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"A RETURN TO REALITY"

MARK HANSEN'S METAPHYSICS: TOWARDS A NEW RELATIONALITY
OF TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY MEDIA

by

SANDRA MOYANO

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal
Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

"A return to reality"

Mark Hansen's Metaphysics: Towards a New Relationality of
Twenty-first-century Media

by

Sandra Moyano

Advisor: Patricia T. Clough.

This project is framed in the recent turn to speculation in philosophy which aims to develop new ontologies that deprivilege the human and human cognition, in turn claiming the capacity of all entities to hold agency in experiential processes. New philosophical scholarship is seeing the resurgence of an old problematic within this turn: the ontological debate of substances vs. relations. The study is structured around these two positions, represented by Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology which claims the essence of all entities and Steven Shaviro's understanding of relationality through Whitehead's structure of experience and becoming, respectively. These two positions will help us situate the alternative metaphysics posited by media theorist Mark Hansen in regards to twenty-first-century media's expansion of sensibility and experiential capacities. His analysis of contemporary technologies proposes a new interpretation of Whiteheadian philosophy that inverts the common understanding of his structure of experience. Hansen uses Whitehead to lay out a new post-phenomenology where twenty-first-century media have access to expanded levels of sensibility beyond human cognition and indeed have a central role from outside in the constitution of human experience. This investigation situates Hansen's radicalization of Whitehead within this problematic and pinpoints the metaphysical aspects that make his media analysis a valid contemporary alternative to rethink such ontological debate in the rise of the nonhuman. Most importantly, however, it is to think politically of Hansen's paradigm in relation to new contemporary debates about technocultural mediations of subjectivity in the context of worldly sensibility.

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1. Introduction.

This project is framed in the recent turn to speculation in philosophy, which has appeared as an intellectual alternative to the weariness of the linguistic turn of the second half of the twentieth century. The speculative turn aims to develop new ontologies that deprivilege the human and human cognition, in turn claiming the capacity of all entities to hold agency in experiential processes. Thus, speculation comes with a return to realism that questions reality itself rather than the human concerns that have constructed these realities: language, discourse, power, representation, consciousness. Instead, realist philosophy generates questions about metaphysics, ontology, the dominion of anthropocentric systems of thought, or the emergence of nonhuman entities and subjectivities taking place in a larger scheme of reality.

In this sense, the emerging accounts of experience have redefined subject matters like causality, agency, aesthetics, or relationality. From this standpoint, my investigation takes up an old problematic that has recently reemerged in philosophical scholarship: the debate between substance and relations. As Graham Harman presents it, there are “two groups of recent thinkers separated by a profound internal gulf: those who take individual entities as primary and those who view them as derivative” (2011, 294). Bearing in mind the new debates that have arisen regarding nonhuman agencies and contemporary digital technologies, the *chicken-and-egg* problematic interrogates whether we should start thinking about reality assuming the substance as the primary unit of an ontological scheme, or, rather, we should conceive substances as the products of a complex system of relationality from which units eventually become.

Harman is speaking from one of the two groups in contemporary speculative philosophy: object-oriented ontology. As an object-oriented philosopher, Harman takes the side of substance and argues that objects exist because they are *withdrawn* from one another. Harman develops a

metaphysical scheme that claims the *intimacy of things* first for there to be a reality. He argues that the only way to maintain a non-human-centered ontology is to advocate the immanent existence of things-in-themselves, and such statement also implies accepting that there is a part of the entity's essence that will always remain inaccessible.

The other take on speculative philosophy is represented by the renewed trend of process philosophy that defines *being* through an equal relationality among all entities. This critique is influenced mainly by the works of Gilles Deleuze and early-twentieth-century process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. The resurgence of Whitehead in academia has provided speculative philosophers with a metaphysical account that overcomes the reductive correlation between human cognition and reality. Within this framework, philosophers like Steven Shaviri, Brian Massumi, and Erin Manning, among others, have focused on the vitalism of all entities and the potential that they radiate in becoming. Being is derivative of the virtual process towards becoming, in which the potential entity is able to connect to the larger plane of existence where all entities affect and are affected by each other.

In *The Speculative Turn* (2011), both Shaviri and Harman take up the vicious chicken-and-egg problematic to reassess the debate in our contemporary context. In his article "The Actual Volcano: Whitehead, Harman, and the Problem of Relations," Shaviri articulates a comparison and contrast between Whitehead's and Harman's position, and concludes that a relational ontology is more capable of accounting for all agencies taking part in the ongoing experience of the world. He criticizes object-oriented philosophy for being unable to respond to the dynamism that contemporary objects show, as well as their implication and effect in our experiential processes. Even though Shaviri points out Harman's appreciation of Whitehead's intimacy of things, he admits that it is only one side of Whitehead's metaphysics. According to

Shaviro, in order to account for the universe's dynamic power for creativity, Harman should also consider the other side of Whitehead's philosophy: relations (process, becoming, change).

Conversely, in his "Response to Shaviro," Harman argues that if we do not attribute a speculative side to entities and thus partly preclude them from our own capacity to access them, we will never be able to place all entities under the same ontological footing. He is reluctant to accept relations as primary because they do not give entities their capacity to exist independently of human perception or affection; rather the opposite, they exhaust the objects' intimacies. Thus, he claims the need of an object-oriented understanding of metaphysics to be able to start thinking relations anew, and for that matter, change, interactions, or evolution.

Beyond any resolution to this never-ending philosophical debate, what lies at the core of my investigation is to show that this problematic today triggers a profound reevaluation of our presence in a larger scheme of reality that can no longer be constituted by human cognition. The ontological turn to speculation brings about a profound examination of what the human is after the emergence of nonhuman subjectivities. It is with these two authors that I want to structure the paradigm that media theorist Mark Hansen has posited in regards to twenty-first-century media's expansion of sensibility and experiential capacities. His analysis of contemporary technologies has ignited a quite controversial academic moment in philosophy primarily, as well as in politics and cultural criticism more broadly. Hansen's last book *Feed-Forward. On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media* (2015) proposes a new interpretation of Whiteheadian philosophy that inverts the common understanding of his structure of experience. Hansen uses Whitehead as a media theorist to lay out a new post-phenomenology where twenty-first-century media have access to expanded levels of sensibility beyond human cognition. For Hansen, contemporary media have causal, affective, and agentic properties that shape and indeed constitute a central

role in our experiential and sensory processes. Hansen will contend that the primary locus of experience is found in a “total environmentality” (2015b, 84), which have the potential to relate only because of their status as real entities. In this sense, we can see how Hansen would stand in a middle position between Harman and Shaviro, as he reinterprets Whitehead starting with atomism, that is, with the reality of entities, which is, in turn, closer to Harman’s argument. Therefore, *worldly sensibility* (environmental agency) reformulates these ontological features outside consciousness, and they become only another element within the large assemblage of environmental agency that informs the production of experience.

My project is structured around this philosophical concern between substances and relations to reveal the ways in which Hansen’s metaphysics is helpful to rethink our subjectivity and our position within the new experiential regimes that, despite surpassing us, impact and determine our experience, both politically and speculatively. Hansen is undeniably giving a new contemporary sense of being that challenges current understandings of the subject and relations. The following pages will be devoted to situate Hansen’s radicalization of Whitehead within this problematic as well as to pinpoint the metaphysical aspects that make his media analysis a valid contemporary alternative to rethink such ontological debate in the rise of nonhumans. Most importantly, however, it is to think politically of Hansen’s paradigm in relation to new contemporary debates about technocultural mediations of subjectivity in the context of worldly sensibility.

Accordingly, this investigation will consist of four main chapters. The first one will be devoted to the prevalent understanding of Whitehead’s metaphysics and the relation to Deleuzian philosophy with both Whitehead’s works and Shaviro’s outlining of the primacy of relations. A view of Whitehead’s relationality and his focus on becoming will contextualize recent

scholarship on Whitehead and the revision that is a stake today with Hansen. After that, I will explore Hansen's reinterpretation of Whitehead and the inversion of Whitehead's relational scheme thanks to his analysis of twenty-first-century media. Thirdly, I will move to Harman's response to address the downsides of a relational ontology like Shaviro's, and I will draw Hansen closer to Harman on the foundations of an ontology of entities that fits more properly in contemporary critical theory. Lastly, I will take up Hansen's proposed relationality starting from the real existence of objects to develop an analysis of his new understanding of power and politics in our contemporary context. His metaphysics does not only restructure conditions of experience in terms of temporality and sensibility, but also redefines a political understanding of the subject and future agencies that will challenge the prevalent narrative of *preemption* developed by Brian Massumi.

2. Beyond cognition. Whitehead's relationality.

In *Adventures of Ideas* (1929), Alfred N. Whitehead points to the reductive accounts that the history of philosophy has offered around the concept of *structure of experience*. Against Descartes and the primacy of the mind, he argues that the history of philosophy has always advocated for “discrimination” (1967, 175) in the relation between the knower and the known, between subject and object. Whitehead elaborates an alternative metaphysics of experience that challenges the traditional subject-object dichotomy and offers an experiential model which is subjectively available and inherent to all entities. His metaphysics allows all entities that compose the universe to feel their subjective properties and take part in the making of the world. As a result, he determines that the “basis of experience is emotional” and claims that there is an “affective tone originating from things” (1967, 176) which contributes both to the individual's structure of experience as well as the universe's as a whole. By arguing that the base of experience is emotional, *affective*, Whitehead is able to place all entities under the same footing in terms of their relation and contribution to a larger plane of existence.

It is from this standpoint that Whitehead begins to develop what would become his *philosophy of the organism*. More than a subject interpreting a world that only the mind can cognize, Whitehead understood subject and object in terms of entities having a concern for each other, entities provoking each other through *affect* or emotion. With his notion of *entity* or *occasion* –he uses both indistinguishably– Whitehead flattens the Western philosophical hierarchy that comes with correlationist¹ notions like knowledge or Man. Knowledge, Whitehead

¹ *Correlationism* refers to the philosophical doctrine that starts from the dependence or the relation between thought and being, cognition and existence. A critique of correlationism that follows similar Whiteheadian precepts has been

argues, “is nothing more than an additional factor in the subjective form of the interplay of subject with object. This interplay is the stuff constituting those individual things which make up the sole reality of the universe. These individual things are the individual occasions of experience, the actual entities” (1967, 177).

