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ORGANIC OR ORGIASTIC METAPHYSICS?

**REFLECTIONS ON WHITEHEAD'S RECEPTION IN CONTEMPORARY
POSTSTRUCTURALISM**

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Introduction: Philosophy as Event of Becoming and Perishing

Whitehead begins *Process and Reality* with a reflection on the intention, method, and character of his endeavor to critically situate his metaphysical speculation within the history of philosophy. He analyzes his own thought within the context of philosophies with the same character he claims to be at the heart of his philosophical endeavor: that it is an event in a nexus of thought experiments of gaining insight into the permanent character of the universe. Ironically, the only thing to be permanent in Whitehead's universe is that it is fluent, a nexus of events. As for the universe, so for philosophy: Whitehead's "imaginative generalization" (PR 5) is caught in the paradox of finding structures in a world of fundamental creativeness and, hence, of finding structures that express *only* this fundamental creativeness (cf. PR 7).

In fact, this paradox names the critical potential by which Whitehead deconstructs the history of philosophy as either not allowing or not having gone far enough in reversing any paradigm of thought that avoids or even suppresses this fundamental creativeness of the universe. As a most honest implication, he situates his own thought as a mode of participation in the incongruence of any such endeavor: its finiteness and virtual infinity of incompleteness; its always imperfect achievements and eventual deconstruction; its unavoidable determination by the philosophical past of conceptualization and its necessary shortcomings over against its vision. These are the criteria Whitehead uses to characterize the event-nexus of imagination in the philosophical canon.

First, because all philosophies (including his own) "suffer from inconsistency and incoherence" (PR 6), that is, they must still overcome the implicit structuring of their thought by abstractive dualisms, "every philosophy will suffer a deposition" (PR 7). As for any other philosophy, deposition always attacks the implicit desire to use a philosophy as that means for Whitehead's work that we should never attempt "dogmatically to indicate premises which are severally clear, distinct, and certain; and to erect upon those premises a deductive system of

thought” (PR 8) but that we should use their elucidating power as “tentative formulations of ultimate generalities” (PR 8).

Second, within the canon of Western philosophy that Whitehead addresses in *Process and Reality*, the “depositions of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, merely mean that ideas which these men introduced into the philosophic tradition must be construed with limitations, adaptations, and inversions, either unknown to them, or even explicitly repudiated by them” (PR 11).

Third, such limitations appear not primarily through inability but unprecedented novelty, the event of a “new idea [that] introduces a new alternative” in the history of thought such that philosophy “never reverts to its old position after the shock of a great philosopher.” Hence, “we are not less indebted to a thinker when we adopt the alternative which he discarded” (PR 11). But even these new alternatives can function always and only as “metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap” (PR 4).

These criteria will be the regulative ideas of my endeavor to ask these three questions: First, do we see signs of the depositions of Whitehead's philosophy in the light of contemporary philosophies, and if so, which ones? Second, in what way have new philosophies since Whitehead introduced limitations, inversions, unknown novelties, and repudiated alternatives? Third, can these alternatives be used for mutually imaginative leaps if contrasted with Whitehead so that we might even find these novelties as new guiding imaginative generalizations of Whitehead's philosophy and hence, in this sense, its future?

I will limit my considerations to one of the most compelling alternatives in philosophy today, namely, poststructuralism and its surprising interface with Whitehead's philosophy of organism. This explains my title: while Whitehead, for his own philosophical agenda, chose the “organic” paradigm—something, interestingly, even his followers were avoiding by transforming it into a “process” paradigm—the poststructuralists, especially Gilles Deleuze, introduced an “orgiastic” paradigm that, in fact, limits, inverses, and adapts the organic paradigm. My question is whether, and in what sense, such limitations, adaptations, and inversions have led to a deposition of Whitehead's philosophy or even more exciting, in what sense have they led to a new imaginative leap that will reveal something *in* Whitehead, even at the center of his whole

endeavor, that might have not been a viable alternative for the contemporary reception of Whitehead before its impact?

Part I: Deposition in Philosophy

1. Whitehead's Interlude

Whitehead is an odd figure in the history of philosophy. For his whole professional life not known as a professional philosopher but as a physical mathematician in the tradition of Newton before, and Steven Hawkins and Roger Penrose after him, he ventured into the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of science (or scientific epistemology), and, of all imaginative scientific theories relevant in the first two decades of the 20th century, relativity theory. Seeking alternatives was Whitehead's passion: an alternative theory of mathematics—its logical deconstruction in the *Principia Mathematica*; an alternative theory of relativity—a simplification of Einstein's approach; or an alternative epistemology against the “bifurcation of nature”; an alternative theory of physical mathematics—seeking ultimate entities as irreducibly complex.

He gave up on the first alternative, *Principia Mathematica*, for philosophical reasons not only highlighted by Gödel's incompleteness theorem; the second, the search beyond Einstein, he gave up also—it was neither taken seriously in the scientific community besides an early push by Sir Arthur Eddington nor was it ever perceived as a mathematical alternative that would have passed all tests; but first and foremost, I think, because of internal philosophical reasons that Whitehead only later addressed indirectly with his theory of events and nexuses. The third one—his bifurcation-theory—later shifted into that which it had excluded in *Concept of Nature*, a metaphysical theory of events that includes the knower of the known and, hence, was totally transformed later. The fourth one—the search for ultimate unity of matter—became abandoned by, although sublated into, a much more comprehensive theory of a creative universe.

