

AN APPRAISAL AND CRITIQUE

OF

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD'S

***PROCESS AND REALITY – CORRECTED
EDITION*** (1929 & 1978)

AND

JUSTUS BUCHLER'S

***METAPHYSICS OF NATURAL COMPLEXES,
SECOND, EXPANDED EDITION*** (1966 & 1990)

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1936 at Harvard (age 75)

**Alfred North Whitehead
(1861-1947)**



1979 © Dorothy McKenzie (age 65)

**Justus Buchler
(1914-1991)**

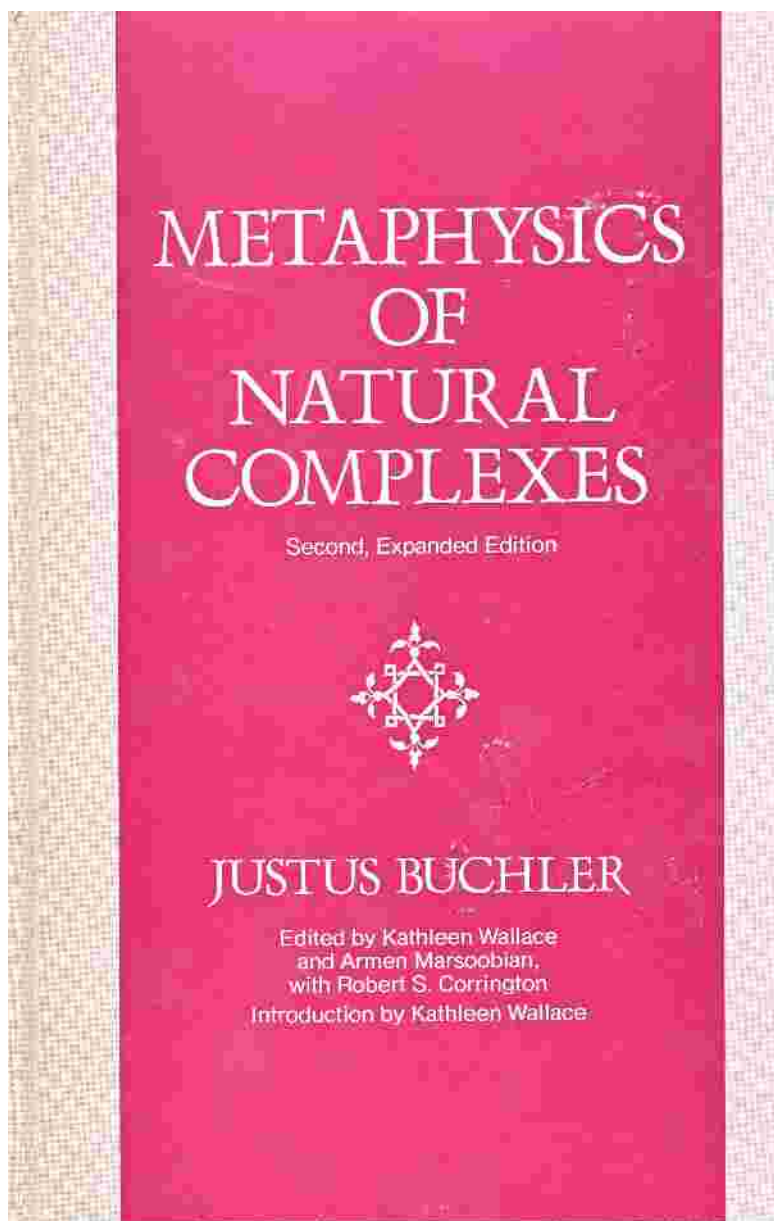
Process and Reality

CORRECTED EDITION



Alfred North Whitehead

Edited by David Ray Griffin
and Donald W. Sherburne



[I]
(On Ultimate Discriminanda)

Whitehead

The positive doctrine of these lectures is concerned with the becoming, the being, and the relatedness of ‘actual entities.’ An ‘actual entity’ is a *res vera* [true thing] in the Cartesian sense of that term; it is a Cartesian ‘substance,’ and not an Aristotelian ‘primary substance.’ But Descartes retained in his metaphysical doctrine the Aristotelian dominance of the category of ‘quality’ over that of ‘relatedness.’ In these lectures ‘relatedness’ is dominant over ‘quality.’ All relatedness has its foundation in the relatedness of actualities; and such relatedness is wholly concerned with the appropriation of the dead by the living—that is to say, with ‘objective immortality’ whereby what is divested of its own living immediacy becomes a real living component in other living immediacies of becoming. This is the doctrine that the creative advance of the world is the becoming, the perishing, and the objective immortalities of those things which jointly constitute *stubborn fact*. (xiii-xiv)

Buchler

Whatever is, in whatever way, is a natural complex. The entire sequel, in a sense, amplifies this statement. Relations, structures, processes, societies, human individuals, human products, physical bodies, words and bodies of discourse, ideas, qualities, contradictions, meanings, possibilities, myths, laws, duties, feelings, illusions, reasonings, dreams—all are natural complexes. All of these terms bespeak discriminations of some kind, and whatever is discriminated in any respect or in any degree is a natural complex (for short, “complex”). Precisely what kind of complex anything discriminated turns out to be; in what way its status, its location, its connections are to be interpreted; what traits it may or should be said to have after investigation or any other form of experience; is a distinct type of issue. Anything identified or discovered or imagined or discerned or inferred or sensed or posited or encountered or apprehended or made or acted upon—no matter whether deliberately or not—is here said to be “discriminated.” There are initial and advanced phases of discrimination. The stress here is on the initial or minimal phase—on that which was not and now is present for us to take account of, to deal with. (1)

Corrington

In what follows it will sometimes be difficult to shape a contrast or to establish some parallelism between the *process* and the *ordinal* perspectives. Each perspective manifests and embodies a strikingly different conception of metaphysics and of the nature of philosophy. That is, it is not merely the question of a list of categories “A” as they line up against a list of categories “B,” for there is, right from the start, two ideas of just what a generic category is and what is it asked to perform vis-à-vis subaltern and practical conceptions. Whitehead belongs to the grand tradition of cosmologists who cleave unto selected sciences in order to generalize from their categorial commitments to a more exhaustive and enveloping categorial scheme. Peirce is another cosmological thinker who wished to open out the *whence* and *whither* in the universe through his rich categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. Cosmological metaphysicians often embrace panpsychism, and with that move secured they can reintroduce final causality, both plural and single, into their conception of nature.

On the other side is Buchler who conceives of metaphysics more in the lineage of Santayana and Dewey. For all three thinkers, metaphysics is not about *the* order of orders, or the cosmic whence and whither, but is a primary means for helping us, as natural creatures working *in medias res*, to find what Dewey called “the generic traits of existence.” Note, both Whitehead and Buchler reject Neo-Kantian readings of where categories come from and how they are internally validated. Categories of generic scope are about nature in its full scope and depth, and not about our machine-like subjective “would be” that we might especially cherish and not want to let go. The doing of metaphysics is precisely the continual stretching and correcting of self-insulating subjectivity. In one sense the ordinal approach is humbler than the process cosmological approach, but that is misleading. Its refusals are profoundly grounded in a highly sophisticated perspective than is demonstrably less subjectivist than the process framework, although this is an oft-contested charge and we will revisit it later.

Now to the two texts. On the surface it might appear that each system is giving the same *type* of answer to the question: what serves as your ultimate ‘foundational,’ discriminandum? But this is not so. For Whitehead, continuing the long tradition of Western philosophy, his ultimate ‘atoms’ all have a set of identical traits as well as a set of individuated traits, however minimal. There is no atomic constituent that is not an actual occasion. Each occasion has: the ability for positive and negative prehensions, the capacity to animate a subjective aim and form, almost a hunger to welcome atemporal eternal entities into its self-constituting, and its abrupt transit from coalescing subjectivity to determinateness and finally superjection into the consequent nature of god. Without these traits an atomic order simply cannot be.

Buchler uses the concept of *natural complex* as his establishing category. But note that the complex (order) has no fixed *what*, no built-in relational network that allegedly touches every other order, and no sense of “well, now we’ve finally come to the bottom of it all.” For the ordinal perspective there is no bottom, no ultimate somethings where metaphysics and query can rest from their labors, and certainly no simples. For Hartshorne there must be simples because, by the principle of

contrasts, there are complex things, therefore simple things are entailed. But this is a purely verbal argument. One simply cannot envision something without traits, internal and relational, as such a bare creature would have absolutely no possible connection with anything else. Anything encountered in any way, is complex. The ordinal perspective consciously rejects the process view with its hierarchy among societies of increasing complexity, contrast, and intensity. Strictly, for the ordinal framework, one of Darwin's barnacles is just as complex as a fully actualizing human being in the midst of crafting a contrivance of great meaning and power. Each is complex in the way that it is complex and the retrograde notion of a hierarchy not only has no metaphysical warrant, but serves to move the human category from the descriptive, where it belongs, to the eulogistic and honorific where it doesn't belong.

