

“THE INFINITE MOVEMENT OF EVANESCENCE:” THE PYTHAGOREAN PUZZLE IN DELEUZE, WHITEHEAD, AND PLATO

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In a difficult but beautiful text of Gilles Deleuze, the concept of *the infinite movement of evanescence* arises:

The concept [of the Whole] . . . follows and espouses determination in all its metamorphoses, from one end to the other, and represents it as pure difference in delivering it up to a *ground* in relation to which it no longer matters whether one is before a relative minimum or maximum, a large or a small, nor before a beginning or an end, since the two coincide in this ground which is like a single and unique ‘total’ moment, simultaneously the moment of evanescence and production of difference, of disappearance and appearance. In this sense, . . . [we attach] importance to the infinite movement of evanescence—that is, to the moment at which difference both vanishes and is produced.¹

In what follows, I intend nothing but to unfold this enigmatic statement, since it names *the Pythagorean puzzle of philosophy*, a statement about “ultimate difference in itself,” the “ultimate ground of being” and a certain region of thinking, namely the region of the “infinite movement of evanescence.” I shall explore this statement in six parts: first by discussing what I call the “Pythagorean puzzle,” found in Deleuze, Whitehead, and Plato; then, in the next two parts, by establishing what I call the “Pythagorean region” of thought in Deleuze and Whitehead; in the fourth part, by locating the “Pythagorean turn” in Plato’s late philosophy; in the final two parts,

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 42; cited hereafter as *DR*.

by drawing out the change that the “Pythagorean region” inflicts upon Whitehead’s and Deleuze’s philosophy. By taking this route, namely away from Deleuze, back to Whitehead and Plato, and again forward to Deleuze, we shall realize that Deleuze’s Pythagorean turn is not really a “turn” but a “region” in the center of his whole philosophical project—although somehow hidden. Plato and Whitehead, on the other hand, really turned to the Pythagorean region of thought at the very end of their careers. The role that the Pythagorean puzzle plays in Deleuze’s thought somehow gives us a glimpse of what may have happened if Plato and Whitehead had had the time and strength to develop their late discoveries. On the other hand, if Plato’s and Whitehead’s late move towards the Pythagorean region appears as antecedent to Deleuze’s puzzling stances, we may better understand how Deleuze’s thoughts could go where they have actually gone.

I. The Pythagorean Puzzle

Deleuze’s quotation reminds us of the very center of his philosophy of Difference, in which we find a “region of thought” that cannot be seen and looked at *directly*, but rather it hides within its presence—like Plato’s sun. All differences vanish and arise, all categories generate and die, instantaneously. All principles deluding us to coat the chaotic fabric of the world break down. In a “unique ‘total’ moment . . . of evanescence and production of difference,” reality expresses its true face, its cruelty, even its monstrosity.² I shall name this region the “Pythagorean region” and the movement towards its enigmatic center, a “Pythagorean puzzle.” This unique “movement of evanescence” is *Pythagorean* because it is conditioned by the reaction of two principles: “the Whole” and “the Large and the Small”—the ultimate principles of the Pythagorean philosophy. For the Pythagoreans, “the One” and “the Unlimited” react to create the

² Deleuze, *DR*, 42. “When this ground rises to the surface, the human face decomposes,” reality really “‘makes’ the difference” (*ibid.*, 28).

world.³ It becomes a *puzzle* when the ultimate Pythagorean principles of finitude and infinity clash, collapse within one another, and create *an infinite movement of evanescence*. The Pythagorean puzzle first appears in Plato's final, radical, thought. The lecture that Plato gave on this matter, called "On the Good," remained disturbing for its listeners; it even disappeared. It was concerned with the introduction of the Pythagorean last principles into Plato's divine principle, the Good.⁴

Why Plato, Whitehead, and Deleuze? First, it is well known that Whitehead sympathized with Plato's philosophical disposition. The *Houghton Library* in Harvard owns a little handwritten notice by Guy Emerson which states that Whitehead "likes Plato because he was always *proposing*, never *finishing* anything. It is always '*process*' not frozen finality."⁵ Second, Deleuze recognized Whitehead as one of his important "philosophical *personae*" he used to mediate his own thought. Deleuze even confesses that Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is "one of the greatest books of modern philosophy."⁶ Third, Deleuze's own philosophy is one of the most persistent experiments in taking a straight look into the Pythagorean puzzle that uncovers an original wildness of the becoming world. Philosophy in the Pythagorean region pushes permanently to the edge of a catastrophic abyss of thought. Fourth, all three philosophers reveal a *unique* truth

³ Ibid., 34, 42. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 986a17-21, 987a13-19; cf. R. D. McKirahan, Jr., *Philosophy Before Socrates: An Introduction with Texts and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 96; cited hereafter as *PBS*.

⁴ Whitehead, who noticed Plato's Pythagorean turn, notes that about "two thousand three hundred years ago a famous lecture was delivered. The audience was distinguished: among others it included Aristotle and Xenophanes. The topic of the lecture was The Notion of The Good. The lecturer was competent: he was Plato. The lecture was a failure, so far as concerned the elucidation of its professed topic; for the lecturer mainly devoted himself to Mathematics" (A. N. Whitehead, "Mathematics and the Good," in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1968], 97; hereafter cited as *MG*).

⁵ Guy Emerson, Houghton Library, Harvard, MS Am 1850 (14-15).

⁶ Deleuze, *DR* 284 f.

of the *variation* of the Pythagorean puzzle.⁷ At different times, with different implications, and at different stages of their work, Plato, Whitehead, and Deleuze have discovered a new land—the Pythagorean region of thought: the infinite movement of evanescence, the appearance and disappearance of Difference.

II. The Pythagorean Region of Deleuze's Thought

In the post-structuralist thought of Gilles Deleuze, *the* basic question of his philosophy is: *What is an event?*⁸ Discerning the reality of events against that of things and beings, forms or possibilities, he came to believe that events do not refer beyond themselves to any “exterior referent” (“something that is”). Instead, they represent their own reality at the boundary of things and language—namely, the reality of “sense” (as in “non-sense”). The reality of events appears as that of an “encounter,” an irritating disclosure of intensities in which

⁷ This is Deleuze's relativistic view of perspective: Different perspectives can be situated in different discourses. However, every perspective on the same “plane of immanence” may be transformed in the other; cf. G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 35 ff; hereafter cited as *WPh*. The participants of a common plane do not have to share the same time or space. They may not be contemporaries; still, they may be “sojourners across time.” In *The Fold*, he says: Relativism “is not a variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject” (G. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* [Minneapolis University Press, 1993], 20; hereafter cited as *F*. I take Deleuze here to break with the idea of linear development, with any preoccupation with timelines and singular traditions forming philosophical identity and exclusive differences. Instead, the variety of perspectives break through history, space, and time, and gather on a certain “plane of immanence,” a certain “universe.” Now, perspectives reveal themselves as the unique truth of a variation, namely of the “Pythagorean puzzle.” “Philosophy [Deleuze says], is becoming, not history; it is the coexistence of planes, not the suggestion of systems” (G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *WPh*, 59).

