

What is meant, exactly, by "the social structure of experience"?

Oddly enough, H's analyses often seem to abstract from the point that he himself otherwise insists on (e.g., when he speaks, in a strikingly parallel phrase, of "the social structure of subjectivity" [DR, p. 123])—namely, that "there are reasons for thinking that subjects cannot exist except by including among the things they know a knowledge of themselves as possessed by other subjects." If this point stands, if "the innermost secret of existence . . . is that the existence of anything other than God consists of its enjoyed contribution to the divine awareness" (p. 124), then among the things included in the "given" is the givenness of all things, including the self, to God. This, however, seems hard to reconcile with Hartshorne's claim that "Not only is it false that the past is never datum; it is false that the present is ever presently a datum. . . . All direct awareness is 'memory' . . ." ("The Structure of Givenness," p. 37). (Whitehead's view seems to be different: "Thus the self-enjoyment of an occasion of experience is initiated by an enjoyment of the past as alive in itself and is terminated by an enjoyment of itself [sic] as alive in the future" (AI, 248 f.; cf. p. 270: "The individual process is now feeling its own completion.")) Elsewhere H sometimes argues, "No such ego [sc. momentary self] is ever literally 'conscious of itself'," while at other times he holds "A mere awareness of that same awareness is nonsense" and rejects the view that "a state of awareness can have itself as sole datum" (LP, pp. 122, 227, 229).