[II]
(On Constituents and Subalterns)

Whitehead

'Actual entities'—also termed 'actual occasions'—are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space. But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of function, yet in the principles which actuality exemplifies all are on the same level. The final facts are, all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent. (18)

Buchler

From this bog we begin to emerge when we conceive of every trait as a natural complex, and therefore of every natural complex as constituted by subaltern complexes. Every complex (complex of traits) is thus a constituent of some other complex and includes other complexes as constituents of it. Stated in what will prove to be an important equivalent way, every complex is an order of complexes and belongs to an order of complexes. Every complex may belong to more than one order, and conceivably to any number of orders. (13)

Corrington

Here, the differences between the process and ordinal views seem less acute. The actual entity can have any ‘actual’ content from deity to an insubstantial event with vague edges and a brief tenure, while a natural complex can be, as stated by Buchler in [I], absolutely anything whatsoever. Yet a striking difference emerges when Whitehead frames his concept of actual occasion/entity in terms of the “final facts,” that are determinate concrescences, or about to be become, fixed concrescences, each with its (infinite) relationality established. His stress on complexity is, however, quite parallel to the ordinal view. But again, the Jamesean notion of a “drop of experience” imposes an antecedently decided “whatness” onto his ultimate discriminanda. Note that “whatness” need not denote the kind of static substance theory that Whitehead rejects, but can also denote his own notion of an ‘in motion’ determining a determined modality of experiencing/feeling. It is a ‘what’ because every actual entity in all of history must be this transit—no such transit, no actual entity.

For Buchler, there is no such thing as a “whatness” that must obtain in each and every natural complex. The ordinal view is the most radical critique of essence and *quidditas* of my acquaintance. A few natural complexes may be drops of experience, but most never are. Concrescences may or may not prevail, but if some do, not all orders must be so. Both views acknowledge that subaltern traits or orders obtain, but the process view insists on an infinite set of internal relations connecting all such subalterns ‘within’ the order of an actual occasion. An “external relation” obtains when at least two somethings (internal or external) impact on each, almost always through efficient causality. But an “internal relation,” an idea rejected by Buchler along with the simplistic notion of external relations, goes deeper down. In such a relation, the core relation in process thought, the two relata (internal or external) enter ‘inside’ of each other and strongly affect the full inner being of each other. Josiah Royce used Cantor’s set theories to develop something analogous with his own concept of infinite self-representative series. An internal relation is decidedly non-ordinal in that it has infinite, if perspectival, scope. Whitehead’s ultimate final actuality is internally relevant, via positive and negative prehension, to all immediately past (Hartshorne) actual occasions.

From the ordinal perspective, such an infinitizing of relationality, with the wheels obviously being greased by panpsychist commitments, represents just that kind of misguided cosmological metaphysics that will (gently) hammer nature into shape as the located and locating event universe in which my own society of occasions will *always* be at the relational center of it all. No matter how perspectival and short-lived are the indefinitely numerous occasions of my personal society, these rolling occasions still bind me to each and all and dramatically elevate my “value.”

[III]
(On the Scope of Relations)

Whitehead

The importance of negative prehensions arises from the fact, that (i) actual entities form a system, in the sense of entering into each other's constitutions, (ii) that by the ontological principle ["no actual entity, then no reason" 19] every entity is felt by some actual entity, (iii) that, as a consequence of (i) and (ii), every entity in the actual world of a concrescent actuality has some gradation of real relevance to that concrescence, (iv) that, in consequence of (iii), the negative prehension of an entity is a positive fact with its emotional subjective form, (v) there is a mutual sensitivity of the subjective forms of prehensions, so that they are not indifferent to each other, (vi) the concrescence issues in one concrete feeling, the satisfaction. (41-42)

Buchler

All natural complexes are relational, though not only relational. Any complex is related to others, though not to all others; and its traits are related to one another, though not necessarily each to every other. Whatever is, is in some relation: a given complex may be unrelated to another given complex, but not unrelated to any other. A complex related to another complex in one respect may not be related to it in another respect. There is no end to the relational "chain" of a complex; and there is no end to the explorability of a complex, whether in respect of its relational traits or any other. A relation as such is a complex, analyzable as all are. No complex is inherently "more of a complex" or "more complex" than any other, nor unqualifiedly "simpler" than any other. The whole is not simpler than a part, nor a part simpler than the whole. The genus is not less analyzable than a species, nor a species less analyzable than the genus. (24-25)

Corrington

The commentary given in [II] can now be further ramified. The process notion of non-indifferent, non-limitable, and non-irrelevant relationality again assumes that nature is 'such' that its indefiniteness can be characterized by one totalizing schema. As we will see, the idea that one can even have a 'theory' of nature, represents a hold-over from pre-Kantian cosmologies that claim to know the contour of whatever is in whatever way. Upgrading the (always moving) science does nothing to solve the metaphysical violence of a scheme of internal relations. Actual occasions may be an improvement over monads, but not by much. From the ordinal perspective, it's almost as if one says that it is nature's business as to what 'it' is, even if all discriminated complexes 'within' nature can be probed in some respect. Students and colleagues are often shocked by the idea that no order or complex will be relevant to all others. Indeed, the very idea of "all others" represents a sadly

standard and out-of-the-can way of satisfying a hunger for a totality, of course as a perspectival accumulating on-the-run totality, that simple isn't there. Process thought is deeply Napoleonic in ways that are resistant to illumination. Internal internal relations have the same fate. From the ordinal perspective any given subaltern will be relevant to some other subalterns, but it will not be relevant to all of them. Ordinality asks us to accept the fact that there is genuine diremption, non-relationality (that is, in *any* respect), sheer indifference (part of the Darwinian piece that the 'evolutionary' process frameworks tends to abject), and genuine spoliation and loss in nature.

[IV]

(On Atomicity)

Whitehead

This doctrine, that the final 'satisfaction' of an actual entity is intolerant of any addition, expresses the fact that every actual entity—since it is what it is—is finally its own reason for what it omits. In the real internal constitution of an actual entity there is always some element which is contrary to an admitted element. Here 'contrary' means the impossibility of joint entry in the same sense. In other words, indetermination has evaporated from 'satisfaction,' so that there is a complete determination of 'feeling,' or of 'negation of feeling,' respecting the universe. This evaporation of indetermination is merely another way of considering the process whereby the actual entity includes the universe, by reason of its determinate attitude towards every element in the universe.

... The 'formal' constitution of an actual entity is a process of transition from indetermination towards terminal determination. But the indetermination is referent to determinate data. The 'objective' constitution of an actual entity is its terminal determination, considered as a complex of component determinates by reason of which the actual entity is a datum for the creative advance. The actual entity on its physical side is composed of its determinate feelings of its actual world, and on its mental side is originated by its conceptual appetitions. (45)

Buchler

An atomic theory of "ultimate actualities" is a type of metaphysical theory stressing the crucial role of "components." To be sure, Whitehead's components, as "processes," are a far cry from the tendency to think of building blocks as the model type of component. But not all natural complexes can be interpreted in terms of components, especially not in terms of a single type. Whitehead conceives of his "ultimate actualities" as processes containing a phase in which they achieve "full

determinateness.” The view of determinateness that is implied is an unnecessarily restricted one. There is certainly a sense in which each phase of a process is no less determinate than either the process as a whole or its consummatory phase. Ontological atoms, like their more familiar namesakes, can be relatively final in a functional capacity; that is, as explanatory or exhibitiv devices accomplishing an envisioned aim in a particular perspective. That atoms of actuality should be unqualifiedly construed as the “really real things” proves only that there is an aesthetic or methodological bias, or an underlying predisposition of common sense, the absolutist cravings of which are appeased by the notion of actuality and not by the notion of possibility. (50-51)

Corrington

Less need be said here. The concept of “indeterminateness” is a rich and fascinating one with a long history of use and abuse. Clearly the issue concerns whether or not it makes sense to talk of stages of moving determination, rapidly unfolding between the two extreme poles of inviting openness and a total shut down of becoming. I don’t think Whitehead is saying that determinateness is more real than indeterminateness, but is more simply asserting a non-reversible teleology of innumerable self-determining *teloi* hungering to obliterate indetermination. An ordinal approach would question the notion that something like full indetermination exists and does so for all complexes [leaving eternal entities entirely aside here], and certainly questions the idea that absolutely every atomic (yet fully complex) order is in some kind of cosmic transition from manic birthing to pre-superjective death. And even in superjection, the ossified occasion enjoys no new subjective life for itself. It is too club footed to have such absolutistic contrast as: life abourning in indeterminacy and life bleeding away in telic determination. Bluntly put, nature is nowhere so on-the-march through the power of pluralized teleology. Later more pressure will be put on the fantasy category of ubiquitous subjective aims correlated, sometimes, with a, hopefully tantalizing, initial aim. Ordinally one would say: there is always the possibility of *some* indetermination in *some* orders *some* of the time, but the “indeterminate per se” does not prevail in nature. Determination is far more ubiquitous but there is no good reason for assuming that it must be the result of a process. As for purpose, initially I will state that not only is it extremely rare in nature, but that it is very expensive, subject to selection pressures, and always, for us, morally conflicted. It’s not clear that ‘nature’ favors purposes given how ‘it’ tends to fill them with entropy and, without guile or intent, litters the birthing grounds with the innumerable fallen ones.

