

## *Immanence and Incompleteness: Whitehead's Late Metaphysics*

Roland Faber

Claremont, December 2008

In *Religion in the Making*, Whitehead sets the stage for an interesting paradox that runs through his whole philosophical work. On the one hand, he defines metaphysics as clearly and succinctly as possible, namely as “the science which seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensable to the analysis of everything that happens” (RM 84n1).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he warns us to *mistrust* metaphysics because of the “defect of a[ny] metaphysical system that is the very fact that it is a neat little system of thought, which thereby over-simplifies its expression of the world” (RM 50).<sup>2</sup> It is the explication of this *paradox* of metaphysics as its very “metaphysical” *situation* that will be the leading “idea” of my analysis of Whitehead's late thought. I think that his “late” thought can be defined as a series of ways to engage this paradox, which thereby *remains* a paradox that Whitehead not only never solves but that appears to be the sort of problem that *cannot* be solved, and reveals itself only as a *series* of deconstructions of metaphysical claims.

As a further clarification, I do not believe that Whitehead, in doing so, ever gave up *metaphysical* claims or metaphysics as such, for that matter, but that he was well aware of the fragility of any such claim and that for him the *status* of metaphysical claims are of as much importance as the content of the claims. Other than analytic philosophy would proceed, however, he never *justifies* the claims through logic or linguistics but *deconstructs* their status as a paradoxical series of contrasts to the very point where they become the expressions of a *limit*, a

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for Its Contemporary Relevance* (Albany: SUNY, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “God in the Making. Religious Experience and Cosmology in Whitehead's *Religion in the Making* in Theological Perspective” in M Weber & S. Rouvillois, ed., *L'expérience de Dieu: Lectures de Religion in the Making d'Alfred N. Whitehead. Aletheia* (Janvier: Ecole Saint-Jean, 2005), 179-200.

logic and language of limit, where logic and language themselves *dissolve*—and are *born* at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

It goes without saying that I don't believe that Whitehead invented this "method" only in his works after *Process and Reality*; on the contrary, if one looks closely enough, everything is already right there, sometimes right *under the surface* of the obvious agenda of the construction of a metaphysics as a "coherent, logical and necessary system" (PR 3).<sup>4</sup> However, against any claim that the works after *Process and Reality*, which we could tentatively call Whitehead's "late" works, are just recombinations and popularized versions of his "mature" work, or examples of a declining mind hanging on to main ideas by way of sweeping simplification, I would like to offer the thesis that these "late" works between *Symbolism* and the last articles from 1941 are a *series of new attempts to articulate* the main paradox of what Whitehead understood as metaphysics.<sup>5</sup>

In a sense, I tend to think that this is the true meaning of what, for Whitehead, lays *beyond* metaphysics or that this "beyond" is precisely the articulation of its paradoxical nature that indicates that we can *never* overcome metaphysical claims in seeking the generality of ideas but that we are, at the same time, already *always beyond* its "nature" to formulate the general as such.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, I understand Gilles Deleuze's affinity to Whitehead not as a poststructuralist misinterpretation of Whitehead's intention but as a true fulfillment of the deeper status of his

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. Faber, "'O bitches of impossibility'! – Programmatic Dysfunction in the Chaosmos of Deleuze and Whitehead," in K. Robinson, ed., *Deleuze, Whitehead, Bergson: Rhizomatic Connections* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> I. Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1958), part I.

<sup>5</sup> Much work was done on the early development of Whitehead up to the "mature" metaphysics; cf. L. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics 1925-1929* (Albany, 1984); V. Lowe, "The Development of Whitehead's Philosophy," in P. A. Schilpp, *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (La Salle, 1991), 15-124; and the "final phase" of Whitehead's metaphysics of multidimensionality and relativity in PR: cf. M. Welker, "A. N. Whitehead: relativistische Kosmologie," in J. Speck, ed., *Grundprobleme der großen Philosophen. Philosophie der Gegenwart. I.* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Göttingen, 1985), 269-312. The later work appears only as "application" of this metaphysics; cf. A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead and His Philosophy* (Lanham, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. Faber, "Whitehead at Infinite Speed: Deconstructing System as Event," in: C. Helmer, M. Suchocki, and J. Quiring, eds., *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue* (Berlin: DeGruiter, 2004), 39-72.

metaphysics as the *infinite adventure* of ideas (DR 284-5).<sup>7</sup>

Hence, two of Deleuze's comments on Whitehead will guide my own exploration of Whitehead's "late" series of deconstructions of the status of metaphysical claims. Like Deleuze, I also think that Whitehead was a pluralist and empiricist in the peculiar sense that he defended the idea that "abstraction does not explain but must be explained" and that "the search is not for an eternal or universal, but for the conditions under which something new is created (*creativity*)" (TRM 304).<sup>8</sup> Hence, I share the conviction of Deleuze that Whitehead is *not* following a paradigm of "eternity," that is, that the "best of all worlds is not the one that reproduces the eternal," but that it is the one that allows for "the production of novelty" (TF 79).<sup>9</sup>

With Deleuze, I think that Whitehead's series of deconstructions of the metaphysical paradox is based on the exploration of novelty, creativity, and the incomprehensibility of experience in such a way that is tantamount to nothing less than a fundamental "conversion of philosophy" (TF 79).<sup>10</sup> I will further explore this suggestion in a series of four theses that increasingly will reveal the status of *all* metaphysical claims to be *essentially incomplete* in such a way that they only can be understood from a perspective of non-exceedable or, if you will, un-embraceable "immanence."<sup>11</sup>

\*\*\*

---

<sup>7</sup> G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York, 1994) (= DR). Deleuze, like Whitehead, has rejected the "end of metaphysics" as "idle chatter" but rather wanted to reformulate its constitutional paradox. Cf. K. Robinson, "Transformation as 'Reversal': Deleuze, Whitehead and the Fiction of the 'End' of Metaphysics", in A. Cloots and K. Robinson, eds., *Deleuze, Whitehead and the Transformation of Metaphysics* (Brussels: Contactforum, 2005), 129-136.

<sup>8</sup> G. Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (New York, Semiotext(e), 2006) (= TRM).

<sup>9</sup> G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: Univ. Minn. Press, 1987) (= TP).

<sup>10</sup> G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: Univ. Minn. Press, 1992) (= TF).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the most radical application of this immanence in Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), ch. 2.