⁸ Gilles Deleuze is a distinguished French philosopher, well-known for his post-structuralism. Besides his intensive work on other philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Foucault, he wrote a series of works, preeminently on his own behalf: *Difference and Repetition* (1968), *The Logic of Sense* (1969), *The Fold* (1988), and *What is Philosophy?* (1991).

reality energizes thinking.⁹ In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze detects the essence of events as somehow “between” or at the border of things and language. The reality we encounter in events does *not* “designate” any ontic object, it does *not* “manifest” any subject (the ‘I’), it does *not* “signify” any concepts. To the contrary, it defines a new, a unique dimension of reality, namely that of *expression*. The reality of expression discloses the level of *sense*, or of the *pure event*. Therefore, the reality of the pure event is not directed toward facts, subjects, or truth conditions. Deleuze does not understand event-reality as a dimension of the status of things that “is,” but rather it expresses a “*non-existing entity*,” or “*extra-being*,” or “*?-being*”.¹⁰ Furthermore, it articulates a dimension of language, which does not indicate anything that “*exists*,” but rather a reality that “*subsists*” or “*insists*.”¹¹

In a manner very similar to Whitehead, Deleuze’s events are players in a *cosmological space*. In the language of *Difference and Repetition*, *The Logic of Sense*, and especially *The Fold*, Deleuze defines this space as “virtuality,” as *spatium*, as formless and open “*Ungrund*”/“*Sans-fond*”/groundlessness, where intensities are “enfolded” and can be “out-folded” to extensities in space and time. Implicit *spatium* explicates itself as *extensio*.¹² In reference to Leibniz

⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 7, 66 ff; hereafter cited as *LS*. Cf. D. W. Smith, “Deleuze’s Theory of Sensation. Overcoming the Kantian Duality,” in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. P. Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 30 f. Intensities energize thinking, yet they conceal themselves from our observation/perception/understanding/thinking. They do not form an ontological, but rather, an aesthetic reality.

¹⁰ Deleuze, *LS*, 7, 12 ff, 66 ff for the “between;” 19 for “expression;” 28 ff for “sense;” 12 ff, 19-22, 151 for “pure event;” 7, 35, 110, 180 for “extra being.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34. Cf. E. Weber, “Fragment über die Wissenschaft reiner Ereignisse,” in *Gilles Deleuze—Fluchlinien der Philosophie*, F. Balke and J. Vogl, eds., (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), 198. Cf. Smith, “Deleuze’s Theory,” 30. Cf. R. Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1996), 70, 72 (with reference to Meinong).

¹² Deleuze, *LS*, 106. Cf. Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, 62 f. This *Ungrund* signifies a non-existing horizon of pure events or their “wherein.” Cf. Deleuze, F, 20; *DR*, 310. Cf. Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, 62 ff. Cf. A. Badiou, “Gilles Deleuze, *The*

and Whitehead, Deleuze is in quest of a world without *preformation*, but of spontaneous “organization.”¹³ Perplexing *forces* arrange experiences without pre-given rules or schemes. *Novelty* occurs within unforeseeable categories insofar as these forces grow together like nomads, created in *qualifying virtuality*, but not in *pre-forming actuality*.¹⁴

In the language of *Bergsonism* and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Deleuze defines this state of “initial virtuality” in terms of Bergson’s *élan vital* and Spinoza’s *causa sui*. In respect to Bergson’s *élan vital*, Deleuze writes that virtuality “exists in such a way that it is realized in dissociating itself. . . . Differentiation is the movement of a virtuality that is actualizing itself.”¹⁵ Regarding Spinoza’s ‘infinite substance,’ that is, the self-differentiating substance of God, Deleuze recognized its absolute immanence and total expression *within* the world and *as* the world’s primordial

Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1994), 65-61.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 38; hereafter cited as *B*. For Leibniz, *this* may have been “the best possible world.” Cf. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 18-19, 119-121. The virtual field of forces, powers and events, the “receptacle” of intensities and characters, hence, which force us to think but perplex recognition at the same time, can be grasped neither by any categories of thought nor by any *a priori* at all. They are included within a *transcendental field of total immanence*, a field of *forces* that *affects* thinking. Cf. Deleuze, *LS*, 102; cf. Weber, “Fragment,” 202.

¹⁴ Cf. Deleuze, *DR*, 36; *LS* 4 ff, 52 ff. Deleuze calls this concrete novelty, which cannot be predetermined by any rules or categories, “*the event’ of actuality*”. Cf. B. Baugh, “Deleuze und der Empirismus,” in *Gilles Deleuze—Fluchtlinien der Philosophie*, F. Balke and J. Vogl, eds., (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), 47. Deleuze’s virtuality, actualizing itself within the immanent field of forces, realizes the self-differentiation of the absolute positive, infinite, and ultimate reality very similar to Whitehead’s ‘substantial activity’ in Whitehead, *SMW*, 70, 107; cf. M. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 16-17 for Deleuze’s differentiation of virtuality-actuality from possibility-reality. In a certain sense, Deleuze’s ‘virtuality’ resembles Whitehead’s ‘real potentiality’ (past actuality) in difference from the realization of ‘possibilities’ (eternal objects).

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, “La conception de la différence chez Bergson,” in *Les études bergsoniennes* 4 (1956); 93.

process of the actualization of virtuality. Precisely this is the process of *differentiation*, of “making” the difference, of the “Difference in Itself.”¹⁶

“Difference” is the production of a world, the way in which the initial virtuality unfolds itself into an extensive space of events, the unique moment in which difference is produced. This is not, as one could be tempted to think, a movement of negation or dialectic; it is purely *affirmative*: the creation of folds, enfolding and unfolding. Thereby “every fold originates from a fold, *plica ex plica*,” and the world originates as “many-fold.” The “fold” moves *affirmatively* and not negatively “because the Fold is always between two folds, and because the between-two-folds seems to move about everywhere.”¹⁷ This is the *affirmation* of the “difference in itself”: Difference is not “between” something (of a certain genus or species), but *of* itself. “Difference” is not subordinated to identity or to opposition, negation, or dialectic. It purely is its own ground, *the* ground of all existence.¹⁸ On the background of the Spinozistic concept of “univocal Being,” Difference *precedes* all distinctions, be it “matter and form, species and parts, and every other element of the constituted individual.”¹⁹ “With univocity, however, it is not the differences which are and must be: it is being which is Difference, in the sense that it is said of difference.”²⁰

It is here, that his whole conception of Difference turns into a Pythagorean puzzle. The purely affirmative Difference happens as a process of affirmative *self*-differentiation of the Difference. In other words, Difference is determination not “between” things but *as such*, where “determination takes the form of unilateral distinction” on the

¹⁶ Deleuze, *DR*, 28 ff. Cf. Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 14, 64.

¹⁷ Deleuze, *F*, 13; cf. 10.

¹⁸ Deleuze, *DR*, 34. With Bergson and against Hegel, Deleuze states in his “La conception de la différence chez Bergson”: “In Bergson . . . the thing differs with itself *first, immediately*. According to Hegel, the thing differs with itself because it differs first with all it is not” (Deleuze, “La conception”, 96; translated by, and quoted according to, Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze*, 7). Cf. Deleuze, *DR*, 28, 50-51.

¹⁹ Deleuze, *DR*, 38; cf. *ibid.*, 35 for “univocal being”; cf. G. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 53.