In fact, in a sense Whitehead did not succeed in his efforts as they were visible in his time at Cambridge and London partly because these earlier conceptualizations had shown their limitations in the mathematical, scientific, and philosophical communities, and partly because he transcended the aims he had set for himself such that in the new, widened contexts of his later

thought he began to see the limitations of his earlier endeavors. Nevertheless, when Whitehead, after a life of fragmentary efforts, was offered a post as a professional philosopher at one of the most famed elite schools of the U.S., the paradox of his life must have been that one *would* have expected him to succeed in his mathematical, epistemological, and scientific endeavor to contribute to the discourse in philosophy of sciences as it raged with the positivists. *Instead*, Whitehead began to write metaphysics! What must have been seen as another fragmentary deposition of his own work became, in fact, the triumph of the germination of the lingering intuitions, namely, to formulate a comprehensive cosmology in the tradition and succession of Plato's *Timaeus* and Newton *Scholium*, scientifically sensitive, philosophical in nature, and informed by the wide possibilities of human experiences from aesthetics to logic, from mathematics to theology, from poetry to sociology.

It was, however, this choice of his life—to mediate cosmology through a speculative metaphysics—that again defeated his success in philosophy. Not analytic enough for the English-style analytic metaphysics, not pragmatic enough for the American-style speculative thought of James and Dewey, criticizing modern philosophy from Hume to Kant for all the wrong reasons, negating Hegel and Nietzsche, which were considered unavoidable, mating with obscure philosophies such as that of Bergson and Alexander—all that, and more, made Whitehead a lost case, a dead end in philosophy; intelligent, sharp, but dinosaur-like, always endangered by mass extinction, actually, being a survivor of such a mass extinction of old style thought patterns. Nobody of stature in mainstream philosophy would have considered Whitehead a viable alternative but maybe more a recurrence of old rationalist modes of thought.

Even more, it became the very irony of Whitehead's legacy that he had an impact everywhere *except* in the fields he was mostly concerned with: relativity theory, mathematics, philosophy of science, and philosophy proper. He succeeded in evolutionary theory, biology, and cultural studies—partly—and he had his most successful after-life career in theology of all matters of concern. Ironically, when Whitehead introduced “God” in his work on philosophy (of science) in *Science of the Modern World*, the whole world of science stopped reading Whitehead. Most ironically, however, although Whitehead despised (Christian) theology as mostly a tragic exploitation of power structures throughout its history, he not only created his masterpiece *Process and Reality* as a lecture series on “natural theology” (back in Scotland in the realm of

Hume) but also was taken seriously almost exclusively by religious thinkers and theologians for the next century to come.

Indeed, his whole life work became a series of events of deposition: of self-deposition (or self-transcendence) but also a deposition by the mainstream movements. We *could*, however, *inverse* this view and instead say: he became an untimely thinker, a subversive thinker, or better: a thinker of the inversion of “public” philosophy.

2. *Lost Case?*

In reviewing the “lost case” of Whitehead's philosophy in the context the first half of the 20th century—namely, not becoming part of mainstream philosophical strands—we might, instead of clinging to the perception that its reason was a general disenchantment with Whitehead's contemporariness combined with a kind of stubborn retrospective view of Whitehead's own philosophy, find ourselves in a very different situation, namely, that his interlude might indicate an untimely, subversive character of his philosophy that only demonstrates Whitehead's own analysis of the tragedy of novelty in *Adventures of Ideas*.

The intermingling of Beauty and Evil arises from the conjoint operation of three metaphysical principles: —(1) That all actualization is finite; (2) That finitude involves the exclusion of alternative possibility; (3) That mental functioning introduces into realization subjective forms conformal to relevant alternatives excluded from the completeness of physical realization. (AI 259)

Indeed, we can understand how Whitehead's philosophy got lost among the rising philosophies of his time that which, in fact, excluded the alternative his thoughts presented by being pre-occupied with their own finiteness so as to become unable to sense the novelty in Whitehead's thinking. Hence, instead of becoming able to connect with them, they excluded its subversion from realization.

The rising Continental movements of phenomenology and existentialism were happening at the same time. Hartman, Husserl, and Heidegger taught at the same time as Whitehead was leaving for Harvard. Heidegger's most influential *Being and Time* was published at the same time

Whitehead gave his Gifford lectures 1927. The Viennese Positivists, especially Carnap, lost interest in Whitehead after 1924, obviously because of Whitehead metaphysical inclinations. Wittgenstein, himself a student of Whitehead's colleague Russell, changed the philosophical world with yet another novelty, right after Whitehead left for the “other” Cambridge, which hindered any perception of Whitehead in the English speaking world way into the 50s. The lingering “linguistic turn” and the imperialism of analytic philosophy in the English speaking West as well as the combination of post-Hegelian, phenomenological, and varieties of Marxist philosophy, on the Continental half of the philosophical empire made it almost impossible for Whitehead to be recognized at all.

Conversely, we find, of course, also reasons for such a mutual blindness and insensitivity in Whitehead's work. While Hartshorne, who became Whitehead's assistant at Harvard in 1924, had studied with Hartmann, Husserl, and Heidegger in Germany, we find little reception of their thought in Whitehead's Harvard lectures and consequent works. Whitehead's disinterest in philosophies after Kant, especially German idealism and Nietzsche—the two motors of Continental philosophy no philosopher of rank could ever and has ever ignored—has immensely limited both Whitehead's understanding of contemporary philosophy at his time and the effectiveness of his own novelty. And although the deep influence of contemporary pragmatist and radical empiricist philosophies *can* be traced in Whitehead's works right to the point of the reappearance in his own terminology, the reverse is not true. Like the phenomenological antipathy to metaphysics, Whitehead's speculative imaginations seemed to defeat the empiricist and pragmatist emphasis of experience such that one would be lead to read Dewey and James, and, if at all, Bergson, instead of Whitehead.