[V]
(On God)

Whitehead

There will be additional ground of relevance for select eternal objects by reason of their ingression into derivate actual entities belonging to actual world of the concrescent occasion in question. But whether or no this be the case, there is always the definite relevance derived from God. Apart from God, eternal objects unrealized in the actual world would be relatively non-existent for the concrescence in question. For effective relevance requires agency of comparison, and agency belongs exclusively to actual occasions. This divine ordering is itself matter of fact, thereby conditioning creativity. Thus possibility which transcends realized temporal matter of fact has a real relevance to the creative advance. God is the primordial creature; but the description of his nature is not exhausted by this conceptual side of it. His 'consequent nature' results from his physical prehensions of the derivative actual entities. (31)

Buchler

The question whether God "exists" or does not is a symptom of deficiency in the categorial equipment of a metaphysics. The use of "exist" in such a context tacitly shapes a crude conception of the subject-matter under debate. In the metaphysics of natural complexes it could be said that God prevails, not for this reason or that, but because God is a complex discriminated, and every complex prevails, each in its own way, whether as myth, historical event, symbol, or force; whether as actuality or possibility. The crucial question must be, not whether God exists, nor whether there is an "entity" which satisfies the scheme of traits by which the concept of God is perpetuated, but in what way a natural complex thus discriminated is to be understood, analyzed, and experientially encompassed; or, in what way it is to be further discriminated and found related. (8)

Corrington

I think that it is unfair to trot out the oft-heard critique that Whitehead invents his di-polar god to solve some knotty problems of essential relevance and of the fate of actual occasions in their superjective dying/living (no longer subjectively). I have long thought that Whitehead's categorial schema, while profoundly wrong-headed, is both powerful and coherent within its wrong-headedness. Put differently, when the primordial/mental and the consequent/physical dimensions of deity appear, they appear on their own and not as witless props in a building about to split into two halves. And in another less formal sense, his delineations of the divine/world

correlations have served to spur, entice, and compel what seems like an unending stream of ramifications and articulations. The richness of PR for liberal theology is clear, even though I don't see a future for this kind of kind of romantic cosmology in philosophy. Churlish as that may be, the god question is still worthy of some of our best energies.

Strangely, I am not unhappy with the way Whitehead develops his god concepts. Clearly the consequent dimension, especially as related to memory, is the more fascinating for many. The primordial dimension and its strange cargo of non-becoming essences, is more familiar and, other than the old essence concept, I can't see any reason to say that it must be wrong. But in another way it doesn't help me. Protestations to the contrary, process thought is *not* down and dirty Darwinian. My concern is rather with the emergence of traits of power and scope (the old essences) as these very traits also embody the (not quite dead) archetypes. For here there is an excitement in the challenge of finding a way of speaking that sees archetypes as: 1) mind independent, 2) evolving and hence subject to selection pressures, perhaps in a new way, 3) not identical to scientific laws of nature, 4) having both power and numinosity, 5) perhaps in competition with each other, 6) not internally related to 'everything,' 7) indifferent to our welfare, and 8) self-replicating if in the time process in the 'normal' sense or both in and out of time but in different ordinal locations. For me, then, archetypes cannot be in a divine mind, nor reducible to the sum of projections of human minds. They are emergents in a vastness that may not be aware that they, or any other complex, prevails at all. Plotinus, whose *One* is way beyond Aristotle's *Nous* which is at least two (thought thinking itself), does not house anything, essence or memorial, in the One. From this perspective Whitehead says way too much about the divine life and his brief writings on god tend to mask some of the real fatal flaws in his system.

[VI]
(On 'the' Order of Nature)

Whitehead

An extensive continuum is a complex of entities united by the various allied relationships of whole to part, and of overlapping so as to possess common parts, and of contact, and of other relationships derived from these primary relationships. The notion of a 'continuum' involves both the property of indefinite divisibility and the property of unbounded extension. There are always entities beyond entities, because nonentity is no boundary. This extensive continuum expresses the solidarity of all possible standpoints throughout the whole process of the world. It is not a fact prior to the world; it is the first determination of order—that is, of real potentiality—arising out of the general character of the world. In its full generality beyond the present epoch, it does not involve shapes, dimensions, or measurability;

these are additional determinations of real potentiality arising from our cosmic epoch. (66)

Buchler

If *natura naturata* is “the world” or “the universe,” then *natura naturans* is the order of provision and determination. It is reflected in the fertility of any complex whatever. Nature is not so much the order which contains or even includes all other orders as the order which permeates them all; not the order within which but by which new orders are discriminable and explorable, whether through assertion, action, or contrivance. Only such an order can make possible and justify the indefinite continuation of query.

The idea of “unlocking the secret” of nature is primitive and barbaric, despite its ostensible influence in the history of science and philosophy. It depends upon the assumption that nature is a unitary prevalence in which aescences [natural complexes admitting new traits, not equivalent to becoming which is only one of its types] are merely human expressions of probing. On such an assumption, there are no arisings but only duplications, no formations but only schedules, no determinations but only predeterminations. The fear underlying the outlook of many philosophies is that if nature were otherwise, the natural order would be inaccessible, and nature would be unintelligible. Those who have systematically rejected this approach—for instance, the evolutionary philosophers of the early twentieth century—appear to accept one form or manifestation of aescence, namely novelty, as the corrective category. Although they do not reduce aescence [differently put: arising of traits] exclusively to human terms, it is mainly upon a certain type of aescence in human life, the surge of spontaneous feeling, that they build analogically their conception of a varied and “open” universe. When built, this conception of the centrality of feeling may well result, as it is sometimes said, in a human world writ large. If so, then nature and nature’s God are once again writ small. (100-101)

Corrington

Process notions of nature’s order can be found operating in several dimensions simultaneously and Whitehead manages to deploy these categorial commitments with an admirable precision. In a non-exhaustive list we see ‘the’ unity expressed by: 1) the extensive continuum that prevails ‘across and through’ an indefinite number of so-named “cosmic epochs,” 2) self-unification of individual occasions, followed by societal unifications, followed by larger and larger subaltern unities until the alleged whole is brought into being (both presenting and absenting itself for itself), 3) the eternally unified divine mental life as it sustains the indefinitely extended domain of static essences (somewhat like Santayana’s powerless essences in the realm of spirit, but with a divine origin that would never be affirmed by

Santayana), 4) the realm of possibilities, the ingressive values of which are largely determined by god, and 5) the lightning fast internal/prehensive relations of any occasion to all other, saying yea or nea, but the latter also being fully a relation involving two relata as internally co-implicated. Process panentheism has unities upon unities, embodiments of the ‘one’ overarching Unity of Nature.

From the standpoint of ordinal metaphysics, a so-called unity emerges when inquiry or query, for whatever reason, cease from further probing of the pertinent natural complexes. Hence whatever unity is spoken of is put in the form: “Unity in certain respects and in certain orders and their subaltern orders, but never unity in all respects in all orders.” Possibilities do not occupy one unified and separable realm any more than that they are eternal and non-related to actualities. Possibilities are embedded in specific actualities—not ‘later’ as the divine recommends and persuades. Possibilities are finite, finitely located, and are subject to all kinds of changes. Once I married, the possibility of my being Pope was cancelled, while others arose. If I am in India and actualize the possibility, never eternal, of drinking local water, then the possibility of not getting sick will, in all probability, cease to prevail. When I do get sick, then brand new (here and now) actualities and possibilities will emerge that weren’t actualizable before—note, not because of a divine being but because of a fully ordinal nature that calls most of the shots.

[VII]

(On Societies)

Whitehead

An unspecialized society can survive through important changes in its environment. This means that it can take on different functions in respect to its relationship to a changing environment. In general the defining characteristic of such a society will not include any particular determination of structural pattern. By reason of this flexibility of structural pattern, the society can adopt that special pattern adapted to the circumstances of the moment. Thus an unspecialized society is apt to be deficient in structural pattern, when viewed as a whole.

Thus in general an unspecialized society does not secure conditions favourable for intensity of satisfaction among its members, whereas a structured society with a high grade of complexity will in general be deficient in survival value. In other words, such societies will in general be ‘specialized’ in the sense of requiring a very special sort of environment.