²⁰ Deleuze, *DR*, 39.

background of an “undifferentiated abyss, the black nothingness, the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolving.”²¹ Difference, finally, articulates the process of the ultimate Pythagorean categories, the uniting “Whole” and abysmal “Large and Small.”²²

III. The Pythagorean Turn of Whitehead’s Thought

Highlighting Whitehead’s last two articles of 1941, “Mathematics and the Good” and “Immortality,” may occur somehow odd to someone who is somewhat familiar with Whitehead’s mature works. Although the short, certainly impervious, sometimes even enigmatic texts seem not to count for a real, even dramatic shift in Whitehead’s thought, it is here that we can discern Whitehead’s *own* turn towards the Pythagorean region of thought.

(1) Foreshadowings of the Pythagorean Region

In *The Concept of Nature*, Whitehead offers two ultimates: “extension” and the “passage of nature.”²³ In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead binds “creativity” with “one” and “many” to his “Category of the Ultimate” *par excellence*.²⁴ As a matter of fact, the *opinio communis* holds that Whitehead stabilized his mature cosmology within the range of four so-called “formative elements” without any further shift: the *Plural World, Ideas, Creativity, and God*.²⁵ As much

²¹ Ibid., 28.

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ A. N. Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 54, 58, 73.

²⁴ A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Corrected Edition, eds. D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press 1978), 21 f; hereafter cited as *PR*. Other terms, however, remain ultimate, too, like “extensive continuum” (*PR*, 61-68), “togetherness” (ibid., 22), or “primordial envisagement” (ibid., 32), and in *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), Whitehead adds “immanence” (A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* [New York: Free Press, 1967], 130, 168; hereafter cited as *AI*).

²⁵ A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), 88; hereafter cited as *RM*.

as this seems to be the case, it is wrong. Without much preparation, the 1941-articles rendered another domain of notions prominent and even predominant.²⁶ Now, the new list of ontologically indissoluble ultimates consists of *unboundedness*, and beyond that just of (indefinite) modes of *limitation*.²⁷ Period. End of list.

Within Whitehead's earlier work, one may instantly think of his introduction of the "principle of limitation."²⁸ "Limit" appears as an "attribute" of a Spinozistic, infinite "substantial activity"²⁹ and it allows for a process of "limitation," thereby creating "definite

²⁶ The notions are "unboundedness" (Whitehead, MG, 103) and "limit" (ibid., 105), "infinity" and "finitude" (ibid., 106; A. N. Whitehead, "Immortality," *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 77; hereafter cited as Imm.), "indefiniteness" and "definition" (Whitehead, Imm., 92). Even regarding *termini technici* from earlier writings we may realize interesting simplifications and even slight shifts of meaning when Whitehead now substitutes "actual occasion/entity" with "minute happening" (Whitehead, MG, 105), "natural occurrences" (ibid., 109), "particulars" (ibid., 111), or "facts" (Whitehead, Imm., 81); "eternal objects" with "pattern" (Whitehead, MG, 102), "types of modes of emphasis" (ibid., 105), or "values" (Whitehead, Imm., 80); and "creativity" with "energetic activity" (Whitehead, MG, 106), "active energy" (ibid., 105), or "active creativity" (Whitehead, Imm., 90).

²⁷ "Infinity and finitude"—one may identify them to be one of the oldest themes in Greek thought. Cf., e.g., Anaximander who could arguably be seen as first philosopher of the highest rank. Other than Thales' "Water," Anaximenes' "Air," or even (although cautiously said) Heraclitus's "Fire," Anaximander's principle, namely the "*ápeiron*," was neither a "material" nor a "form," but rather something beyond all that, namely the *unbounded infinity* itself. Greek philosophy began with infinity, understood as the *ground* of the world.

²⁸ Whitehead, *SMW*, 178.

²⁹ Ibid., 70, 177. In Whitehead, Spinoza's "one infinite substance" expresses three "attributes": the "multiplicity of modes" of actualities, "the realm of eternal possibility," the "principle of limitation" (ibid., 177-178). The first attribute is the *actual* limitation of infinity as a "differentiation into individual multiplicity." The second attribute is the limitation of the unbounded realm of *possibility* as "synthesized in these modes" (ibid., 177). The third attribute names the process of limiting infinity as needing "to conform to a standard" regarding all kinds of limitations among "values, introducing contraries, grades, and oppositions." God, accordingly, "is the ultimate limitation" (ibid., 178).

entities.”³⁰ But, since “there is no perfection which is the infinitude of all perfections,”³¹ infinity is in itself *abstract*. Paradoxically, it is bound to the finite. It is *the finite’s infinity*.³²

(2) The Appearance of the Pythagorean Turn

In the 1941-articles, one cannot overlook the overwhelming use of *Unboundedness* and *Limitation*. If these Pythagorean concepts of the Ultimate may have been on the ground of Whitehead’s thought for a long time, now they rush up to the surface. The universe is created by the *interference* of “infinity” and “finitude,” generating “the active energy of a finite assemblage.”³³ Now, even the four ultimate principles—Plural World, Creativity, Form, and God—can be expressed in terms of Unboundedness and Limitation: The *World* is the “essential relatedness of all things” in which “finite entities require the unbounded universe, and . . . the universe acquires meaning and value by reason of its embodiment of the activity of finitude.”³⁴ *Creativity* creates finite events “by the inflow from the infinitude to the finite.”³⁵ *Forms* allow stable patterns and characters when “the finitude of the actual world embraces the infinitude of

³⁰ Whitehead, *RM*, 146. In the 1926-lectures published as *Religion in the Making*, two developments happen. First, the modes of infinity are *abstract*; infinity cannot gain actuality; it cannot act at all. The concrete, on the other hand, is the “definitely limited.” God is enthroned to *the* limiting agent *par excellence*, if not the only one. Further, this has the consequence that God “in Godself” is now understood to be “infinite” and “finite.” God is limited by God’s goodness. This does not mean that God is *only* finite. God is just “not . . . in all respects infinite. . . . [God] is something decided and is thereby limited” (*ibid.*, 147). Both infinity and finitude are an ontological and conceptual basis of these metaphysical constructions; in God, infinity and finitude even embrace all of the metaphysical constructions at once.

³¹ Whitehead, *AI*, 257.

³² “Importance,” says Whitehead in *The Modes of Thought*, “arises from this fusion of the *finite* and the *infinite*” (A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* [New York: Free Press, 1966], 79).

³³ Whitehead, *MG*, 105.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 112 f.

possibility.”³⁶ Finally, even *God* appears as a “characterization of the infinite in terms of finitude.”³⁷ The Pythagorean region of thought occupies Whitehead’s interest because 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. This search for such an understanding is the definition of philosophy.”³⁸

(3) The Manifestation of the Pythagorean Puzzle

Unboundedness and Limitation lead to the question, how Patterns and Values, Mathematics and the Good, belong together. This, indeed, expresses the Pythagorean puzzle. For Whitehead, mathematics in the most general sense is understood as the study of patterns of all kinds and appearances. How patterns relate to the actual world of passing facts is the major project of Whitehead’s philosophy: “All value is a gift of finitude which is the necessary condition for activity. Also activity means the origination of patterns of assemblage, and mathematics is the study of pattern. Here we find the essential clue which relates mathematics to the study of the good, and the study of the bad.”³⁹ The basic problem of philosophy now is the *reference* of the Pythagorean “mathematical infinities” to the “infinitude of things,” and “the relevance of the notion of varieties of multiplicities to the infinitude of things.”⁴⁰ This explains Whitehead’s restless admonition to *intersect* infinity with the finitude of events, things, enjoyments and values. “The superstitious awe of infinitude has been the bane of philosophy. The infinite has no properties. All value is a gift of finitude. . . .”⁴¹

³⁶ Whitehead, *Imm.*, 87; cf. MG, 109.