***First Thesis: The Immanence of the Possible or the Actual Incompleteness of***

***Metaphysics.*** Whitehead's "late" work is a series of progressive deconstructions of the idea of metaphysics, understood as a general theory of all possible actual worlds, thereby revealing the status of metaphysical claims to be of actual incompleteness.

It is an interesting philosophical gesture that Whitehead, in formulating a desire for metaphysics, accompanied every instantiation of such metaphysics with its relative impossibility.<sup>12</sup>

In early works, like *Concept of Nature*, Whitehead was still withholding metaphysical claims, although he was hinting at the necessity of formulating a new metaphysics in the near future, based on his analysis that the implicit metaphysics of physics was mechanistic and that this mechanistic was neither scientific nor necessary; in fact it excluded what is the basis of its own endeavor, namely, *nature as experienced*.<sup>13</sup> While he was still excluding such a metaphysical endeavor, he laid the ground for its formulation *and* its relative impossibility when he defined nature as "the mystery of creative passage of nature" (CN 72).<sup>14</sup> The *implicit* metaphysical claim of such a new, non-mechanistic metaphysics became the analysis of what happens in nature in events, the realm of experience, and objects, the realm of structures of nature

---

<sup>12</sup> This has raised the question why Whitehead, if he really wants to employ a pluralistic viewpoint, would not deconstruct any metaphysics as one claim *among* infinitely many but instead formulates "one" metaphysics of plurality; cf. B. Kasprzik, "Whiteheads metaphysische Option," in: *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13 (1988), 19-36. Cf. the pondering of this problem in R. Faber, *Prozeßtheologie. Zu ihrer Würdigung und kritischen Erneuerung* (Mainz: Grünewald, 2000), § 16. I think that the reason is that Whitehead wanted to uphold the paradox *as essential* to the metaphysical endeavor as such.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. R. Sayer, *Wert und Wirklichkeit. Zum Verständnis des metaphysischen Wertbegriffs im Spätdenken Alfred North Whiteheads und dessen Bedeutung für den Menschen in seiner kulturellen Kreativität* (Würzburg: Ergon, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> "The passage of nature which is only another name for the creative force of existence has no narrow ledge of definite instantaneous present within which to operate. Its operative presence which is now urging nature forward must be sought for throughout the whole, in the remotest past as well as in the narrowest breadth of any present duration. Perhaps also in the unrealised future. Perhaps also in the future which might be as well as the actual future which will be. It is impossible to meditate on time and the mystery of the creative passage of nature without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence." (CN 72)

and its knowledge (CN 173). Since objects are per se immanent to events of which they are mere abstractions, Whitehead already laid the ground for the impossibility of any “objective” formulation of such structures as general enough to encompass the “creative advance” (CN 34) of a world of events.

This is the nucleus of the paradox of Whitehead's metaphysics: that it strives for a generality that is always already undermined by the creative passage of structures and the creative advance of a world of events beyond any structural stability, which would allow us to analyze this world in terms of universals (cf. PR 20).<sup>15</sup>

When Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World* first formulated his new metaphysics, he did so precisely on the premise of a *universal activity* he borrowed from Spinoza that *underlies* all structures—themselves uncovered as “abstractions,” and a *principle of concretion* that defines the most general characteristics of an actual world as *irrational process* (cf. SMW 178).<sup>16</sup> While a Whitehead-interpretation could establish itself that believes that the famous Chapter X on “Abstractions” is the most comprehensive formulation of such metaphysical structures, its hierarchies of abstractions do not, in fact, establish an eternal order of structural integrity of the world but only a flexible instrument to analyze the irrational process of events in their intelligibility without ever making the claim that they represent an eternal order of ideas.<sup>17</sup>

This Platonist misinterpretation of Whitehead is as common and it is wrong.<sup>18</sup> In fact,

---

<sup>15</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “On the Unique Origin of Revelation, Religious Intuition and Theology,” in: *Process Studies* 28/3-4 (1999): 273-289.

<sup>16</sup> It is often overlooked that Whitehead never gave up on his “principle of concretion” and, hence, also never on the fundamental irrationality of its being an act; cf. R. Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville: WJK, 2008), § 27.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. W. Leue, *Metaphysical Foundations for a Theory of Value in the Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (Ashfield, MA: Down-to-Earth-Books, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Its “presence” can even be felt in new approaches; cf. J. Williams, *Encounters & Influences: The Transversal Thought of Gilles Deleuze* (Manchester, Clinamen, 2005), 88-92.

metaphysical structures are nothing but abstractions of the process of becoming itself, they are neither concrete nor are they actualizing forms of eternity. On the basis of universal activity and irrational concretion, events harbor structures as intelligible mediums of communication, not as principles of their actualization.<sup>19</sup> Instead, any metaphysical claim must have that status of a *possibility for actualization* and, hence, “describes” the actual world as one that is *actually* incomplete, that is, incomplete because of the irrationality of its creative activity.

While *Process and Reality* seems to make the strongest case for a “coherent, logical and necessary system” with which to analyze the utmost generalities of the actual world—as already hinted to in *Religion in the Making* (cf. RM 84) and as repeated in slightly different language in *Function of Reason* (cf. FR 67-8)<sup>20</sup>—it is, on a deeper level, also a serious contestation of such claims or a simultaneous affirmation of conflicting claims of the relative impossibility of this endeavor.<sup>21</sup>

Besides Whitehead's famous appeal to intuition regarding the insight into “first principles” (PR 4) and “togetherness” (PR 22) and an infinite process of approximation with only “tentative formulations” (PR 8) we find more “structural” refutations of “dogmatic certainty” (PR 264)—the ultimacy of creativity (PR 21), of course; the irrationality, although not unintelligibility, of the Whitehead's categories (PR 22-26); the embeddedness of all orders and laws within the relativity of a chaotic nexus (PR 95); the a posteriori status of the extensive continuum (PR 35); the infinity of cosmic epochs (PR 35-6); the primacy of becoming over being (PR 22); and so on.

Although Whitehead often addresses the *limitation* of metaphysical claims with

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Faber in Helmer (2004), 72.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Rust, *Die organismische Kosmologie von Alfred N. Whitehead. Zur Revision des Selbstverständnisses neuzeitlicher Philosophie und Wissenschaft durch eine neue Philosophie der Natur* (Frankfurt, 1987), 45-66.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Michel Weber, *Whitehead's Pancreativism: The Basics* (Frankfurt, Ontos, 2006), 83-138.

limitations of language, experience and deficiencies of the mind to grasp the most general (PR 4),<sup>22</sup> he well knows about a limitation *in principle*, namely in *actuality* (PR 20).<sup>23</sup> The maybe most overlooked but strongest statement against the *possibility* of metaphysical claims in light of this actual incompleteness or grounding of all structures in non-preformatted actuality can be found in this passage from the section on “The Order of Nature” in *Process and Reality*.