Thus, with Whitehead’s structure of experience and the concept of entity he establishes a “subject [that] may be human, but it also may be a dog, a tree, a mushroom, or a grain of sand” (Shaviro 2009, xii). Whitehead uses the metaphysical concepts of *presentational immediacy* and *causal efficacy* to claim this premise of an equal ontology, and differentiates higher-order subjectivities from infraperceptual levels of experience of all entities. By presentational immediacy Whitehead means “the clear and distinct representation of sensations in the mind of a conscious, perceiving subject” (Shaviro 2011, 281), that is, it is connected to higher-order subjectivities. On the other hand, perception in the mode of causal efficacy corresponds to the “way that entities affect and are affected by one another through a process of vector transmission” (Shaviro 2011, 281). By placing more importance on perception in the mode of causal efficacy, Whitehead is able to claim that there is no ontological hierarchy or privilege among entities. The causality that connects entities is beyond cognition; it is located at an *affective* level, and it bears a speculative component that is tied up to novelty and creativity. These two modes of perception will become key to understand part of the revision of Whitehead that is at stake today.

Therefore, the world in Whitehead’s cosmology is made up of occasions that have the potential to entertain experience and thus contribute to the making of the world. In Whitehead’s metaphysical scheme, when the entity’s potential is satisfied, the entity becomes an *actuality*,

recently elaborated by Quentin Meillassoux in *After Finitude. An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2009), which has put forth the necessity to break down the correlation between thought and being, claiming in turn a realist ontology in which objects exist independently of human cognition.

which is the main unit in Whitehead's metaphysics. The actual entity is the self-realized occasion of experience. In other words, when the occasion fulfills its eventful character, the immanent potentiality of the occasion actualizes in the form of a real becoming-concrete, what Whitehead names *concrescence*, an act of becoming. The concrescence has undergone a process of selection, it has hosted certain possibilities of experience and has also neglected others in that stream of potentiality. And yet, the individual process of becoming inherits the whole universe in the actualization of experience for the sake of novelty (creativity).

Within this mesh of occasions and its virtual possibilities, every entity is to a certain extent, as Whitehead puts it, also a *prehension*, a fundamental notion that Whitehead incorporates to talk about causality among entities. A prehension is a part of the occasion that acts through the host and contains past datum of the world. Prehensions do not reside at the conscious or perceptive level in the anthropocentric sense. When the datum provokes a prehension in the potential occasion, the occasion will become actualized by past datum of experience and will in turn also become something new in its attained actuality as a new becoming (always carrying through a part of causality in itself that encompasses all things). Using Whitehead's words, "the creativity of the world is the throbbing emotion of the past hurling itself into a new transcendent fact" (1967, 227). Finally, after concrescences have hosted experience and are actualized, they become *superjects*. Superjects are satisfied entities that have perished in the universe, and they await new concrescences to host part of their past character, their causality, as prehensions for new occasions.

The scheme of structure of experience presented by Whitehead has been essential to contemporary philosophy and criticism for the non-correlationist and non-human-centered paradigm which current thought has recently built upon. The Whitehead renaissance in affect

theory and speculative philosophy has helped point to sensations and emotions that inform us of pre-conscious and pre-cognitive capacities which have in turn multiplied levels of relationality beyond human perception. These disciplines in the humanities do not only advocate the decentering of the human but also bring about new questions regarding other agencies that act independently of human capacities. They argue that there is no hierarchy of being and that all entities hold the same degree of reality in their interaction and contribution to the world. Following Whitehead's theory of occasions these theorists have achieved an ontology of equal relationality among entities.

A great part of the return to Whitehead has been highly marked by the influence of Gilles Deleuze, who presented akin philosophical and critical alternatives to the linguistic turn during the second half of the twentieth century. Shaviro himself and other renowned Deleuzians like Erin Manning, Luciana Parisi, or Brian Massumi –translator of Deleuze to English and probably the most important Deleuzian theorist in this new turn in the humanities– turned to Whitehead because of the processual character of his metaphysics. Deleuze's critique of being in his *biophilosophy* or *philosophy of life* required the inclusion of Whitehead's horizontal understanding of experience. If Deleuze's biophilosophy becomes relevant for humanities today, it is because his conceptualization of life extends beyond the human and beyond traditional conceptions of the body, offering alternatives to rethink matter and potentiality. Through Deleuze, these contemporary theorists envision a scheme of reality that focuses primarily on the ontological side of becoming and event. This is why Whiteheadian occasions become so relevant for contemporary speculative philosophy. Since the satisfaction of occasions into actualities occurs at all levels of experience, critical theory has been able to open thought to a *real*² realism

² In contrast to the realism that speculative philosophers are endorsing today (from the speculative realists to the object-oriented theorists to the anti-correlationists), the *anti-realist* tradition would include all the continental

in which all entities claim a selfsameness, on the one hand, and also create a space for speculation where the virtual possibilities become immanent and real, on the other.

The philosophy of Deleuze has allowed for a rethinking of “the technology of time and the ontology of bodily matter [...] beyond the autopoiesis of the human organism, making it possible to rethink heredity, repetition and time in terms of the virtual and the crack in time” (Clough 2007, 9). In this sense, the virtual in Deleuze is conceived as “the field of energies that have not yet been expended, or a reservoir of potentialities that have not yet been tapped. That is to say, the virtual is not composed of atoms; it doesn’t have a body or extension. But the potential for change that it offers is real in its own way” (Shaviro 2009, 35). The virtual provided opportunities for a sense of being that questions matter, and more than matter, the concept of *life* or *liveliness*. Shaviro and others have been able to challenge notions of matter as already identified by Deleuze, though with a contemporary technology that did not make itself as present as when Deleuze conceived his biophilosophy. Digital technology is not only able to account for matter’s capacities beyond human perception, but also, and probably most importantly, it has not required human agency to do so.

Thus, the key point of Deleuze’s ontology is what the immanence of matter implies: “for materiality is always something more than ‘mere’ matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable” (Coole and Frost 2010, 9). As a result, the focus of Deleuze’s version of Whitehead’s organic philosophy has been the immanent difference of becoming and event, the immanent possibility of matter to repeat differently, to play with contingency and self-transformation. When Shaviro, Massumi or

philosophical systems that depart from the “self-enclosed Cartesian subject” (Bryant et al. 2011, 3). No matter what the object matter of these different philosophical movements is (“death, aversion to science, a focus on language, culture, and subjectivity” (Bryant et al. 2011, 4), “humanity remains at the center of these works, and reality appears in philosophy only as the correlate of human thought. Thus, the anti-realist tradition would include traditional phenomenology, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, to name a few intellectual movements.

Manning turn to Whitehead's structure of experience, they focus on the processual character of the becoming of such concrescence or actuality. According to Whitehead, actualities unfold in two different stages in the process towards satisfaction: *actualities-in-attainment* and *attained actualities*. Actualities-in-attainment are the occasions in the process of being actualized, that is, occasions that are in the process of prehending part of the settled world; they are in the process of being satisfied, completed. In contrast, attained actualities have already acquired such concrescence, have satisfied their becoming. As Deleuzians, Shaviro et al. favor Whitehead's actualities in the mode of attainment because it theoretically corresponds to Deleuze's virtual, and therefore follows the Deleuzian notion of germinal life and immanent difference.

As a result, the Whiteheadian becoming that Shaviro and others sustain, following Deleuze, belongs to a larger plane of a continuous becoming of actualities. In other words, the experience of that particular actuality is part of a larger universal plane of experience. Actualities for Deleuzians are described within a relational scheme. The trajectory of the entity goes from occasion to actuality-in-attainment to satisfied actuality (attained actuality) and eventually perished superject. That is, they believe creativity or novelty happens in the moment of becoming, following a process that goes from a creative entity entertaining experience (subject) to a created product (superject). They focus on the experiential power of the process of actualities-in-attainment as they activate all the particularities of the universe again in their concrescence, that is, in their process towards attained actualities. Thus, Shaviro and others prioritize the relationality of all entities bearing potential and entertaining all virtual possibilities. According to them, for there to be a decision, there must first exist a relation between such actuality-in-attainment and all existing actualities. To put it simpler, for there to be concrescence, unity, substance; there must first be contact, potential, relationality.

In locating the empirical power in the process towards a satisfaction, Deleuzian realists can talk about creativity as organic, because it is only in the process that actualities become and sense experience. From this subjective experiential view of concrescence, the actualities become meaningless when they perish, not as a mere dismissal or disappearance, but as passive units. The only agency that attained actualities have left is the “awaiting” for new concrescences to reinvigorate them through prehensions. In their view, once the occasions are actualized, the actuality becoming superject perishes waiting for a new concrescence to inhabit part of the causality that the past datum leaves to transform it into novelty. In doing so, it is only the new actuality in attainment that can give life to the perished, objectified superject: the superject thus just becomes inert datum. The primacy of relations that these theorists advocate “means that no point of spacetime can be isolated from the overall ‘physical electromagnetic field’, with its interplay of forces and its quantum interactions. This immanent connectedness, rather than any imposition from above of the Categories of the understanding, is the real basis for physical causality” (Shaviro 2009, 62).

Even though this reading of Whitehead follows his structure of experience to the core, it does not fully account for the double ontology that Whitehead contended. Harman’s critique, and, as I am going to argue, Hansen’s, focuses on the other side of Whitehead’s ontology: atomism. Shaviro does contemplate this other side of Whitehead and he claims that “becoming is not continuous, because each occasion, each act of becoming, is unique: a ‘production of novelty’ that is also a new form of ‘concrete togetherness’” (2009, 19-20). Shaviro does claim that in Whitehead’s account of entities there is always something that “doesn’t get carried over, something that doesn’t get translated or expressed” (2011, 285). However, for Harman this statement does not account sufficiently for the essential role of the “intimacy of objects”. As a

result, Harman argues that the focus on becoming is eventually surrogated to the pre-existent relations from which they emerge. Even though Shaviro acknowledges the speculative essence of the substance, he argues that this withdrawal is the consequence of the accomplishment of the actuality, and not because of its preexistence to the relations that the entity establishes with other entities.