³⁷ Whitehead, MG, 107.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁹ Whitehead, MG, 105-106; cf. 109; cf. Whitehead, *Imm.*, 79 f.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

IV. The Pythagorean Puzzle in Plato's Lost Lecture

The Pythagorean region of Plato's Lost Lecture "On the Good" is concerned with the question, How to relate Infinity and Finitude, Number and Value?⁴² Although the lecture was lost, fortunately, it was of such an extraordinary excitement that the participants and their disciples handed it down to us. What made this lecture so outstanding in the eyes of the listeners was Plato's exciting but dangerous Pythagorean position that *destabilized* and even *destroyed* the positions for which Plato became famous. Plato's "Pythagorean turn" signifies nothing less than his intention not to hold his major positions anymore.

(1) Plato's Standard Position on Ideas

Plato's *middle dialogues* presented a position he was known for ever since, namely that Ideas are simple, independent, and absolute causes for what happens within the changing world. They are *simple*, that is, free of contradiction and without composition.⁴³ Ideas are *absolute*, depending solely on themselves, self-sufficient, self-contained, and self-sustaining.⁴⁴ Ideas *cause* things to be what they are by participation.⁴⁵ The knowledge of Ideas is *immediate*. In a process of recollection, the Ideas are spontaneously recognized, but within a procedure of "unmixing" them from sensations or dialectically laying them bare apart from them.⁴⁶ As Aristotle summarizes, Ideas are universal, independent, and separate entities.⁴⁷

⁴² For Whitehead, this relation remains "a basic truth of philosophy" (ibid., 97).

⁴³ Plato, *Phaedo*, 80b; *Protagoras*, 330e; *Phaedo*, 78c.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Euthyphro*, 6d; *Phaedo*, 78c-80b.

⁴⁵ Plato, *Meno*, 81e; *Theaetetus*, 147b; 148d; *Euthyphro*, 6d; *Meno*, 72c; *Phaedo*, 100b-101c.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Meno*, 85d; *Phaedo*, 66; *Republic*, 532a.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1078b 30-32.

(2) Plato's Deconstruction of his Middle Stances

In the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophistes*, Plato began to break with his "standard position." In the *Parmenides* 131a-134e, a first, major break-down happened. Within several arguments, Plato struck his earlier positions to death. Here are four of his arguments: *First Argument*: He argues against the *clear-cut reality* of the Ideas. If the Ideas are just what they are without inclusion of their opposites, how should they be able to cope with the plurality in the world? *Second Argument*: In the first of the so-called "third man" arguments, Plato strikes his earlier claim that Ideas are *singular*. Although a singular Idea (Largeness) shall be the expression of all participating things (large things) in their specific character (being large), this is not possible, since Largeness *itself* would have to be "large." Since Largeness and all large things together would found a new group of "large things," what seems to be simple and "one"—the Idea—suddenly turns out to be "*indefinitely multitudinous*".⁴⁸ *Third Argument*: In the second "third man" argument, Plato demonstrates the insufficiency of the idea of *participation*. If sensible things are similar, that is, expressing the same character, this is because their character resembles the Idea itself. What follows is an infinite regress, since we must assume a new similarity *between* the character of similar things *and* the Idea to which this character is itself similar ($L1+1=L2+1=L3$). Thus, participation cannot be a matter of likeness. *Fourth Argument*: Ideas are not *absolute*. Since what is totally separated from this world, consequently, is not knowable at all.⁴⁹

Clearly, the chain of arguments now really begins to injure the *nerve* of the Platonic Ideas. Ideas were introduced to ground human knowledge. If a separate, real single existence of Ideas cannot be held anymore, then the whole enterprise has broken down. This was Plato's new situation.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 132b.

⁴⁹ First argument: Plato, *Parmenides*, 131a-e ; second argument: *ibid.*, 132b-c; third argument: *ibid.*, 132d-133a; fourth argument: *ibid.*, 133a-c.

(3) Plato's Construction of a Pythagorean Region

A new departure was needed; and three of Plato's late works stand for his new orientation, namely the *Parmenides*' second part, the *Philebus*, and his lost lecture "On the Good." Especially the *Philebus* represents Plato's only explicit statement towards the *general relativity* of the Ideas, their *togetherness* with sensible things, and their *reconstruction* from more ultimate principles.⁵⁰ But what, in that context, was the position of the lecture "On the Good?" And why, for most of the time, was it held to be the center of an unwritten, "second" line of teaching of Plato, a kind of "esoteric opus?" Three points may explain this: (1) The lecture is *lost*. It is known through Aristotle, his reference to other attendees like Speusippus and Xenophanes, and by stunning commentaries of philosophers like Porphyry or Simplicius (in the sixth century). According to him, even the group of exquisite listeners found the lecture to be of "enigmatic utterances."⁵¹ (2) The *ingredients* of this lecture can be reconstructed according to Aristotle's account in *De anima* 404b, *Physics* 187a, 209b, and *Metaphysics* 987a-988a, 991b, 1091b; namely: (a) *Numbers* are composed of two principles: "Unity" and "the Great and the Small." (b) The sensible World is composed of "Ideas" and "the Great and Small." (c) *Ideas* themselves are *composed* by "Unity" and "the Great and the Small." (d) Ideas *are* numbers. (e) Most strangely for the listeners: *Unity is* the Good. (3) Plato's *new position* consists in the following stances: (a) Ideas are not *simple*, but ontologically *composed*. (b) Ideas are not *separated* from the sensible World, but composed of *the same* principles. (c) Ideas do not *cause* anything, they are *numbers* or *measures*. (d) We have knowledge of the *becoming*, because Ideas and sensible things are generated from the *same principles*. (e) The *ultimate principle* of what determines Ideas *and* sensible things likewise is the Good. The Good is no Idea; the Good is the "Unity," the principle of unification and measurement, of rhythm and determination. The Good *founds* Limitation.

⁵⁰ Now we find Plato even talking of a knowledge of *becoming*, cf. Plato, *Philebus*, 61d-e.

⁵¹ H. Diels, ed., *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* IX (Berlin 1882), 453:30.

In the Pythagorean region of thought, nothing remains the same: Old principles and categories suddenly decompose; new principles and categories begin their reign. After all deconstruction, only two principles remain: *Unity* and *the Great and the Small*.⁵²

(4) The Core of the Pythagorean Puzzle

In his meticulous study on *Plato's Late Ontology* (1983), Kenneth Sayre discovered the strong connections between Plato's lost lecture and his written opus. Following his analysis, I shall draw out the hallmarks of Plato's Pythagorean puzzle. All begins with the second, critical part of the *Parmenides*. In the "third man" arguments, Plato states that the seemingly self-contained unity of the Ideas really vanishes in an *infinite regress* that Plato named the "*indefinitely multitudinous*": the "*ápeiron plêtos*." "One prominent meaning assigned to *ápeiron plêtos* there is that roughly of 'unlimited manyness,' with 'unlimited' understood in the sense of "without definite limits or boundaries"—hence 'indefinite multitude'."⁵³ Plato's term leads us straight to the very beginning of Greek philosophy, namely Anaximander's *ápeiron*, "the Limitless."⁵⁴ It stands for the *indefinite, boundless multitude within an infinite regress*. Ideas, Plato wants to say, are not what they were introduced for, namely *limits for differentiation*. Instead, they are nothing but *indefinite factors*.