Thus the problem for Nature is the production of societies which are ‘structured’ with a high ‘complexity,’ and which are at the same time ‘unspecialized.’ In this way, intensity is mated with survival. (100-101)

Buchler

But although societies cannot attain results that individuals can, they can attain results, and results that individuals cannot. Basically this is a commonplace of everyday belief, but it is also more than defensible metaphysically. For we cannot entertain the notion of a society, or even of a mere grouping, without taking seriously the relations that obtain among the individuals said to constitute the society or group. Nor can we recognize any complex as a society without recognizing the difference between an organization of individuals and an abstract number of individuals. A social complex is differently agential but not less truly agential than an individual.

And *are* societies constituted by individuals but not the other way around? If “constituted by” meant “composed of,” the answer might be, yes. But to be a “constituent,” as we have seen, does not necessarily mean to be a “component.” What it means, more generally, is to be a trait that is relevant. The society of which an individual is member may enter into the complex that constitutes an individual, just as an individual may enter into the complex that constitutes a society. Indeed, so far as an individual at random is concerned, a society may be relevant to its integrity in a far more fundamental way than that individual is to the integrity of the society. (42-43)

Corrington

Whitehead uses his multi-layered concept of communities as a way of framing some of the horizontal and hierarchical traits of an actual occasion as it may happen to link up with this or that type of society. In this passage he contrasts two polarities: loose pattern β \rightarrow tight pattern and unspecialized β \rightarrow specialized. Conceptually and even Phenomenologically the contrasts are quite clear. Again, I raise the issue of using human personal and communal terms as technical language in an alleged non-anthropomorphic cosmology. This argument and its many counter arguments have made the rounds for decades so I shall leave it be here. The more interesting question pertains to the prevalence of unstructured societies, bereft of tight gestalt or form, and their role in furthering adaptation in nature. While it is becoming clearer that there is some plasticity in gene expression in organisms, with the environment putting efficient causal pressure on the genome, it doesn't follow that this newly appreciated external input on gene expression in any way translates into Whitehead's notion of how a well balanced society with just the right amount of structure yet just the right amount of mobile openness can increase its chances of avoiding the iron hand of natural selection. Whitehead's tendency is to see open and opening complexity up and down his cosmic stairway (a metaphor that he would reject), thereby finding genuine modes of freedom whenever any of his

‘whats’ on any level struggles to advance. Of course, the rock is a limit case where no unstructured society can obtain, but ‘up’ the scale there is far more freedom or, if you prefer, maneuvering room, than a more judicious view of nature would find. My reiterated point is that, all the many arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, Whitehead’s process panentheism truly does clean up organic nature and fails, again and again, to grasp the sheer unending forces of natural selection, gene expression, reproductive strategies tied to sexual selection, the utter waste of nature, and the ubiquity of extinction. What we get in PR is what I will call “soft Darwinism;” namely, a perspective that is so keen on finding atomic and societal *teloi* that it masks the blunt and pervasive rulership of efficient causality. Hair trigger instincts and ancient habits make or break the predator and the prey. Nature likes it simple and it likes it structured and unambiguous. Plasticity is a wonderful thing but it is rare and quite expensive to maintain. Were it to appear in the wrong creature, which it won’t, the plastic phase could be the period of maximal vulnerability.

Obviously Buchler is working through a different notion of the social than is Whitehead. For Buchler the stress is on the various ordinal locations of the human process as it moves in, through, out, and sometimes back again into social orders. As stipulated, being a process-style “component” is only pertinent in some social locations, never all. However, to be a “constituent” is to be a subaltern trait in any social order, and, from the ordinal perspective, what is a subaltern constituent in order A could also, simultaneously, be a major trait in order B. Both traits prevail in the way that they do and are, in a rough sense, the same. If I wear a certain red shirt, say an English-style soccer jersey, in a pub filled with like-minded fans wearing the same *type* of shirt of which mine is a *token*, then it is clearly a major identifying trait within a rather insular and sometimes tribally violent social order. Yet, without moving a metaphysical hair, so to speak, that shirt prevails, right here and now, as a ‘mere’ subaltern constituent in the much larger social order of all persons wearing sports insignia on their shirts. Note that the first and smaller social order is a “reflexive” community, that is, each member is directly aware of each other member. But in the vastly larger community not all members could be aware of all other members, an absurdity, but this doesn’t make it any less a society, or less a community with common signs.

To squeeze all forms of relation, of relevance, and even communication, into the straightjacket of prehension is to drive the panpsychist juggernaut across innumerable complexes whose forms of co-relevance have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with prehension. Crushed under the massive wheels are forms of relevance like the above example B where prehension is not a prevalence. Not only is panpsychism of a piece with “soft Darwinism,” but it also shoots out lines of relationality, often dim and hardly sentient it is true, that end up claiming the relational prize when nothing in fact prevails but a super small utopian delusion that devolves into its own cloudy longings. Technically put the doctrine of internal relations makes it almost impossible to do the slower and more careful work or rotating natural complexes through their pertinent ordinal locations. Genuine prehensions are rare in nature and it is not clear why they would be put into the honorific class. That other great panpsychist, C.S. Peirce blundered badly when he

created his Lamarkian soft Darwinian cosmology that allowed his telic longings to vibrate in the heart of the protozoa up to the deity itself, ironically, wanting to be pure secondness after the cosmic joy ride of thirdness. He created a special kind of secondness, not quite dyadic, that I called “sheer secondness” in my Peirce book, for the end-point god. This sheer secondness is a kind of presenting/gifting rather than the vulgar hammering of much abjected efficient causality (nasty secondness).

[VIII]
(On Identity)

Whitehead

The creative action is the universe always becoming one in a particular unity of self-experience, and thereby adding to the multiplicity which is the universe as many. This insistent concrescence into unity is the outcome of the ultimate self-identity of each entity. No entity—be it ‘universal’ or ‘particular’—can play disjointed roles. Self-identity requires that every entity have one conjoined, self-consistent function, whatever be the complexity of that function. (57)

Category II. [2] There can be no duplication of any element in the objective datum of the satisfaction of an actual entity, so far as concerns the function of that element in the satisfaction.

This is the ‘Category of Objective Identity.’ This category asserts the essential self-identity of any entity as regards its status in each individualization of the universe. In such a concrescence one thing has one role, and cannot assume any duplicity. This is the very meaning of self-identity, that, in any actual confrontation of thing with thing, one thing cannot confront itself in alien roles. Any one thing remains obstinately itself playing a part with self-consistent unity. This category is one ground of incompatibility. (225)

Buchler

A complex has an *integrity* for each of its ordinal locations. The continuity and totality of its locations, the interrelations of its integrities, is the *contour* of the complex. The contour is itself an integrity, the gross integrity of that which is plurally located, whether successively or simultaneously. A contour is the integrity of a complex not in so far as the complex transcends all orders but in so far as it belongs to many orders. The *identity* of a complex is the continuous relation that obtains between the contour of a complex and any of its integrities. (22)

Corrington

In these passages we see a dramatic difference between Whitehead's highly conventional account of identity, relating it to a cluster notion of fully determined traits, both other-relational and internal-relational. Ironically, this portrayal is surprisingly static and lifts identity out of the time process. Buchler's revisioning is one of the most radical transformations I know of because it no longer requires clusters, determinateness, atemporality, static trait continuity, human stipulation, or a belief in pre-cooked genera.

For Whitehead identity is an achievement requiring one of his 'somethings' to be "conjoined" and "self-consistent." Presumably, should it fail to do so it would have no identity and perhaps not be. His panpsychism once again compels him to ignore virtually all forms of identity that don't conform to his narrow model of what proper identity is. Again, the irony is acute. We have a cosmology that touts itself as being the most capacious and most sensitive to all that there is, gladly locating all competitors as subalterns within itself, while it in fact bristling with narrow, prioritizing, and half-digested categories. Its appeal is easy to see, for a soft Darwinism compounded with the feelings of infinite relationality, all deriving their measure from an accommodating dual deity, warms the lonely heart, perhaps weary of the endless impactions of nasty secondness, and lightens one's load—well, perhaps.

Buchler's more subtle and complex view of identity is a place where the power of the ordinal perspective is especially clear. First some preliminaries. Any natural complex will prevail in innumerable orders, but never all. For example, I have a red leather chair. Traditionally philosophers have focused on the hereness of the space-time particular, ignoring all other ordinal locations. A more complete inventory would look like this: the red chair prevails in: 1) space-time particulars, 2) of dining room furniture, 3) of red objects, 4) of animal products, 5) of art designers, 6) of shipping agents, 7) of packers, 8) of truck drivers and their families, 9) of pedagogical examples of ordinality, 10) of reminders of annoying guests, 11) of color rhythms within a home, 12) of anxious store owners, 13) of a digital second-order transit onto a computer screen, 14) of the economic order of a manufacturing town, 15) of the order of compliments, 16) of the order of woodworkers trying to keep the stain off of their hands--and on and on indefinitely to other orders. A key point is that none of these quite 'real' ordinal locations is more natural, more authentic, or more 'the' chair than any other. Common sense will sternly say: "Yes, but I'm only interested in what I sit on, not all this other flap doodle!" Fine. In its domain that is all that is needed, but for the lonely metaphysician, it's the flap doodle that is compelling.