As we will see in detail in chapter 4, the critique of Harman focuses on the primacy of the ontological existence of each entity. He elaborates a non-relational ontology that starts with substance in order to be able to account for the ways in which objects can relate. If philosophy puts primacy in the process towards becoming, it seems condemned to feel that the potentiality is never eventually actualized; it never *is*. As Harman points out in his response, focusing on a relational metaphysics runs the risk of identifying actual entities with their prehensions, that is, of understanding existence as “nothing more than a previous set of prehensions” (2011, 296). When entities are made of previous bundles of relations, when the substance becomes constituted by “their perception of other entities” (2011, 295), these relations exhaust the entities’ presence and leaves “no residual substances lying beneath prehensions” (2011, 296).

Beyond the actual chicken-and-egg problematic, what is at stake today with the new ontological accounts of experience is whether the metaphysical principles can really address the relevant objects involved in today’s structure of experience, and whether or not this schemes respect the space of other entities and their speculation of other entities’ experiential structures. This debate questions whether the Deleuzian version of Whitehead’s experience can afford to explain what being actually is through a relational ontology, as being is always becoming but never fully becomes. With the focus on becoming and process, the primacy of relations seems to omit the effects of the contemporary technological regime “that is calling into question

assumptions about human experience, consciousness and bodily perception, as well as agency, historicity, system and structure” (Clough 2015, 8). As Patricia Clough points out, “the contrast between Shaviro’s and Harman’s thinking is entangled with the development of digital technology and the further development of that technology may give weight to one of their philosophies over the other” (Clough 2011, 7).

It is at this point that Hansen’s innovative take on twenty-first-century media and technology becomes interesting. In the “age of decisive awareness of nonhumans” (Morton 2013, 22), Hansen offers an analysis of media that addresses other levels of sensibility that Whitehead discovered and located within the infraperceptual –and thus inaccessible– realm of causal efficacy. If Deleuze’s conceptualizations were useful for theory to place virtuality in excess because it presented the only alternative to open future fully to its possibilities as a critical realm, maybe contemporary technology is pointing at a different way of being whose capacities are not only located on the excess, but on their actual agential immanence, both for human and nonhuman subjectivities. In this sense, I am not disputing that the focus on process and liveliness of matter has ceased to be fruitful; or that the virtuality of becoming is neither real nor accountable. Rather, I do argue, following Hansen’s argument, that contemporary media show the sense of being for themselves, independently of human agency, and are claiming their potential to reveal more of the structure of experience and causality once foreclosed in Whitehead’s philosophy.

Hansen’s analysis will show that the Deleuzian version of Whitehead does not account for the full radicality that Whitehead’s scheme of sensibility permits, especially in coupling the philosophical study of Whitehead with twenty-first-century media capacities. In the next chapter, I will develop a more detailed understanding of Hansen’s transformative reading that inverts the

focus on process of becoming. Not only will this reinterpretation problematize the traditional subject-object relationship, as Shaviro and others have already underscored, but it will also propel us to rethink subjectivity and agency in concert with non-human and environmental phenomena in the world of sensibility. By positioning Whitehead as a post-phenomenologist, Hansen speculates about accessing this expansion of sensibility, about “our capacity to exploit, for our own ends of experiential intensification, the ‘surplus of sensibility’ generated by contemporary technologies for data-gathering and passive sensing” (2015b, 135).

3. “Whitehead as a media theorist.” Hansen’s structure of experience with twenty-first-century media.

Mark Hansen’s reinterpretation of Whitehead’s metaphysics starts with the latter’s basic distinction between the two modes of perception introduced in the previous chapter: causal efficacy and presentational immediacy. According to Whitehead, “we must assign the mode of causal efficacy to the fundamental constitution of an occasion so that in germ this mode belongs even to organisms of the lowest grade; while the mode of presentational immediacy requires the more sophisticated activity of the later stages of process, so as to belong only to organisms of a relatively high grade” (1978, 172). For Whitehead’s commentators, this distinction has been the metaphysical premise to claim a shared level of experience among all entities. Hansen takes this claim of ontological equality a step further and reformulates Whitehead as a media theorist which is useful to provide a more complex insight to perception in the mode of causal efficacy. For Hansen, the complexity of causal efficacy sheds light on “a veritable plurality of multi-scalar instances of experiences that extend, [...] from consciousness all the way down to the most rudimentary aspects of our living operationality, and all the way out to the most diffuse environmental dimensions of a given sensory situation” (2015b, 44).

Presentational immediacy is subordinated to causal efficacy because “presentational immediacy is an outgrowth from the complex datum implanted by causal efficacy” (Whitehead 1978, 172). Whitehead tries to go beyond the connection between causation and subjectivist perception by locating the “true constitution of experience” (1978, 172) in causal efficacy. He gives a more specific definition of the role of causal efficacy in *Process and Reality* (1927):

[causal efficacy] produces the sense of derivation from an immediate past, and of passage to an immediate future; a sense of emotional feeling, belonging to oneself in the past, passing into oneself in the present, and passing from oneself in the present towards oneself in the future; a sense of influx of influence from other vaguer presences in the past, localized and yet evading local definition, such influence modifying, enhancing, inhibiting, diverting, the stream of feeling which we are receiving, unifying, enjoying, and transmitting. This is our general sense of existence, as one item among others, in an efficacious actual world. (1978, 178)

As the “fundamental constitution of an occasion” (Whitehead 1978, 172), causal efficacy bears an infraperceptual level of experience that allows concrescence to inherit *prehensively* part of the past. The fundamental role of this mode in the Whiteheadian scheme is to allow speculative causation among the formation of all entities as well as a sense of (and sensibility to) derivation and connection to the world. Thus, according to Whitehead, causal efficacy corresponds to mode of sensibility called *nonsensuous perception* because “it remains the given uncontrolled basis upon which our character weaves itself” (1978, 178), a basis to which consciousness does not have access to. Whitehead describes it more concisely later in *Adventures of Ideas*: “the immediate past as surviving to be again lived through in the present is the palmary instance of nonsensuous perception” (1967, 182).

Hansen revisits causal efficacy and correlates nonsensuous perception with twenty-first-century media in order to account for the transformation that nonsensuous perception and causal efficacy have undergone in our contemporary context. Twenty-first-century media revolves around the process of *data-ification*: “data mining of social media, tracking devices, biometric and environmental passive microensors—the full analytic capacities of twenty-first-century digital technologies” (Clough 2016, 437). Therefore, twenty-first-century media is more directly connected to nonsensuous perception if we understand these as “media that are only *indirectly* correlated to human modes of experience, or [...] media that involve technical operations to which humans lack any direct access” (Hansen 2015b, 6). Hansen uses twenty-first-century

media to show “the complex layerings informing the ‘vector character’ of experience—the many levels of experience sedimented beneath and causally informing sense perception—in any other way than through the perspective of consciousness” (2015b, 115). The scheme of nonsensuous perception that was foreclosed with speculative causation in Whitehead is complexified in Hansen’s analysis. In fact, the analysis demonstrates how nonsensuous perception is manifesting *experientially*, which turns twenty-first-century media into a central constituent of the structure of experience.

The assistance of twenty-first-century media has made the nonsensuous realm of sensibility operational. Current technologies for data gathering and analysis displace consciousness “as the sole arbitrator of experience” (Hansen 2015b, 116) and make causal efficacy *presentified*. Through the modulation of intensity as a correlate of experience, “today’s media effectuate nothing less than a pluralization and a radical scale-heterogenesis of sensibility” (Hansen 2015b, 118). If media are allowing access to other levels of experience that do not depend on consciousness but that are rather expanded into “multiple, heterogenous, and multileveled causal lineages” (Hansen 2015b, 117) of sensibility, then Whitehead’s nonsensuous perception, following Hansen’s argument, needs to be reformulated. In order to account for the now experiential expansion of nonsensuous perception, Hansen turns nonsensuous perception into *non-perceptual sensibility*. He argues that non-perceptual sensibility “follows the causal lineages informing perception in the mode of causal efficacy to the point of their culmination, and the dissolution of perception itself, in worldly sensibility” (2015b, 117). Contemporary media “literally stand in for consciousness within the circuits through which we gain access to worldly sensibility” (2015b, 116) thereby changing our entire relationship to causality.

This perspective in regards to causal efficacy is seen by Hansen as a “liberation of causal efficacy” itself. He expresses a concern for a new “phenomenological domain of sensibility” (2015, 30) in opposition to the traditional phenomenological realm that is consciousness and cognition. He posits causal efficacy as a correlate, or better as a synonym, of worldly sensibility. Non-perceptual sensibility allows for the liberation of sensibility as a subordinate of consciousness. Consequently, non-perceptual sensibility expands its realm into a “total environmentality” that becomes the cornerstone for informing and showing the multiple levels in which experience has expanded. “For”, Hansen writes, “if today’s sensor technologies let us access sensory events in which our experience is implicated independently of and prior to any distinct perception that might emerge from such events, they effectively call into being a ‘new’ (or, more exactly, a dormant and as yet untapped) potential for directly experiencing worldly sensibility” (2015b, 117-8).

With this reformulation of nonsensuous perception, Hansen calls for a complete revision of the structure of experience to account for the full radicality of Whitehead’s metaphysics. To do so, Hansen articulates a critique against the Deleuzian understanding of experience by turning to the most fundamental notion of Whitehead’s organic philosophy: the speculative ban. The speculative ban refers to “the prohibition against invoking or appealing directly to actual entities to explain experiential events and societal processes” (Hansen 2015b, 86). That is, the premise that the speculative and experiential realms must maintain a radical separation. This metaphysical tenet was created by Whitehead in order to be able to give an account of experience that is neither human-centered nor favors cognition. The ontological equality of Whitehead’s scheme needs a speculative realm to which we cannot have access; this speculative realm will be the necessary component to explain how we experience the way we do.

