There is a line of thought which can be pursued, one which leads to some interesting philosophical problems. That line is as follows.

I sit at my desk and write. It is a familiar desk of sturdy wood and from all appearances has remained the same throughout the years I have owned it. Common sense, or at least the kind of common sense which arises from simple empirical observation, tells me that the desk is comprised of matter which is static and inert, and which will passively remain unchanged until some active formal determination is imposed upon it. We may refer to this as Aristotelian common sense.¹ Yet on other grounds it is clear to me that the desk is in no way static, since the "material" atoms of which it is composed are in a state of ceaseless flux. So there is another kind of common sense which tells me that the desk, and indeed all "material" objects, are to be understood as energy in motion. We may refer to this as Heraclitean common sense.

1. Of course we must bear in mind that common sense is itself neither intuitive nor primitive, but always comes as a by-product of what was already appreciated at cognitive levels. In other words, it is our rational belief structure which determines the kinds of common sense interpretations we subsequently bring to bear.
on our experience of objects. Changes in the belief structure will entail corresponding alterations at a common sense level.

All my percepts of objects in the world, no less than my conceptual reflections upon them, are conditioned by the knowledge that permanence of an Aristotelian sort is nowhere found within the natural order. Therefore, whenever I think of objects I think of them as events enduring through time.

Of course not everyone will think of objects in this manner. I do so because I have come to view process as an interpretive principle of widest scope, that is to say, as a categorical concept. I shall argue from a conventionalist stance, though non-skeptically, that each person is endowed with a set of categories and, further, that these categories serve as the preconceptual regulative principles whereby the data of experience is organized into patterns of intelligible meaning. Process is a concept of this sort.

Categorical concepts are demonstrated through transcendental arguments. Such a proof begins with some concept which we have, a concept having a region of experience as its objective reference, and proceeds through a series of hypothetical inferences to the conclusion that some a priori precondition, or set of preconditions, must be posited in order to account for the concept with which we began. Such preconditions are prior to experience in the sense that they serve as the regulative conventions, the categorical criteria,
we employ in order to organize cognitively the raw material of experience. Kant's Transcendental Deduction is no doubt the most celebrated example of this kind of reasoning.

The point I wish to make here is simply that we cannot talk in any thorough way about our percepts and concepts unless at the same time we are prepared to examine the preconditions which render them possible.

Beginning with percepts, I notice that under present conditions the desk appears to me as brown. It will not, of course, appear to my dog as brown, but as some shade of what I might see as grey. So any statement of the form "The desk is brown" is going to be true from some (human) point of view, but false from some other (canine) perspective. Hence in saying "The desk is brown" I am not talking so much about an object in the world as about those factors in me which cause me to have the appearance of brown. Those factors, namely the physical structure of the human eye, must be operative prior to my being appeared to brownly; they are not present in quite the same manner in the dog, and he is therefore appeared to otherwise. But any visual percept which any organism has will in part be made possible by factors occurring within that organism prior to experience.

Change the structure of the perceiving organ, and corresponding changes in the percept can be predicted. So while objective
properties of the desk do furnish part of the cause of my being appeared to brownly, we cannot neglect the subjective physical makeup of the perceiver, since factors there will condition the form which the percept finally assumes.

Similarly, in the case of concepts, to ask why I think of the desk in the manner I do entails also the question of those (categorical) factors within me which serve as preconditions for the formation of concepts of the kind I have. Since process is included within my categorical scheme I therefore think of the desk as a dynamical event persisting through time.

Now for a process-oriented mentality it is the event which constitutes the basic unit of experience. Events are episodic in character, having more or less identifiable beginnings and endings in time, with a culmination phase in between. So in thinking of my desk I conceive that through the coherence of a manifold of causal factors it emerged into being, is now persisting through an extended period of existence constituting its culmination phase, and that it one day no longer will be.

No strict or logically static concept of identity is applicable to it, since sufficient magnification would reveal it to be in a state of continual molecular interchange with its environmental region, such that at any arbitrarily selected "moment" the set of molecules comprising it would not be exactly the same set which
comprised it at any previous moment chosen from its history. Also the constituent molecules and atoms within it, at our arbitrary "moment", stand in different internal relations to each other than they have ever stood before.

Just as the photograph of a river systematically misrepresents the flowing reality which is the river, so the notion of strict identity, when applied to the desk, misrepresents the temporally episodic event which is the desk. This consideration holds for physical objects in general, provided one thinks of them under the regulative convention imposed by the category of process. It is therefore commonsensical, in a Heraclitean sense, to conceive of objects in this way.

One can easily detect Kantian presuppositions throughout this line of thought, but with this important difference. In the Transcendental Deduction Kant argued, ingeniously, that a categorical apparatus of some sort or other must be presupposed in order to account for the possibility of empirical concepts of the kind we have. In the Metaphysical Deduction he sought, not quite so convincingly, to show that the twelve individual categories he actually deduced are, once and for all time, the only categories humans can be conceived to have.