The red leather chair, then, is all of these things, all of these ordinal locations within which it prevails (and admits traits). If you 'add' all of the above 16 orders together (and, as per impossibility, every other location) you have the chair's contour. Each ordinal location is an integrity (very roughly, a kind of identity or whatness). So in number one the integrity is the prevalence in physical space of the red leather, dark legs, and the design—quite simple on this level. The 'sum' of these integrities is the gross integrity, the contour. Identity cannot be found in any

ordinal location and integrity alone. Nor could you somehow just add them up into a super identity. Rather, the identity of the red leather chair is the correlation of a given location, (one through sixteen) with the contour. The radical aspect is that identity need not involve determinateness, indeterminateness, internal relations, trait continuity, self-determination, psyche, physicality, non-physicality, clusters, compounds, simples, continuity, a continuum, continua, spirit, objectified will, and all of the many candidates for the post. Any of these *may* be a constituent in articulating an identity, but it certainly *need* not be. In the simpler process scheme certain traits, like determinateness, are necessary, if not sufficient, for identity to occur. It should be clear that the process scheme has once again forced a species to become the genus, ignoring the imperialism in such a move, and betraying the need for real, not paper, complexity and for ordinal precision rather than binding complexity to have a much tidier ship.

[IX]

(On Feelings)

Whitehead

An actual entity has a perfectly definite bond with each item in the universe. This determinate bond is its prehension of that item. A negative prehension is the definite exclusion of that item from positive contribution to the subject's own real internal constitution. This doctrine involves the position that a negative prehension expresses a bond. A positive prehension is the definite inclusion of that item into positive contribution to the subject's own real internal constitution. This positive inclusion is called its 'feeling' of that item. Other entities are required to express *how* any one item is felt. All actual entities in the actual world, relatively to a given actual entity as 'subject,' are necessarily 'felt' by that subject, though in general vaguely. An actual entity as felt is said to be 'objectified' for that subject. Only a selection of eternal objects are 'felt' by a given subject. But those eternal objects which are not felt are not therefore negligible. For each negative prehension has its own subjective form, however trivial and faint. It adds to the emotional complex, thought not to the objective data. The emotional complex is the subjective form of the final 'satisfaction.' (41)

Buchler

Methodically we may submerge the contrasting traits within the complex. In our relation to a complex we may deliberately neglect or strategically disregard the relationality within the complex and the relations of the complex. But we cannot regard the integrity as somehow isolated in its being, or as intrinsically free of relation. We may speak of the integrity as "felt," but the assumption that there are

integrities which can *only* be felt is without a shred of warrant. An integrity *need* not be inquired into. Not to inquire into it may be suitable for a purpose or circumstantially desirable. But to suppose that it *cannot* be inquired into, that it is not the “kind of thing” that can be “described or defined,” is to suppose of it the sole inhabitant of an order detached from every other order—in effect, to suppose it (in securely negative fashion) “non-natural.” Dewey, who like innumerable others thinks there are “undefinable and indescribable qualities,” qualities that are “ineffable,” beclouds the natural status that he insists on assigning to these qualities. A feeling is itself a complex that is analyzable, not a non-relational monadic ultimate. To analyze a feeling through an enumeration or description of its traits may be undesirable in certain types of situation. The description, like any other description, may be better or worse, more or less clarifying. To interpret and clarify the feeling through action, for instance, may well be the better course. (28-29)

Corrington

Whitehead’s tendency to find a species or even a sub-species that he finds rich and compelling in its native setting and then to elevate it to genus status so that it is like a fish out of water is one of his most recurrent strategies. Simultaneously he moves that species or sub-species from the realm of the descriptive to the Platonic heights of the honorific and eulogistic—a move that even vexed Plato when he courageously examined his own tendency to do so with his *Forms* in his *Parmenides*. The idea that all relations are, indeed must be, feelings is one of the least valid moves he makes in PR and elsewhere. Yes, he has a very subtle view of the gradations and types of feelings (epicycles within epicycles) and always reminds of us that negative prehensions are faint and do not bring home any objective data to chew on. But all of this subtlety is wasted as it only serves to prop up a hapless genus (feeling) and mask the fact that it was once an ordinally located ‘species,’ or, better, recurrent subaltern trait within more pervasive orders. I reiterate *ad nauseum* that process panentheism has a subtly hidden violence and, strange as it may sound a conceptual laziness that together result in a combination that is rather tepid yet aggressive. How so: 1) the move from a ‘humble’ descriptive species to an honorific genus aggressively violates the intrinsic ordinal location(s) of that species; namely, it tears it out of its ontological ‘home’ and uses it in such a way that its own ordinal integrity is damaged, 2) there is a deep conceptual laziness in this process that refuses the more difficult precision of ordinal analysis in favor of a hierarchal panpsychism that is at its best when it effaces distinctions that might slow down its raptor flight, 3) contrary to much opinion process thought is addicted to hierarchies that it tries to deny are such, but it is possible that this can only be seen in its starkness from an ordinal perspective which is powerfully anti-hierarchical, unless, of course, there are ordinal hierarchies, but these are only such in certain respects and no subaltern trait can be stolen from its complex and made into a metaphysical category. This gentle special pleading aside, an honest deconstruction could arrive

at similar conclusions, but at the end it would still have no socially usable categories of its own.

I have long been persuaded that Dewey and Buchler are the greatest *practicing* phenomenologists in the English language traditions. Recently our graduate Dr. Ed Lovely showed convincingly in his dissertation that Santayana was also in this company, especially for his phenomenology of religion, something that was peripheral for Dewey and Buchler. In 1984 I compared and contrasted Husserl and Buchler on “bracketing” verses “ontological parity” and was able to show, I hope, that the ongoing use of the sense of ontological parity made one a much more powerful and judicious phenomenologist than the use of bracketing, which is a very limited strategy with a limited aim. I am also persuaded that if phenomenology has or needs a metaphysics, then the ordinal perspective is by far the most useful, even compelling. Consequently I have developed and used an ordinal phenomenology in several books. The point of this digression is that Whitehead’s panpsychist cosmology is profoundly un-phenomenological. No where is this clearer, for me, than in his concept of relations. I am reminded of Wittgenstein’s blunt imperative: “Don’t think, look.” Perhaps naïve, but in a trained and focused way it is not. In the Buchler passage you see almost pure phenomenology happening. Through the enabling comportment of ordinality one can see right away that there can never be one *kind* of relation, one *genus* that gobbles up all types of itself, one *really real* form of relation that puts the others to shame, or one *translation scheme* that morphs dangling or vagrant forms of relation into one strong cosmic type. And here’s the kicker: in the innumerable orders of the world (*nature natured*) actual *non-relations* prevail as well. There is something violent in forcing even non-relations into the one world of unbridled cosmic prehensions. Like Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit*, although in a different context, an ordinal phenomenology of relations lets, insofar as it humanly can, relations and non-relations obtain in all of their modalities. If one thinks that there is *Gelassenheit* in process panentheism, all I can reiterate is that there are many modalities of violence within the seemingly peaceful schema. To find those modalities just look at any major category and start to probe into its provenance and into the debris left behind (all phenomenological and ordinal) in its rise to preeminence.

Buchler’s critique of Dewey’s sense of an “ineffable” and “undefinable” quality is something I just note in passing. Above all Buchler is thinking of Dewey’s masterpiece *Art as Experience* (1934), one of the greatest works in the history of aesthetics. In this book Dewey works with a notion of consummatory experience in art that unveils whole-making qualities that are latent in all experience but fully manifest in art. We can *say* nothing about them, but they *show* us the work itself (using Wittgenstein’s distinction from c. 1921). Dewey’s use harks back to his graduate professor C.S. Peirce (Johns Hopkins) with his primacy of “firstness.”

[X]
 (On the World)

 Whitehead

The world is self-creative; and the actual entity as self-creating creature passes into its immortal function of part-creator of the transcendent world. In its self-creation the actual world is guided by its ideal of itself as individual satisfaction and as transcendent creator. The enjoyment of this ideal is the 'subjective aim,' by reason of which the actual entity is a determinate process. (85)

It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.

It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many.

It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.

It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World.

It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.