Thus, in order to fulfil the premise of the speculative ban Hansen needs to posit what he calls a “Claim For Inversion (CFI),” in which he will invert the Deleuzian focus on becoming of the scheme of experience. As already described, in the Deleuzian understanding of actual entities, actualities are described within a subject-superject trajectory of the entity; from a creative process (subject) to a created product (superject). This perspective locates the *experiential* power in the process of actualities-in-attainment as they activate all the particularities of the universe again in their concrescence; that is, in their *process* towards attained actualities. However, Shaviro and others are overlooking the speculative divide because to characterize experience they focus on the speculative side of entities. According to Hansen, their focus on the speculative character of becoming to explain the structure of experience is illegitimate in this ontology because entities can never experience the speculative realm, as it belongs to each entities’ genesis. When Shaviro and others argue that we host experience in the potential –the *virtual*– of process towards the actualization, they are actually taking an “illegitimate leap” (Hansen 2015b, 98) across the speculative ban³. The speculative side of entities must remain speculative and inaccessible to explain experience if we want to be able to *experience* experience. In order to feel potentiality experientially, then, it must be located somewhere else.

Hansen’s CFI flips the actual power of experience in a way that maintains the speculative ban. The inversion is found in the association between the realms of the experiential and the speculative with the two modes of actualities that had been assigned in the processual scheme: actualities-in-attainment and attained actualities. Whereas the Deleuzian scheme of experience associated actualities-in-attainment with the experiential and attained actualities with the speculative, Hansen’s structure couples the experiential realm with attained actualities, while

³ For a more extended discussion about Shaviro and Parisi regarding the speculative ban see Hansen 2015b, pp. 90-97, 127-131 (Shaviro); and 97-102, 127-128 (Parisi).

actualities-in-attainment are assigned the speculative mode. By allocating the experiential realm with attained entities, the sense of creativity in the becoming is lost on behalf of the potentiality of an attained superject that thanks to this inversion does not perish but continues to take part in the making of experience. Hansen's position proves compatible when he couples Whitehead's metaphysical scheme of experience with the expansion of sensibility that twenty-first-century media qualities allow. If twenty-first-century media are to show new modes of sensibility which bear potentiality, then, it is attained actualities the ones that produce them thanks to their ubiquitous and accessible –*experiential*– environmental character.

In this sense, superjects are not perished actualities but actual *beings* with the potentiality of influencing the virtual realm of future occasions. This ability to influence the virtual realm is produced by what Hansen calls a seepage of intensity, which is indeed a form of relation that originates in an attained actuality. Thus, the process of becoming does not reach a “death” in the actualized occasion. The potentiality of the settled world, worldly sensibility, informs the rest of actualities in attainment. The reading of Hansen claims that the real power of Whitehead's ontology resides in the superject. Following philosophers Didier Debaise and Judith Jones for his inversion, he is able to ascribe a more active role to the superject, aka attained actuality, as an experiential force, the only force that entities can feel as experiential subjects. He states that

today's media technologies directly impact worldly sensibility by shaping the very production of intensity at the infraperceptual level. They thereby modulate possibilities, and open new possibilities, for experiencing the heterogeneous superjective subjectivity of sensory intensity, and also, for gaining access to and accounting for such experience in ways that do not recur to perception as ultimate arbiter. (2015b, 118)

Hansen restores the “ontological power of the settled world” (2015b, 94), worldly sensibility, to give the actual satisfied actuality, the superject, the potential to create experience through objectification or actuality; in other words, through *substance*. Thanks to twenty-first-

century media we are able to locate experience as the main source for creativity in the world. In being part of the experiential realm, we are afforded access to these new modes of experience. As Hansen puts it, “twenty-first-century media, including data gathering and analysis, furnishes a crucial and largely unprecedented means to access this broader environmental surround –the superjectal subjectivity of objectified concrescences of ‘data’ –and to translate its data [...] into a form that can be presented, or more precisely ‘fed-forward,’ into (future) perceptual consciousness” (2015b, 117).

The need of the speculative ban in Hansen becomes essential with Hansen’s reinterpretation of causal efficacy as sensory available to worldly sensibility. Even though it might seem at first that he tries to claim that twenty-first-century media is making everything experiential at multi-scalar levels of experience and thus getting rid of the speculative side of becoming, the speculative ban in Hansen serves the purpose of maintaining a non-human centered perspective and preserving the reality of worldly sensibility which is informing the experiential realm. Even if the speculative “takes on a more narrow or specific role [...], the speculative ban ensures that experiential events are attributed to experiential causes.” (Hansen 2015b, 96) In the end, what Hansen’s thesis is telling us about the speculative realm is that it “cannot ‘preexist’ the experiential and that it is, in fact, ultimately nothing more than a dimension of the experiential: what has to be—or better, what has to be created—in order for experience to be what it is.” (2015b, 109)

Hansen writes that “Whitehead’s conception of the speculative serves expressly to theorize what is needed to explain experience but that cannot be expressed via experience itself.” (2015b, 122) The purpose of the speculative account of actualities in the scheme of Whitehead, to put it more specifically, is to account for “how the world must be in order for experience to be

what it is” (Hansen 2015b, 93). For Hansen, the potentiality of twenty-first-century media is ontologically more fundamental than the speculative power that actualities-in-attainment hold in the Deleuzian scheme. And it is more fundamental because they are the central constituent of the production of experience. If we want to account for the sensory affordances of contemporary experience we cannot look at the speculative instances that permit the process because we are not able to access the speculative genesis of entities. Rather, we must look at the realm of the experiential to know more about the environmental processes that inform our experience. The speculative aspect of experience is necessary to account for experience the way we do, but it has to remain unreachable, a statement that is aligned with Harman’s thought: the speculative withdrawal of objects is the necessary standpoint from which to start thinking experience.

By inverting the view of concrescence to show how causal efficacy is experiential in order to respect the speculative ban, Hansen is also able to invert the chicken-and-egg problematic: the speculative power that Shaviro and others find in the speculative relationality of actualities-in-attainment is not primordial in the production of experience. Instead, “every concrescence is catalyzed by a physical ‘gift’ of data from the settled world or experience” (Hansen 2015b, 95). Thus, the genesis of attained actualities becomes the primordial units informing the actualities-in-attainment; or in other words: “with the CFI, attained actualities (worldly sensibility, non-perceptual sensibility) become the *source for* instead of the *result of*, concrescence” (2015b, 95).

Following the speculative ban is a crucial aspect in Hansen’s transformative metaphysics because it discovers two fundamental aspects in regards to the contemporary structure of experience. First, it reveals a more asubjective and neutral character of experience found in attained actualities. This shows the urge to redefine the parameters of experience, which will

open a completely new realm for rethinking subjectivity, politics and aesthetics in contemporary criticism and philosophy. And second, the speculative ban helps to place causality under this neutral experiential level, and not subordinated to speculation any more. Ultimately, Hansen uses the speculative ban because it enables him to claim it as the “correlate of a robust speculative phenomenology that it [speculative ban] in some sense makes possible” (2015b, 96). He continues:

that is precisely why the speculative ban goes together with a massive expansion in the scope of phenomenology, an embrace of the asubjective phenomenology of the world itself. The radicalization of the superject as proposed by Jones—its capacity to wield subjective power independently of any subject narrowly considered—simply is the result of this newly prominent operation of attained actuality, the fruit of its resolutely experiential creativity. (2015b, 97)

This quote links to the second discovery by Hansen: the new “causal field of sensibility” (2015b, 98) to which this asubjective or neutral phenomenology (2015b, 102, 111) also addresses. By placing causality at the level of attained actualities, that is, at the level of satisfied entities, causality itself also undergoes a transformation. In Whitehead’s scheme, causality is felt thanks to causal efficacy, which speculatively prehends past datum of the world. In contrast, in Hansen’s scheme causality has been placed in the realm of experiential entities, which inform future actualities in the contrast of potentiality among attained actualities. This contrast will access the process of becoming through the seepage described above affecting new actualities in attainment. He argues that the “telos of every concrescence is shaped by the experiential intensity of the particular nexus that concretizes its conditions of adaptation [...] concrescence is always beholden to an external situation, which is to say, to an experiential reality whose attainment it supports” (2015b, 110-111). Therefore, prehension will also need to be placed at the level of causality. He calls them attained prehensions, because “like the attained actualities they in effect compose, attained prehensions exist in the world in the form of superjectal

remainders, and indeed, they are—or rather, they become—micro-agents of experiential events” (2015b, 101).

With the speculative ban, Hansen inaugurates a new domain of phenomenology based on neutral, asubjective experience and sensibility. Twenty-first-century media have uncovered a worldly sensibility that has shaped both human and non-human agencies, and that are involved in the production of current subjectivities. The lingering agency of the superject in the experiential realm allows thought to keep growing and expanding its criticism to other levels of sensibility, and Hansen has made that possible by pointing at the potential that emerges from inverting Whitehead’s scheme. It is very important to highlight how Hansen places the potential –and reality— of worldly sensibility at a primordial level of experience through this inversion. In the next chapter, the analysis of Hansen’s scheme will be framed by Graham Harman’s premises in the debate between essence and relations. Following Harman’s criticisms of Shaviro’s position in regards to Whitehead in his response, we will be able to claim Hansen’s theory as an alternative ontology for rethinking experience and subjectivity.

4. Harman's critique of relations. Towards a realist philosophy in Hansen.

Harman starts his response to Shaviri by claiming that "Whitehead (like Bruno Latour) should be seen not as a philosopher of becoming, but of concrete, individual entities" (2011, 291). Indeed, the dual ontology that Whitehead presents moves him away from philosophers of becoming like Bergson or Deleuze, and it is the inner atomism of his metaphysics that draws Harman to Whitehead. The intimacy of objects is the basis of an object-oriented philosophy of Harman's kind. Even though the postulates are different among the authors in the object movement, the metaphysical inquiry about how entities relate departs from the assumption that they must exist independently of their relations with other entities. Harman and Whitehead's "shared project" (Shaviri 2011, 281) starts with atomism in order to claim an equal ontology where "all entities, of all sizes and scales, have the same degree of reality" (Shaviri 2011, 281). All entities must keep their atomistic nature or intimacy withdrawn from the rest of entities to start thinking in such ontological terms.