In fact, since there *are* so many subversive connections between Whitehead's metaphysics and these predominantly non-metaphysical philosophies, it can only be the disgust for the whole setup of his philosophical novelty *as* metaphysics and its *seeming* presupposition of unbridled rationalism, wild speculation, and the open reverence for abstractions instead of phenomena that can partly explain this mutual silence. But how, then, do we account for Whitehead's emphasis of metaphysics as empirical endeavor (like the pragmatists), as interpretation (like hermeneutics), as investigation into actuality as decisional processes (like existentialist); as seeking the phenomena of experience (like phenomenology); as adherence to logical coherence (like the analytic

tradition), and as recognition of language and symbolism (like language philosophy)? Well, Whitehead's own subversive differentiation, preferring alternatives and inversions instead of their choices, made such connections problematic: empirical, yes, but also stubbornly speculative (a horror for pragmatists); hermeneutical, yes, but also stubbornly systematic (a horror for Continental philosophy); phenomenological, yes, but also stubbornly consciousness-critical (a horror for Husserl's followers); logically coherent, yes, but only limitedly instrumental to the comprehension of life (a horror for analytic philosophies); in a linguistic turn, yes, but also in stubborn adherence to pre-linguistic and pre-symbolic reality (a horror for almost every philosopher since the 1960s).

Finally, although we find a plethora of internal connections to many of these philosophies rising in the West, *neither* has Whitehead ever followed his own intuition that “the philosophy of organism seems to approximate more to some strains of Indian, or Chinese, thought, than to western Asiatic, or European, thought” insofar as it “makes process ultimate” (PR 7) *nor* have Eastern philosophers, some of which—especially from Kyoto—actually studied with Heidegger and the others, taken much notice of these immense coherences until much later. The advent of Whitehead's philosophy was a lost case, indeed.

3. *The God-Problem*

In Whitehead's case of dismissal, however, we find a grave complication: he dared to reintroduce the concept of “God” into his philosophy! This was to be seen as philosophical suicide. After Hegel's proclamation of the “death of God,” by the very driving force of its dialectic negativity, the center of his philosophy can be understood as *final absorption* of the divine into world immanence; after Nietzsche's inversion of the “death of God” into a critique of slavery under any divinized force that would divide us from the power of *becoming*; and after Marx's inversion of Hegel from an “interpretation” of reality into a materialist activation for a profound change of our human conditions as based on structures of subjection—there was definitely no space for any positive notion of the divine in philosophy that would not have demonstrated an infliction and sustainance of imperialist interests.

Although Western philosophy is wedded with the presence of the concept of God such that it cannot be ignored, the *kind* of “presence” it played in philosophy at Whitehead's time (and this is also true for today) was that of an *illusion* that only manifests the erroneous power-structures we live in, that furthers it, and *must be deconstructed* if we want to address a human world or a world that has regained its own powers of reflection, insight, and the ability to formulate its own aims within a reformation of socially, politically, and culturally livable structures. Hegel's God became immanent; Nietzsche's God became only an expression of slave-strategies, Marx's God was an illusion of desires to change the regime of suppression and its perpetual installation alike.

In Whitehead's contemporary philosophies, “God” was only a symptom of the suffering and the installation of subjugating powers of the “better ones.” Their atheism was not so much “secularism” that only divinized humanity but a symbol of their profound dissociation from suppressive structures encroached in the orthodoxies of religion and their collaborating philosophies and theologies. This analysis was the reason for Heidegger in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* to dismiss “God” as hindering us from really asking the fundamental question of Being and Nothingness; it was the reason that Critical Theory accepted “God” only as an image of restlessness in a world of despair; it was the reason that William James in his *Pluralistic Universe* only accepted a hypothetical and “limited God” as a cross check of the incompleteness of the becoming multiplicity of existence; it was the reason that Dewey gave up on such talk at all and that Francis Bradley dismissed “God” as a religious illusion of moralist enterprises to install an instance of correction in a universe that must remain religiously and morally ambivalent.

If there remained a trace of “God,” it was not the God of religious orthodoxies but a *becoming God* as the very expression of the universe's evolution as in Samuel Alexander, a *Messianic force of the shock* of the history of the victors as in Walter Benjamin, or as *rift of the respect and dignity of “otherness”* in all imperial sameness of power as in Levinas. This divinity, however, was a liberator from illusion, oppression, and sameness; it “acted” *against* rationalistic closures and the installation of power over others; it became *a God of holy imperfection and rebellion against misuse of power* that only hides its self-satisfying interests within a neutral terminology so as to channel desires for liberation into a new subjection.

It is not without irony that Whitehead actually shared these criticisms of religion and the theological misuse of “God” for power interests and that he reintroduced God *critically* along the lines of Alexander, Benjamin, and Levinas. He refused to name power and its legal avatars—“the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover”—God; instead he sought the “suggestion” that “dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love” (PR 343). When he introduced “God” in *Science and the Modern World*, he did so as philosophical *antidote* against any illusion of a closed rationalism that could be used to install omnipotent power. In order to avoid the denial of the reality of becoming (“to deny the reality of actual occasions”) for which God would only function “as a proof of illusion” of becoming, Whitehead's God became a “principle of limitation”—“the limitation for which no reason can be given: for all reason flows from it”—so that God’s “existence is the ultimate irrationality” (AI 178). From it flows a “principle of empiricism” that became Whitehead's novelty: Since it “depends upon the doctrine that there is a principle of concretion which is not discoverable by abstract reason” (AI 178), we cannot know of any world apriori in which what will be only happens in unprecedented novelty—as for the world, so for God!

What became a “lost case” of a philosophy in deposition of which God was only the last indication for its inadequacy and indigestibility, in fact, could only be rediscovered in a new context in which philosophy itself *began to recognize its own profound irrationality* and made it its very subject. This was the appearance of poststructuralism.

