

In the Wake of False Unifications:

Whitehead's Creative Resistance against Imperialist Theologies

Roland Faber, Claremont, March 31, 2005

Ten years ago, in 1995—it was March—I came to Claremont, the first time, with a research fellowship to study Whitehead. At that time, neither was Whitehead widely known to, or much liked by, European philosophy and theology, nor was Continental philosophy, especially the French brand of postmodern, deconstructive thought, much known to, and if so, much appreciated by, the process community. In my mind, though, they always formed a strange alliance, not infected by the gaps of transatlantic reality.

It came as some surprise to me that this was not only a dysfunction in my head, but that Gilles Deleuze, a central figure of French poststructuralist thought, had just the same idea. As poststructuralist, Deleuze deeply *honored* Whitehead, and precisely because of the same reason: the profound love for *this* impermanent world that exceeds any abstract reconstruction, the appreciation of the unconquerable wildness of open-ended becoming over against any systematic derivation of multiplicity from hierarchical unity.

Deleuze died in 1995 while I was at Claremont, and suddenly, here in Claremont, both Deleuze and Whitehead began to form an unexpected continuity of thought. In my mind, they developed a *rhizome*, and—so it dimly arose in my consciousness—they actually *sought* a rhizomatic world.

1. *Thinking like a Rhizome*

Deleuze took the biological “rhizome,” that is, a horizontal underground stem that can send out both shoots and roots, that can connect indefinitely at every point and has no hierarchical center of control, as a philosophical and political metaphor opposed to the model of “the tree,” which symbolizes hierarchical structures, extreme stratification, and linear thinking. A rhizome is an interrelated network of bifurcating organisms, of constantly moving multiplicities. It cannot be analyzed as a system, but represents an assemblage of heterogeneous connections. Deleuze writes:

Form rhizomes and not roots, never plant! ... Be neither a One nor a Many, but multiplicities! ... Don't arouse the General in yourself! ... Make maps, not photographs or drawings. Be the Pink Panther, and let your loves be like the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon. ... A rhizome doesn't begin and doesn't end, but is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. (Deleuze/Guattari, Rhizome 17)

In a rhizomatic world of infinite differentiations and interrelations, “unity” always appears as *finite* unification of multiple relations. Nothing is fixed; nothing is perfect; nothing is for ever. The metaphor of the rhizome frees our mind *from “false unifications” that defy multiplicity* and, as a political category, empowers *resistance against “oppressive unifications” of hierarchies*.

This is what Deleuze saw in Whitehead: that, in a creative world, “unification” is always “multi-pli-cation”—the creation of folds of difference. Any attempt to freeze this movement produces *imperialism*, that is, the “will to power” to conquer manifoldness. But the imperial desire for a “perfect” world “under control” only earns a *dead* world. It was either guided by fantasies of necrophilia or misled by rigid conservatism, which Whitehead considers profoundly against the grain of the Universe. This means: Neither is there, nor can we ever know of, any *static, world-capturing unity* that would not be surpassed by ever vaster *difference* in becoming.

In a profoundly *creative* world—as in Whitehead and Deleuze—*no* power can unify everything by occupying everything’s self-creativity—not even God! Against any imperial transcendence, Whitehead considers God to be *the* opposition against any such attempt to control the world. I take the following quote from Deleuze to be a “statement of mission” for such a *rhizomatic* process theology:

For Whitehead ... bifurcations, divergences, impossibilities, and discord belong to the same motley world that can no longer be included in expressive units, but only made or undone according to prehensive units.... In the same

chaotic world divergent series are endlessly tracing bifurcating paths. It is a “Chaosmos”.... Even God desists from being a Being who compares worlds and chooses the richest compossible. [God] becomes Process, a process that at once affirms impossibilities and passes through them. The play of the world has changed in a unique way, because now it has become the play that diverges. (The Fold 81)

For Deleuze, Whitehead’s rhizomatic Chaosmos of indefinite *manifoldness* resists the imperialism of “monadic” metaphysics, theology, or politics. Indeed, instead of seeking an all-encompassing, all-controlling “monad,” Whitehead rather envisions God to be *rhizomatically interwoven in a process that creates unoccupied diversity*. But before we enter Whitehead’s Chaosmos, we will ask: What are the monadic structures that poison theology?