The metaphysical characteristics of an actual entity—in the proper general sense of ‘metaphysics’—should be those which apply to all actual entities. It may be doubted whether such metaphysical concepts have ever been formulated in their strict purity—even taking into account the most general principles of logic and of mathematics. We have to confine ourselves to societies sufficiently wide, and yet such that their defining characteristics cannot safely be ascribed to all actual entities which have been or may be. (PR 90)

The reason is that the world is not based in “fact,” as representations of structures, but in *process* (PR 7) so that no structural generalization can reach beyond the activity of the process to become; or reversely stated: metaphysical generalities are but possibilities *immanent* to the process as a whole in its actual incompleteness (cf. PR 36).<sup>24</sup> This again is the reason that Whitehead can link the two ways of metaphysical analysis in such a way that they only express this limitation of the metaphysical endeavor: While “coordinated analysis” allows for infinitely different ways of “division” none of which reaching the actual process exhaustively (PR 283-4),

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. R. Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. R. Wiehl, “Whiteheads Kosmologie der Gefühle zwischen Ontologie und Anthropologie,” in Rapp and Wiehl, eds., (1986) 141–68.

<sup>24</sup> Here, Leclerc cannot overcome a hidden rationalism; cf. I. Leclerc, “Whitehead and the Dichotomy of Rationalism and Empiricism,” in F. Rapp and R. Wiehl, eds., *Whiteheads Metaphysik der Kreativität. Internationales Whitehead-Symposium Bad Homburg 1983* (Freiburg, 1986), 13-32). St. Rohmer, *Whiteheads Synthese von Kreativität und Rationalität. Reflexion und Transformation in Alfred North Whiteheads Philosophie der Natur* (Freiburg: Alber, 2000), however, with the explication of Whitehead’s thought in a rhythm of creativity and rationality points in the right direction, namely the overcoming of the rationalism as the foundation for the creative process.

the genetic analysis discovers only phases of becoming in which all “givenness”—be it structures, generalities or facts—are only *potentials* for new becoming (PR 23).

This again is the reason that for Whitehead the “realm” of “eternal objects” is not absolute but only *relative* to the world-process in its ultimate irrationality—whether it is based in creativity (PR 20) or the principle of limitation (PR 46). In being *relative to actuality* it may not be “becoming” in itself—that is, there are no new eternal objects—but it is no well-defined “realm” either; rather it is *pure multiplicity*, per se chaotic, without unity, lacking any definite structure, only being unified in the *actual* process of becoming itself (PR 46).<sup>25</sup>

In this sweeping glance through the development of the metaphysical paradox up to Whitehead's magnum opus, *Process and Reality*, we can gain the insight that the process of deconstruction of metaphysical claims is already there, right in the midst of the *constitution* of metaphysics; but unfortunately, it remains often undetected.<sup>26</sup>

In the following three theses, I want to render a *cumulative* case that the “late” work of Whitehead, following this initial climax of the metaphysical paradox in Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, reveals actual incompleteness to be *the* driving force of Whitehead's further philosophical development, that is, both of new conceptualities and their constellations entering the Whiteheadian vocabulary and of new attempts to *formulating* the paradox *as* paradox in its deconstructive force, thereby always breaking open all (possible) solutions.<sup>27</sup> As a point of departure, I will always start with a passage from *Process and Reality* that indicates how the

---

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. Ford, “Neville on the One and the Many.” in *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 10 (1972): 79–84; Leue (2005) 107-16; and Faber (2008), § 15.

<sup>26</sup> cf. D. R. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> For the transmutation of the project of “universalizing towards relativity” into that of “relativizing towards universality” after PR cf. R. Faber, *Prozesstheologie. Zu ihrer Würdigung und kritischen Erneuerung* (Mainz: Gruenewald, 2000), § 17.



fundamental actual incompleteness canalizes into the four different spheres of incompleteness.

\*\*\*

*Second Thesis: The Immanence of Reason or the Cultural Incompleteness of Metaphysics.* Since the actualization of rationality for Whitehead is an act of civilization, it is a moment of its development and decline whereby metaphysical claims express a cultural incompleteness.

One way of formulating the basis for the cultural incompleteness of metaphysics and for the immanence of reason and rationality in a cultural context in *Process and Reality* is with Whitehead's conviction that there is no "givenness" that is not based on becoming and that this becoming is a relational happening of a multiplicity of events, the immanent rationality of which are fundamentally in flux.<sup>28</sup>

There must, however, be limits to the claim that all the elements in the universe are explicable by 'theory.' For 'theory' itself requires that there be 'given' elements so as to form the material for theorizing. ... For rationalistic thought, the notion of 'givenness' carries with it a reference beyond the mere data in question. It refers to a 'decision' whereby what is 'given' is separated off from what for that occasion is 'not given.' This element of 'givenness' in things implies some activity procuring limitation. (PR 42-43)

The evolution of history can be rationalized by the consideration of the determination of successors by antecedents. But, on the other hand, the evolution of history is incapable of rationalization because it exhibits a selected flux of participating forms. No reason, internal to history, can be assigned why that flux of forms, rather than another flux, should have been illustrated. It is true that any flux must exhibit the character of internal determination. So much follows from the ontological principle. (PR 46)

---

<sup>28</sup> This assumption that can always be undercut by fundamental rationalistic assumptions that are understood as *justification* of Whitehead's approach. Whitehead instead does not justify rationality but *explores* it always already on the *basis* of actuality; cf. R. Lachmann, *Ethik und Identität. Der ethische Ansatz der Prozessphilosophie A. N. Whiteheads und seine Bedeutung für die gegenwärtige Ethik* (Freiburg: Alber, 1990), 130-135.

