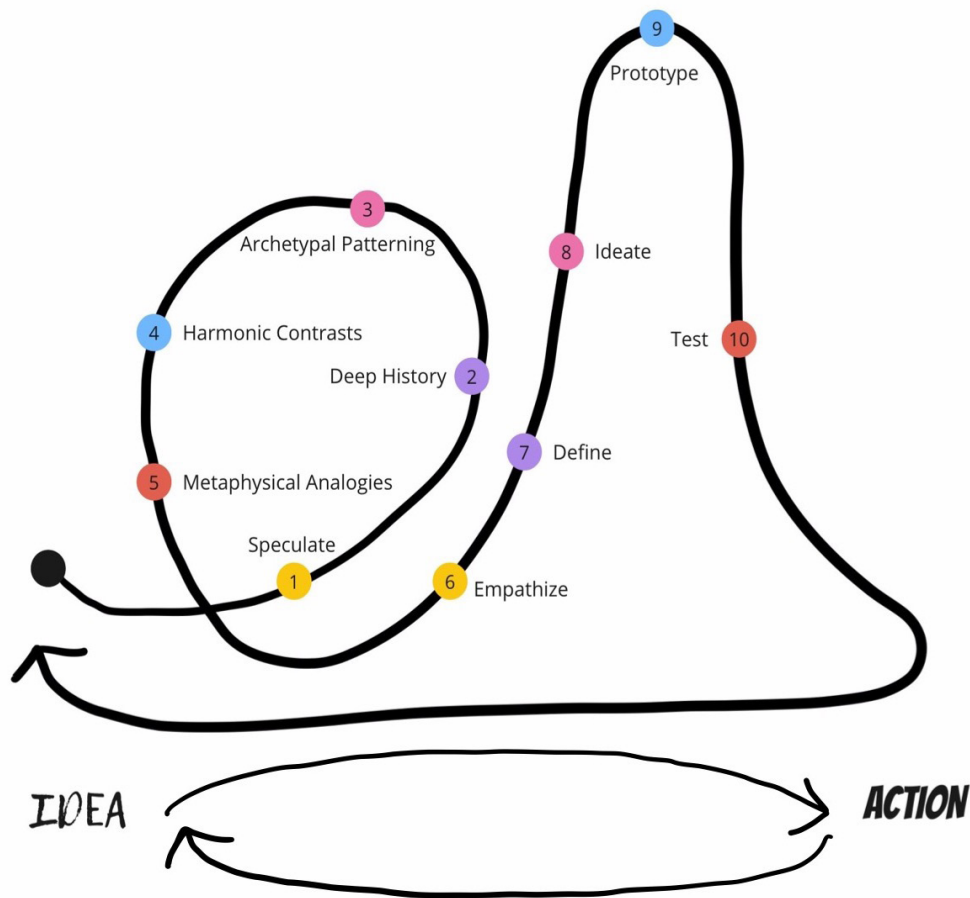
As we continue to witness the unfolding shape of process, let's zoom out a little; as we find ourselves riding on a roller coaster of process. This is the path that the philosopreneur must take. It begins with an idea, and accompanies you on a metaphysical loop. As you move up the hill of concretization, you pause for the moment of conversion, and suddenly accelerate down towards action. Then, you head back in the direction of idea and ride that roller coaster again. As Whitehead would say, it's an "adventure of ideas."

However, as mentioned earlier, praxis is also a crucial component to being a philosopreneur. "Celibacy does not suit a university," states Whitehead "It must mate itself with action." And by "action" Whitehead is referring to the "discovery of coordinated theory illustrated in coordinated fact."[44] One could also understand the realm of ideas as the microcosm, and the reality of action as the macrocosm. And as Whitehead's process-relational metaphysics has shown us, the macrocosm is a reflection of the microcosm and vice versa.