2. Imperialism in Theology

The locus classicus of Whitehead’s analysis of the imperialist notion of God is a passage in *Process and Reality* where Whitehead erects the pictures of an “eminent reality,” which appears as unmoved mover, moralistic judge, and ruling king (PR 342-3). These epithets disguise *the same* monadic transcendence, envisioning God as pure act, who is unmoved by the world’s becoming and perishing; as chief moralist, who judges the right to exist by preformed standards of values; and as the King of the World, who is a “monarch” of absolute power.

Moreover, Whitehead explicitly points to the origin of this monadic imperialism: namely “the deeper idolatry...of the fashioning of God in the image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman imperial rulers” (PR 342). This idol, the monadic God, is a product of “sublimation from its barbaric origin,” namely the imperial relation of “early Egyptian and Mesopotamian kings...to their subject population” (AI 169). What Whitehead's says is this: God’s imperial power is the outcome of the legitimization of the Empire. Therefore, the imperialist God must be “wholly transcendent”, a “monad,” who conquers

multiplicity and imposes absolute power of nominalist darkness by *solitarily* determining existence, communication, and destiny (cf. RM 69).

Nevertheless, we have to be careful here. Not the “oneness” of God or “monotheism” *per se* causes monadic theologies, but the *imperial will* to *functionalize* theological “oneness” in order to establish monarchic supremacy. Its stability rests on God’s “supreme agency of compulsion” (AI 166), which encourages religious, political, and social oppression. “By the fiat of the One God” (AI 166), monadic power is enthroned, and a “naïve trend of...monotheism” (AI 121; cf. PR 342) is misused for monadic exploitation. The imperialism in Western Christianity may well be a consequence of this *naïveté* in which the fusion of post-exile, Israelite monotheism with Greek metaphysics felt pray to the needs of the Empire (cf. RM 66-9; PR 343).

Indeed, as contemporary research by Jan Assmann has established regarding Israel and Egypt, monadic imperialism *prevailed* precisely by erasing rhizomatic traces of the multireligious environment. This *exclusivist monotheism* of Akhenaton and post-exile Israel declared the gods irrelevant, except Aton or YHVH. Thereby, the monotheistic reforms created a suppression of religious manifoldness and tried to eradicate the multiplicity of uncontrollable appearances of the Divine.

Of the many reasons that may explain the *persistence* of monadic imperialism in religion, one is ample: the confusion of exclusive Oneness with supreme Truth in the old monotheistic reforms, which again legitimized exclusive institutions to defend this Truth in the name of the One. If there is only *one, true God*, all other manifestations of the Divine must be either violently transformed into nothingness or demonized as temptations of evil. Hence, this “monadic monotheism” developed aggressive strategies to erase the manifoldness of (what Assmann calls) *cosmotheism*, otherwise found in ancient Mediterranean cultures.

In Christian theology, these monadic structures can be felt until today. Their symbol is the highly patriarchal notion of the “absoluteness of Christianity,” which attacks any multiplicity of Divine manifestations as fantasies of heterodox groups, heretics, witches, or idiots. Either from sin or from ignorance, the “others” have fallen from Holy Unity—which is of course the Truth guarded by a “logocentric” hierarchy. Their “otherness” can only be tolerated as variation of the orthodox tradition. Renitent subjects must be erased

because of the peril that their alternative views may spread like the plague. We know today that it was *this* imperialistic scheme that led to the invention of the Holy Inquisition.

The violence of monadic structures follows from its mechanisms of self-legitimization. I will name three: First, where multiplicity is feared, *fundamentalism* prevails. It defies multiplicity as irrelevant or evil, and uses unity as oppressive instrument. Second, where one's own superiority prevails, *expansionism* occupies every territory with one's own exclusive truth. Third, where a "theology of glory" controls "otherness" by deriving it from the One, *unilateralism* unmask itself as hierarchical instrument. But, of course, instead of representing the Holy Will of God, religious monadism satisfies only "phallogocentric" fantasies of power.