The problem Whitehead formulates here is not *a* metaphysical problem, but one of the *very possibility* of metaphysics as such. Although this paradox is guided by the ontological principle (cf. PR 24), this passage deconstructs the *very possibility* of principles to guide us beyond a certain point, namely that of the limitation of rationality by the *historicity* of the process, which is ungrounded, or grounded only in *actuality* with actuality meaning “decision amid ‘potentiality’” (PR 43).<sup>29</sup> In other words, actual incompleteness generates cultural incompleteness, that is, the immanence of rationality in the *cultural settings developing* rationality (cf. RM, part I).<sup>30</sup>

I think it is this link that forced Whitehead to delve ever deeper into the cultural settings of the emergence and the decline of reason and rationality. *Symbolism and Function of Reason*, written right around *Process and Reality*, express this urge for the analysis of the cultural appearance of reason and rationality.<sup>31</sup> While *Symbolism* on the one hand hints to *Process and Reality* as the “adequate discussion” of experience (S 16), it spends a third of its explorations on the *cultural embeddedness* of experience or better, of *metaphysics* of experience, and that means, in Whitehead's context, of metaphysics as such (S, part III). *Function of Reason*, on the other hand, right after *Process and Reality*, addresses the *evolution* of rationality out of the biological into the cultural context, in which it becomes cultivated, among other uses, as speculative reason, that is, metaphysics. Reason is the driving force of cultivated life, the *art* of life (FR 4) and, at the same time, an expression of its own cultural conditions—the “passionate claim for freedom of

---

<sup>29</sup> The “ontological principle” that states that all “reasons” are (or are grounded) in actualities; hence, it is the very principle that situates reason *in actuality*; cf. Faber, in Helmer (2004), 67.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. E. Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's “Process and Reality”* (New York: Fordham UP, 1997), ch. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Their existence, therefore, is not due to any “side project” in which Whitehead would have wanted to “apply” his metaphysics but a necessary *implication* of the actual incompleteness of metaphysics as such.

though” (FR 38)—that allow for its arrival (FR 38).<sup>32</sup>

In both cases, Whitehead *situates* metaphysics—as rationality *of* experience—in a distinctly cultural context.<sup>33</sup> In both cases, Whitehead seems to “break” with his universal metaphysical vision of utmost generality; but he does so not in order to ask a reduced “anthropological” question instead; rather he situates the very existence and development of metaphysics in the *history* of the decaying and self-organizing tendencies of the “course of events” (FR 1) of which human evolution and humanities’ cultures are a direct expression.

In both cases, Whitehead ends with visions of the *utmost cultural relativity* of the metaphysical endeavor. In *Function of Reason*, “Reason is the self-discipline of the originaive element in history” (FR 3), that is, of creativity. But while it raises the process beyond “mere blind appetite [that] would be the product of chance and could lead nowhere” (FR 89) it *never* becomes the expression of an underlying, almost divine Reason that would lead us to an eternal point beyond this history of becoming and perishing.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, it is limited by the “form specialized to the special aptitudes of human beings” and only allows for a creative arrival of *unprecedented* cultural developments that express a “counter-tendency which converts the decay of one order into the birth of its successor” (FR 90).

That this cultural incompleteness of metaphysics, for which there is always only a *successor* but never a point of rest in a final generality, is always the expression of a cultural environment is the insight with which *Symbolism* leaves us. The ability of a culture to establish a favourable environment and to survive a non-favourable environment is eminent in the

---

<sup>32</sup> Both works are mostly consulted only as additions to PR’s discourses on reason and perception; in their integrity, however, they reveal the relativizing effect they have on metaphysics. Notable exception is Lachmann (1990), part II/ch. 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> Ch. Kann, *Fußnoten zu Platon: Philosophiegeschichte bei A. N. Whitehead* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 2001), ch. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Whitehead, therefore, is a notable exception to the “logocentrism” Derrida criticizes; cf. Faber (2008), § 19.

formulation of *any* symbolism of which “metaphysics” is only one appearance.<sup>35</sup>

Thus mankind by means of its elaborate system of symbolic transference can achieve miracles of sensitiveness to a distant environment, and to a problematic future. But it pays the penalty, by reason of the dangerous fact that each symbolic transference may involve an arbitrary imputation of unsuitable characters. It is not true, that the mere workings of nature in any particular organism are in all respects favorable either to the existence of that organism, or to its happiness, or to the progress of the society in which the organism finds itself. (S 87)

Hence, *none* of these cultural forms of symbolism represent reality per se but they *always* are the *pragmatic* expression of a success or decline of a certain cultural integrity that has no underlying reason but the historicity of its own becoming. A “symbolism which is taken to refer to the ultimate purposes for which the society exists,” therefore, needs to “combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision” without which it must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows” (S 88).<sup>36</sup>

It goes without saying that Whitehead’s pursuit of this cultural conditioning of metaphysics in his last two books *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought* can easily be misunderstood as an “application” of his *preceding* metaphysics.<sup>37</sup> In fact, however, they are really reflections of *precisely* the cultural incompleteness of metaphysics. While the cultivation of metaphysics for Whitehead is a civilized act of surveying “the world with some large generality of understanding” (MT 4), it must also always be situated in the particular development, the

---

<sup>35</sup> For an analysis of the modes of perception that create “symbolic reference” cf. Kraus (1998), 75-93. It is easy to overlook that which Whitehead formulates in *Symbolism* is a self-referential undermining of metaphysics as a symbolic system that is already based on the relativism of the biological, evolutionary and cultural symbolism out of which it grows; and even deeper, the principle of relativism in the generation of such symbolic systems.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “In Fearlessness of Revision—Whitehead on Religion and Society” (Opening Remarks to the Conference Legacy & Lure of John Cobb, Claremont, February 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead’s Philosophy of Civilization* (Beacon Hill: Dover, 1958).

becoming and decline, of *concrete* civilizations. It is with this insight that one realizes that “[r]ationalism never shakes off its status of an experimental adventure” (PR 9) of ideas, potentials, structures, and laws of any magnitude of universality by being embedded in, and expressions of, the relativity of history, culture, society, and the universal course of events. Because of this *immanence* of rationality, Whitehead concludes that we “cannot produce that final adjustment of well-defined generalities which constitute a complete metaphysics”; we can always *only* produce “a variety of partial systems of limited generality” (AI 145). This “process is, of course, unending. All that can be achieved is the emphasis on a few large-scale notions, together with attention to the variety of other ideas which arise in the display of those chosen for primary emphasis” (MT 2).<sup>38</sup>