Part II: Limitation, Adaptation, Inversion—The Impact of an Alternative

4. Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a phenomenon: its appearance was a true novelty with impacts and reverberates into many areas of thought and practice—from cultural studies to social politics, from psychology to science, from philosophy to theology. It cannot be characterized except as a *multiplicity of thought streams* that have implicated many of the philosophical developments in the later 19th and early 20th centuries: they all were to go through Hegel’s absorbing dialectic, Nietzsche’s liberation of becoming from Being, Marx’s social restructuring, Freud’s discovery of the mechanisms of the subconscious, Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein* in the midst of nothingness,

Sartre's liberation of existence from essence, but especially De Saussure's linguistic turn that, with everything else, invoked a structural analysis of human existence both within and as an expression of pre-subjective patterns of world-creation through which humans live on their surface. This was the birth of structuralism.

Poststructuralism is the overcoming of the structuralist contention, a liberation *from* these structures, that is, it thinks that we are, in fact, *not* living out pre-given structures, except as an implementation of a *multilayered universe of bodily becomings* itself. Poststructuralists retained the radical criticism of power structures as creative of our human world by hiding its origins and they refused to believe in any pre-giveness of any of these structures such that they would not always be themselves in the process of becoming. The situation is complicated and fuzzy: Some thinkers can be assigned to both structuralism and poststructuralism insofar as both of them opposed phenomenology and never sought their unification as suggested by Merleau-Ponty. Poststructuralists remained structuralist insofar as they opposed phenomenology because of its project of subjectivity that was overcome with their objectivist claim of *pre-subjective structures of cultural signification*; and they became *poststructuralists* by deconstructing even these structures as modes of "subjectivity" in their claim of powers of oppression in disguise.

The poststructuralist's interest became *that which cannot be unified*, that which in all unification *is dismissed and excluded*, that which in any exclusion is only as *symptom of the mechanisms of power* that must be deconstructed and inverted so as to liberate the multiplicities of underlying realities—*not* human realities, anymore, but *multiplicities of disturbances that refuse to be incarcerated by any power whatsoever*. From Roland Barthes' linguistic, Claude Levi-Strauss's cultural, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical, Louise Althusser's political structuralism poststructuralist multiplicities emerged such as Michel Serres' philosophy of noise that always escapes any reductionist system; George Bataille's philosophy of transgression and expenditure of that which always escapes any system; Julia Kristeva's pre-symbolic *khora* that escapes Lacan's symbolic structures; Michel Foucault's, analysis of order as a system of madness immersed in the omnipotence of power structures in its confusion with (disinterested) knowledge; Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of any system of unification, especially Hegel's negative dialectic; Lyotard's postmodern condition of the break with any unifying meta-stories into irreplaceable multiplicities; Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's anti-Marxist, anti Capitalist,

and anti-psychoanalyst philosophy of multiplicities; Luce Irigaray's feminist analysis of the female as the excluded, as that which is not One; Jean Baudrillard's disappearance of the world in virtual realities; Judith Butler's post-feminist critique of all-present power-structures; Gayatri Spivak's post-colonial analysis of cultural symbolizations; Slavoj Žižek's Lacanian unburying of the excluded "Real"; Rosi Braidotti's materialist metamorphosis of the Law.

If there is anything to be named of this extremely diverse movement that is kept in common by all of them in this or another way, formulation, or theory, it is their profound criticism of "reality" as regimes of power that place their omnipotent influence on the hidden, pervasive, and poisoning omnipresence of *binaries*. Binaries are self-universalizing and all-pervasive dualisms that create our concepts of reality (and everything in it) by *instilling abstractions with the power over life and death*. Known as "substantialism" or "essentialism," binary structures live from the division of reality into a duality of One and many in which the One is always the controlling upper side—substance, essence, act, form—and the many is the controlled down side, always only being an inherent expression, variation, participation, derivation or deviation of the upper side: Form/matter, Substance/attribute, Man/nature, God/world. Moreover, the upper side *must* control the down side in order to guaranty its "integrity": Law/chaos, Logos/flesh, Mind/body, Reason/desires, Man/women. It is the intention of poststructuralist thought to free us from these binaries or, at least, to reveal their mechanism of colonizing power in order to unravel its inherent inconsistency and the coerciveness that flows from this internal monstrosity.

In naming this poststructuralist procedure "deconstruction," poststructuralism really addresses such *a mode of liberation of the under side*—chaos, flesh, body, desires, women—insofar as it cannot be captured by binaries. It is *not*, as many people erroneously believe, the unsettling of any construction for its own sake or to produce chaos, relativism, and upheaval. On the contrary, "deconstruction" is the *liberation from the closures of constructions insofar as they attempt to become omnipotent, seamless, and continuous; excluding the noise, the other, the poor, and the nonconforming*. Derrida calls this procedure *différance*: it *names* that which before all unification is already always excluded for reasons of guarantying this unification. Moreover, its *positive* endeavor is not destruction but *affirmation* of the underlying, excluded, restricted,

divided, dualistically engaged multiplicity itself. This is what many poststructuralists indicate with the Platonic concept of *khora*. Deleuze calls it “multiplicity.”