All three modes of theological imperialism obviously express the "sublimation" of their "barbarian origin" (AI 168.236). It is this *critique of sublimation* in contemporary and process theologies I will commit myself to in the next two sections.

3. Anti-Imperialist Strategies of Contemporary Theology

Whitehead's remedy against imperialist mechanisms is what he calls: "insistence on immanence" (RM 71). In many respects, this is also the reaction of contemporary theology. Because *imperialistic unifications* coercively occupy manifoldness in the name of *transcendence*, anti-imperial theologies attempt to liberate multiplicities from the command of "monadic" structures. "Immanence" here means a *rhizomatic space* for the unconquered multiplicity of becoming (cf. F 35).

A classic example is Erik Peterson's critique of "monotheism as political problem" from 1935. Ever after his analysis, no monotheistic theology is politically innocent, but stands under suspicion to legitimize the Empire. Historically, both the Roman Empire and Christianity, in their interaction, used the monadic God as instrument for "their" (common) Empire. Complementary to Peterson's critique of monotheism, Odo Marquard issued an anti-monadic "Laudation on Polytheism," whereby he defends the richness of "polymyths" against any "monomyth" that monotheistic traditions invoke to gain control over the cosmos by way of a Divine logos—logocentrism again.

Although those critiques have been furiously attacked, they correlate with Whitehead's and contemporary de/constructions of imperial theology.

Against *fundamentalism* both in its crass, political form and its epistemological mode, current theologies develop a wide variety of *non-foundational* and *non-monadic concepts of Divine unity*. Fundamentalism is based on the premise that there is an “Archimedic point” from which we can evaluate all knowledge without interpretation. It is a late ancestor of Descartes’ *fundamentum inconcussum*, which, in Descartes’ case, was the *ego cogito*, self-reflecting subjectivity. But there is no un-interpreted reality; and this understanding led to the liberation of a multiplicity of genuine religious manifestations of the Divine—Claremont’s John Hick became leading in this field. However, against “monadic fundamentalism” and “egalitarian pluralism,” this approach produced non-monadic reformulations of Divine unity. With Rosemary Radford Ruther, we may understand this immanent and pluralistic God as *Divine matrix*, as the mystery of the *interrelations* in the universe as a whole.

Against *expansionism*, critical theologies developed *inter/contextual* and *non-essentialist* approaches. While for expansionism the *one* truth can only be found in authoritative symbolizations, con/textual theologies of liberation, feminist, and ecological flavor, e.g. of Cone, Johnson, or McFague, counter with the *uniqueness of self-experiences* of the hitherto suppressed multiplicities of class, race or gender. Self-experience, however, must not be interpreted in the line of Descartes’ *ego cogito*, which, in its pre-formed essentiality, causes self-assured superiority. Contemporary theologies, as e.g. Daniel Boyarin’s, therefore counter-balance its “self-interest” with the flux of inter/textuality, pre-subjectively inherent in, and rhizomatically shifting through, experiences.

Against *unilateralism*, current theologies follow *power-critical* and *relational* traits. In many well-known liberation, eco-feminist, and post-colonial theologies, e.g. of Gutiérrez, Ruether, or Keller, unilateralist concepts of power are unmasked of their inherent, violent oppression of otherness—of women, minorities, and the poor. Both self-assuring substantiality (the dream of the powerful) and apocalyptic discontinuity (the dream of the weak) is de/constructed as patriarchal distortion, or better: “phallogocentric” occupation, of the ecological circularity of chaos and cosmos. In rediscovering the Divine as relational,

God is deprived of the fantasy of absolute power. In Her radically self-releasing movement towards the world, self-assuring transcendence is overcome.

From French deconstructive, post-subjectivist, and post-constructivist thought of Derrida, Lévinas, Foucault, Deleuze, Kristeva, or Irigaray, post-imperialist theologies learn their insistence on difference, trans-subjectivity, and immanence, which cuts right through the heart of the theological problem: the immunization of imperialism by identifying power with unity; unity with truth; truth with essence; and essence with eternity. Sojourner on this critical way is process theology, which follows similar intentions, scopes of matters, and directions of thought. However, besides the “French connection” to Henri Bergson, it developed its de/constructive critique primarily from Anglo-American thought—James, Dewey, Peirce, and, of course, Whitehead.