In light of the weight that the “late” works of Whitehead around and after *Process and Reality* lay on issues of social and cultural analysis, we must either conclude that Whitehead lost his metaphysical interest—hence, that he did indeed formulate his metaphysics in *Process and Reality*—or that these “late” works are a series of *deconstructions* of the metaphysical claim that already appeared underlying Whitehead's metaphysical construction in *Process and Reality*.<sup>39</sup> In the second case—and this is the thesis here—these “late” works are the *very expression of the fundamental incompleteness of metaphysics* in the relativity of its cultural constitution, articulation, scope, and flavour; an incompleteness, however, that does not leave metaphysics behind but deconstructs it *as the moment of its constitution*. In this sense, says Whitehead in *Adventures of Ideas*, it is not the metaphysical constructions of generalities themselves but their

---

<sup>38</sup> “Philosophy is the attitude of mind toward doctrines ignorantly entertained. By the phrase ‘ignorantly entertained’ I mean that the full meaning of the doctrine in respect to the infinitude of circumstances to which it is relevant, is not understood. The philosophic attitude ... refuses to be satisfied by the conventional presupposition that every sensible person knows the answer. As soon as you rest satisfied with primitive ideas, and with primitive propositions, you have ceased to be a philosopher.” (MT 171-172)

<sup>39</sup> Cf. C. Keller, “Introduction: The Process of Difference, the Difference of Process,” in C. Keller and A. Daniell, eds., *Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernism* (Albany: SUNY, 2002), 1–30.

“limitations [that] are the topics for philosophic research” (AI 145).<sup>40</sup>

\*\*\*

***Third Thesis: The Immanence of Categories and Principles or the Transcendental Incompleteness of Metaphysics*** Although “a whole” is the condition of the self-constitution of any event,<sup>41</sup> since for Whitehead universality is process there is no such thing as a “complete whole” amounting to a transcendental incompleteness of metaphysical claims.

The passage from *Process and Reality* I want to start from, speaks about actual incompleteness as a *condition for the possibility* to formulate any metaphysical system so that this inherent limitation of any universality as such amounts to a *transcendental* condition of the constitution of actuality.<sup>42</sup>

The aim at generalization is sound, but the estimate of success is exaggerated. There are two main forms of such overstatement. One form is what I have termed, elsewhere, the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness.’ This fallacy consists in neglecting the degree of abstraction involved when an actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought. There are aspects of actualities which are simply ignored so long as we restrict thought to these categories. Thus the success of a philosophy is to be measured by its comparative avoidance of this fallacy, when thought is restricted within its categories. (PR 7-8)

When Whitehead postulates this transcendental incompleteness of any metaphysical system with its generalizing categories and embedded principles as the *overture* to his table of categories in *Process and Reality*, everything appears in a different light. Neither the categories nor the principles of Whitehead's alleged “system” nor the system as such are to be viewed as

---

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Faber (2000), §§ 25-26.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. W. Jung, “Zur Entwicklung von Whiteheads Gottesbegriff,” in ZPhF 19 (1965), 608.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Faber, in Helmer (2003) 64-71.

adequate statements of the *real* generalities involved in the analysis of actuality but merely as *abstractions* from the very process of actualities that generates them as very incomplete statements of orientation.<sup>43</sup>

This limitation is, first of all, a limitation of abstraction in the attempt to use them to gain an understanding of the actual process; it is based on actual incompleteness. Secondly, it is a limitation given by the historicity and cultural embeddedness of the process of actuality. Thirdly, however, it is a *limitation of principality as such* in the course of the process.<sup>44</sup> The “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” is not just a statement on the status of metaphysical claims in differentiation from “reality,” but also a statement about the “reality” itself *insofar* as it cannot be conceptualized. Hence, principles and categories ought to be incomplete not because we are limited by culture and language but precisely because this limitation of principles and categories is the *very condition* for the conceptualization of *actuality as actuality*.<sup>45</sup> In other words, if actuality could be “rationalized,” that is, universally grasped through concepts, categories, and principles, it would be only the expression of an “idea” (Plato) or a “spirit” (Hegel) of which it was only a variation or exemplification.

Of course, as soon as we have seen this transcendental incompleteness working *in* Whitehead's constitution of metaphysics, many of its pieces in *Process and Reality* fall into place: that the “universal of universals” is *process* that is the creativity beyond all forms (PR 20); that *all* four kinds of categories are irreducible to a law of unification, a One behind them, and that they are actually open-ended (especially in the case of the categories of existence which per se

---

<sup>43</sup> Cf. J. Bradley, “Transcendentalism and Speculative Realism in Whitehead,” *Process Studies* 23/3 (1994): 155–91.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. J. Williams (2005) 1-8.

<sup>45</sup> This is the basis for Deleuze's “transcendental empiricism” that he relates back to Whitehead, which does not seek the transcendental condition of all *possible* experience but that of *actual* experience. Cf. J. Marks, *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 78-90.

generate *infinite* other categories) (PR 22); that the basic principles (principle of novelty, of process, of relativity and the ontological principle) of his metaphysics appear *in* or *as* categories and not as self-sufficient grounds; that Whitehead can speak *at all* of a supersession of the category of conceptual reversion (PR 250); that the principle of concretion remains in place as the irrational, but intelligible, correction of closed systems (PR 244).

All that only explicates the fact that, for Whitehead, the *coherence* of thought is not grounded in any closed system but in a constitutional incompleteness. While it might be true that the metaphysical paradox can go unnoticed (or is even surprising) because of Whitehead's so obvious *eros of rationality*, that is, his striving for comprehensiveness, universality, and the "rescue from anti-intellectualism" (PR xii),<sup>46</sup> it is right there, in the heart of this "rationality."<sup>47</sup> When Whitehead defines metaphysical coherence, he opens a *rational space* for its own *transcendental limitation*. Since coherence, for Whitehead, means that all metaphysical generalities "presuppose each other so that in isolation they are meaningless" whereby this mutual presupposition "does not mean that they are definable in terms of each other" (PR 3), they are *limited by their mutual incompleteness* in such a way that they always allow for novelty and therefore for the unprecedented on the conceptual level.

It is precisely this open potential for *unprecedented conceptual and categorical novelty* as an implication of a thereby *a priori* open world that Whitehead most forcefully develops in his "late" writings. In *Modes of Thought*, this transcendental openness appears as a restatement of the rebuttal of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness in form of the "The Fallacy of the Perfect Dictionary," which is "the belief, the very natural belief, that mankind has consciously

---

<sup>46</sup> Cf. D. R. Griffin *et alia*, *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy: Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne* (Albany, 1993).