Why, then, is the experienced world in fact *structured*, having limits and boundaries? Now Plato improves his middle stances with three important positions: (a) Ideas are themselves constructed of *more fundamental principles*: "Unity" and "the Large and the Small." (b) These principles mean that of "Limit" and "Unlimited," respectively. (c) They relate fruitfully in creating a structured world.⁵⁵

⁵² Cf. McKirahan, *PBS*, 102.

⁵³ K. M. Sayre, *Plato's Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved* (Princeton University Press, 1983), 29; hereafter cited as *PLO*. Cf. Plato, *Parmenides*, 133a; cf. 132b.

⁵⁴ Cf. McKirahan, *PBS*, 37. Cf. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Orgins of Western Speculation* (Princeton University Press, 1991), 145.

⁵⁵ Cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 137c; cf. Sayre, *PLO*, 184. For Sayre, the meaning of the *Unlimited* and its *Limit* reveals itself, when we identify "the Unlimited" of Plato's

Plato realizes that the Parmenidean “Way of Truth” (*fragment 8*) does not lead to an understanding of the world “as it is.” Plato, instead, prefers a *Pythagorean* way, namely that “*Limit*” and “*the Unlimited*” are the ultimate ontological basis for all possible principles yet to constitute the world.⁵⁶ Hence, the “*Limit*” and the “*Unlimited*” originate a chain of eight principles, disposed in opposition to Parmenides’s “eight truths,” namely shape, place, motion and rest, the same and the other, the similar and the dissimilar, the equal and the unequal, the temporal order.⁵⁷ Plato claims: *Only* when there is a *Limit* reacting with the *Unlimited* *then* there can be *shape*, which is in turn a necessary condition for things having a *place*; *motion* as the change of place; *rest* as remaining in a certain place—and so on. That is to say: If the first principles, namely the Limiting of the Unlimited, are not intersecting, nothing happens at all.⁵⁸

How does the *interplay* of the Unlimited and the Limit work? According to Alexander Polyhistor, it works as a *creation*-process:

From the unit and the indefinite dyade springs numbers; from numbers, points; from points, lines; from lines, plane figures; from plane figures, solid figures; from solid figures, sensible

Lecture,” namely “the Great and the Small,” with the “the Great and the Small” as “the Indefinite Dyade.” Although, what Aristotle referred to as “the Great and Small” (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987b) or, occasionally, as the “Indefinite Dyade” (cf. *ibid.*, 1082a), *cannot* be found in Plato’s written opus, these concepts contain intimate connections to Plato’s *Philebus*. The *ápeiron plêtos* of the *Parmenides* is the *ápeiron* of the *Philebus*. The relation of the *One* (Unity) and the *many* (multitude) of the *Parmenides* (164c) reappears in the *Philebus* (23e) as that of the *Limit* and the *Unlimited* (Sayre, *PLO*, 125, 133). “The Unlimited” of the *Philebus* is what Aristotle, comparing Plato to the Pythagoreans (*ibid.*, 149), referred to as “the Great and the Small,” or the “Indefinite Dyade” (*ibid.*, 133-155).

⁵⁶ Cf. Plato, *Parmenides*, 137e-141d; cf. McKirahan, *PBS*, 101.

⁵⁷ Cf. Plato, *Parmenides*, 137d; 138a-b; 138b-139b; 139b-e; 139e-140b; 140b-d; 140d-141d.

⁵⁸ Cf. Sayre, *PLO*, 50-54. The four principles remaining in the *Philebus* are Limit, the Unlimited, Mixture, and Cause (23e). Limit and the Unlimited name the first principles, Mixture (as Forms and sensible objects likewise) and Cause name “something” proceeding this mixture—like the Demiurg of the *Timaeus* 29e-47e.

bodies, the elements of which are four: fire, water, earth, and air; these elements interchange and turn into one another completely, and combine to produce a cosmos animate, intelligent, spherical. . . .⁵⁹

This Pythagorean way, hence, contains a three-fold operative order: (a) The basis is *the Unlimited*, the *ápeiron*, or the *ápeiron plêtos*. It is “a numberless multitude,” devoid of any “infinite series of positive integers, . . . or any number series whatever.” It means an indefinite abyss “in the sense of lacking identity.”⁶⁰ (b) The concrete World, on the other hand, is an *infinite multitude* already *transformed* into a structured series of *numbers*.⁶¹ (c) What performs the structuring of *the Unlimited* is nothing but *tò hén*, the (capitalized) *Unity*, called *the Limit*. It operates as the “imposition of a limiting principle within the multitude,” thereby creating “a number series by participation of its members in *péras* or limit.”⁶² “One of the roles prominently assigned to *tò hén* (Unity) in that context is to provide a limit enabling “manyness” to be differentiated into identifiable parts.”⁶³

What, then, are numbers? Numbers name the composition of *the Unlimited*—the “Indefinite Dyade” or “the Great and the Small” of the Lost Lecture, or “the becoming more or less” of the *Philebus* 24e—and *the Limit*.⁶⁴ The *interaction* of the Limit and the Unlimited

⁵⁹ McKirahan, *PBS*, 101.

⁶⁰ Sayre, *PLO*, 55.

⁶¹ McKirahan, *PBS*, 103.

⁶² Sayre, *PLO*, 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁴ “Dyade” stands for the methods Eudoxus used to form *ratios* of integers to perform an approximation to a certain number on the continuum from both sides of a fraction, the greater and the smaller. See, for instance, the approximation of the magnitude of the square root of 2 (= 1.41421...): We can construct proportions between this magnitude, called C and, say, another magnitude, called R, representing a numeral unit, so that the 1st C is falling between the 1st and the 2nd R, the 10th C between the 14th and the 15th R, the 100th C between the 141th and 142th R, the 1000th C between the 1414th and the 1415th R, and so forth, increasing the accuracy of the sought value infinitely and continuously (Sayre, *PLO*, 105). Cf. Diels, *Commentaria*, 248.1. In other words: The interaction has a

creates “unique limits imposed upon continua of progressively larger and smaller constituents. . . . [T]he Great and the Small is a continuum that admits division into exclusive sets of greater and smaller factors, and a given number is identical with an unique segmentation of the continuum. By virtue of this uniqueness—its participation in Unity, that is to say—a point on the continuum of the Great and the Small takes on the identity of a particular number.”⁶⁵ Numbers, therefore, are not just integers, but even magnitudes studied in geometry (lines, plane figures, solids) or temporal durations; they perform *the imposition of a limit within a continuum generating definite multiplicities, structures, sequences, rhythms, and proportions*. There is no reason why such a process should not take on even *qualitative* character (cf. temperature-intervals: colder/hotter). In *Philebus* 25e, Plato points out that *everything* that comes under a *péras*, a limit, submits to “number” or to *métron*, measure.⁶⁶

What allows for a world to be generated from the Unlimited? It is *the Good, the essence of Unity*. Hence, in the *Philebus*, the hallmark of the Good is neither intelligence nor pleasure but *measure*. This is why the listeners of Plato’s lecture “On the Good” were profoundly disturbed when Plato identified the Pythagorean Unity (in generating measures) as the Good and the Good by *mathematics*.⁶⁷

V. The Decomposing Face of Whitehead’s Philosophy of Organism

Whitehead’s works of 1941 disclose the Platonic intertwining of infinity and finitude as a triadic movement of *unbounded infinity*, a *limiting principle* and an *infinite multiplicity of finites*.⁶⁸

mathematical basis, namely within the emerging concept of irrational numbers as unlocked in Euclid’s and Eudoxus’s work; cf. Sayre, *PLO*, 103-108.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁷ Cf. Plato, *Philebus* 66a. Cf. Diels, *Commentaria*, 122.13-14.