4. De/Constructive Process Theology

Introducing process theology to Claremont would be like carrying owls to Athens. Ever since John Cobb, David Griffin, and others, founded the Center for Process Studies in the early 70s, Claremont was the initiator of a now worldwide, increasingly rhizomatic, decentralized network of process thought. From the beginning, one of its agendas was the critique of the *omnipotent God*. Hartshorne’s title *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (1984) demonstrates the impact that power discourses have had for the appearance of process theology. It does not come as a surprise, then, that Cobb’s and Griffin’s *Introductory Explanation to Process Theology* from 1976 rejects these common, imperial connotations for God: the cosmic moralist; the unchanging and passionless absolute; the controlling power; the sanctioner of the status Quo; the male God (cf. Cobb/Griffin, PTh 8-9). Today, this intention can be felt even sharper: from Griffins recent publications on the mechanisms of the Empire to the *Christian Proclamation against American Empire*. Here, the *Process and Faith Advisory Council* states:

Our country is in a theological crisis. Do the American people worship the coercive power embodied in global Empire?

The current situation is, indeed, a *theological* crisis because of the worship of an *imperialistic distortion* of God. The *one, transcendent monad* legitimizes a deeply patriarchal, moralistic, and arrogant mode of theology. Following Ann Case Winters' analysis in *God's Power* (1990), we can "trace [it]...back to...the 'oldest and most fundamental dualism,' the hierarchical differentiation between women and men" (GP 206). Catherine Keller's *Face of the Deep* (2003) demonstrates how the non-monadic alternatives disappeared by violent repression of female self-creativity—however, inter/textually leaving the traces of their disappearance in early creation myth like the *Enuma Elish*, and even the doctrine of the creation *ex nihilo*.

Against this "one absolute, omnipotent, omniscient source of all beings" that "for *his* own existence" requires "no relations to anything beyond *himself*" (AI 169, italics added), Whitehead and process theology replaced the hierarchical dualism with a *cyclic duality* of "'action and reaction' [as] belong[ing] to the essence of being" (AI 120). God, then, is no absolute, transcendent, and self-sufficient *actus purus*, but relational, receptive, rhythmic activity of becoming. This God does not coerce, but persuade, lure, seduce.

Of the wealth of non-monadic alternatives, process theologies developed of this relational Divine, I will name just four:

Charles Hartshorne, and with him many process theologians, de/constructs the imperial oneness of God as a *series of Divine actualities*, radically breaking with the *naiveté* of the monadic monotheism and the model of self-reflecting subjectivity for God's identity. Far from dissolving God into plurality, this "panentheism" allows for unconquered multiplicity in God in a relational process of ever becoming unification.

Another tradition, sustained by Bernard Loomer and "process naturalism," identifies God with the mystery of existence, the wealth of interrelations of the becoming universe. This again is not very far from Joseph Bracken's *Divine matrix*, or Catherine Keller's *tehomitic "matrix of possibilities"* (FD 181). Here, the inherently imperialistic, monadic substantiality of God is de/constructed in favor of a non-substantial, all-relational ultimate

that, for itself, cannot be called “entity,” but is the flux of potentiality in becoming or pure activity empowering communication.

A third line of thought, especially explored by Marjorie Suchocki and a minority of process thinkers, draws on the *radical reversal* of God’s and the World’s processes (PR 350). God is seen as *one* actual entity; but far from the power-infected, unilateral, theistic understanding, S/he indicates a thoroughly relational, becoming *Divine body* of responsiveness and self-transcendence.

A last trait takes us back to some of the earliest process theologians of the empirical tradition. For Shailer Mathews and Henry Wieman, God in *no* sense directs power to *sustain* self-same identity in the word, but always *creatively transforms* all self-centered persistence into radical openness. This reconceptualization of God as *future* reappears in the work of Lewis Ford: Coming *from* the future, God is pure activity *of* the future, creating novelty, always aiming beyond self-sameness.