Nevertheless, the way they conceive the atomistic foundation of this equal ontology remains at opposite sides of the spectrum. While for Whitehead "ontological equality comes from contact and mutual implication" in the universe, for Harman "all objects are ontologically equal because they are all equally withdrawn from one another" (Shaviri 2011, 281). In other words, even though they both proclaim the objects' atomism, Whitehead does so as the result of the process of relations, whereas Harman needs to remove all relations, "(their accidents, qualities, and moments [...])," in order to be able to claim their reality (Harman 2011, 295). Thus, according to Harman, Whitehead's account of the intimacy of objects is not sufficient because

even though Whitehead is sensitive to their inner vitality and reality, he believes that the intimacy of actualities is derivative of the processes and relations that connect them to previous actualities. That is, the origin of an actuality always depends first on the bundle of relations or connections that they have made with previous entities. Since actual entities in Whitehead correspond to satisfied, perished actualizations, their ontological character is reduced to what other actualities-in-attainment will inherit from them. Conversely, for Harman the inaccessible withdrawal of entities is understood as the only possibility for a real realism, the chance to build an ontology that does not privilege any entity over another. In contrast to what his critics think, a non-relational ontology for Harman means precisely the possibility to start rethinking relations anew. As he puts it, a non-relational ontology “*does not* mean that I think that objects never enter into relations; the whole purpose of my philosophy is to show how relations happen, despite their apparent impossibility” (2011, 295). In short, according to Harman, only when we understand objects as withdrawn from relations can we start speculating about how objects relate.

In this respect, Shaviro’s discussion argues that if we were to choose between the structure of experience of Whitehead’s becoming or Harman’s substance ontology, Whitehead’s view would be the most adequate philosophical position today as it corresponds to the modes of experience that we are facing in contemporary sociopolitical contexts. For Shaviro, when the focus remains on the substance’s withdrawn essence, the object is precluded from entering the potential to experience. Actualized objects in Shaviro’s scheme are inert. Therefore, if Shaviro followed Harman’s proposal and objects ended up being withdrawn and neglected any relation, they would be unable to pass on part of their datum. Shaviro’s criticism stems from Deleuze, and therefore it focuses on the expansion of the capacities of being beyond the substance’s genesis

into virtual and affective realms. From Shaviro's standpoint, Harman's focus on substance becomes insufficient and limiting when it comes to understanding contemporary subjectivities.

As a result, Shaviro and other Harman detractors have criticized the static and reductive character of his focus on objects, and they have denounced his inability to account for the immanent potentiality that entities do hold in experiencing becoming. This has led Shaviro to claim a wider gulf in the debate between substances and relations. He argues that Harman's philosophy of substance is a philosophy of stasis and therefore it cannot account for change. According to Shaviro himself and other speculative philosophers of becoming, only from a relational ontology we are able to account for transition, movement, change, which is at the core of contemporary criticism. They believe that only a relational perspective is able to address event and, ultimately, the larger plane of existence where all entities are connected and in mutual implication.

In his response to Shaviro, Harman argues that "only a non-relational model of objects is capable of accounting for both the transient and enduring faces of reality." And he continues: "Shaviro denies this, mainly because he wrongly links relations with becoming, and objects with stasis" (2011, 291-2). As he writes, "there is no nothing inherently transient about relations" (2011, 299). This association is misguided because "if an object could be identified completely with its current relations, then there is no reason that anything would ever change" (2011, 295). Harman gives a philosophical explanation for the previous statement. According to him, if we look further and trace back the object's essence, if we try to track its relations to locate the previous atomic unit, we come to the conclusion that Whitehead's privacy of objects only results in an "infinite regress of relations" (Harman 2011, 296) which does not refer to any real actuality and that makes it impossible to explain change. This is mainly because the object's intimacy

comes always *after* the fact; the object is derivative of a series of a relations. In fact, if we look at the explanation that Whitehead gives in *Adventures of Ideas*, we see more clearly how he eventually has to link the entity's origin to just the relations that it has previously established:

Objects.—The process of experiencing is constituted by the reception of entities, whose being is antecedent to that process, into the complex fact which is that process itself. These antecedent entities, thus received as factors into the process of experiencing, are termed 'objects' for that experiential occasion. *Thus primarily the term 'object' expresses the relation of the entity, thus denoted, to one or more occasions of experiencing.* [...] the process of experiencing is constituted by the reception of objects into the unity of that complex occasion which is the process itself. The process creates itself, but it does not create the objects which it receives as factors in its own nature. (1929, 178-179, *emphasis added*)

Even though Whitehead does argue that the process does not create the new actuality, if we look at how the new actuality inherited part of the past we can only understand the previous unit as the bundle of relations and prehensions that have constituted it in the first place. As a result, Whitehead's principle is not able to hold the ontological premise of the object's intimacy. As Harman states, "there are no residual substances lying beneath prehensions, since Whitehead could only dismiss such substances as 'vacuous actualities'" (Harman 2011, 296). The bundle of prehensions influencing future occasions that we discover in Whitehead's scheme can never account for any intimacy of the future object. Accordingly, Harman concludes against Shaviri that the "supposed difference between the private and public faces of the 'dual-aspect ontology' is really just a reflection of one set of relations passing to its successor" (Harman 2011, 296). Harman believes that creating actual entities that can only be understood through their previous systems of prehensions leads to a mere abstract principle that does not sustain the capacity for actual change. Harman writes:

the question is not whether Whitehead sees and asserts this [primacy of substance or relations] (he does both), but whether the principles of his ontology sufficiently support it. For if the privacy of the moon at this instant is to be distinguished from its 'public' prehension of other actual entities, we still need to know in what this privacy of the moon consists. [...] to speak of actual

entities in terms of anything but their prehensions is a mere abstraction; the entities themselves are concrescences, or systems of prehensions. [...] *A thing must exist in order toprehend.* (2011, 296 *emphasis added*)

Thus, with Harman's response we see that what distances Harman from Whitehead is not relations themselves but the fact that the processual character of actualities turns relations into the only previous unit that an actuality can refer to for its origin. If substances, as seen above, are made of bundles of relations that do not link to any real substance, then the substance becomes exhausted by the relations that produce them; they cannot be "the home of any potentiality." (Harman 2011, 298). In turn, Harman proposes an intimacy of objects that primordially remains withdrawn from the *affects* of any relations. In this sense, the ontological immanence that provides the substance with a reality has to be and remain speculative. The selfsameness of entities cannot be accessed by other entities or the relations that they establish. This is the only way for Harman in which change can be produced, where real objects exist.

To prove how this principle of intimacy versus relations is unsatisfactory in Whitehead, he continues his discussion with a critique of Whitehead's *eternal objects*. Whitehead's eternal objects are often linked to platonic units, as they are supreme types of objects that are able to ingress their qualities into the new concrescences. Even though eternal objects might be similar to superjects at first, they hold a more important role in the stage towards concrescence. They are, according to Whitehead, conceptual units that are able to "enter into integration with the physical prehensions, modifying both the data and the subjective forms" (1978, 164). They are not perished units like superjects, they keep a potentiality which is able to ingress in new objects during the making of new concrescences. The process of selection that concrescences undergo is mostly informed by the ability of eternal objects to unify the past and present into an actual feeling of becoming. Conceptually, eternal objects are actual entities that can keep the

potentiality to affect new concrescences as well as to remain active within the rest of perished entities. Eternal objects are able to keep a relation of contrast between the past datum and the new creative concrescence in the making. Whitehead writes: “the concrescence is an individualization of the whole universe. Every eternal object, whether relevant or irrelevant to the datum, is still patient of its contrasts with the datum” (1978, 165).

The example that Harman uses in his response is very useful to understand the limitations of such a platonic concept that informs Whitehead’s scheme:

If I see two objects as being the exact same shade of blue, it is the same eternal object that ingresses into both. And it is the eternal object, not the actual entities, that are a plenum of fine gradations without gaps, as well as being the source of all potentiality for change. In other words, the supposed ‘boundless wealth of possibilities’ invoked by Shaviro is not to be found in the actual entities. These have no potential. They simply are what they are; their story is already over, since they are always in the act of perishing as soon as they are born. In fact it is not I but Whitehead who appeals to ‘vast reserves of hidden qualities’; he simply places those qualities outside any individual thing. As for actual entities themselves, they are incurably atomic and happen in causal independence of each other (2011, 298).

Harman shows the failure of Whitehead’s metaphysical scheme when Whitehead has to appeal to eternal objects to give an explanation for change. Eternal objects are used as the pre-existent units that can ingress in any new creative unit. Whitehead ultimately locates the possibility for change outside the individual entity, he needs an *a priori* of objects to be able to account for change within the relational continuum of existence. A close reading of Harman demonstrates two basic insufficiencies in Whitehead: first, that Whitehead’s structure of experience cannot keep the primacy of the intimacy of objects within a metaphysical scheme; and second, that in giving a primary role to relationality, he is unable to account for change or evolution in his ontology. Because only eternal objects are able to explain change, Whitehead’s atomic units become insufficient to develop a philosophical theory of the structure of experience.

In contrast, by claiming the object's speculative essence first we do not need to distinguish between eternal objects and other actualities. All of them have the potential to experience. Harman's philosophical alternative attempts to resolve Shaviro's misconception of linking relations to change, on the one hand, and thus overcome Whitehead's abstraction, on the other. In addition, his philosophical task has to respect the speculative intimacy of things in a way that it can still allow us to stipulate about the different ways in which entities relate and produce change. In this sense, it is worth appealing to Hansen's critique as his reinterpretation of Whitehead directly contributes to both endeavors. With the analysis of Hansen's position we can see how both authors are closer than it might appear in their views on atomism.