Embracing the integral worldview, the philosopreneur grounds their work in the inner realms of civilization, by focusing on creating a shift in the consciousness of people. As one works through the inner dimensions, they enable the outer transformation of human evolution to occur. And with design thinking as a toolkit, the philosopreneur produces novelty through empathetic innovation. Finally, through a deep understanding of process-relational metaphysics, the philosopreneur enables *cosmogenesis* to appear in the actualization of their work. As philosopher and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin expresses: "the universe no longer appears to us as an established harmony but has definitely taken on the appearance of a system in movement. No longer an order but a process. No longer cosmos but a cosmogenesis."[45]

PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS

In this integral adventure with design thinking and process philosophy, we've discovered and created a framework for the rising philosopreneur. This journey is one that is never complete, and always in process. Ultimately, it requires one to participate in the transpersonal dimensions of life. And this participation requires a certain kind of knowing. *Participatory knowing*, as defined by transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer, is a "multidimensional access to reality that includes not only the intellectual knowing of the mind, but also the emotional and empathic knowing of the heart, the sensual and somatic knowing of the body, the visionary and intuitive knowing of the soul, as well as any other way of knowing available to human beings."[46] Thus to participate and know reality, is to deeply feel it. In Whitehead's cosmology, reality is actually not made up of ideas, but feelings. "The process," writes Whitehead "is a process of 'feeling.' In feeling, what is felt is not necessarily analysed; in understanding, what is understood is analysed, in so far as it is understood. Understanding is a special form of feeling."[47] So with feelings in your Being, go forth and transmute potentiality into actuality, while fully participating in the process of reality.

Endnotes

1   *Process and Reality*, 10.

2   *Process and Reality*, 228.

3   *Process and Reality*, 208.

4   Einstein to Vero and Mrs. Bice, March 21, 1995. Einstein Archive, reel 7-245; reprinted in *Albert Einstein-Michele Besso Correspondence*, 537-538.

5   *Process and Reality*, 7.

6   "Time and Experience in Physics and Philosophy: Whiteheadian Reflections on Bergson, Einstein, and Rovelli" By Matthew T. Segall.

7   *Principles of Natural Knowledge*, 25-26.

8   "Time and Experience in Physics and Philosophy: Whiteheadian Reflections on Bergson, Einstein, and Rovelli" By Matthew T. Segall.

9   *Process and Reality*, 3.

10   *Modes of Thought*, 168.

11   "Whitehead and Business Education: A Second Look" by Brian Hendley.

12   *Process and Reality*, 13

13   "Whitehead and Business Education: A Second Look" by Brian Hendley.

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21   *Physics of the World-Soul: Whitehead's Adventure in Cosmology*, 44.

22   *Physics of the World-Soul: Whitehead's Adventure in Cosmology*, 46.

23   *Process and Reality*, 35.

24   *Process and Reality*, 166.

25   *Process and Reality*, 112.

26   "Time and Experience in Physics and Philosophy: Whiteheadian Reflections on Bergson, Einstein, and Rovelli" By Matthew T. Segall.

27   *Process and Reality*, 339.

28   "Spotlight: Bjarke Ingels" By Evan Rawn. Accessed 07/02/2020: https://www.archdaily.com/553064/spotlight-bjarke-ingels.

29   *Adventure of Ideas*, 271.

30   *Tragic Beauty in Whitehead and Japanese Aesthetics*, 178.

31   "Whitehead, LSD, and Transpersonal Psychology."

32   "The Great God Pan is Not Dead: A.N. Whitehead and the Psychedelic Mode of Perception."

33   "Everlasting Concrescence: A Process-Relational Cosmology."

34   "Iridescent Infinity: Participatory Theory and Archetypal Cosmology."

35   "Social Construction of Space and Time."

36   *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space*, 1.

37   *Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics, and Space*, xi.

38   "Cutting Away from Smooth Space: Alfred North Whitehead's Extensive Continuum in Parametric Soft-

ware"

39   "Cutting Away from Smooth Space: Alfred North Whitehead's Extensive Continuum in Parametric Soft
       ware."

40   "Improvisation and Divine Creation: A Riff on John Coltrane's A Love Supreme" By Sam Laurent.

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42   *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, 128. By Paul F. Berliner

43   *Adventure of Ideas*, 296.

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47   *Process and Reality,* 153.