All of these de/constructive conceptions of God, inspired by Whitehead’s anti-imperialistic approach, demonstrate a somehow *rhizomatic manifoldness* possible from Whitehead’s theology. Although process theology may understand itself as systematic endeavor, it is, in fact, a *whole body of creative multiplicity* that corresponds to the profoundly rhizomatic character of Whitehead’s “system” itself. In fact, Whitehead’s Chaosmos was never conquered by any systematic unification; it rather is, and theologically evokes, “a process that at once affirms impossibilities and passes through them” (F 81). It is this *rhizomatic anti-imperialism* of Whitehead that I will be concerned with in the next two sections.

5. Whitehead’s “Chaosmos”

Of the very few personal letters surviving, Whitehead’s note to Guy Emerson from 1937 reads as follows:

[T]here is no suggestion in my mind—nor (I hope) in my works—of a clearcut adequate philosophical system. All we can do is to gage dimly in the infinitude of

things, which lies beyond our finite apprehension. Words are inadequate for experience, and experience is inadequate to grasp the infinitude of the Universe. Of course, this is a commonplace: but it cannot be repeated too often (Houghton Library, MS Am 1850, 1-10).

Although the public perception of Whitehead was that of a *systematic* thinker, Whitehead himself was always humbly aware of the *contingency* of all investigation into the “nature of things.” He proclaims his great philosophical hero, Plato, to be the “greatest metaphysician” precisely because of the “depth of metaphysical intuition,” while judged by his “fragmented system,” Plato was “the poorest systematic thinker” (AI 166). Especially in *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead confesses that we will never reach “that final adjustment of well-defined generalities which constitute a complete metaphysics” (AI 145). Whitehead *essentially* was an anti-dogmatic thinker, always pushing his thought against “dogmatic finality” (AI 145)—so characteristic for imperialist monadism.

Whitehead’s anti-imperialism comes from his mystical awe for the “infinitude of the Universe”; and his correlating strategy is, in fact, *de/construction*; the de/construction of dogmatic finitude (cf. MT 172-3). With a *slash* between “de” and “construction,” I want to emphasize a *polar circulation* between the “de-” of “resolving” a *monadic* whole and the “con-” of “integrating” multiplicities anew into a (now) *rhizomatic* whole, in order “to gage dimly in the infinitude of things.”

For further explanation, I directly point to a passage often considered an *emblem* of Whitehead's whole “system,” namely his Category of the Ultimate as developed at the beginning of *Process and Reality* (PR 21-2). Of all of Whitehead's “tentative formulations of...ultimate generalities” (PR 8), this one may offer the philosophical basis for the anti-imperialism of process theology. A significant part reads as follows:

The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the ‘many’ which its finds, and

also it is one among the disjunctive 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one. (PR 21)

In the Category of the Ultimate, ultimate reality appears as a triangle of generalities *in process: unification of multiplicities; multiplication of unities; and their rhythmic togetherness as creative advance into novelty*. Every unity becomes a unique *unification* of its prehensive relations within a virtually infinite multitude, and in its perishing it generates the *multiplication* of this multitude. In fact, in this fluent Chaosmos *nothing* is ultimate—neither unity nor multiplicity—there is only unification and multiplication immersed in the *rhythm of an endlessly cyclical process of relational transcendence or of self-transcending relativity*.

“Transcendence” may appear to be a startling term in the context of Whitehead's “insistence on immanence.” Nevertheless, by depriving it of imperialist connotations, it now signifies the polar and cyclical tension between unification and multiplication. On the one hand, any unification *transcends* the multiplicity it connects by its *unique subjectivity*. In this sense, Whitehead knows of the *mutual transcendence* of all actualities because of the *novelty* they exercise for another (PR 94). On the other hand, any unification, in being transient, *transcends itself* to become *just one* unit of a new multiplicity. In this rhythmic process that I want to call *trans-unification*, ultimate reality is profoundly *suspended*; and this might be the most exiting aspect of Whitehead's creative resistance against imperial theologies.