5. Gilles Deleuze

Gilles Deleuze is of special interest here. Not only is he one of the most prominent and influential contemporary philosophers besides Derrida; other than many poststructuralists, he remained interested in the endeavor of philosophy proper: his last book, before he died in 1995, has the title *What is Philosophy?* He did not believe in the death of metaphysics—asking the questions of reality and universality. And of all other improbabilities, he committed the “crime” of becoming the most vital source of a fresh, unexpected, and lasting new interest in Whitehead today. Not only did he appreciate the same outsmarted philosophers nobody else would have chosen as a quell of inspiration—among them most prominently Bergson, Hume, Spinoza, Leibniz, widened by Nietzsche, however—he also, liked Whitehead, reconnected with Plato, reverted Kant, and despised Hegel—but, unlike Whitehead, also disputed Heidegger. In fact, he based his whole project on a Whiteheadian insight that, at once, changes the whole perception of Whitehead and situates its hitherto excluded novelty (cf. AI 259) within poststructuralism, that is, the critique of binaries and their inherent power-structures as infesting metaphysics and any knowledge, for that matter. Listen to Deleuze:

I have always felt like an empiricist, or a pluralist. What does this empiricism-pluralism equivalency mean? It derives from two traits Whitehead used to define empiricism: 1) abstraction does not explain but must be explained, and 2) the search is not for an eternal or universal, but for the conditions under which something new is created (*creativity*). (TRM 304)

This Deleuzian perception of Whitehead is immensely important on three accounts: First, it values Whitehead for that which he actually stands for but could often not be perceived: an empiricist and a pluralist, that is, someone who in his metaphysical account took seriously the radical empiricism of Hume and James, namely, that the experience of relationships *is* reality and that that this reality is in a process of becoming; that is, Whitehead initiated one of the most cherished insights of contemporary poststructuralism: that there is no unified reality which is not

itself the *outcome* of a becoming of such relationships and, hence, is not in itself pluralistic. Secondly, Deleuze takes seriously Whitehead's *inversion* of the philosophical project: from the traditional (metaphysical) search for universals as reasons of becoming to becoming as reason for abstraction. If it is in “no way” true that “concrete particular fact can be built up out of universals” then, so Whitehead, we must inversely “explain the emergence of the more abstract things from the more concrete things” (PR 20). Third and most importantly, the paradigm of such an empiricist and pluralist inversion of philosophy is that we are not anymore following the classical “holy grail” of finding the eternal in the becoming world—the Platonic reconstruction of becoming from universals—but that we become witnesses of an entirely new paradigm: the search for the conditions of a *profoundly creative* world.

The consequences of these three alternatives and inversion in philosophy, indeed, amount to such a shock from which Whitehead was prophesizing that philosophy, as it *was*, will never recover. First, as with Whitehead's “principle of empiricism” (SMW 178), Deleuze changes the whole game by inventing an empiricist and pluralist instructed, poststructuralist, “categorical” imperative: “Don't be one or multiple, be multiplicities” (TP 24)! Neither seek the presupposition of a Law-giving One (like Substance, History, Subject, God, Being, Nothingness) or a merely unrelated chaos of plurality but seek *experiential end experimental togetherness as the many folds* of that which is neither one nor unrelated—this is a fair description of Whitehead's category of the ultimate: become one out of many and let yourself be situated within a newly constituted many, increased by you (cf. PR 21).

Second, poststructuralists with and after Deleuze have been sympathetic with Whitehead's “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” such that it not only reverses classical accounts of universality but also uncovers them as power-inflicted structures of oppression. For the “so-called rational philosophers ... abstraction is responsible for explanation, the abstract is realized in the concrete” so that the universal abstractions become invested with suppressive powers of control over the concrete multiplicity. As its propagators “speak of abstractions such as the One, the Whole, the Subject, etc., and seek the processes through they have which these abstractions are embodied in a world made to conform to their requirements,” they have also to hide their underlying power-interest “even if it means experiencing a terrible crisis each time they realize

that rational unity or totality turns into its contrary, or that the subject engenders monsters” (TRM 304).

Third, in a *reversal* of Kant’s transcendental philosophy of rational presuppositions, which only follow these power-installations, Deleuze now asks for a “transcendental empiricism” that holds that the only presupposition for multiplicity is its *becoming* so that the process of experiencing its plurality enacts novelty. Hence, Deleuze correctly, I think, but nevertheless unexpectedly, interprets Whitehead’s categories in *Process and Reality* not as “universal concepts” *explaining* concrete reality but as *transcendental conditions of the possibility of a world of creativeness* that can never, at no point, be captured and controlled by universals invested with the power of explanation, reason, and authority. In this sense, he understood Whitehead's *Process and Reality* as one of the “greatest books in modern philosophy (DR 284-5).

6. *Deposition – again?*

The reception of this deeply engrained novelty of Whitehead's philosophy in the emergence of poststructuralism is just unfolding now, fourteen years after the death of Deleuze. It was to my best knowledge with the 4th *International Whitehead Conference* at Claremont, in 1998, that Catherine Keller and I, independently, began to introduce Deleuze to Whitehead scholars—and we have written on this issue since then, have produced doctoral work on it, and are continuing through publications and conferences to explore this fresh access to Whitehead. Among the first outcomes of this encounter was my book *Process Theology* (2000, in German), and Keller’s collection of related articles in *Process and Difference* (2000), our co-chaired session on “Whitehead and Poststructuralism” at the 6th *International Whitehead Conference* at Salzburg, Austria, in 2006, and my conference with the *Whitehead Research Project* (WRP) “Event and Decision” at Claremont in 2008. Both gatherings have initiated book projects and will soon appear as *Secrets of Becoming: Negotiating Whitehead, Deleuze, and Butler* (Fordham 2010) and *Event and Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze, and Whitehead* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010). These efforts will be crowned when, this December, at the 3rd *International Conference of the WRP* with the title “Becomings, Misplacements, Departures” Judith Butler will discuss Whitehead.