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 disjointed multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast. In each actuality there are two concrescent poles of realization—'enjoyment' and 'appetition,' that is, the 'physical' and the 'conceptual.' For God the conceptual is prior to the physical, for the World the physical poles are prior to the conceptual poles. (348)

Buchler

When it is said that the World is a process or an Interrelation, the emphasis on singularity seems to vanish. But the concept of an integrity certainly does not. An interrelation and a process are complexes which have an integrity, even as an individual has. Some formulations have subtle loopholes and uncertain consequences. They represent weaknesses which can be found in philosophical cosmologies, especially theories of evolution like those of Peirce, Bergson, and Whitehead. If these theories are not open to simple definite indictment, it is only because their framers are sensitive, in principle, to the pitfalls of cosmology. Peirce and Whitehead seem aware of the trouble that may develop in treating the World as if it were one among many. Yet, being themselves much attracted to the kinds of analogies that generate dilemmas, they are impatient of self-imposed warnings, and it is a fair question whether the metaphysics of cosmic chance and love, and the metaphysics of creativity and creative advance do not further obscure the concept of the World. (249-250)

There cannot be a World Order, a Complex of all complexes. Every natural complex, itself an order, is located in an order. In other words, every complex is also a sub-complex, every order a sub-order. The world cannot be a complex, because it cannot be a sub-complex; it cannot be an order, because it cannot be a sub-order. Every complex is related to a complex other than itself and its subaltern complexes. The World cannot be a complex, because there could no be anything besides the World to which it could be related. The World cannot be located, for it would have to be located in an order which would be more inclusive. The World cannot be included, for it would then not be the World but one more order, one more sub-complex. The World cannot be environed, as every order can and must be, for that which environs would be a complex distinctly additional to the World—an absurdity. (250)

Corrington

While I find Whitehead's first sentence to have beauty and to border on the ordinal approach, it still makes the mistake of over generalizing the 'amount' of creativity in the world, while simultaneously putting "creativity" in the honorific camp, indeed, as the most honorific of the regnant categories. Process panentheisms rightly take pride in rejection the allegedly patriarchal notion of creation out of nothingness, but then turn around and see natural (divine?) creativity everywhere, especially in the micro/macro mirroring of the actual occasion and the "self-creative" world that it recapitulates before also helping to shape the divine realms through superjection where the occasion gives up its own subjectivity for the world of divine memory where it will never know that it is being remembered. In my discussions with Hartshorne I was never convinced by his notion that the desire for subjective immortality was the result of narcissism. While I see far less subjectivity in the world than he and Whitehead did, I strongly suspect that it has a post-death trajectory that has some deep ontological purchase.

More pointedly, I do not see anything like a mega creativity *an sich* that can, somehow, weave the (momentarily) disjoint into a coordinated realm of natural happenings. It is unclear, in the one nature that there is, what "disjointed multiplicities" might be. Disjointed in what respects and in what orders? As an oppositional multiplicity such an order would still prevail as the order that it is, with traits and subaltern orders being what *they* are—perhaps alescences, but never disjointed. It makes no sense to use such a mytho-poetic word as "disjointed"—it lacks precision and serves to evoke an aesthetic aversion rather than to denote a genuine prevalence in nature. But this anti-aesthetic irritant is posited by Whitehead to set up the contrast, always the contrast, between its ontologically inferior state and the riding-to-the-rescue superior state of aesthetic harmony and (complex) order. But a humble naturalist, descriptive *or* ecstatic, asks: "Show me an example of how a given 'disjointed' natural complex becomes a "concrecent unity" with all of its "diversities in contrast." And: "Show me the operation *in situ*

of Creativity (with a capital “C”) in and through any chosen disjointed order.” This is a fantasy projection, desire is again entwined with a utopian “would be.” And while the term “idealism” has many meanings, often pejorative, the process schema is idealistic in at least two senses: 1) it lets otherwise useful aesthetic categories ride roughshod over more metaphysically valid but less puffed up categories, thereby throwing over the innumerable orders of nature a sweet opiate that helps the intellectually credentialed enjoy a nicer world than there is, which in turn takes away the sting of secondness by obviating the need for radical self-analysis, and 2) it puts on the mantle of science and wants to be an extension of contemporary scientific theories as one of the means by which one builds up categories that are more encompassing than those in science. This move is problematic on a good day but what inevitably happens is that there is an unconscious picking and choosing from among the many available scientific theories with insufficient attention to internal conceptual struggles or aporia in various disciplines. An idealized empiricism emerges, in fact, was there from the beginning, and in-house scientific conflicts are ignored or ‘resolved’ by categorial reconstruction.

Buchler’s careful delineation of the profound differences between ‘World’ and the so-called ‘intra-worldly’ reminds me of Heidegger’s analyses of Worldhood (*Weltheit*) in the 1930s. In both thinkers there is an abyss of difference separating any analysis/understanding of things-in-being/natural complexes from the elusive enabling condition of ‘the’ World. Yet Buchler’s approach is more radical than Heidegger’s insofar as Heidegger still wants to talk about the “how” or “way” of Worldhood as if ‘it’ is a presence/power *an sich* that gifts itself around and within the worldly. For Buchler, on the other hand, there really is no such thing as the World or a gifting Worldhood. The ordinal perspective is unrelenting in undermining, again and again, any desire for a quasi-knowable encompassing and final World. Ordinarily we can speak of worlds without number, of living in more than one world, of finding some worlds congenial and some alien, or of the collision of worlds. But beyond that if we try to leap up to some mega-notion if *the* World, or *the* Super-Order, or *the* Matrix, we are creating, often for deep aesthetic reasons, an imaginary totality that simply does not prevail or obtain. When Process Panentheism uses this inflated language it unwittingly betrays its unconscious commitment to the tidy, to the circumscribable, to the ordering and organizing, and to the safety and security of *the* grand circle that provides the measure for each and every subaltern.

[XI]
(On Possibilities and Potentials)

Whitehead

The definite ingression into a particular actual entity is not to be conceived as the sheer evocation of that eternal object from 'not-being' into being'; it is the evocation of determination out of indetermination. Potentiality becomes reality; and yet retains its message of alternatives which the actual entity has avoided. In the constitution of an actual entity:--whatever component is red, might have been green; and whatever component is loved, might have been coldly esteemed. The term 'universal' is unfortunate in its application to eternal objects; for it seems to deny, and in fact it was meant to deny, that the actual entities also fall within the scope of the principle of relativity. If the term 'eternal objects' is disliked, the term 'potentials' would be suitable. The eternal objects are the pure potentials of the universe; and the actual entities differ from each in their realization of potentials. (149)

Buchler

There is no "realm" of the possible. But neither is there a "realm" of the actual. There are no "pure" possibilities which never are related to actuality, or which are actualized out of the blue—arising in no particular order and relating to no particular order. But neither are there "pure" actualities, exemplifying no possibility and having no possibilities. There are no "possible entities" which monopolize or specialize in determinateness and are void of anything but actuality. Pure possibility and actuality is as much of a confusion as pure relation, pure individuality, pure fact, pure structure. Purity as such is as fictitious as simplicity. (129)

To hold the opposing view [non-ordinal] is to assume a single indivisible order in nature within which all "possibilities" prevail eternally, that is, in total independence of what is alescent [admitting traits] or specifically prevalent. Strictly speaking, in this one order nothing could be distinguished as alescent or prevalent. Everything would be inherently part of everything else, and there would be no discrimination at all. One possibility, then, could not be discriminated from another. There could be no possibility, but only one "seamless" actuality. (142)

Corrington

Can Whitehead's eternal entities, aka 'pure' potentials, in any way admit traits, other than the process of having their scope enhanced when invited to ingress (even negatively/dimly) into an actuality in the 'realm' of actuality? And when is a potential a possibility, or, rather, a possibility a potential? Is an eternal entity potentially a possibility or, more likely, always a possibility that is potentiated when actualized? Can any possibility or any potentiality be indeterminate? What sense would it make to say that an eternal entity napping in the Primordial Mental Pole of God, gets awakened into the concrescence parade by a scanning, hunting, looking, even hungry actual occasion that thus enables the essence to now have a finite locatedness? Just how does the eternal entity cross over from atemporal dreaming innocence into the squeeze play of an actual entity and its relevant societies? How goes the transit from non-changing possibilities, always in their own domain, to the instant when they fatten an actual occasion, super busy, for its superjective hour comith, take place? And this as it lets the already determined eternal entity goad/guide its flight from its own indeterminacy into whatness, hardly a wimpy "strategic essentialism," but the real McCoy? Absurdities abound and denied/unwanted dualisms remain, the categories deployed disappointingly shop worn and traditional.