6. The Suspension of the Ultimate

Today's anti-imperialist theologies draw mostly on three anti-monadic, profoundly liberating counter-concepts of ultimate reality: *multiplicity, intercommunication, and spontaneity*. Although they have their merits in the resistance to imperialism, we will see that Whitehead's cyclic process of trans-unification de/constructs their ultimate status by *mutually suspending* them.

In Whitehead's *Category of the Ultimate*, multiplicity is *ultimate*: It is the *primordial* condition for the subjective process of unification and its *final* aim in the transient process of multiplication. With this process of multiplication, Whitehead anticipates Derrida's *différance* and Deleuze's *differentiation*, as has already been recognized by process theologians. As in Derrida and Deleuze, the critical aspect of this insight is that unity is always only a *finite* element *in* an infinite, rhizomatic process. This has important consequences: If oneness is not the ultimate ground, *monadic fundamentalism* is an imperialistic distortion of the infinite process of becoming and perishing. If process does not ultimately aim at unification, multiplicity can never be conquered by *expansionist repression* of the dignity of disjunctive multiplicities. If unity is no *precondition*, but always *consequent* to *creative unification*, mutually relational multiplicity cannot *unilaterally* be derived from presupposed unity.

At this point, however, we have to face the major objection: that "deconstruction" may lead into relativism and perspectivism. Indeed, *if* "deconstructive pluralism" deprive us of connectivity, of a common reality, this will lead to irresponsibility, detached irony, and finally to the loss of humanity. This, with David Griffin so called, "eliminative pluralism" furthers yet *another form of imperialism*, the "right of the most powerful" to conquer this indifferent plurality for selfish purposes. In the sense of Foucault, this *is* what the Empire does: it defines knowledge by the regime of the powerful. Therefore, we must *suspend* multiplicity by *inter/communication*, *différance* with the "other-in-relation."

Whitehead was at pains to demonstrate that "eliminative pluralism" merely exercises Aristotle's substantialism: The world falls apart into unrelated pluralities of substances without internal relations (PR 157-8). While *his* whole philosophy stands up against substantialism, the dual/cyclic process of trans-unification precisely attacks this "substantial pluralism" by de/constructing it as a process of unification of *relations* and of multiplication by *self-transcendence*. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead invokes Plato's *Khora*, the Receptacle of existence, to articulate this *cyclic/relational* process. The world is not a pluralistic chaos, but a relational "matrix" of all processes, a "medium of intercommunication" (AI 134) in which everything is in "mutual immanence" (AI 168). Only in inter/communication, multiplicity is ultimate!

Here, however, we have to be careful *again*. Although inter/communication liberates from the terror of pluralism and perspectivism, it may lead into a *new form of imperialism*, this time exerted by *holism*. In fact, it is precisely the *transparency of interrelations* by which the Empire controls community! Whitehead's dual/cyclic process of trans-unification resists this holistic seduction of total transparency by veiling concrescence in *ultimate, ontological privacy* that cannot be spied out—not even by God! In order to avoid this holism, ultimate inter/communication must be *suspended by spontaneity*. Otherwise, absolute transparency will ultimately turn into *fascism*, so darkly envisioned by Georges Orwell as Big Brother, and so effectively executed by the current global manipulation of information.

At this point, the wheel of suspension turns again: When the process of unification is tempted to substantialize itself, the illusion of its permanent oneness must again be de/constructed by multiplicity.

However, within suspension, the process of trans-unification creates a *rhizomorph world of unconquerable, intercommunicating multiplicities*. Since I follow the diagnosis of imperialism as *theological* crisis, Whitehead's notion of God may be seen as highest manifestation of this rhizomorph trans-unification.

7. Divine Trans-Unification

If, for Whitehead, God is the “chief exemplification” of the metaphysical principles (PR 343), this is especially true for the process of trans-unification. Indeed, as both Suchocki and Bracken have shown, the *cosmic* trans-unification of the Category of the Ultimate has its *theological* counterpart in the summery of the so called “Six Antitheses” at the end of *Process and Reality*. It reads:

It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God. God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its

diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast.
(PR 348)

Again we encounter the suspension of ultimate reality *between* God and the World *within* Creativity, which *is* the emblem of the dual/cyclic process of trans-unification. In this process *both* God and the World are processes of unification and multiplication, or better: they constitute a *common cycle* of trans-unification (PR 349-51): While the multiplication of the World is essential for God's unification, God's multiplication is essential for the unification of the World's processes (cf. PR 347-8). And again, in this Divine Trans-Unification, multiplicity, intercommunication, and spontaneity are *suspended* and remain in *constant flux* between God and the World.