⁶⁸ As is well known, much of Whitehead’s knowledge of Plato came from the work of the influential and important Plato-exegesis of A. E. Taylor, especially in his *Plato: The Man and His Work* (1926) (cf., e.g., Whitehead, *PR*, 42). As Sayre

Here, Heidegger's "ontological Difference" reappears as the difference of *unbounded infinity* and the whole *process of limitation*. Whitehead asks: If *unbounded infinity* has no properties, is mere vacancy, and "cannot be distinguished from nonentity," how may infinity be the ultimate source of *any* being whatsoever? On the other hand, if "infinity is meaningless" and "value is a gift of finitude," how does *limitation* create the world of finitude, of value and meaning?⁶⁹ Whitehead answers with his most astonishing move: the *reciprocal intersection* of infinity and finitude. All infinities are an abstraction from the finite *and* all finites are an abstraction from "the totality of the Universe"⁷⁰ —*vice versa*. Whitehead takes it this way:

. . . 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.⁷¹

proposes in the context of interpretation of "the Great and Small," it was exactly Taylor's account, which will come next to his own findings (Sayre, *PLO*, 100). Taylor's interpretation of "the Great and Small" precisely underlines the fact that it is an infinite series of fractions appropriating a limit (in this case the square root of 2) that defines the concept of "the Great and Small" (*ibid.*, 101). First, the mathematical approach to the problem and, secondly, particularly the view that the "Indefinite Dyade" generates "numbers" by imposition of a "Unity" (*ibid.*). The three-fold scheme that we have extracted in Sayre's analysis is exactly that which Whitehead could have known through Taylor. For the triadic movement cf. Whitehead, *Imm.* 77. Whitehead's texts follow Plato's lost lecture: (a) Patterns are complexities composed by infinity and finitude (Whitehead, *MG* 101, 105 f). (b) The sensible world is constructed by unbound infinity and patterns (*ibid.*; Whitehead, *Imm.*, 82). (c) Forms or patterns are numbers or measures, dependent on infinity and finitude (Whitehead, *MG*, 103, 111). (d) The Good is Unity (*ibid.*, 109; Whitehead, *Imm.*, 88 f).

⁶⁹ Cf. Whitehead, *MG*, 103, 105-106; *Imm.*, 82.

⁷⁰ Cf. Whitehead, *Imm.*, 77, 82; *MG*, 104, 106.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

This is really the core of Whitehead's Pythagorean puzzle: *Infinity and Limitation "create" concrete reality, but—in the same moment—are derived by their own "creations," which in turn are derived from their interplay, which in turn create their interplay—and so on, infinitely moving.* Such "infinite movement of evanescence" has, in turn, major consequences for the principles that have governed Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism so far: It renders them *derivative* from the interplay of infinity and finitude.

(1) The Limit is the World itself

For Plato, *the Limit* is the principle of *Unity* that generates measures, forms, and sensible objects. In Whitehead's universe, there is no highest, abstract, and mysterious Limit *beyond* the process of becoming. Beyond the "concrete unity of experience" only abstraction reigns. *True Unity happens only as the Unification of finitude with infinity. Unity is the Finite; the Limit is a gift of finitude.* Since the Limit is the Good, the Good is no Idea ordering all measures, rather it is *identical* with the *whole becoming body of the World itself*. *Unity originates* within the process of the becoming Universe.⁷²

(2) Potentiality is created

In the process of unification, persistent character and pure potentiality are produced. They arise in "the awakening of infinitude to finite activity."⁷³ The process of limiting the unbounded infinity generates not only new finite entities, but is "the origination

⁷² Cf. Whitehead, *Imm.*, 90; *MG*, 112 f. Thus, although Whitehead thinks that God's "existence is founded in Value" and, therefore, is "the essential unification of the Universe" (Whitehead, *Imm.*, 90), God would not be the Limit but only an abstraction if God was not infinite *and* finite; cf. *ibid.*, 106 f.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 111.

of patterns.”⁷⁴ Now, in the final stage of his ontology, Whitehead’s thesis: “All value is a gift of finitude” exhibits a totally new flavor: namely, that *all* actualities (not only God) structure the unbounded infinity, thereby generating patterns, possibilities, and novelties.⁷⁵

(3) Creativity is energized

In his final approach to Creativity of 1941, Whitehead *derives* it from the interplay of infinity and finitude.⁷⁶ Hence, a paradoxical situation occurs. The Limit limits the unbounded infinity, thereby *generating* “activity,” that is Creativity.⁷⁷ Thus, the one element

⁷⁴ Ibid., 105 f. Cf. R. Rorty, “Matter and Event,” in *Explorations in Whitehead’s Philosophy*, L. S. Ford and G. L. Kline, eds., (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 91: The “total multiplicity of Platonic form is not ‘given’” (Whitehead, *PR*, 43). This insight emerged not later than with *Science and the Modern World*, when the relations between eternal objects were desystematized toward a process of actual decision (at least of the limiting principle, that is, God) (Whitehead, *SMW*, 157-179). There are no pre-established patterns but only decisions of actualities. Since “unrelated” eternal objects are “indistinguishable from nonentity” (Whitehead, *PR*, 257) and “[n]onentity is nothingness” (ibid., 46), there is no “prior multiplicity of simple eternal objects, in any sense of ‘prior,’ whether temporal, generic or logical”; cf. L. S. Ford, “Neville on the One and the Many,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 10 (1972): 80.

⁷⁵ Whitehead, *MG*, 105 f.; cf. 112 f; Whitehead, *Imm.*, 82.

⁷⁶ Creativity is an abstraction (ibid., 80, 90); it is without character (Whitehead, *MG*, 105 f) and it is activity (ibid., 105 f, 112 f; Whitehead, *Imm.*, 90). In the first place, however, it is unbound *infinity* (ibid.; Whitehead, *MG* 105, 106, 112 f). However, Whitehead’s infinity is not only an indefinite continuum, but *pure activity* and *pure spontaneity* (Whitehead, *PR*, 31; *AI*, 258). In a certain sense, Creativity is an abstraction—nothing despite and besides its embodiment in actualities (Whitehead, *PR*, 7). Despite having no characteristics on its own at all, thereby resembling Aristotle’s “prime matter” (ibid., 31), it is the *activity* of novelty (ibid., 21), *whereby* actualities are conditioned *as* actualities (ibid., 20).