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Keller and Daniell, eds. (2002) 1-11.



entertained all the fundamental ideas which are applicable to its experience” (MT 173).<sup>48</sup> Similar to the demand for open metaphysical symbolism of societies in *Symbolism*, here, Whitehead understands that the “use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system” (MT 174). This transcendental incompleteness is nothing but precisely the *condition for the possibility of novelty* so that metaphysics is at its best when it does not fall short to always formulate anew “insight into depths as yet unspoken” (MT 174).

Since such incompleteness will always create a *series* of formulation of the unspoken, it always will appear only as *imperfect* series of concepts, categories and principles. Here Deleuze is right: Whitehead's pluralism creates conceptual multiplicities, that is, divergent series of dimensions of conceptualization (TRM 304-5). In fact, it is one of *Adventures of Ideas*' great characteristics to develop transcendental incompleteness into *multiple series of categories* answering “the depth as yet unspoken.” I will name only three, which roughly resonate with the three dimensions of incompleteness.

One is based on Plato's “seven notions, namely—The Ideas, The Physical Elements, The Psyche, The Eros, The Harmony, The Mathematical Relations, The Receptacle,” of which Whitehead thought that “all philosophy is in fact an endeavour to obtain a coherent system out of some modification of these notions” (AI 275).<sup>49</sup> In fact, *Adventures of Ideas* can be understood as a prolegomenon to such a system of modifications that conceptualizes the *actual* incompleteness of the world-process.

The second series is that of cultural incompleteness, that is, of “a general definition of civilization, [namely] that a civilized society is exhibiting the five qualities of Truth, Beauty,

---

<sup>48</sup> Cf. St. Franklin, *Speaking from the Depth: Alfred North Whitehead's Hermeneutical Metaphysics of Propositions, Experience, Symbolism, Language, and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 293.

<sup>49</sup> For one of the very few serious considerations of these concepts cf. Cf. Kann (2001), 51-62.

Adventure, Art, Peace.” (AI 274) The later part of *Adventures of Ideas* can be understood to be the sketch of the implementation of these five categories of cultural incompleteness.<sup>50</sup>

A third series is roughly an expression of the *transcendental* incompleteness of the world process, namely the “incompleteness...[that] relates to the notion of Transcendence, the feeling essential for Adventure, Zest, and Peace.” (AI 295)<sup>51</sup> This series expresses the very incompleteness of the world-process *as such*, namely that it never finds a *unity* that does not create a new *multiplicity*; that, however, any unification is not doomed in this vast process but becomes an expression of it unending novelty.<sup>52</sup> Here is also the place where Whitehead's “principle of limitation,” which seemed to have expressed a unified notion of “God,” *disperses in a multiplicity of concepts*—Supreme Adventure, initial Eros, final Fact, Harmonies of Harmonies, Adventure of the Universe as One, the union of Zest with Peace, final Beauty, tragic Beauty, the Great Fact (AI 295-6).

In a final move in Whitehead's last article “Mathematics and the Good,”<sup>53</sup> Whitehead even infects even his earlier version of ultimate concepts, categories and principles with this transcendental incompleteness, that is, he begins to reconstruct *whatever* ultimacy one could pose in Whitehead's “system” and lays open the underlying rationality of such a serialization. It is based on the *reversal of the assumption of transcendental completeness* that was infused by the primacy of infinity (and eternity); instead, now, *finitude* (and novelty) becomes primary.<sup>54</sup> It was

---

<sup>50</sup> For the aesthetical implications cf. Sayer (1999), ch. 4; for the ethical implications of the metaphysical incompleteness of these notions cf. B. Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity: Beauty, Morality and Nature in a Processive Cosmos* (Pittsburgh, UP Press, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Faber (2008), § 39.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “‘O bitches of impossibility’! – Programmatic Dysfunction in the Chaosmos of Deleuze and Whitehead,” in Cloots and Robinson, eds. (2005), 117-28.

<sup>53</sup> A. N. Whitehead, “Mathematics and the Good,” in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 97–113 (= MG).

<sup>54</sup> Not that Whitehead had ever had another “ideal” than this reversal. In this sense, event and process are the thoroughgoing ideal of Whitehead's philosophy from CN on. Cf. L. Ford and G. Kline, eds., *Explorations in*

the “superstitious awe of infinitude [that] has been the bane of philosophy”; but the “infinite has no properties. All value is a gift of finitude” (MG 105), writes Whitehead thereby actually performing the “conversion of philosophy” in which Deleuze had situated Whitehead. Its content is to formulate the conditions of the possibility of novelty. In one of the central passages from “Mathematics and the Good” Whitehead concludes that while

Spinoza emphasized the fundamental infinitude and introduced a subordinate differentiation by finite modes [ , ] Leibniz emphasized the necessity of finite monads and based them on a substratum of Deistic infinitude. Neither of them adequately emphasized the fact that infinitude is mere vacancy apart from its embodiment of finite values, and...finite entities are meaningless apart from their relationship beyond themselves. (MG 106)

From the *generative* energy of this *intersection of immanent infinitude* and, hence, a *multiplicity of series of actualities*, Whitehead now *derives* all of his ultimate notions of process in which they mutually deconstruct each other.<sup>55</sup> Whitehead explains that the “notion of ‘understanding’ requires some grasp of how the finitude of the entity in question requires infinity, and also some notion of how infinity requires finitude.”<sup>56</sup> This search for such an understanding is the *definition* of philosophy” (MG 106; italics added). The world now has no *unity*, except that of finite actualities; *creativity* arises in “the awakening of infinitude to finite activity” (MG 111); *possibilities* are “abstraction involved in the creation of any actuality, with its union of finitude

---

*Whitehead's Philosophy* (New York: Fordham.1983). But it is his deconstruction of the grounding ideal of “infinity” as “ultimate reality” that remains in the background as “substantialist remainder” that he addresses in MG in a manner that is unprecedented insofar as it now has consequences for Whitehead's own “ultimates.”

<sup>55</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “‘The Infinite Movement of Evanescence’—The Pythagorean Puzzle in Plato, Deleuze, and Whitehead,” in: *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 21/1 (2000): 171-199.

<sup>56</sup> The interaction between the infinite and the finite plays a role in the very constitution of Whitehead's metaphysical interest since CN and especially in R, chapter 2, but can now, in the “late” work, show its radical consequences in having gone through a more systematic articulation of this metaphysics up to PR with its principles, categories and well-related concepts. Its constructive force now also reveals its deconstructive potential as part of its paradoxical constitution.

with infinity” (MG 112-113); and so on.