The anti-imperialistic consequences are obvious:

Whitehead's God is in no sense *foundationalist*, but *immersed*: In an interesting passage, Whitehead calls upon the non-foundational distribution of the ultimate among the whole process by pointing out that *Creativity*, the epitome of trans-unification, is "an ultimate which is [only] actual in virtue of its accidents" (PR 7). The only appeal to foundation is always to the cyclic process of trans-unification *itself*.

Whitehead's God is in no sense *expansionist*, though *expansive*: The imperialist identification of Truth and the One that conquers the multiplicity of belief-systems in which we multiculturally and interreligiously find ourselves interwoven, does not recon with the dual/cyclic process of responsiveness and self-relativity. God does not occupy multitude, but furthers a motley world of diversification—and grows by its. In this sense, the whole process is not about the Truth of the One, but about the *Intensity of the Many* (PR 259).

Whitehead's God is in no sense *unilateralist*, but *intermezzo*: In Divine Trans-Unification, God and the World *concur* in "mutual immanence," which, in *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead claims to be the most creative moment of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (AI 167).

In the cycle of Divine Trans-Unification, God does not exert *coercive power*—as if God must "combat" "constructive force with constructive force" and "destructive force

with destructive force.” God operates by *persuasion*. Based on Divine self-relativity, God is the “poet of the world” (PR 346). With this Divine *poiesis* we enter Whitehead's non-imperialistic counter-concept of theology that draws “upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love” (PR 343). Indeed, *love* is the *ultimate theological expression* of the cycle of Divine Trans-Unification. Love *transforms* “what is done in the world” “into the reality of the heaven, and *floods back* into the world” (PR 351; italics added). Post-imperial theology, therefore, must immerse into this *Cycle of Love*; it must follow this *Divine flow* towards the World; its effort must be *earthbound*.

8. Earthbound Theology

In this final section I want to draw a prospect from Whitehead's Cycle of Love for current post-imperial theology.

Based on the Divine flow towards the world, it seems imperative that we learn to *love* the *Earth*; that we desist to abandon its motley manifoldness for another world to come; that we resist the temptation to seek a purely non-material heaven devoid of becoming; that we embrace the fragile *impermanence* of *this* interwoven web of organisms, we live *in* and we live *on*. Earth is our *common ground*. With Catherine Keller, we may say that

Anyone serious about feminism or any other form of resistance to power will surely want...to remember the shared earth that provides the one common ground in which all of our contexts nest. Might this bodily and earthly ground—*adamah*—be permitted to offer itself as trope for the most embracing perspective in with *earthlings* live, breath, and have our discourses? (PD 13)

Might we break through the *exploitation* of this Web of Live by particular interests, profits, and privileges; might we unmask the disguises of self-centered power of the Empire, which divides society by its repressive dualism of money, race, and gender?

The liberation of *adamah* is the fight for her *cyclic flow*, which does not draw on exclusive foundations, but aims at rhizomatic diversification; which does not occupy everything by monadic expansion, but shares space for rhizomatic manifoldness of the multiple other; which does not violently annihilate multiplicity in order to produce a *tabula rasa* for one's own supremacy, but lets the playful difference on Earth come forth. In Genesis 1, indeed, God creates from *tehom*, the pro/found abyss of Chaosmos, and the creatures co-create in this relational process of differentiation.