But here, as many a critic has shown, he went too far. Looking only at the three categories of Relation, for instance, one might
argue that a very strong case can be made for including, as Kant did, Causality and Community. However, it is no longer reasonable to include Substance in this list. It seemed to Kant that whenever we think of an empirical object, whatever its unknowable transcendental constitution might be, we think of it as a material substance persisting through time; moreover we conceive its permanent material composition in Aristotelian terms—static, inert, passive.

But we now know, in the light of later scientific discoveries, that in this view of matter Kant was surely wrong. The brown desk I see before me now is conceived not as a static substance but as a dynamical event; accordingly I think of it not in terms of what it is, since it has no univocal identity, but in terms of the totality of its episodic history. In short I view it under the condition of process, where process has replaced substance in the categorical scheme.

I propose the following transcendental argument as a demonstration of the operation of process as a categorical concept.

**PREMISE:** In viewing the desk I find that I simply do not conceive it in materially static terms, and that my common sense interpretation of it is therefore Heraclitean and not Aristotelian.

**PREMISE:** The above premise implies that, since the Aristotelian theory of static matter is statable without contradiction, I must have been influenced
by other considerations; these other considerations, on reflection, consist of my having at a rational level accepted the kinds of scientific evidence which have in turn molded my common sense interpretations along Heraclitean lines.

PREMISE: My common sense having been so molded, it follows that literally my first impression of the desk was a non-static impression.

PREMISE: From this it is inferred that a non-static regulative principle must have been conceptually operative within me prior to my first impression of the desk.

PREMISE: It is therefore evident that I have at some past time integrated the concept of process, as that non-static regulative principle, into my categorical scheme.

CONCLUSION: Process thus can be viewed as an a priori categorical precondition regulating appearances of the kind I have, such that my initial common sense interpretation of any material object, including the desk, will be that it is dynamical and not a static Aristotelian substance.

The line of thought I have been pursuing leads to several difficulties. Chief among them, perhaps, is the consideration that the concept of process in the above proof is immediately seen to be an inductive generalization, inasmuch as in the second premise it is acknowledged that my Heraclitean common sense is conditioned by the acceptance of scientific data.

From this it would seem to follow that the concept of process cannot be pure, that is to say categorically a priori, but rather is an empirical concept derived from experience. Therefore, a
critic might point out, the proof not only fails to accomplish its intended purpose but in fact reaches a conclusion inimical to that purpose.

This objection, admittedly a serious one, can best be countered by the observation that a category, by virtue of its a priori nature, can in principle never serve as an object of thought. Any concept we have of it presupposes that it has already been employed in its role as pure precondition of that concept. Hence no information inductively derived from experience could ever conceivably cause any changes in the pure regulative principles which themselves determine the formal boundaries of our concept of that information.

Yet something must be changing, otherwise we would never be able to interpret reality differently as a result of new insights furnished by, e.g., the sciences. The changes must therefore occur in the manner in which a category is applied to experience, that is to say, in its schematization.

Kant recognized that there is one category (Substance) by virtue of which we think, of a thing, that it has certain properties. By itself, however, the category is completely generalized: "Substance bearing accidents". It must be applied to some possible object of awareness before a judgment, or thought, can be entertained. Therefore some intermediate is required, a tertium quid whereby on the one hand the possibility of an experience, and
on the other the category, can be linked. Hence the need for a schema for each category.

Consider again the locution "The desk is brown". In the absence of a schematic application the most I could know or say from the category taken alone is that "Something (in general) bears accidents (in general)". But I want to say more than this. I want to say that this desk in particular is brown, and this can be said only when the pure concept of substance is schematized.

Now Kant, from an Aristotelian commonsense point of view, thought the schema of substance to be "permanence of the real through time" (Critique of Pure Reason B-183). This is my point of departure from Kant: I abandon the notion of permanence, and instead substitute a Heraclitean schema. The category is no longer thought of as substance, but as process, and through the schematic application of that category to possible objects of awareness I find I now think of them as events having accidental properties and persisting episodically through time.

In summary, it can now be seen that for "substance", "thing", and "permanence of the real through time" I have substituted, respectively, "process", "event", and "persistence of the episodic through time". These substitutions are implicit in the transcendental proof I offered earlier, and must be borne in mind in any critical analysis of that argument.
A second problem area to which my line of thought leads is the question of conventionalism. The critic can charge that the presupposition of a categorical apparatus of any kind whatsoever implies that we never have access to reality as it is, but only to reality as it appears, and that our appearances are nothing more than conventional determinations which could conceivably be quite different if changes were made at the categorical level. Therefore, it is argued, skepticism is inescapable since we can never in principle look past the limits of our categorical conventions to the real world beyond.