⁷⁷ The “vagueness of the praxis” is *energized* by patterns (Whitehead, *MG*, 104); “flux” is raised above the “futility of infinity” by patterns which *generate the active energy* of finite assemblages (ibid., 105); finite value (that is, finite actuality) appears as the “necessary condition” of *activity* (ibid., 105 f); the “unbounded universe” is embodied by the *activity of finitude* (ibid., 106); emphasizing “sheer infinity” without limitation means robbing it of *energetic activity* (ibid., 106 f); “the characterization of the infinite in terms of finitude” allow us to conceive *energy*

generates the other: “All characteristics peculiar to actualities are modes of emphasis whereby *finitude vivifies the infinite*. In this way Creativity involves the production of value-experience, by the *inflow from the infinitude to the finite*, deriving special character from the details and the totality of the finite pattern. This is the abstraction involved in the creation of any *actuality, with its union of finitude with infinity*.”⁷⁸ Again: “finitude vivifies infinity” ($f \Rightarrow i$), “Creativity involves . . . the inflow from the infinitude to the finite” ($i \Rightarrow f$), and this all happens for the sake of “actuality, with its union of finitude and infinity” ($i + f$).

(4) Immanence is God

We are left with a final duality, that between infinity and finitude, and God appears to stand for *their final integration*. Since the integration of all differences has to be *actual*, and all actuality is the “union of finitude and infinity,”⁷⁹ Whitehead understands God as *actual integration of infinity and finitude*.⁸⁰ A God who could not integrate the finite would remain external to the World process. Such a God would not attain relevance in the World, because sheer infinity is without energetic activity. Instead, infinity must be energized by actuality.⁸¹

Buddhism emphasized the sheer infinity of the divine principle, and thereby its practical influence has been robbed

(*ibid.*); patterns help in the “awakening of infinitude to finite *activity*” (*ibid.*, 111); patterns of actualities are modes of emphasis, “whereby finitude vivifies itself into finite *activity*” (*ibid.*, 112 f).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 112-113; italics added.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 112 f.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 106 f. Since *Science and the Modern World* Whitehead already introduced God as the supreme *Limit*. Not later than in *Religion in the Making*, he has realized that this *Limit* has to be an *actual* synthesis itself.

⁸¹ Cf. Whitehead, *AI*, 236; *MG*, 106 f., 109. Whenever this balance was brought into peril, the notion of God had to fail, as it did in Spinoza’s “fundamental infinitude” (*ibid.*, 106), Leibniz’s “substratum of Deistic infinitude” (*ibid.*, 106 f), or the Buddhist emphasis on “sheer infinity of the divine principle” (*ibid.*, 109).

of energetic activity. . . . Christianity has been concerned with the characterization of the infinite in terms of finitude. It was impossible to conceive energy in other terms. The very notion of goodness was conceived in terms of . . . the limitation of deity.⁸²

Whitehead solves the integration of infinity and finitude in terms of Plato's most disturbing equation: the Limit = The Good. When we conceive Unity essentially as *imposition* of a Limit—precisely when would a Limit not be “imposed” on the unbounded infinity?⁸³ This could be the case, when we allow for a Unity/Limit of finitude and infinity that is not their *integration*, but ultimately their *generation*. God would be visioned as the primordial decision *in favor of* the “existence” of both infinity and finitude. In God, then, infinity and finitude do not re-act, as in every other actuality, but they originate. This origination is precisely God's act, in which God is the originating Limit. This is God's *self-limitation*, which is God's goodness.⁸⁴ In God, the ontological difference is an

⁸² Ibid., 106-107.

⁸³ Ibid., 103. In his *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead developed his doctrine of Immanence as a cure against *imposed duality* (Whitehead, *AI*, 129). The pivotal point is that when there is no “outside,” there is no independent external *imposition* either, that is no “external creator” (ibid., 236). Within this profound theological background, Whitehead evaluated his doctrine of Immanence as *the* important improvement of Christian theology over against Plato (ibid., 167). Instead of an internal “second-rated God of the World, who is a mere Icon” of an external Creator, the Alexandrian theology integrated all aspects into a “mutual immanence” of God and the World. The Doctrine of the Trinity, of the two Natures of Christ, and the immanence of the Spirit in the world interpreted this important improvement (ibid., 168). Imposition of a limit would disturb this immanence.

⁸⁴ Whitehead, *MG*, 109. The “primordial envisagement” of God indicates the primordial activity of God as God's *self-limitation*, self-creation as actuality, and the Limit as that in which God “creates” possibilities. This “primordial envisagement is a creation *ex nihilo* in the sense that there is no one thing or many things from which it emerges”; cf. Ford, “Neville on the One,” 81. Only *retrospectively* can we distinguish a primordial differentiation between infinity and finitude, which is the basis for all other actual unity of infinity and finitude—the World (ibid., 112 f; Whitehead, *Imm.*, 80). When Whitehead says that God's

abstraction. In God, the existence of the difference between infinity and finitude is God's decision. In God, it is not the *unification* of infinity and finitude, but rather the *origination* of the *Difference*.

VI. The Orgiastic Ground of Deleuze's Philosophy of Difference

If there is a difference between Deleuze, on the one hand, and Plato and Whitehead, on the other, it is this: While Plato and Whitehead came to think the Pythagorean Puzzle at an *extreme* point in the *corpus* of their thought, Deleuze really *dwells within* the dangerous Pythagorean region, namely the moment of appearance and disappearance of the naked Difference itself. Nothing else "makes" a difference anymore, if not Difference itself.⁸⁵ And "Difference in Itself" appears from Indifference, that is, the mystery of "the undifferentiated abyss, the black nothingness, the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolved—but also the white nothingness, the once more calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations like scattered members. . . ."⁸⁶

"existence is founded in Value" (Imm. 90), the deepest interpretation may be that God is the Supreme Limit of Godself, the self-limitation that *grounds* the "essential unification of the Universe" (ibid., 90), the goodness of the universe, its process and totality, from which there "is no escape" (ibid., 80). Then (and in this sense), God is the creator of the world *ex nihilo* by God's *primordial self-limitation*. Cf. R. Faber, *Prozeßtheologie: Zu Ihrer Würdigung und kritischen Erneuerung* (Mainz: Matthias Gruenewald, 2000), 524-549.

⁸⁵ In their philosophical development, both Plato and Whitehead reached a point where their major stances seem to disappear. Plato's Ideas, his ultimate distinct, independent, and unmoved entities vanish. Whitehead's organic universe, founded on Creativity, God, Forms, and Plurality, moves (again) into an infinite (conceptual) process (of principles). All distinct principles collapse, leaving us back with nothing than what Deleuze names so well "a single and unique 'total' moment, simultaneously the moment of evanescence and production of difference" (Deleuze, *DR*, 42). But in the same moment, a new movement of infinity and finitude appears: the Platonic process of the Good, Whitehead's organic/chaotic process of Beauty and Evil (Whitehead, *AI*, 259), the movement of Imperfection (ibid., 257). Cf. Deleuze, *DR*, 28.

⁸⁶ Deleuze, *DR*, 28.