Let me add a second thought: When this Earth loves differentiation, we should love the manifoldness of its spiritual fruits. When we learn to understand God as the power of self-relativity, then it might be *just right* to accept the multiplicity of religions as expression of God's Cycle of Love. God might, indeed, reveal Godself in many religions. And when God *becomes one* by integrating what the World creates, we might read the World's creative responses to God's revelations as *profound* part of God's own becoming. In the Cycle of Love, God might be "in the making" by the evaluation of what we create to be revered as God. Far from being the expression of theological indifference, this is a consequence of post-imperialist insistence on *multiplicity, relationality, and spontaneity*. In this sense, we may dare to understand Jesus' question in Mathew 16: "Who say *you* that I am?" not as expression of *our* quest for the *only true view* of God, but as *God's* quest for *our unique actualizations* of God's self-revelation.

Thirdly, it is not possible to invoke the Cycle of Love without expressing the sexual colors that shade this love on Earth on every level of existence, from the attraction of physical love to the ecstasy of mystical love. Virtually every religion is aware of *this* intimate connection, the risks and distortions it harbors as well as the liberations and blessings it offers. Many religious traditions value the creative and explicative power of sexuality, expressed by the *cyclic duality* of the female and the male, the dark and the light, the passive and the active, the receptive and the creative, the below and the above, Matter and Form, Earth and Heaven, God and the World. From feminist reconstruction of Christianity, we know that this cyclic duality became profoundly distorted by the superimposed monadic imperialism that declared God the creator of *tehom*. Thereby, the feminine was not just subjugated under the fantasies of male

control, but was almost—at the theological level—annihilated under the law of the creation *ex nihilo*.

Whitehead's Cycle of Love, however, not only insists on the infinity of the *female Divine*, he never dualistically identifies Her with passivity or receptivity. Neither suggests "the *mater*" a passive principle, or "material," awaiting the male act of fertilization, nor is S/he created by male omnipotence from nothing. In Whitehead's *Creativity*, S/he appears beyond the dichotomy of activity and potentiality as the process of self-creativity itself. And if we follow Keller's and Bracken's *Divine/tehomitic matrix*, we might even say that S/he *is* the non-dualistic, cyclic flux of Divine Trans-Unification. As Cycle of Love, S/he "potentializes" infinite shades of sexuality that pro/foundly express Her liberating Flow on the rhizomorph Earth.

I want to close with a last thought on spirituality: In order to de/construct imperial power in theology, which identifies power with unity, unity with truth, truth with essence, and essence with eternity, we have gone a long way in showing that the Cycle of Love counter-balances power with responsiveness, unity with multiplicity, truth with intensity, essence with becoming, and eternity with circularity. But, of course, cyclic Love also breaks through balance by suspending any fixed ultimate in favor of what Whitehead calls the infinite process of "Imperfection" (AI 257). Post-imperial theology might be envisioned as opting for *imbalance*, the *imbalance of an unending, rhizomatic process* that Whitehead in its most profound sense calls "Adventure" (AI 295).

Theology is adventurous, or it is not!

Adventure is not a romantic revival of the "Wild West" of Buffalo Bill, but the relentless effort to release the *circularity* of love. Its highest *spiritual* aim is "Peace" (AI 286). As developed in *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead means by Peace

...self-control at its widest,—at the width where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coördinations wider than personality. Here the real motive interests of the spirit are meant, and not the superficial play of discursive ideas. (AI 285)

This “extreme ecstasy of Peace” (AI 289), however, is always *imperfect*, always realized in *rhizomatic* Adventure, in which we work for “the removal of [the] inhibition” (AI 285) that blocks trans-unification. Therefore, the Adventure is always *iconoclastic*: a constant removal of *all objectifications, abstractions, conceptualizations, and structures* we invent, or steal from the flux of the Chaosmos, to produce our “false unifications” in the name of the interests of our little “self.” Because they substantiate self-perpetuating oppressions that terrorize the societies sustaining them, post-imperialist theology must loosen these monadic unifications in order to open society to *cyclic flux* and *rhizomatic diversification*. In the Cycle of Love, we might understand God’s Love precisely as Her Spirit who frees from oppressive objectifications, who de/constructs the abstractions that rape *adamah*.

It might well be our spiritual responsibility, and certainly it is Whitehead's post-imperial impulse for contemporary theology, to seek Her Peace in the ever new Adventure of redefining our lives in terms of the rhizomatic flow of our common nexus that is Earth.