Infinity and Originality | Nick Leonard

Note: Page numbers refer to the book *Classic American Philosophers* edited by Max H. Fisch

We start with nothing. Then we add a point, and suddenly, we have two. Then, the whole creates perspective—a third, a triangle. We move further and further out—four, five, six, and beyond—until we cannot see a beginning or an end. An infinity has been created; an infinity that is the founding principle of our universe. What could this infinity be? I believe this infinity is energy, for as a whole, the continuum of the experience of energy has no beginning and no end. Energy has no limits, and it cannot be bounded. Thus, the very nature of the universe creates a field of infinite possibility in the future and leaves in its wake a field of completed actions or infinite actualities. How are these actualities created? They are created through the conscious or unconscious realization of one of these new possibilities followed by a process: decision. All beings create decision, but when beings create decision through a creative and imaginative process of inquiry and interpretation, we come upon a decision that has become more than just the result of inquiry with regards to environment, but inquiry as the synthesis of environment *and* mind. Decision actualizes possibility, and in that exact moment, creates an infinite end of that specific process which, by nature, to contribute to the continuing advancement of the universe, must be novel or never before actualized. In novelty lies the crux of my inquiry. I wish to examine the creation of ‘new’ actualities which, in turn, form the basis for the *basic* principles of evolution and advancement on all levels with the understanding that higher levels of evolution create a higher amount of complexity involved with the operations discussed.

To account for human originality we must account for universal originality because, as parts of a whole, principles exhibit and reflect the inherent qualities of our environment and can be applied on all levels of experience from the infinitely small to the infinitely large. I will begin with the concept that new ideas are actualized from a field of infinite possibility. This field is one of the present (155). It is the result of the past interpreted and the possibilities inherent in the future. Future is always possible unless we achieve stasis (457), death (278), or ‘truth’ (156) as advance is the principle of human life (457), and infinite possibilities are advance. The universal whole must advance because infinity is contained within its very nature. Such a field of infinite possibility extends out from being—an entity which can dictate the next pathway to follow or the next actuality in its own field of experience (163). This dictation is a process of unconscious or conscious actuality or the process of making real. Reality begins with prehensions (457) or the environment (282), as a principle that extends beyond the physical, from which the being came. The environment creates the conditions for a process of exploration, trial and error, or inquiry to occur. This inquiry does not apply to only human beings but also applies unconsciously to less complex beings (272). Even viruses mutate as a result of their environments, and when an environment changes, a being must change as well or be swept away by the advance of the universe. To take a derivative you must first have the original function. To inquire you must have a base from which to build on; the important distinction is that this base is not the finite boundary of the process of actuality. Prehension is a part of a whole continuum of past reality and future possibility.

The field of infinite possibility seems like an impossibility. In ordinary human experience, this infinite array of choices is not apparent. For example, we cannot live infinitely as all humans die (at least in the physical sense). We die biologically when one component of our selves—mind, spirit, or body—fails; nevertheless, even though our personal experience is over, we leave an infinite effect on universal actuality through *being* (321). In our seemingly bounded and finite lives, we do not see the infinity contained in the future. An infinity array of possibilities already exists, and, in that sense, you could say nothing ‘original’ exists, but I would argue that the universe’s principle is originality. Zero must give ‘one’ a context as ‘one’ cannot exist without zero, and the realization of zero cannot exist without ‘one’ to give it context. One is a never before seen reality in a world of zero and creates a continuum of advancement—of evolution. The universe we live in advances through such originality. The decisions that become eternal in the lives of others, the decisions that make a being actual beyond biological death, are the decisions that advance the universe as a whole (456). On a universal scale these decisions must, by their very nature, be completely and totally new. Novel actuality comes out of a field of possibility, and if that decision advances even a fragment of the universe, it becomes an eternal reality. Decision is cemented in the past and becomes another stepping stone from which to project the field of infinite possibility. Are some possibilities excluded from such a field? I would assume so; nevertheless, such exclusions would not mean the field was not infinite in nature. For example, the distance between two points is finite yet infinite as you can always find a smaller and smaller measure by which to judge the distance between points. If we flip such a proposition, we find that we are searching for something infinite that is finite. Could such a concept even exist? Look around you. In your existence you are surrounded by the finite, yet you are a part of a whole continuum of infinity. The ultimate universe is that which is infinite and finite. Here we have an interesting circle: infinite life within finite life; finite life within infinite life. While the scale may move up and down, the principle cannot change. Between two points is a bounded infinity, but surrounding the two points is an ever-changing, advancing infinity.

The advancing infinity created through decision is dependent on past actuality and possibility. Past actuality gives a platform (and in some sense is a measure against regression (447)) for an array of infinite possibilities to extend out from being (163). These prehensions give way to decision in a brief, timeless moment: the moment of apprehension (456), action (322)—the present. Such a decision lies in the subjective and objective worlds: is it represented in experience, or does it reflect experience itself (155)? If such a new possibility was imagined from the field of infinite possibility and thus made actual by thought and action (decision), this new actuality would collapse into a moment of understanding (322). Thus, understanding is actualized through a process of present founded in past and future. It is interpretation. An original idea loses its novelty once it is known *and* understood. One state of being may have been lost, but the other is eternal and infinite cemented in the experience of the universe as past. The past is never gone. As human beings we tend to forget: even if the past is not remembered, it still exists as its principle is interwoven in the fabric of our lives. The past was once original, now it has become a platform for the continuing infinity of ultimate life as a process of interpretation. “And if there is no interpretation, there is no world whatever” (234).

I quickly realized in writing this essay that there is still one question left unanswered that I cannot answer. It is a question of beginning. In a field of zero, how could the environment change to require the evolution of ‘one’? Does ‘one’ even evolve or has something introduced ‘one’ in turn creating process and infinity? One is the ultimate originality, yet I have failed to find the process behind its existence. In the finite life, beginnings and ends occur all the time, yet beginning is based off of a previous prehension. I suppose in trying to account for originality, I am trying to account for entirety of the whole. Trying to tackle this issue, I imagined the field of zero or, maybe, energy as having an infinite field of possibility. But I take issue in saying that the field can decide and choose a thread of possibility as it has no past. Maybe such a field of energy randomly collapsed into one of the fields of possibility, but in the experience of the universe, such an action cannot occur without conscious or unconscious being to facilitate that decision. So must this process of beginning require being? If so, what form would this being take?