Difference does not *negate* the dark abyss and it is, for that matter, not just a state of determination. Difference *affirms* the Infinite with a “*single voice*,” the *univocity* of being, precisely in differentiating itself.⁸⁷ Determination does not measure precise *unities* (Forms, as in Plato and Whitehead). Determination is *Difference as such*. Now, unity *is* Difference, and that makes “difference . . . monstrous.”⁸⁸ “This difference . . . *as such* is cruelty. . . . In truth, all form . . . ceases. . . . When the ground rises to the surface, the human face decomposes in this mirror in which both determinations and the indeterminate combine in a single determination which ‘makes’ the difference.”⁸⁹

Here, Deleuze’s “infinite movement of evanescence” becomes *orgiastic*. In Pythagorean terms: The dark abyss of the Infinite Dyade (“the Large and the Small”) not only dissolves all Forms (as in Plato); in the light of the Difference *as such*, “the Large” and “the Small” themselves *dissolve*. They represent only “extreme forms” of the maximum and the minimum. The *difference of the ground* pushes the extreme forms of the small and the large to *collapse* into the infinite. Deleuze writes:

It seems that the extreme can be defined by the infinite. The infinite, in this sense, even signifies the identity of the small and the large, the identity of the extremes. When representation discovers the infinite within itself, it no longer appears as *organic* representation but as *orgiastic* representation: it discovers within itself the limits of the organized; tumult, restlessness and passion underneath

⁸⁷ Ibid., 35; Cf. T. May, “Difference and Unity in Gilles Deleuze,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, eds., C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, (New York Routledge: 1994), 38 f.

⁸⁸ Deleuze, *DR*, 29. “Difference in Itself” is “the Whole,” either in extending its benediction to its parts or in reflecting back the misery of the differences of its parts (ibid., 42). When “determination makes itself one, by virtue of maintaining a unilateral . . . relation to the indeterminate,” Difference arises—and this “difference is monstrous” (ibid., 29), cruel, of uncensored power.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 28.

apparent calm. It rediscovers monstrosity. [Now, Difference is the] *ground* in relation to which it no longer matters whether one is before a relative minimum or maximum, a large or a small, nor before a beginning or an end, since the two coincide in this ground which is a unique ‘total’ moment, simultaneously the moment of evanescence and production of difference, of disappearance and appearance.⁹⁰

We have again come back to Deleuze’s introductory quotation stating the Pythagorean puzzle. Its power of relentless “infinite movement of evanescence” at which difference both vanishes and arises, now, somehow begins to explain many of Deleuze’s moves. Thus, finishing the investigation, I shall name three of them.

(1) Where Ground is Difference, Impossibility is no Stranger

In *The Fold*, Deleuze appreciates Whitehead’s “chaotic world [of] divergent series [that] are endlessly tracing bifurcating paths.”⁹¹ Such a world has *orgiastic* structures; it “is a ‘chaosmos’,”⁹² created of pre-individual singularities.⁹³ In *Difference and Repetition*, the measuring of the infinite—that what Deleuze calls the imposition of *nomos*—genuinely happens by *nomadic distribution* of singularities on a plane. “Here, there is no longer a division of that which is distributed but rather a division among those who distribute *themselves* in an open space—a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits.”⁹⁴ Singularities distribute no stability, but they

⁹⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁹¹ Deleuze, *F*, 81.

⁹² Ibid. Deleuze even recognizes Whitehead’s integration of God into the “chaosmic” process, when he says: “Even God desists from being a Being who compares worlds and chooses the richest compossible. He becomes Process, a process that at once affirms impossibilities and passes through them” (ibid.).

⁹³ Deleuze, *LS*, 103.

⁹⁴ Deleuze, *DR*, 36; cf. *LS*, 102.

measure the world of a “meta-stable” plane, where they live virtually as *pure events*.⁹⁵

(2) The Duality of Time

In a certain sense we may say that time is nothing but the process by which Infinity and Finitude, the Whole and the Infinite Dyade energize world. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze articulates two modes of time: *Chronos*, the time of the present without past and future, only of more or less extension. Chronos is the time of the things, of the *actual* world. It extends to the notion of the *Whole* in the sense of a God as infinite extension, uniting the whole world as present. *Aion*, on the other hand, is the time of the past and the future. Like the *Infinite Dyade*, it indefinitely divides every present into a past and a future. Aion, the time of the pure event, is never present.⁹⁶ “Briefly, *there are two times, one of which is composed only of interlocking presents; the other is constantly decomposed into elongated pasts and futures. . . . One . . . measures the movement of bodies . . . , the other is pure straight line at the surface, incorporeal, unlimited, an empty form of time, independent of all matter.*”⁹⁷ Here, Deleuze restates the Pythagorean puzzle as the conflict of “Aion versus Chronos,”⁹⁸ that is, of things and events, monads and nomads, depth and surface.

(3) Ground is Surface

When the ground rises, the Pythagorean terminology breaks down: the Infinite Dyade has no maximum and minimum any more; the Whole represents no essence beyond the process of

⁹⁵ Deleuze, *LS*, 103. Cf. C. V. Boundas, “Deleuze: Serialization and Subject-Formation,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1994), 104.

⁹⁶ Cf. P. Canning, “The Crack of Time and the Ideal Game,” in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, C. V. Boundas and D. Olkowski, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1994), 74, 90-93. Cf. Deleuze, *LS*, 88, 107, 162-164, 164-168.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62; italics in the text.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

nomadic limitation. Limit/*nomos* expresses nothing other than the *process* of limitation, that is, of nomadic distribution. Thus, the world appears as “surface.” Surface, that is the world that has no essence, no depth, which is pure event. Surface is the “between,” the birth of Difference. That explains Deleuze’s stark formulation that when the “ground rises to the surface, the human face decomposes.”⁹⁹ When the dangerous ground rises, the presumption that the ground was essentially human disappears and the true depth appears—that of the pure surface. The world has no depth; depth is only a projection of the human *nomos* into the Whole. The world is seen right when we look at it as a *mirror* in which depth is only a reflection of the pure surface. This world is *empty*. If we would try to penetrate the surface, thereby misinterpreting the reflections in the mirror as depth, we would find—nothing. This is Deleuze’s solution to the Pythagorean puzzle: “Everything now returns to the surface.”¹⁰⁰ The surface is the interaction of the Whole and the Infinite Abyss. It has no existence; it is not Being. It *insists* only as “non-existing entity”; it expresses really *extra-Being*.¹⁰¹

Finally, Returning to the Pythagorean Puzzle

At different times, with different implications, and at different stages of their work, Plato, Whitehead, and Deleuze have discovered a new land—the Pythagorean region of thought. Its heart is the infinite movement of evanescence, of the appearance and disappearance of Difference.

Nevertheless, maybe the most stunning moment of this Puzzle is this: All three thinkers never credited Pythagoras for their

⁹⁹ Deleuze, *LS*, 37; *DR*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Deleuze, *LS*, 7; cf. *LS*, 10; *DR*, 28. Deleuze calls this surface both a “pre-individual transcendental field” (Deleuze, *LS*, 102) in his early *The Logic of Sense* or “the plane of immanence” (Deleuze, *WPh*, 35 ff) in his late *What is Philosophy?* This plane/surface really does not underlie the “illusion of transcendence,” cf. May, “Difference and Unity,” 40. Difference in Deleuze is not transcendence at all, but Immanence *as such*.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Deleuze, *LS*, 7, 180.

discovery. Although the listeners to Plato's lecture stated such a connection and we may find the same undercurrent in Whitehead and Deleuze, I may admit that the Pythagorean Puzzle is all the more puzzling, since it seems to be included in its own movement of evanescence. I may even admit this: Maybe the surface of Plato's, Whitehead's and Deleuze's thought mirror only what one finds to be reflected by them. But, then, at least this would be the Pythagorean Puzzle. Then we remain within this infinite movement of evanescence.