Hansen's understanding of Whitehead's dual ontology, as in Harman, also needs to start primarily with the object's atomism. Hansen agrees with Harman's premise of withdrawing objects in order to account for their relationality. In *Feed-Forward*, Hansen aims to develop an "atomism of connected individuals" (2015b, 111) that starts with his assigning a primordial role to attained actualities. He claims:

On the highest level of generality, then, Whiteheadian "coherence" has to do with the way that things—or, more precisely, events—are entirely inter-dependent, yet also mutually independent. The world is both a disjunctive multiplicity of discrete entities, and a continuous web of interconnections. Neither of these dimensions can be ignored; 'the individuality of entities is just as important as their community.' (Whitehead 1926/1996, 88) Every entity is related, positively or negatively, to all the other entities in its universe. And yet, within this network of relations, 'the ultimate metaphysical truth is atomism' (1929/1978, 35). Whitehead's philosophy is 'an atomic theory of actuality.' (Hansen 2015b, 27)

Along the lines of Harman's critique of change, Hansen uses his view of Whitehead's atomism to offer a critique of the Deleuzian perspective of Whitehead, particularly its emphasis on event and becoming: "in their zeal to make Whitehead relevant for analyzing contemporary experience (and in several cases, because of a certain fidelity to Deleuze), these critics run

headlong into the very error denounced by Debaise—the historically French error of identifying actual entity with event” (2015b, 91). In fact, Hansen’s main critique developed in chapter 3 against speculative philosophers of becoming which argues that they do not follow the speculative ban has to do with this same principle. More specifically, the need that Hansen sees in maintaining the speculative ban makes the interpretation of actualities-in-attainment by speculative realists metaphysically incorrect. According to Hansen, Shaviro and others appeal to the speculative side of the becoming in order to explain experience because they believe it is the only way to achieve a non-anthropocentric perspective. However, Hansen demonstrates that if we are to give accounts of the experiential side of entities, they will always have to claim first the realities of those entities. Only when we assume the ontology of the substance and the fact that it needs to be speculatively withdrawn from all things in order to exist, will we be able to start theorizing about experience.

It is important to remark that Hansen is not positioning his critique within an object-oriented philosophy, and neither does his account of twenty-first-century media try to respond to the substance vs. relations problematic that has structured this investigation. However, after the critique of process and event that we have seen, Hansen’s premise of the speculative ban in the analysis of Whitehead’s actualizations makes his position closer to Harman’s primacy of substances than to Shaviro’s relational ontology. The principle of respecting the speculative intimacy of objects is also found in Hansen’s CFI and the appeal to the speculative ban. Following Harman’s tenet, it is the object’s selfsameness that can explain the potential for change, or in Hansen’s scheme, it is the potential of attained actualities that can create a continuum of experience. It is being, and not becoming, what allows experience.

Hansen and Harman are in similar intellectual positions when considering the speculative as the most important aspect of the objects' selfsameness. Harman formulates a non-relational ontology of *real* things to be able to rethink how objects relate. In doing so, the speculative withdrawal of actual entities becomes a primordial aspect to think any possible relationality among substances. Without the speculative, without accepting that we will never be able to think experience outside selfsameness, we can never envision a structure of experience or the relations that construct change within this scheme. Similarly, Hansen turns to the speculative ban to be able to give an account of experience. For Hansen, the speculative realm is the necessary element within the metaphysical scheme "in order for experience to be what it is" (2015b, 122-23). Without the speculative, to which will never have total access, there is no possibility to create an equal ontology that explains experience of all entities. This is a central aspect of the revision of Whiteheadian philosophy, as it raises questions about the possibilities of a critique that is just based on process. What Whitehead claimed as atomism does not come off as real atomism after all.

Another aspect that draws Hansen closer to Harman is his position towards eternal objects. In his revision, he will dismiss eternal objects as the only ones that can determinate the pure potentiality of new actualities. For him, there is no need to distinguish among actualized entities and eternal objects, as all of them are able to sustain superjectal, potential power. In this case, Hansen follows Jorge Nobo's critique of Deleuzian Whitehead:

By transferring the burden of explaining solidarity from eternal objects as determinants of definiteness to the unique position of actualities, Nobo, like Jones, gives sway to the superjectal operation of actualities within other actualities as the source for creativity [...] On this account, there is solidarity of the universe and of every actuality with all other actualities precisely and only because of the superjectal operation of attained actualities outside of their own subjective geneses. (2015b, 243)

In repudiating eternal objects and dismissing their primary role in the formation of new actualities, Hansen will give general power to this superjective subjectivity that is given to all actual entities. In his proposal, he takes pure potentiality and gives it a whole new role. Eternal objects will be displaced by the *real potentiality* of the settled world created by attained actualities. The dismissal of eternal objects “confirms our position that creativity simply is the power of worldly sensibility: [...] [the] critique of eternal objects uncovers the fundamentally sensory nature of the power –and the creativity—of the settled, superjected world, which operates to catalyze and to accompany concrescence and, ultimately, to intensify itself by the continual addition of new superjects” (Hansen 2015b, 174).

Hansen’s ontology does not need eternal objects to account for change. His analysis of twenty-first-century media provides a structure of experience that does not depend on virtual becoming, but that it is actual and causal. The power that he gives to attained actualities claims an ontology of substances that is able to reach beyond higher-order subjectivities, thus promising access to other levels of sensibility. His philosophical account, however, does not stay there. This analysis starts from an ontology of substance as an intellectual strategy to propose a new scheme of relationality, which is what ultimately makes Hansen’s position a very interesting critique for contemporary critical theory. My analysis has drawn Hansen closer to Harman intellectually in order to rethink experience and come to a ground zero regarding relationality. From this point onwards, however, Hansen will grow apart from the object-oriented theorists to develop a whole new relational paradigm, which at the same time was the main aim in Harman’s object ontology.

In this new exercise, Hansen does not get rid of potentiality completely, rather the opposite. In this sense, he will elaborate a relational scheme that enters a completely new realm that will separate him from Harman. Whereas Harman endorses a model of non-relational

speculative actuality that has the potential for change insofar as it is withheld from relations, Hansen claims the speculative existence of actualities for the potential for relations to exist. The real potentiality of the settled world that attained actualities create will be the central agent in this scheme, as agent of creativity, change, and, most importantly, experience. This chapter has first served the purpose of illustrating how Hansen takes a new side in this chicken-and-egg debate by positioning himself within a substance ontology closer to Harman's. And secondly, it has also demonstrated how Hansen's analysis challenges politically and philosophically great part of contemporary Whiteheadian scholarship, or in Hansen's words: the "operative reduction that lies at the heart of recent work on Whitehead" (2015b, 127) that comes from the Deleuzian side.

Hansen's ontology of entities is not Harman's realism. Along the lines of Harman, Hansen's realism starts with the speculative withdrawal of entities, but, in addition, he also dares to take a step further and propose a new scheme of relationality that does not only respect a real equal ontology –what he calls, rephrasing Whitehead, a "neutral ontology of the organism" (2015b, 16); but also redefines contemporary subjectivity and temporality so central to the "contemporary technocultural mediations" (2015a, 117) of our context. As we will see in the next chapter, the reinterpretation of experience will concern especially the temporal relationality of this new ontology. The approach to experience is not only internal but also external, as this real potentiality stems from worldly sensibility, which has only revealed itself with twenty-first-century technology. By proposing this new relationality, Hansen is able to bring forth an intellectual project that Shaviro had not conceived in atomistic ontologies: a metaphysics that can account for real "transience" and "futuraity" thus contributing to a real "creative advance" (Shaviro 2011, 288).

5. Hansen's relationality. Realism, futurity, and prehension.

So far this investigation has unfolded two basic arguments regarding Hansen's radicalization of Whitehead. First, that Hansen's structure of experience departs from the ontological premise of a real realism of entities, which in principle situates him closer to Harman's ontology than the speculative realists'. And second, that Hansen's ontological scheme coupled with his analysis of twenty-first-century media prompts the speculation about a new relationality that expands traditional conceptualizations of experience, providing in turn a new role to the potentiality of the settled world. This final chapter will address Hansen's ontology in its totality by engaging critically with the relationality that he puts into motion. The pharmacological logic of worldly sensibility in Hansen's media analysis uncovers a structure of experience that not only challenges contemporary sociopolitical analyses of power, especially the criticism after 9/11, but also restructures other more abstract –though equally real— conditions of experience such as temporality, and more specifically futurity. In this sense, I will look into Hansen's critique of Brian Massumi's *preemption* which Hansen develops in his article "Our Predictive Condition; or, Prediction in the Wild" (2015a). With this analysis we will be able to have a better grasp of what Hansen's structure of experience really entails, both metaphysically (philosophically) and experientially (politically).

If there is a fundamental aspect in Hansen's theorization of twenty-first-century media is the radical exteriority that these technologies bring about in the production of experience. Twenty-first-century media expands the human threshold of sensibility and multiplies levels of experience that no longer belong to or depend on cognition. These exterior, "complex and heterogenous fields of contemporary sensibility" (Hansen 2015b, 191) are able to ingress their experiential forces in the present of experience before consciousness reaches cognition. As

Hansen writes, “consciousness comes to learn *that it lags behind its own efficacy*” (2015b, 190). Worldly sensibility does not need consciousness to produce experience; what is more, these technologies show that we can now address “worldly sensibility in itself and in relation to its own force, independently of any ensuing perception” (2015b, 145). Consequently, consciousness is left with a rather supervisory role within this scheme. Yet Hansen’s structure of experience affords a pharmacological recompense for human subjectivity: this “technical access to and production of data about levels of experience that remain outside our direct experience” can nevertheless “give us the potential to gain an expanded understanding of our own experience and its implication within larger worldly situations” (2015a, 116).

Thus, the exteriority ascribed to twenty-first-century media does not only expand our capacities outside consciousness to make us understand larger processes of worldly experience, but it also claims a worldly dynamism that becomes the main agent for producing worldly experience in our contemporary context. In other words, worldly sensibility informs our experience but it also experiences from itself the potentiality of its own capacity to produce experience. As Hansen points out, worldly sensibility “exerts its impact not solely as a passive source and by being channeled through delimited subjective processes, but as an environmental agency enveloping such processes exceeding them in its total scope” (2015b, 174). Given that twenty-first-century media are able to envelop the production of all levels of experience within a broader worldly operation, the potentiality that they generate as worldly sensibility is always going to be ontologically more relevant in the structure of experience. In fact, Hansen distinguishes worldly potentiality from other experiential forms of potentiality. He refers to it as real potentiality, or *data potentiality*, and he uses it designate potentiality “that is wholly and completely relative to the actual: real potentiality is the potentiality accruing to the settled world”

(2015b, 168). And adds: “because data potentiality combines the production of objective data with unprecedented possibilities for accessing that data, it allows for an excavation, or data-mining, of the settled world—which (to stick with the homology with phenomenology) is also a self-revelation or manifestation of that world—at extremely fine-grained scales” (2015b, 168). In terms of creativity and novelty, this objective data is very powerful as an exterior environmental force involved in the production of experience at a larger sensory level: it “provides a crucial and non-substitutable source of novelty that contributes to the creativity of the universe” (2015b, 168).

