

Desiring Ultimate Goodness

A dialogue in which Freya and Orin discuss Goodness as an emotional object of desire!

Stephen J Brewer, November 2025*

His free ebook “*The Origins of Self*” can be downloaded at www.originsofself.com

The late afternoon sun filtered through the old leaded-glass windows of Orin’s office. Books covered nearly every surface, many with worn spines: *Process and Reality*, *Science and the Modern World*, *Modes of Thought*. Freya stood by the window, her hands clasped behind her back as she questioned the professor.

Freya: You explained earlier why this ultimate “good” is an emotional object and so not physical. But as a scientist, I can’t help asking — where is it? If it’s real, shouldn’t it have some kind of location or substrate?

Orin (smiling): Ah, you speak like someone trained to think the universe is built of things located in space. Whitehead would tell you that’s a habit inherited from classical physics. In his view, the world is not composed of objects but of events of experience.



Freya: Events of experience... occurring in what, though?

Orin: In relation. In process. In what Whitehead calls the creative advance. The universe is a vast unfolding of experiential occasions, each prehending—grasping—the world and adding something new to it. That “ultimate good” you’re seeking is not a place but a possibility actively luring experience toward greater intensity and harmony.

Freya: So, the good isn’t an end-state, but something like... a tendency? A directionality in experience?

Orin: Exactly. Whitehead calls it the “lure for feeling.” Not a command, not a blueprint, but an invitation—an emotional pull toward richer forms of existence. What you call a “good emotional state” is one local expression of this metaphysical lure.

Freya: But why can’t I reach the ultimate version of it? Why only glimpses?

Orin: Because experience, in Whitehead's system, is always finite, always partial. Each occasion synthesizes the world, enjoys its moment, perishes, and hands its achievement forward. Permanence would contradict the very nature of process.

Freya: So, the reason I can't feel that permanent perfection is not because I'm flawed, but because the universe itself doesn't work that way?

Orin: Precisely. Actuality is momentary; perfection is an idea that shapes the flow but never freezes it. In Whitehead's language, the "ultimate good" is located in what he calls the primordial nature of God — not as a supernatural person, but as the abstract realm of possibilities harmonized into a coherent ideal.

Freya: Wait — so God, in Whitehead's sense, is like... the ordering of possibilities?



Orin: Yes. A metaphysical function, not a bearded sky-father. The "divine light" you mentioned earlier is simply our experiential contact with those higher harmonies of possibility. Moments of awe, unity, insight — these are when an actual occasion manages to mirror a bit more of that ideal pattern.

Freya: But if this divine dimension is real, why do people talk about it like it belongs in another realm or a higher dimension?

Orin: Because humans tend to spatialize whatever they revere. Whitehead takes a subtler line. The "divine" is not elsewhere — it's woven into every moment as the potential for depth, coherence, and beauty in experience. Calling it a higher dimension is poetic shorthand for saying it is not reducible to physical measurements.

Freya: So metaphysical "spirit stuff" isn't a substance — it's a way of pointing to the fact that experience has a depth that physics doesn't capture?

Orin: Precisely. Science measures actualities. Philosophy explores possibilities and meanings. Both are real, but not in the same currency.



Freya: You said earlier that death isn't a shortcut to full unity. But isn't Whitehead famous for saying that experience continues in some form after death?

Orin: What he says is more nuanced. The achievements of each experiential moment are taken up into the larger weave of reality. In that sense, nothing is lost. But your personal consciousness, your striving for emotional fulfilment — that

belongs to the temporal flow of life. It cannot leap to perfection because perfection is not a destination. It's a guiding ideal.

Freya: So longing is built into existence.

Orin: Yes. Longing is how finite beings participate in the creative advance. It's the friction that drives novelty. Even your desire for the "ultimate good now" is part of that process — a sign that you're responding to the lure of deeper experience.

Freya: So, the divine isn't something I travel to — it's something I momentarily embody?

Orin: Beautifully put. The divine is not "elsewhere." It is the background music of becoming. Every moment is a chance to harmonize with it — just a little more.

Freya: That's surprisingly accessible. Almost comforting.

Orin: That's why Whitehead's metaphysics appeals to both scientists and mystics. It allows the universe to be mathematically structured, physically real, emotionally meaningful, and spiritually resonant, all at once.

Sources:

Image 1 Eleanore Stohner: San Pedro de Atacama, Antofagasta, Chile

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/the-desert-landscape-with-mountains-in-the-background-27878412/>

Image 2 lii Chun Woman in Stylish Coat Posing in Scenic Mountain Landscape

<https://images.pexels.com/photos/34730100/pexels-photo-34730100.jpeg>

Image 3 Bird Feeds on Vibrant Red Berries in Natural Habitat, Sudip Ghosh

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