If we—in formulating the transcendental incompleteness of actuality—want to summarize this development in the “late” work of Whitehead, we can do so with a “metaphysical principle” Whitehead invokes in *Adventures of Ideas* really as a principle that defies all principles, a “*principium sine principio*,” that indeed is the transcendental condition of *pure becoming*: namely, that “the very essence of real actuality—that is, of the completely real—is *process*. Thus each actual thing is only to be understood in terms of its becoming and perishing.” Hence, for Whitehead, “no static maintenance of perfection is possible” (AI 274); unity is “Imperfection” (AI 264); and when we “speak in the singular of *The Universe*, of Nature, of φύσις [it] can be translated as Process. (AI 150)<sup>57</sup>

\*\*\*

***Fourth Thesis: The Immanence of Immanence or the Essential Incompleteness of Metaphysics.*** We can define the “late” work of Whitehead as a series of explorations of the metaphysical paradox of rational comprehensiveness and relational multiplicity. Addressed with the notion of “mutual immanence,” the secret of this paradox is essential incompleteness.

The maybe most imminent structural appearance of this paradox in *Process and Reality* is Whitehead's definition of “necessity” in his formulation of a *metaphysical* scheme of ideas. Although it might be widely conceived as the cornerstone and proof of Whitehead's rationalism,<sup>58</sup> it is actually the opposite: a formulation of *universal relativity*; it is the very ground for the limitation of rationality by *essential* incompleteness.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Faber (2008), §§ 16 & 24.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. N. Rescher, *Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY, 1996; cf. the discussion with Rescher in Weber (2006), 13-31.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Faber, in Helmer (2004), 60-4.

Thus the philosophic scheme should be ‘necessary,’ in the sense of bearing in itself its own warrant of universality throughout all experience, provided that we confine ourselves to that which communicates with immediate matter of fact. But what does not so communicate is unknowable, and the unknowable is unknown; and so this universality defined by ‘communication’ can suffice. This doctrine of necessity in universality means that there is an essence to the universe which forbids relationships beyond itself, as a violation of its rationality. Speculative philosophy seeks that essence. (PR 4)

Necessity is *universality*; but “necessity *in* universality” is universal *relativity*, that is, *relationality*, that nothing is isolated beyond its *communication* with everything. This is its *rationality*. To seek the essence of the universe *that is process*, then, means to seek an essential incompleteness through the *universal immanence* of the communication of everything in everything. Indeed, I think, what Whitehead's “late” work has accomplished is to explore this claim in a manner that transcends *Process and Reality*. I will end by highlighting three such *unprecedented* developments.

1) Although Whitehead seems to have begun his metaphysical journey from such an intuition of universal relationality—as can be witnessed by passages in *Concept of Nature* (CN 12-3),<sup>60</sup> *The Principle of Relativity* (chapter 2, *passim*) and *Science and the Modern World* (SMW 91)<sup>61</sup>—it remained a problem for Whitehead to harmonize this claim with other fundamental claims of the world, namely to be process and extension.<sup>62</sup> In *Process and Reality*, the relation

---

<sup>60</sup> “To sum up: the termini for thought are entities, primarily with bare individuality, secondarily with properties and relations ascribed to them in the procedure of thought; the termini for sense-awareness are factors in the fact of nature, primarily *relata* and only secondarily discriminated as distinct individualities.” (CN 12-3)

<sup>61</sup> “I will not repeat myself now, except to remind you that my theory involves the entire abandonment of the notion that simple location is the primary way in which things are involved in space-time. In a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times. For every location involves an aspect of itself in every other location. Thus every spatio-temporal standpoint mirrors the world.” (SMW 91)

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Kraus (1998) ch. 5-6; W. Mays, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Science and Metaphysics: An Introduction to His Thought* (The Hague, 1977); . J. Klose, *Die Struktur der Zeit in der Philosophie Alfred North Whiteheads* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 2002).

between “creativity” and “extensive continuum” remains unmediated at best.<sup>63</sup> In Whitehead’s *Symbolism*, however, we can find a formulation of the metaphysical paradox that attacks this incompleteness. Here, Whitehead claims, that

Universality of truth arises from the universality of relativity, whereby every particular actual thing lays upon the universe the obligation of conforming to it. Thus in the analysis of particular fact universal truths are discoverable, those truths expressing this obligation. ... The fallacy of ‘misplaced concreteness’ abstracts from time this specific character, and leaves time with the mere generic character of pure succession. (S 39)

Here, Whitehead understands universality of truth not as conformation of particulars with universal truth—representing the philosophy of infinity and eternity, in which all actual happenings are but representations of universal ideas (or a divine will)—but as *universality of relativity* whereby all actual happenings are related to one another. This relationship of mutual immanence, however, is not a “state” of things, but an *infinite process of finite events*, the generation of ever-new multiplicities and series of multiplicities of events. These are not just series of variations of “eternal objects” in the realm of time and extension,<sup>64</sup> but, since the *singular* event generates universality,<sup>65</sup> *series of reverberations of novelty throughout the universe*.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, here, universality and relativity, singularity and relationality, creativity and extension are differently related: they are *manifolds in mutual immanence* of which time, space, ideality (eternal objects), extension, and creativity are expressions of their mutual, universal incompleteness. In “Mathematics and the Good,” then, they are *mutually immanent* in one

---

<sup>63</sup> Cf. J. Nobo, *Whitehead’s Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity*. Albany: SUNY. 1986); J. Bracken, *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as a Link between East and West* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ch. van Heften, “Eternal Objects: Their Multiplicity and the Structure of their Realm,” in *Process Studies* 35/2 (2006): 319-337. Cf.