In terms of the expansion of worldly sensibility’s potentiality, the new metaphysical scheme will inescapably affect the traditional temporal conceptualizations involved in the production of experience. The fact that worldly sensibility shapes concrescences from the outside and these are ahead of any cognitive realization changes the temporal dynamics that we engage in within the experiential structure. From Hansen’s metaphysics, the environmental agency that contemporary media reveals is implicated in both the particular experiential processes of the present as well as in an expanded view of the totality of the situation in the universe, also implying the yet-to-come concrescences. Our traditional notions of temporality will collapse in front of the real potentiality that worldly sensibility wields in the creation of new experience. As a result, the category of the present undergoes a fundamental change in Hansen’s scheme. Within the context of contemporary technologies for data-gathering and analytics, the present as a temporal vector becomes increasingly affected and shaped by the future, which has not happened yet but nevertheless ingresses its real potentiality in current concrescences. The metaphysical scheme that worldly sensibility brings about has an impact on human experience: it translates

into new conditions of operability of the present, which becomes, as Hansen would put it, *feed-forwarded*:

In short, perception is no longer needed to enframe the causal efficacy of sensibility, and it is no longer needed to provide access [...] to this efficacy; indeed, insofar as it is decoupled from the force of sensibility, perception becomes available for what I am here trying to theorize as the operation of ‘feed-forward’: projecting causal efficacy forward into future activity, and specifically, into the future of perceptual consciousness deliberating on its own future activity. (2015b, 145)

In this sense, the role of the future in such metaphysics becomes more fundamental: “each new concrescence actually comes into being as a *passive reaction to the data of the settled world*, replete with its real potentiality for the future, real potentiality emanating *from the future*” (Hansen 2015b, 206). Therefore, every actuality has the potential to impact future actualities “*but also* –and to my mind more importantly – [...] it feels the potentiality for the future in its present, and indeed, as part of what constitutes the causal force of the present. Its intensity simply is the index of the power of this potentiality” (Hansen 2015b, 210).

The relevance of the future in the production of experience becomes even more important when we try to extrapolate the metaphysical scheme to cultural criticism and politics. Temporality has become a crucial aspect in the analysis of power in the age of financial capital. As Hansen explains, “what is ‘new’ about twenty-first-century media, then, is less their technical disjunction from past media than their opening of the operational present of sensibility to various forms of modulation, including most prominently (as we have just seen) capitalist ones” (2015b, 226). In this regard, Hansen’s analysis of experience advocates for an study of the predictive logics of twenty-first-century media that openly challenges the prevalent logic of *preemptive power* developed by Brian Massumi, which has been used to describe the predictive character of post-9/11 American foreign policy and politics. Massumi argues that the current regime of power

uses technologies for data gathering and analysis to expand our capacities for predicting the future in order to anticipate decisions in situations that have not yet occurred. According to Massumi, these decisions are made according to “a set of factors bearing on the likelihood of such activities indeed occurring—factors that include seriousness of the threat, the temporal window of opportunity for intervention, and the possibility of reducing collateral damage—which taken together present preponderant or overwhelming evidence of the ‘imminence’ of the threat at issue” (in Hansen 2015a, 102).

The fact that these decisions are made based on a future that has not yet happened leads Massumi to claim that “preemption is an effective operative logic rather than a causal operative logic” (in Hansen 2015a, 103). For him, the preemptive logics of power exert its dominance where there are no actual causes yet, where the future has the “virtual power to affect the present *quasicausally*” (in Hansen 2015a, 104). Thus, for him the uncertainty about the future is taken as an element of threat that will justify any decision that can anticipate the future. As a result, fear acts as a substitute of an objective cause, and it will become the element that legitimates any movements that are based on the predictions of these technologies. The target of preemptive technologies is the threat in a state of potential becoming, a threat that is virtually possible but has not yet emerged. In this respect, we can see how this conceptualization resonates with the structure of experience by philosophers of becoming developed in chapter 2.

One of the ontological claims of the preemptive logic is that it must operate “in relation to—indeed in virtue of—an unknowability that can never be overcome” (Hansen 2015a, 104). The impossibility of knowing the actualization –actual emergence– of the potential threat is what justifies and indeed ontologically makes possible the regime of preemption. This view on “absolute uncertainty” (2015a, 106) totally opposes Hansen’s understanding of the real effects

that the future –indeed, the expanded predictive properties of twenty-first-century media— hold in his metaphysical scheme, for as far as he is concerned with the causal efficacy of these technologies, he is able to propose that the real potentiality of twenty-first-century media lies on its capacity to feel the future in a causal and real manner. When Hansen claims that thanks to twenty-first-century media causal efficacy is presentified, he is arguing that causal efficacy becomes a real force (real potentiality) stemming from a future that even though it has not been lived yet, it has power on our present experience. Instead of using the potential future of predictions as a “substitute for the causal efficacy of the real” (2015a, 105), Hansen is able to theorize this potentiality as real forces that not only act causally on present decisions but that are able to feel its future potentiality in the present. A position like Massumi’s cannot help but subsuming fear to causality, which does not leave room for an alternative in the operability of the future in the present. As a result, the age of preemptive power “mobilizes the affect of fear ‘to effectively trigger a virtual causality’” (Hansen 2015a, 105). For Massumi the affect is the material quality that emerges as a vehicle and justification of a virtual threat, but he does not attribute ontological properties to the future entity or event; on the contrary, he assumes that only the fear is the material (real) force in the correlation of preemptive power.

As much as Massumi’s critical description of preemption is appropriate and objective to the regime that these policies establish in our contemporary context, what Hansen questions about this logic is that it does not seem to offer any way out; what is more, “it runs the risk of ratifying the Bush doctrine of preemption” (2015a, 106). It does not find a material solution to the correlations that preemptive power establishes, correlations that on the other hand continue to affect our everyday life experience. Against this paradigm, Hansen’s reinterpretation of Whitehead elaborates an alternative which he has defined under the claim of “a certain return to

reality” (Hansen 2015a, 107) which affords us access to part of the data implied in the total situation of the environmental sensibility that characterizes our experience. Hansen differs from Massumi’s “ontology of threat” in the fact that his analysis of twenty-first-century media shows that there is no uncertainty that is not causal in the structure of experience. The real potentiality stemming from a future, or, for that matter, any microtemporality within all these multiple sensory levels that is ahead of consciousness, is indeed a material force that affects, even if probabilistically, the present of our experience. That is, there is no *unknown unknown*, as Massumi would have it. Rather the opposite, the expansion of twenty-first-century media provides us with more information about causal, real forces that take place in the broader operation of ongoing environmental sensibility.

It is true that the expansion of the capacities of contemporary media, as well as its potential to affect the present from the future, has a “complexity that eschews all notions of simple linear causality and that embraces indeterminacy-uncertainty-unknowability as the very aspect of reality that makes causal analysis necessary in the first place” (Hansen 2015a, 107). However, the metaphysical reinterpretation of Hansen helps us understand our conditions of experience in a way that allows us to engage critically, and not just as mere spectators of virtual causes producing real fear. The expansion that corresponds to our capacities helps us learn about our conditions of experience, and, as a result, become more aware of the “environmental networks of sensibility that generate experience” (2015a, 65). The fact that it comes to us in a probabilistic form is what indeed explains the speculative reserve of all this data potentiality. As Hansen argues: “The key point is that this potentiality, despite being imperfectly reliable as a ground for prediction, has indisputable ontological power: the very power that is at issue when

Whitehead characterizes potentiality as the mode through which the future is *felt* in the present” (2015b, 211).

Therefore, Hansen’s critique of preemption proposes an alternative that he redefines as *prehensive* operative logics. On the one hand, prehension is able to maintain the metaphysical variations that Hansen included in his reinterpretation of Whitehead: real potentiality stemming from attained actualities, worldly sensibility, the speculative withdrawal of all entities, and the reformulation of temporality. On the other, it provides a framework of the future characterized by real causality, and which still provides us with a certain degree of agency, even if it is in the form of pharmacological recompense and in a feed-forwarded structure.

This paradigm of real causality, I believe, is crucial to engage with contemporary regimes of power and politics. Data-mining technologies show that the potentiality shaping our environmental structure of experience is probabilistic in nature, but it is also causal and real. In fact, there is no other form that we can attribute to potentiality but a probabilistic one. Then, the real change that is at stake here is that thanks to twenty-first-century media we have more access to those probabilities, and that we now know that they inform our experience and that we are shaped causally by them. To put it more simply, potentiality has always been –and can only exist– probabilistically; what makes it politically relevant today is that the probabilistic structure has become ontological and deeply intertwined in our structure of experience, and I would give two main reasons to explain this ontological change. First, because of the discovery of the entities’ open-endedness structure and their superjective power, which enable them to propagate potentiality once they have become and by producing contrasts between what they are (present)

and the future potentiality that exceeds them (future)⁴. And second, and I believe this is the great contribution of Hansen’s study, because the potentiality of entities metaphysically needs to maintain the speculative withdrawal of their genesis to be able to generate any form of relationality. The speculative character of all entities is the necessary foundation for these conditions of experience to exist. This paragraph in the book perfectly grasps the ontological claim that permits the relationality that is at stake with Hansen:

data potentiality gives more access to the ‘total relationality’ informing an event, and thus makes it more calculable than ever before, *but it does not—and cannot—give total access to that relationality*. By way of its contrast with prior configurations of real potentiality, data potentiality reveals something crucial about Whitehead’s thought of total relationality: namely, that it is a speculative element, a regulative ideal that has acquired ontological force. In this regard, there is perfect analogy between the speculative dimension of data potentiality and the speculative side of actual entities: total relationality is what must be the case for experience to be what it is—it is the real structure of the solidarity of the universe—but remains in principle beyond the access of any possible experience [...]. Precisely because it reveals the speculative foundation of total relationality, data potentiality both establishes the impossibility of any attempt to close the loop on prediction—to install a closed causal system yielding perfect predictability—and points to the double source of indeterminacy or novelty in the cosmos, namely, the compatibility of total relationality with incipient, bootstrapping selectivity that produces contrasts and intensity. Because of the ban on experiential access to the speculative, which operates here on two fronts—both metaphysical to the speculative, in relation to subjective concrescence and to total objective relationality—the actual workings of this encounter must in every concrete instance ultimately remain a mystery. (2015b, 169-170, *emphasis added*)

Therefore, the future –real potentiality— as it comes to us, as it affects our experience and shapes our subjectivity and the worldliness around us, can only be expressed probabilistically (Hansen 2015a, 120): “Actors are characterized by what they do—instantiation is action—and *what they do* is inflected by *what they will do*. Actuality is conditioned by *tendency*” (Hansen 2015b, 191). This is why the conditions for the potential relationality among entities need to be revisited and understood in terms of twenty-first-century media capacities.