Meanwhile, Deleuzian scholars have also taken up Deleuze's references and have become more versed in their understanding of Whitehead. Notable article, books, and conferences by philosophers like Stephen Shaviro, Jeffrey Bell, James Williams, and Keith Robinson have infiltrated poststructuralist studies. Instrumental was the conference "Deleuze, Whitehead and the Transformation of Metaphysics," at Brussels in 2005, co-hosted by Andre Coots and Keith Robinson and published in the proceedings of the Belgian Academy of Sciences and the Arts and now republished widely accessible by Robinson under the title *Deleuze, Whitehead and Bergson* (Palgrave, 2009), which connected many Deleuze and Whitehead scholars still active: Stephen Meyer, James Williams, Pierfrancesco Basile, Michael Halewood, Didier Debaise, Isabelle Stengers—many of them now research or board members of the WRP.

Nevertheless, with notable exceptions such a new history of reception can easily again degenerate into a grave for the deposition of Whitehead in favor of the novelty of Deleuze. Taking into account and graciously overlooking the enthusiasm for the shock with which poststructuralism bars the reversion of philosophy to its former business, this excitement is easily not only dwarfing Whitehead's contribution to this very event of poststructuralism but also reverting Deleuze's own recovery of Whitehead's "alternatives" hitherto "excluded from the completeness of physical realization" (AI 259). I briefly mention three of these potential depositions of Whitehead: Robison, in my upcoming edition *Beyond Metaphysics? Conversations on Whitehead's Late Thought* (Contemporary Whitehead Series, 2010), will make the case that Whitehead, contrary to Deleuze's favoring of *univocity* of being, remained bound to the analogy of Being. While the former one undercuts all hierarchical ontologies of "eminent reality" of abstractions, the latter remains poisoned with a chain of hierarchical structures of Being—something poststructuralism deeply despises. James Williams, in his book *Encounters and Influences* (Clinamen Press, 2005) connects Whitehead with the old style understanding of "possibilities" as realized in actualities, which, he thinks, was overcome in Deleuze's account of "virtualities" as ideal realities in their own right that do not become realized—like Platonic Ideas—but only differentiate actuality. Jeffrey Bell in his book *Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), again, makes a case for Whitehead's understanding of an open universe as limited by his introduction of God as ordering activity by which the universe is

hindered to slip into pure chaos over against Deleuze's *radically* open multiverse, which does not need "God" to achieve an open process of ever-new intensity.

In light of Deleuze's own discovery of the novel alternative that Whitehead provided for philosophy, however, we might reverse the question of how Deleuze has overcome Whitehead but instead ask in what sense Deleuze's reevaluation of Whitehead situates Whitehead right *in* the event of the poststructuralist alternative such that the *contrast* of Whitehead's and Deleuze's untimely inversions *together* might initiate a "mutual appeal for the leap of imagination" (PR 4) necessary to sense the novel event of philosophy today to which they both have, in their difference and as a multiplicity of approaches, tried to direct our perception.

Part III: A Mutual Appeal of Imagination

7. The Organic and the Orgiastic

There is a perception of Whitehead's philosophy that Deleuze has directed us *against*—interestingly it is connected to the three aspects with which Deleuzians would think of Whitehead as overcome by Deleuze. This perception would presuppose that Whitehead's organic philosophy is still a late successor of Plato, geared towards the classical game of restricting chaos and becoming through Platonic Ideas—in Whitehead's case through eternal objects and its custodian, "God"—by introducing an order of universal concepts that would be potent enough to capture universal reasons much in the sense of the rationalist monsters Deleuze has singled out—Subject, Being, God, History (cf. TRM 304). In fact, if we follow the most repeated description of Whitehead's philosophical aim, namely, to build "a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted" (PR 3) we can hardly resist this impression—and many Whiteheadians, although aware of the restrictions such a claim has in Whitehead—that it is tentative, need progress, and is always incomplete—have done little to revert the impression that Whitehead builds the most complete and accurate system of metaphysical universals capturing the reality of our and, in fact, every possible world.

We must remain aware, however, that Deleuze did *not* think of Whitehead this way! He did not think that Whitehead's "organic" thought resembles more Leibniz's preestablished harmony that, although pluralistic, is holographic, functioning because of God's presupposed

exclusion of incompatible worlds and our permanent refutation of such other possible worlds as unrealizable, actually impossible, evil, or undesirable. Instead, he thought of Whitehead to have finally *broken* this spell of a philosophy of universalization of abstractions installed with the power of subjection such that “bifurcations, divergences, impossibilities, and discord belong to the same motley world that can no longer be included in expressive units”—Being, Subject, God, Nothingness—but is “only made or undone according to prehensive units” *within* this world, pressing it open to ever new multiplicities of complication. Deleuze chose even a new concept—taken from James Joyce—to recognize this new, univocal multiverse of Whitehead, namely, “Chaosmos.” In naming its novelty, creativeness, and multiplicity (as not presupposing any unity), in the chaosmos “divergent series are endlessly tracing bifurcating paths.” Even more surprisingly for a philosopher who is very critical of any false unification under abstract universalization such as “God,” Deleuze recognizes that in Whitehead’s chaosmos even “God desists from being a Being who compares worlds and chooses the richest compossible” because Godself “becomes Process, a process that at once affirms impossibilities and passes through them” (TF 81).