<sup>65</sup> Cf., Faber (2008), §§ 11-4.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Leue (2005), 105-115 & 125-152.

another, that is, *generative of one another*.<sup>67</sup>

2) In many important passages of *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead declares the very concept of “mutual immanence” central to his metaphysics.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, if there is any concept with which Whitehead has tried to capture the most universal “character” of this universe as process, it is this one. With “mutual immanence,” Whitehead transcends any other “generalizations” of metaphysics. In a sense, it becomes the very expression of what Whitehead thought to be a metaphysical notion of *utmost generality* present in *any* analysis of actuality; it thereby even surpasses earlier formulations of such generalities—like creativity, extensive continuum, eternal objects, God, Space and Time—and included them as modes of its very universality. This is the maybe most daring passage from the beginning of the chapter on “The Grouping of Occasion”:

The Grouping of Occasions is the outcome of some common function performed by those occasions... . The grouped occasions then acquire a unity; they become... . The ...characteristic [of] divisibility into groups of analogous type of being, is the general notion of extensiveness. The peculiar relationships (if any) diffused systematically between the extensive groups of an epoch constitute the system of geometry prevalent in that epoch. The general common function exhibited by *any* group of actual occasions [however] 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; italics added)

This “common function” of whatever happens is not any “property,” it is not a “form,” it is more like Plato’s “place,” the *khora*, ““a natural matrix for all things’. It receives its forms by

---

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Faber, in *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 21/1 (2000): 171-199.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Faber (2000) § 25.

reason of its inclusion of actualities, and in a way not to be abstracted from those actualities” (AI 134).<sup>69</sup> At this stage in Whitehead's work, it formulates the widest, and maybe the *only* metaphysical “function” of actuality, *prior* to extensiveness, time, space, characteristics, structures, orders, and laws. Although it does not presuppose *anything*, it is no chaos either; rather it is the “medium of intercommunication” (AI 134) “whose sole function is the imposition of a unity upon the events of Nature. These events are together by reason of their community of locus, and they obtain their actuality by reason of emplacement within this community” (AI 187). *It is universal relativity as such.*

However, how is “mutual immanence” not a violation of the metaphysical paradox? Isn't it a new universal category, finally capturing everything? How does it formulate essential incompleteness? First of all, it only sets *relativity* universal so that it actually says that there is no universality *transcending* the mutual immanence of all actualities, which already harbour possibilities, categories, and principles. It is a non-category, a non-principle. It is not a unity, but *pure difference*.<sup>70</sup> It is not form, but only *connection*.<sup>71</sup> It says that there is no principle encompassing everything. Secondly, it is a *critical* notion that, in refuting any transcendence of categories and principles, denied anything the status of origin, source, ground, aim or goal beyond the nexus of happenings itself. It is anti-hierarchical!<sup>72</sup> Hence, thirdly, it can only be realized *as process*, as in/finite becoming, unguided by any order or law transcending its actual process. It is the expression of groundlessness of becoming as such.

---

<sup>69</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “Prozesstheologie,” in Giancarlo Collet et alia., *Theologien der Gegenwart* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 179–97.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Faber (2008) §§ 16,24,32.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Keller in Keller and Daniell (2002), 4.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. R. Faber “*Amid a Democracy of Fellow Creatures*” — *Onto/Politics and the Problem of Slavery in Whitehead and Deleuze* (Lecture at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of the Whitehead Research Project *Event & Decision: Ontology & Politics in Badiou, Deleuze and Whitehead*, Claremont Graduate University, December 2007).



In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead directly implements mutual immanence as *anti-principle*, as *anti-hierarchical* refuge, as “foster-mother” of *becoming*, by criticizing *any* transcendence breaking through the *mutuality of everything in all*. When there are no pre-given Laws, all laws must be immanent (AI113); when there is no One beyond this immanence, there can be no external God but only self-creativity or immanent creativity (AI 236); when there is no unity as ground or goal, all unity must be becoming and perishing.<sup>73</sup> *Immanence creates multiplicity of becoming* and its mutuality—essential incompleteness.

3) In his last lecture “Immortality,” held 1941 in Harvard, Whitehead explores unoccupied territory. Clearer than ever before, and maybe for the first time in this sense ever, he formulates mutual immanence in such a way that it directly exposes the deepest meaning of the metaphysical puzzle that has energized his thought throughout his whole career.<sup>74</sup> He restates metaphysical universality in terms of the mutual immanence of *all* concepts, categories, and principles in such a way that we recognize that we can never really *formulate* the process of the universe, but in doing so never *transcend* this process either. Whitehead makes three claims in this regard.

Firstly, Whitehead makes the claim that there *is* “finitude—unless this were true, infinity would have no meaning.” Hence, he concludes that the “contrast of finitude and infinity arises from the fundamental metaphysical truth that every entity involves an indefinite array of perspectives...But any finite perspective does not enable an entity to shake off its essential connection with totality.” There is always an unanalyzed “infinite background” that any entity presupposes “which is the universe in its relation to that entity” (Imm. 682).<sup>75</sup> In other words, *whatever* can be said, in *whatever* categories we can analyze the universe, it is always the *mutual*

---

<sup>73</sup> Cf. R. Faber, *On In/Finite Becoming: Philosophic Considerations on Whitehead’s Many Multiple Worlds* (Claremont, Cosmology Conference of the CPS, October 2006).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. R. Faber, “De-Ontologizing God: Levinas, Deleuze, and Whitehead.” in Keller and Daniell (2002), 209–34.

<sup>75</sup> A. N. Whitehead, “Immortality,” in Schilpp, ed. (1991), 682-700 (= Imm.).

*immanence of infinity and finitude* that generates these multiplicities of categories and principles.

Secondly, the question remains how infinity and finitude and generative categories of analysis relate to one another so as to fulfill this mutual immanence. Whitehead answers with his most daring move. In analyzing the universe into two multiplicities, namely the worlds of actualities and values, Whitehead claims that “the description of either of the two Worlds involves stages which include characteristics *borrowed* from the other World” (Imm. 685). Here, we face the center of the essential incompleteness: that whatever we say in analysis we can only say by *synthesis*; and that this synthesis contrasts the *mutual exclusion of categories, principles and concepts* in analyzing the universe into formulations of their mutually immanent relationship.<sup>76</sup> Even more, because the contrasting series of concepts, categories, or principles must “include *characteristics derived from the other*,” these “major examples of perspectives of the universe” to the extent that they “*require* each other” (Imm. 685; italics added), exhibit the universal incompleteness of *all* metaphysical claims.

Thirdly and lastly, only in their mutual incompleteness can metaphysical claims exhibit “the *concrete* Universe in its relation to either of its ... aspects” (Imm. 684-5; italics added). However, since any aspect “considered by itself it is an abstraction” *from* the Universe, it is always only in their *mutuality* that metaphysical claims approximate the concrete. Indeed, Whitehead’s “late” work finally addresses the paradox of a metaphysical claim *without* invoking any “unity” that names “*the same*” in the difference of aspects, but only names the differences *themselves* in their *mutually creative dynamic*.

---

<sup>76</sup> Cf. J. Williams, “Deleuze and Whitehead: The Concept of Reciprocal Determination,” in Cloots and Robinson, eds. (2005), 89-106.