⁴ In “Our Predictive Condition,” Hansen calls this moment of contrast in such temporality *in-between-present-and-future* (Hansen 2015a, 123).

This is the real realism of Hansen and the structure from which his alternative relationality stems from. The real potentiality holds an ontological state of its own because it stems from the superjective power of attained actualities, which do not only create new concrescences but also continue to add superjective power –real potentiality– to the totality of experience. The virtual causality of Massumi cannot become real datum of the world because it stems from an actuality-in-attainment in the process of *always*-becoming. Against Massumi, the potentiality stemming from worldly sensibility, or *worldly prehensiveness* (Hansen 2015b, 241), is real: it is causal and affective. Hansen’s real potentiality has the “capacity for a subjective variation to reach out beyond itself and impact the becoming of other entities” (Hansen 2015a, 104). This is the reason why Hansen, along with his redefinition of the prehensive logics of power, proposes to get rid of the term prediction and use *propensity* instead: “propensities aren’t mere possibilities but are physical realities” (2015a, 120).

Within such paradigm, Hansen’s take on the subject requires the reconceptualization of subjectivity as neutral so that it can be implicated in the larger total situation of worldly experience. This “dispersal of experience elicited by twenty-first-century media” (2015b, 251), Hansen argues, could never be more necessary for a rethinking of the human and human subjectivity, always bearing in mind the premises of the new metaphysics that he puts forward. In contrast to Massumi’s position, our agency will be restored, but it will never be as a result of human cognition, and it will definitely not be held outside the potentiality of worldly sensibility. Following Jones one more time, Hansen argues that subjectivity emerges in the contrasts produced between potentiality from the settled world and the attained actuality from which it stems:

subjectivity, insofar as it is the intensity produced by contrasts of settled data, simply is a distillation of real potentiality for the future that is felt in the present, and whose feeling in the present impacts the emergence for the future, and specifically of the genesis of novelty in the future form intensity experienced in the present. As such, subjectivity cannot be restrictively located in the present, but spans the transition from present to future: it places the future—as real potentiality, as the force of historically achieved potentiality—in the present. (2015b, 205; 2015a, 122)

Hansen's metaphysics is relevant today because it reveals agencies and potentiality outside our consciousness as much as it also claims our incapacity to grasp them in its totality. Both philosophically and politically, Hansen is ultimately taking this position on relationality to find ways to engage in the new social and political contexts that these technologies create. His relationality acknowledges our limits in order to know more about our capacities in front of worldliness that not only shapes subjectivity and experience, but that also frames and marks our capacities and sensibilities. As Hansen claims,

a crucial political and technical challenge that will necessarily come to the fore as we begin to develop such environments centers on whether and how we can gain agency over the power of these microtemporal qualities of experience, and on whether and how we can safeguard our expanded openness to worldly sensibility from corporate takeover: will the atmospheric media systems of the future provide opportunities for open-ended intensification of our experience, or will they remain exclusively focused on instrumentally targeting specific effects aimed at making our 'desire' legible for exploitation by others? (Hansen 2015b 132-133).

As it has been pointed out throughout this investigation, what is at stake today with the new ontological accounts of experience is whether our intellectual and metaphysical paradigms can address the worldly sensibility that is involved in today's structure of experience. I believe that Hansen is able to give worldly sensibility its ontological position without leaving human agency aside. Hansen wants to remain in that tension, and he does so with an extremely brilliant reinterpretation of Whitehead that respects the potentiality of the settled world and proposes new alternatives that allow us to engage with this very same potentiality. Speculation has never been more human-decentered and more human-concerned than in Hansen's metaphysics.

6. Conclusion.

Shaviro concludes in “The Actual Volcano” that the problematic of relations vs. substance found in the tension between Whitehead’s and Harman’s differing positions is best understood with the “difference between the aesthetics of the beautiful and the aesthetics of the sublime” (2011, 288), respectively. According to Shaviro, Whitehead’s world of relations is more akin to the aesthetics of the beautiful because beauty is defined by the relations that entities establish, continually affecting, touching, intensifying and reshaping one another; whereas Harman’s objects insinuate the “existence of something deeper, something hidden and inaccessible, something that cannot actually be displayed” (Shaviro 2011, 289). Therefore, Harman’s relations are better defined as entities that allure, attracting other entities yet always preserving their inner essence to themselves.

For Shaviro, relations construct beauty whereas substances construct the sublime. In this sense, the sublime has always been connected to the modernist tradition which favored sublimity as concealment, as a greatness that cannot be completely absorbed, measured, imitated, or calculated. The sublime, in Shaviro’s view, is too static to face the dynamism of the “universe of things” that is making itself present to us. He argues that in contrast to the sublime of the twentieth century, twenty-first-century aesthetics open up for access and reevaluation:

We live in a world where all manners of cultural expression are digitally transcoded and electronically disseminated, where genetic material is freely recombined, and where matter is becoming open to direct manipulation on the atomic and subatomic scales. Nothing is hidden; there are no more concealed depths. [...] The volcano is actual, here and now. (2011, 289-290)

Thus, Shaviro stands with Whitehead’s relations and he believes that only through our relational capacities with other entities we will be able to acknowledge the objects’ reality and power. However, Shaviro forgets that the only way to acknowledge the entities’ reality and

potential for relation is to admit that, as humans, we will never be able to access those entities in their full existence. He criticizes Harman's allure because "it stretches the observer to the limits of its power" (2011, 289) yet this is the first stance that one has to assume in order to relate with others; otherwise we will always create our bonds privileging our capacities over the rest of entities. Indeed, what Shaviro is overlooking is that allure is precisely what gives all entities their intimacy, the power to relate with one another. As Hansen also claims, one last time, it must be the foundational premise of the structure of experience *in order for experience to be what it is*.

Harman takes up this criticism in his response, and revisits the notion of allure to mark that it is not a product of modernist subjectivity. Allure is not so much about the human cognitive reductive capacities but about the objects' claimed intimacy; it is about the objects' ontology "including but not privileging the human" (Clough 2011, 7). In Harman's words, "the sublime is a theory about *human* experience of the world, while allure for me seeps down even into the heart of inanimate matter" (2011, 302). This investigation has tried to demonstrate that a relational ontology cannot account for a real equal ontology, and that to be able to think possible relations among entities there must first be a recognition of their reality. The conditions of our reality have made obvious that there is a technical regime that is propelling us to rethink our subjectivity in terms of capacities beyond human condition, on the one hand, and that we have to acknowledge other levels of sensibility that produce experience and that escape us, on the other. Worldly sensibility is unavoidable and it is real in its own right.

Thus, I would argue that today the aesthetics of the sublime have changed due to twenty-first-century media's expansion of sensorial capacities, as Hansen's account has demonstrated. Therefore, there is no full concealment, as twenty-first-century media have discovered new *experiential* realms that have established a new ontology of worldly sensibility and also a new

relationality that stems from its environmental potentiality as fully ontological actualities. Hansen pinpoints the two fundamental aspects of the new relationality that twenty-first-century media reveals in relation to human agency and access:

(1) they mark the technical revelation of (and new forms of access to) an expansive domain of worldly sensibility that lies behind and remains in excess of any delimited act of feeling, sensing, perceiving, thinking, or understanding; and (2) they catalyze a gradual shift in the economy of experience, and with it, a shift from human-addressed media to environmental [...] media, which shift however is not ‘determined’ by media so much as it is emergent from the power of sensibility that media open up. (2015b, 226)

The world of data-ification that Hansen describes has brought about a whole new scheme of relationality. His reinterpretation of Whitehead is rooted in the capacity of twenty-first-century media to impact the structure of experience. Perhaps what Hansen is telling us is that in this world of data-ification we do not have such a clear distinction between the aesthetics of the beautiful and the aesthetics of the sublime. Or, as I believe Hansen’s metaphysics demonstrates, maybe twenty-first-century media contributes to a new aesthetics that though partly less hidden and expanded into new different levels of sensibility (or taste for that matter), they do so through claiming their selfsameness. The intimacy of twenty-first-century media lies at the heart of their capacity to show that we will never be able to access them completely. In terms of our intellectual position within this new ontology, accepting the intimacy of worldly sensibility is the first step to understand and engage with what is at stake in this new technical framing that is now relevant for our subjectivity. Of course, any of these accounts will always have to partly remain speculative, both in the sense of our encounters and limitations in relation to other entities, and also because of our ever-changing intellectual paradigms and realities.

The chicken-and-egg problematic has been the foothold that has allowed this investigation to unfold the new metaphysics that has arisen in our contemporary contexts.

Situating Hansen within an ontology of entities rather than an ontology of becoming has established the foundations of a media post-phenomenology that stands as another possible solution to this never-ending philosophical problematic. From here, we have to continue to endure critique and remain attentive to what the surrounding objects tell us, or let us see. Shaviro's last line in "The Actual Volcano" argues that "tomorrow, things might be different; but today, the future is Whiteheadian" (2011, 290). In the last lines of this study, I would like to take a stance against Shaviro and claim that tomorrow might have come, and that it might be Hansen's, or rather, the settled world's.

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