Over against the “organic” paradigm of a half open universe, Deleuze finds in Whitehead his own poststructuralist world of “orgiastic” openness: the “play of the world has changed in a unique way, because now it has become the play that diverges” (TF 81). Here, philosophy as well as the chaosmos it understands and activates becomes *orgiastic* (cf. DR 42). Organic structures *inhibit* openness by transforming actuality into representative, repeated, or varied participations within a general systematic structure, which by its common form or the judgment of God grants its own variation only as derivation or as deviation (cf. TP 158). They always install a highest principle of identity as creator of their always already controlled multiplicity (cf. AO 13). An orgiastic “system,” on the other hand, reintroduces what Deleuze calls the “body without organs,” the orgiastic body “that God has stolen from us in order to palm off an organized body without which his judgment could not be exercised.” Instead of being drained of its *immanent* life, the orgiastic body “is an effective, intensive, anarchist body that consists solely of poles, zones, thresholds, and gradients” (E 131). For Deleuze, the rediscovery of orgiastic openness is the “greatest effort of philosophy” (DR 262) because “it discovers the infinite in itself,” that is, “it

discovers in itself the limits of the organized; tumult, restlessness and passion underneath apparent calm” (DR 42).

In Deleuze’s reading of Whitehead, *this is* what Whitehead has discovered: the radical openness of a chaosmos in which, as stated by the category of the ultimate, creativeness is not only *a* principle of novelty *within* an otherwise organically closed universe but the expression of *the* very ultimacy of Process over against any Fact, that is, completion (cf. PR 7). This radical openness transforms any cosmic, abstract, universal, or divine structures into *appetitions for intensity*, which are not executions of any pre-given (divine) Law. In Whitehead, it appears with his version of the orgiastic body, namely, in his daring concept of the “entirely living nexus” (PR 103-7), that is, the chaotic overflow of organic structures such that it cannot be comprised by any “society,” order, Law, or system but only “answers to the notion of ‘chaos’” (PR 72). Here, Whitehead’s like Deleuze’s *erotic of intensity* become the new “aim” of the chaosmos—unattainable, always in flux, never closed, always adventurous as it is tragic, a total affirmation of a world without any abstract ground and within an infinite process of becoming.

8. *The Metaphysical Paradox*

In my own work over the last decade, I have tried to uncover the traces of this *other*, this *orgiastic* Whitehead in sourcing it at the very center of his metaphysical motivation and the very constitution of its metaphysical structure itself. What I discovered—with the eyes of Deleuze—was nothing short of a philosophical shock that, once uncovered, cannot revert us back to thought before its impact, an impact that, indeed, led me to recognize Whitehead’s silent revolution in philosophy in midst of the clamor of the marketplace of contemporary philosophies, which were too preoccupied with their own stature in order to listen to this gentile voice amongst themselves, as what it is: a difference that “introduces a new alternative” of which everything else, and in this case, even Whitehead’s own philosophy, must be viewed under the premise of “limitations, adaptations, and inversions, either unknown to them, or even explicitly repudiated by them” (PR 11)—and him.

In a series of articles and books, I have explored this “philosophical shock” under the heading of the “metaphysical paradox” in Whitehead. It appears throughout his whole work,

again and again, as the complex impossibility of two approaches to metaphysics: First, as systematic endeavor to create a universal system of thought that can, indeed, express the All of our experiences. This is the “organic” side of Whitehead's thought: the desire for a universal structure of understanding. Although it is always augmented by a practical limitation of ability (rationality), instruments (language), and constructs (the locality of its particular starting points), it *is* a desire for universality, rationality, and the progress of approximation towards this aim. However, there is this other side of Whitehead's desire that, in so proceeding, is *in principle* and *systematically* hindering the very aims set out before.

This “other side” of Whitehead’s thought can be grasped with these counter-flowing aspects of synthesis: that universality itself is *abstract*, internally itself a *multiplicity* of eternal objects, which are only possibilities *for* actualization; that rationality is itself *limited* by empirical novelty; that if creativeness is ultimate, no abstract universality can be governing the process of becoming; that the very transcendental presupposition of novelty undermines any goal of universal knowledge; that even under Whitehead's own presuppositions of “formative elements” as underlying any universe or cosmic epoch, virtually everything could follow different structures: time, space, extension, any kind of laws; that even these “formative elements” are only multiplicities without any presupposed unity or abstract order: God is a multiplicity in becoming; eternal objects are a multiplicity without any unity on their own; creativity is the very statement of formless creativeness and novelty.

Corresponding with Deleuze’s differentiation between the organic and the orgiastic, this metaphysical paradox can be formulated in this systematic manner: While in organic thinking any event is only an actual repetition of a generality inherent in every experience, that is, it merely reifies a general scheme, in orgiastic thinking every event is a singularity (or novel synthesis of becomings) for which these metaphysical rationalizations are always mere abstractions (PR 20, 230; SMW 30, 248). In other words: while the first option views the cosmos as series of *individuals* that are subject to a *general law*, the second views them as *singularities* which are only by themselves, without determination by any general abstraction, *universal* (DR 70-128). Whitehead can formulate this same paradox on all levels of his philosophy, most obviously in his ontology: Any event must repeat itself (or be repeated in its singularity) in any other event such that universals do not transport its universality (this is Whitehead's “reformed subjectivist

principle”); eternal objects, on the other hand, are only abstractions from this process of repetition or luring appetitions into new actualizations for which they are *not* the reason (this is Whitehead's “ontological principle”).

On the level of philosophical meta-theory, Whitehead formulates this paradox such that it implies the very clash of metaphors that might initiate the leap of imagination: On the one hand, metaphysics “seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensable to the analysis of everything that happens” (RM 84n1); on the other hand, we must mistrust such systems because *per se* they repeat the “defect” of our mind to seek in any “metaphysical system” only “a neat little system of thought, which thereby over-simplifies its expression of the world” (RM 50). In this sense, I think, we must read Whitehead's metaphysics *as this very metaphysical paradox*, that is, the paradox *as the very metaphysical situation* in which, and *only* in which, we *really* seek the transcendental conditions of an open chaosmos.