The ordinal perspective is more subtle and more carefully worked out, yet easy to delineate. The word "pure" is dangerous both in psychoanalysis and philosophy, as it denotes a state that is not subject to corrosive events or alescences of arising or modifying. Purity simply cannot be as it must be in its own ordinal mode—purity only in certain respects and only in certain ordinal locations, which in turn entails, impurity, also in certain orders and in certain respects for the 'same' natural complex. Secondly, the idea of a realm or domain that has one type of "stuff," to use William James' wonderful word, is akin to the idea of purity; namely, that there are various locations in nature that can say "hands off" not only once but forever, at least in a cosmic epoch (another fuzzy notion). To say that possibilities or potentials are non-located, that they prevail *an sich* beyond the mud of actualities, is to invent a hyper-pure fantasy world that hinders our attempts to probe, and be probed by, the innumerable orders of nature. Possibilities are, in one sense, like actualities; namely, that they too come and go, are born and die, wait around or effervesce, and can only obtain within actualities. Possibilities are never *less* real than actualities, although common sense sometimes acts as if this is so, nor are possibilities *more* real than actualities, although one can read Whitehead as believing so. Whenever an actuality alesces (admits traits) its possibilities change, whenever a possibility changes, the actuality changes or admits new traits, and so on, and on, and on with no special realms mysteriously prevailing from which the players must come. Remembering that "change" and "becoming," are mere species of the genus "alescence," showing once again Whitehead's tendency to curiously invert the genus species relation, usually when the species is privileged because of its dramatic or aesthetic appeal. In polemical orders this can appropriate, but when building a metaphysics of great scope, this inversion can undermine the entire enterprise.

[XII]
(Becoming and Alescence)

Whitehead

- (i) That the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus actual entities are creatures; they are also termed ‘actual occasions.’
- (ii) That in the becoming of an actual entity, the *potential* unity of many entities in disjunctive diversity—actual and non-actual—acquires the *real* unity of the one actual entity; so that the actual entity is the real concrescence of many potentials.
- (iii) That in the becoming of an actual entity, novel prehensions, nexus, subjective forms, propositions, multiplicities, and contrasts, also become; but there are no novel eternal objects.
- (iv) That the potentiality for being an element in a real concrescence of many entities into one actuality is the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual; and that every item in its universe is involved in each concrescence. In other words, it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming.’ This is the ‘principle of relativity.’ (22)

It follows from the first category of explanation [above] that ‘becoming’ is a creative advance. It is for this reason that the meaning of the phrase ‘the actual world’ is relative to the becoming of a definite actual entity which is both novel and actual, relatively to that meaning and to no other meaning of that phrase. Thus, conversely, each actual entity corresponds to a meaning of ‘the actual world’ peculiar to itself. (28)

Buchler

Four forms of alescence may be distinguished, though they may be intermingled. In *augmentative* alescence a prevailing complex is extended, increased, or enhanced. In *spoliative* alescence there is loss or attenuation, expiration or extinction of a complex that has prevailed. In the third form, *coalescence*, a complex arises from a junction or intersection or novel configuration of complexes: there is variation in the world without deviation from any prevalent complex in particular, and without any particular complex having to be augmented or despoiled. The fourth form, *vagrant* alescence, involves that which has a “chance” or “dangling” character. (57)

Alescence is represented by variation, but it is neither solely nor necessarily the basis of variety. It is represented by deviation, but it is neither solely nor necessarily the basis of uniqueness. Among the prevalences of nature there is inexhaustible difference. The traits of any prevalence comprise a variety. Even if there were simples, since simples would differ, composites would manifest variety. The parts of an enduring “thing” are various, as are the stages, periods, phases, functions, or relations within other prevalences. Alescence is indeed the condition for the advent, and therefore the extension or increase of variety. But complexes may be alescent without introducing variety at all. They may, for example, only terminate a prevalence. (63)

(c) “Becoming” suggests, not always but still too often, evolution, progress, or development, and even design. These concepts or conditions are of no special relevance to the concept of aescence. An aescence may be purposive or blind, felicitous or destructive. (d) Becoming is commonly regarded as characteristic of actualities, and is either made the basis of an argument that there are no other kinds of complex, or is contrasted with the “being” of complexes like possibility. (78)

Corrington

Two things need to be highlighted here. The first is the Romantic notion of “creative advance” as an alleged product or outcome of the unending novelty-shaped ingression processes. The second is the obsession with “becoming,” which I noted above as being but a species of the genus aescence. With Buchler’s most explicit statement of aescence before us we can see what the larger concept looks like. While the four-fold concept of aescence has a place for becoming, the obverse is not the case. Some find it disorienting when they are shown that the concept of becoming is profoundly overrated and has been stretched so far beyond the bounds of its prevalence in nature, that it is actually just one subaltern concept among others that are useful in helping us unfold an encounter with all that is not us. To describe all sorts of becomings, from smoothly gliding/ingressing to the most intense birthing and struggling, nativity ever our pride and joy, appeals to our dramatic sensibilities, but this selective emphasis creates problems off stage and away from our narrower pedagogical methods designed to keep fellow philosophers awake. There is so much that can change with out any becoming being involved. And when becoming is lifted up high into the honorific and eulogistic stratosphere, its quotidian fragmentary and strictly regional obtainance is obscured—for in becoming a goddess, becoming betrays the only nature that there is, where mortal becoming has to share the world with innumerable non-becomings.

And these non-becomings are not eternal entities, they are so vast that they cannot be named or categorized, nor need they reside in some deity who allegedly delights in keeping them alive and warm within its non-entropic mental pole. Now, when the manic pretensions of becoming are deflated, the commensurate belief in creative advance also falls under the impress of a more subtle metaphysics. One could argue, as I have, that process panentheism is a liberal Christian attempt to save the community from either rear guard belligerence or secular dissolution of the god question. I can’t personally weigh in on that score, but it is clear that the ordinal framework stands completely on its own with no obligations or debts to any religion. This alone give the perspective greater freedom and allows for more daring portrayals of nature. This said, Whitehead’s affirmation of the becomingà creative advance correlation is a species of wishful thinking combined with a continuing failure, as I have averred, to let Darwin’s ideas of selection pressure and the sheer ubiquity of extinction take hold. First, creativity, another poor species in the world gets elevated into membership in the most exclusive yacht club in town. But, alas,

the secret will get out that the would-be Commodore can't even pay the slip fee. Genuine creativity is extremely rare in nature and there is no guarantee that it is even a good for the creature that might have enough surplus energy to be creative. It could kill and often does. In the human process what predominates is drift, waste, habit, repetition, inertia, mimicry, and a foreshortened horizon that is pushed out just far enough to serve desire and, perhaps, the will to power. Twin with this is the myth of advance, for what, after all, does the word becoming denote if not a unified becoming-toward-a-divine-end that is, miraculously, at least partially in view, if we are both decent and sufficiently complex. An ordinal approach will say, rather, there may be advances in this or that order for specific reasons and perhaps for specific amounts of time (where time is pertinent), but there is no such thing as a cumulative and accumulating creative advance per se. Nor is there such a thing as total regression per se. In the end this is of a piece with that hard to let go belief in History as a humanly-centered gifting of, well, whatever—god, being, the good, even the intervention of aliens from outer space as we saw in one recent suicidal cult group. Evolution has never been about 'the' creative advance of the biosphere. Almost all mutations spell death for their hapless vessels and the very few mutations that don't still have to earn their keep over time. If the environment changes too fast for genetic adaptive responses, then even the miniscule creativity within most species is gone too—and this forever.

[XIII]

(On Unity and Purpose in Nature)

Whitehead

The structural relations gather intensity from this intensity in the individual experiences. Thus the growth of a complex structured society exemplifies the general purpose pervading nature. (100)

The atomic actual entities individually express the genetic unity of the universe. The world expands through recurrent unifications of itself, each, by the addition of itself, automatically recreating the multiplicity anew.

The other type of indefinite multiplicity, introduced by the indefinite coordinate divisibility of each atomic actuality, seems to show that, at least for certain purposes, the actual world is to be conceived as a mere indefinite multiplicity.

But this conclusion is to be limited by the principle of 'extensive order' which steps in. The atomic unity of the world, expressed by a multiplicity of atoms, is now replaced by the solidarity of the extensive continuum. This solidarity embraces not only the coordinate divisions within each atomic actuality, but also exhibits the coordinate divisions of all atomic actualities from each other in one scheme of relationship. (286)

An actual entity considered in reference to the privacy of things is a ‘subject’; namely, it is a moment of the genesis of self-enjoyment. It consists of purposed self-creation out of materials which are at hand in virtue of their publicity. (289)

Buchler

From the viewpoint at which we have arrived thus far, two general observations are pertinent. The first is that there is no longer any need to speak nor any meaning in speaking of “the unity of nature.” This idea, which is another of the venerated metaphysical slogans, seems most at home in a restricted view of nature and in particular the historical view defending the universal applicability of scientific law and explanation to all that is measurable in the world. Another and even older version of the unity of nature is the idea of the inherent purpose or purposes of nature, “what nature intended.” It too is familiar, morally and metaphysically—and remarkably obscure in meaning.