There are two seemingly related complaints involved, conventionalism and skepticism. My reply to the former is that it seems to me to be evident that I indeed do not have access to any "real" world behind my appearances. I cannot exceed my limitations. My percepts are conditioned by the structure of the sense organs which I happen to have at this point in the evolutionary history of the species; and concepts of the kinds I have are in their own turn made possible by the categorical scheme. So there are conventional limitations to which all elements of my awareness must conform.

This is not to deny that there is a "real" world beyond, or, to use the Kantian jargon, a transcendental ideality underlying every manifold of experience. Such a world must be presupposed as part of the cause of my being appeared to at all. But the most that
that world can furnish is the material possibility of experience, to which I must bring my sensorium and my set of categorical preconditions as the formal determinants of that experience. Conventionalism is therefore not only a tenable position, but an unavoidable one as well.

It does not follow, however, that we must resign ourselves to skepticism. While it is the case that contingently we are beings of the kind we are, and could therefore be conceived without contradiction to have other kinds of sense organs and a different set of categories, it remains non-contingently true that we are obligated to think of ourselves as possessing, at any arbitrarily selected point in our history, some kind of sensorium and some sort of categorical superstructure. I simply cannot form a concept of what it would be like to be a sensing and knowing human agent and at the same time lack senses that were fashioned in some manner or other and a mind that lacked an identifiable design. Conventionalism does not therefore entail skepticism; on the contrary the two are shown to be incompatible.

There is yet a third difficulty attending my line of reasoning, a problem which grows out of the preceding discussion, namely, why is it the case that not everyone admits process into his or her categorical scheme? The peruser of philosophic journals will readily notice that even in those pages many an author is
presupposing, however implicitly, a universe of substantival "things" and is employing a "thing" oriented logic to analyze the putative relations in that universe.

Generally speaking, philosophers in the empirical tradition, including many language analysts, write in this fashion. But there is a fundamental misconception at work here. The logical calculi presently accepted by philosophers today have evolved as an outgrowth of the Aristotelian syllogistic. Even Whitehead, for all his commitment to the category of process, was tacitly willing to perpetuate this heritage in consenting to co-author the system of Material Implication. However, the logical intuitions underlying syllogistic theory and its later extensions are such that the basic unit of experience is the particular substance, or "thing", and not the event; and these intuitions are, in addition, grounded in the assumption of strict identity, where it is understood that a thing is equal to itself.

But in a universe in flux, where the event is the primal unit of experience and in which an event at a given time is never strictly equal to itself at any subsequent time, the very kind of logic appropriate to the analysis of an Aristotelian conception of reality no longer applies. The weight of the task of future logicians is to pioneer in the discovery of new kinds of logic adequate to the challenge of symbolizing fluid relations in a universe in flux. New
formulations of identity will emerge, and the concept of "thing" will become an historical curiosity.

So why then do so many contemporary thinkers persist in the furthering of a tradition which has been rendered so largely obsolete by the findings of modern physics? No doubt part of the answer lies in the cumulative weight of the centuries of empiricist dominance in Anglo-American philosophy. Surely no casual shrug will rid us of this legacy. But a second, and to my mind more significant, part of the answer lies in the fact that the very kind of reality I judge the physicists to be describing is a kind that many philosophers evidently believe not to exist. I hear the physicists saying that nature is dynamical energy in ceaseless and protean emergence in which the permanent and the static are nowhere to be found. Thus the elevation of process to the categorical level seems unanswerable.

To my colleagues who would disagree I can only say: you apparently do not believe that the consensus of these physicists provides an accurate description of reality; our dispute is therefore over what we will respectively allow to count as admissible evidence in our conceptual ordering of experience. Since I do accept their findings, and do concede the ultimacy of the category of process, my common sense interpretations of objects as they appear must therefore differ from your own.
To raise one philosophical problem is to be drawn eventually to all philosophical problems, so the procedure must be arrested somewhere. There is, however, one last issue on which I wish to comment. There is a natural yearning shared by many philosophers to have the rational process be some one thing, univocally inherent in one and the same manner in everyone, though varying of course in degree from person to person. I rather suspect that this is a mistaken desire. Reason seems to be no one thing, but many, depending on the kind of ontic commitment the individual makes with regard to what he or she will allow to count as real within the conceptual scheme. The very admission, for instance, of a categorical apparatus is the sort of fork in the road at which reasonable people part company.

Most philosophers have little if anything in the way of a Kantian bias. It is similarly apparent that the majority lacks confidence in process theory. So I find myself making two rather fundamental commitments that are not everywhere made. This is interesting because these commitments exert such a compelling influence over what I take the basic unit of experience to be, and they play a decisive role in determining how I relate my concepts one to another. A person not sharing these inclinations will posit something other than the event as the basic experiential unit, and his conceptual scheme will as a result differ structurally from my
own.