This is Whitehead's “philosophical shock”: that we cannot give up seeking universals—be they substance or event, Being or creativity, order or difference, the One or multiplicity—but that all the difference Whitehead's metaphysics makes is that such universals are only abstractions from a process of becoming in which they play *only* their role as desires for novelty instead of oppressive power. Hence, we must *always deconstruct* their very claims of universality as abstractions *from* singularities of becoming, while these singularities inscribe concreteness into universality so as to make universals only lures for unprecedented novelty to come instead of orders to fulfill. Whitehead's metaphysics, then, is a *series of deconstructions of metaphysical claims*, their limitation, adaptation, and inversion—even against his own reductionisms, simplifications, and complicities—for an open, free, and liberated universe of multiplicities in the desire for becoming intensities of life, love, and peace.

9. Multiplicity

It is this *shock of multiplicity* in Whitehead's thought that makes him a veritable forbearer of poststructuralist sensibilities: the deconstruction of binary structures instead of a reverence of controlling mechanisms; the power analysis of the substantialization of abstractions as grounds of existence and knowledge; the liberating capacity of differentiation, univocity, and complexity

instead of seeking refuge in unification, the analogy of the chain of being, and simplification; the desire for differentiation, complexification, and anti-hierarchical multiplicities of becoming instead of seeking security in any kind of escape strategies into initial or underlying or final permanence. In fact, what connects Whitehead not only to Western poststructuralism but the philosophical traditions of the East is this *profound trust in impermanence*.

Nothing underlies multiplicity except multiplicity! Of course, multiplicity is not a mere crystalline, infinite inclusion of parts in parts and wholes in wholes—like a mere fractal—since it does not presuppose any unity. On the contrary, multiplicity is a process of differentiation of differentiations in which novelty always only expects the unprecedented to happen. Multiplicity must be viewed as a process of folding, unfolding, and enfolding.

Differences abide: While Whitehead's metaphors were mostly oriented toward *temporal* metaphors of creative becoming—conrescence and transition of disjunctive multiplicities into novel constellations of disjunctive multiplicities—Deleuze's metaphors were more of *spatial* nature—dimensions of differentiation, lines of flight and connections in between. We find crossings in Whitehead's theory of extension in chapter four of *Process and Reality* and Deleuze's theory of the event in chapter six of *The Fold*. But while Whitehead seems to have been more geared towards *temporal discontinuity* or the *becoming of continuity*, Deleuze was more oriented towards the *continuity of the process of differentiation* within ever new constituted *planes of immanence*. While Whitehead interprets the question of the “unity” of multiplicity mostly from his understanding of conrescence as contrastive synthesis of relations, Deleuze views the “unity” of events as “infinite speed” with which their togetherness is penetrated.

Nevertheless, both philosophers formulate multiplicity as an infinite process of differentiation, complexification, and intensification on the basis of a *new understanding of unity* that in radical form abstains from binary power plays. They both find multiplicity as articulated by a unity that is the *radical immanence* of these processes of differentiation, complexification, and intensification within a place of emptiness *in which* they can become nothing but such differentiations, complexifications, and intensifications, that is, without any theft of multiplicity. Deleuze speaks of the multiple planes of immanence in which these processes hold together consistently; Whitehead speaks of their mutual immanence. It is interesting that both philosophers refer to Plato's *khora*—much like Derrida and, again in connection to Kyoto, Kitaro

Nishida does in his *Logic of the Place (basho)*. In fact, in Whitehead, *khora* is the most profound “characteristic” of multiplicity, namely, that it has *no* characteristic—neither temporal nor extensional—except this mutuality of immanence.

The general common function exhibited by *any* group of actual occasions is that of *mutual immanence*. . . . If the group be considered merely in respect to this basic property of mutual immanence, however otherwise lacking in common relevance, then—conceived as exemplifying this general connectedness—the group is termed a *Nexus*. Thus the term Nexus does not presuppose any special type of order, nor does it presuppose any order at all pervading its members other than the general metaphysical obligation of mutual immanence. (AI 201;

It is this chaosmic nexus in which multiplicities of any kind can become such that they cannot ever be captured by any binary abstraction or overarching power—and be it that of a “divine,” which for Whitehead's view of multiplicity literally disappears in this binary function into the *immanent self-creativity of becoming* within the place of emptiness itself (cf. AI 236). Here, we can repeat for Whitehead what Deleuze had reserved for Spinoza, that he is “the infinite becoming-philosopher”; that “he showed, drew up, and thought the ‘best’ plane of immanence—that is, the purest, the one that does not itself hand over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions” (WP 60).

If there remains a difference between *this* Whitehead and poststructuralism that still awaits a mutual leap of imagination it is this: that Whitehead thought that this immanence is not only filled with the ideal of the self-creative powers of liberated multiplicity but, even more, that its aesthetics of intensities generates an *ethics of love and peace* that always *overflows* the powers of multiplicities to become mutually immanent, or better: that this overflow that cannot be addressed in terms of “power” at all—neither in form of the theft of multiplicity by occupation of the forces of colonizing unification nor in form of the liberation of the immanent forces of these multiplicities in its differentiations themselves. Whitehead calls this mystery of multiplicity “Harmony of Harmonies” (AI 296). In fact, it is *this* impulse of trust *in* multiplicity that, within its tragic creativeness produced by its obstructive and liberating powers alike, *radically affirms the All of becoming* such that it motivates us to act *on behalf* and always *in favor of* the

affirmation the All of multiplicities of becoming with a sentiment for compassionate love and a sense of peace. May it be the last illusion that divides Whitehead from poststructuralism, *maybe* it is something else: the last resort of resistance against any universalization installed with power—even that of multiplicity.