The second general observation is that no reason can be assigned for speaking of what Whitehead (among many others) calls “the system of the universe.” “The universe” appears to be Whitehead’s term for the most comprehensive order, and “nature,” as we saw, is called by him a “portion” of the universe. We will recall also that intimately related to this assumption of a system is his view of “an essence to the universe,” an essence allegedly sought by metaphysics. But, once again, the universe, deemed all-inclusive, cannot be itself an order and, therefore, cannot be called a system. A system is differentiable not only from its own subaltern systems but from alternative systems. If it is inclusive of all others, it is left without an integrity and is therefore not a system at all. Hence there is also no meaning in saying that it has an essence. (272-273)

Corrington

Initially one can ask: what does it mean to say that “extensive order” steps into the multiplicity of (slightly) individuated actual occasions bringing the deliverances of the mighty extensive continuum? From whence does such totalizing order come, whither is it moving and, finally, is anything directing this transit? What is ‘the’ initially definite multiplicity of actual occasions as ‘they’ gallop toward determinateness? And, lastly, what is one to make of the rather jarring term “solidarity” as it is held to both pertain to *and* govern over: 1) each occasion’s ‘inner’ multiplicity and, 2) ‘all’ ‘external’ relations among ‘all’ condescended actual occasions? It sounds very much like a badly over-generalized use of some scientific ideas within a conceptual order where they simply have no ‘extensive’ pertinence. As, for example, when Pannenberg uses a non-mathematical concept of field theory to help illuminate the spirit, and in turn, the movement among the dimensions of the trinity (*perichoresis*). Such an analogical or even metaphoric extension of an electro-magnetic theory can light-up certain traits, but, and this is crucial, *no*

scientific theory, even that of evolution, can possibly carry the scope of a metaphysical theory, which is, after all, crafted with extreme care with a constant eye to “whatever is in whatever way it is.” Simply put: that is beyond the reach of even the most ambitious scientific category. Thus, one could query: “Yes, but isn’t it all just energy, even matter?” But is this so? Are possibilities energy, or laws, or hopes, or betrayals, or my dog’s dreams? Energy may be a *subaltern* trait in some of these complexes, but the complex itself is not energy *an sich*. And saying that it’s all just “super strings,” or “organisms,” or “prana,” or vibrations, or....., adds nothing useful to metaphysical query. There is a conceptual laziness in making Viking-like raids on the sciences with the assumption that what you bring home can actually be indefinitely stretched to do your metaphysical house building. Inevitably the sad day comes when you realize that nothing brought home from afar will fix the growing leaks in your roof. It’s time to return to the, perhaps slower, process of really thinking through again and again your most cherished pseudo-generic concepts to find a way out and through them to the vastly more capacious nature that generic thought joyously struggles to honor.

An ordinal approach would say that any so-called “extensive continuum” simply can’t apply to every variety of natural complex. If by “colonialism” one means the move to impose one region and its power on another, then Whitehead’s scheme is surprisingly colonialistic. It is as if the British Vice Regent in India in 1929 were to say: “You must become a British Gentleman, whether you are male or female, and have all of the appropriate traits on display, fully determinate and solid, or you simply will not *be* at all.” Lest this comparison seem too crassly polemical, bear in mind that it exhibits two things: 1) the reduction of everything (human) to one and only one trait constitution, and 2) establishes a system of ontological priority as to what is the really real stuff of ‘the’ ‘unified’ ‘nature.’

For Buchler nature (somehow included in the ‘universe’ for Whitehead) has neither unity or purpose. Purposes are curious creatures, eminently popular and oft sighted, but almost all sightings are the result of optical delusions. And to say that ‘nature’ is even a ‘something’ that could *have* a purpose is the height of metaphysical folly, even if few theologians can ply their craft without this operant super “would-be.” An ecstatic naturalist with a Neo-Platonic sensibility could maintain without contradiction that while so-called nature has no purpose, souls can and do. But, to give Whitehead his due, no society of occasions or its constituents can get a clear picture of the divine initial aim. Purposes always emerge in a very muddy context—always. And, as noted, most die long before they can fully prevail. True wisdom is born when even the hard working metaphysician has to look up and opine that, after all of the razzle dazzle is done, efficient causality is both King and Queen—cold, efficient, taking no prisoners, and yet somehow generating the most astonishing forms of beauty that ravage the soul—beauty that already is a going under just as it is most proudly on display.

[XIV]
 (On Ontological Priority and Ontological Parity)

Whitehead

In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed 'creativity'; and God is its primordial, non-temporal accident. (7)

Thus we have always to consider two meanings of potentiality: (a) the 'general' potentiality, which is the bundle of possibilities, mutually consistent or alternative, provided by the multiplicity of eternal objects, and (b) the 'real' potentiality, which is conditioned by the data provided by the actual world. General potentiality is absolute, and real potentiality is relative to some actual entity, taken as a standpoint whereby the actual world is defined. It must be remembered that the phrase 'actual world' is like 'yesterday' and 'tomorrow,' in that it alters its meaning according to standpoint. The actual world must always mean the community of all actual entities, including the primordial actual entity called 'God' and the temporal actual entities. (65)

Buchler

Now along with the notion of a complex as "unreal" we must discard the notion of some complexes as "less" and other complexes as "more" real. Let us contrast a principle of ontological priority—which has flourished from Parmenides to Whitehead and Heidegger, and which continues to flourish in unsuspected ways—with a principle of ontological parity. In terms of the latter, whatever is discriminated in any way (whether it is "encountered" or produced or otherwise related to) is a natural complex, and no complex is more "real," more "natural," more genuine," or more "ultimate" than any other. (30-31)

No distinction, then, is dismissed. It only awaits its analysis—the interpretation of "how and in what sense it is real." All complexes are equally "authentic" as complexes, distressing as this may be to certain points of view whose metaphysical orientation actually damages an ethical purpose which it is believed to support. The natural parity of all complexes, their ontological integrity, is what reveals all differences and makes it possible to ascertain them. The principle of parity obliges us to receive and accept all discriminanda. The conception of ontological priority, on the other hand, makes all ascertainable differences suspect, and instead of interpreting their relative character and ordinal location, always stands ready to efface them. (32-33)

It turns out, also, [for Whitehead] that (3) the atoms or "final realities" are actualities; so that actualities are more real than possibilities. This in spite of the fact that the atomic actualities do not endure but only become and perish, while

“pure” possibilities (“eternal objects”) neither become nor perish; and in spite of the fact that actualities are dependent, for their being, upon possibilities getting realized in them, while these pure possibilities are not dependent, for their being, upon any actualities—they are “the same for all actual entities.” (50)

Corrington

In conclusion, Whitehead, as previously argued, is rather hierarchical in his aesthetic privileging of complexities, intensities, harmonies (of a certain type), and self-determining determinateness. Allied to this is an implied commitment to ontological priorities, i.e., the curious notion that some things are more real than others, and often for specific reasons. So we can see the following: 1) creativity is more real than one of its actualizations—god, yet, 2) in another twist, that which is actualized or even an agent of actualization is more real than that which is a ‘pure’ possibility, so 3) god must be more real than eternal entities because without divine actualizing (always toward the atomic), no eternal entity can itself be actualized, yet, again, 4) the ingressing eternal entity is surely less real than its host because the host is self-determining, it is actually doing something by concreting and that is more real than that which is concreated, 5) or, put in a commensurate way, whatever is becoming, ironically, has more beingness than that which has usually been identified with Being. All of this cosmological construction fits the patterns of (North American) common sensism. That which is later is better (read as more real), origins are suspect, and little becomings, filled with the energy of the Conquistador, are the most really real kinds of stuff we know. In the end, Whitehead is far less innovative than many would like, and his easy translation into our theological want-to-bes is explained by the fact that his process panentheism is a sophisticated public version of our hoped-for selves’ writ large.

The ordinal perspective has a genuine radicalness that takes longer to learn and assimilate. It gives us some stark realizations: 1) let go of the quest for mega-unity, 2) let go of the quest to find one trait that is in everything, 3) let go all supernaturalisms that make the absurd claim that there can be something ‘outside’ of nature, 4) let go of every possible anthropomorphic projection, 5) let go of seeking ‘the’ whence and ‘the’ whither, 6) let go of conceptual colonialism, 7) let go of honorific and eulogistic use of categories, 8) let go of lazy, sloppy, or pseudo-poetic modes of language when theoretical fatigue sets in, 9) let go of all container images for nature, and 10) let go of all use of ontological priority, especially insofar as it can further valuational injustice.

The ongoing commitment to ontological parity, the view that there is nothing more or less real than anything else, should be seen as a spiritual discipline. Such a discipline in the domain of thought does not tell you everything you need to know about nature, but it does train you to become as open as humanly possible to the infinite variety of natural complexes and their traits. No trait is ever condemned to non-being, nor is another trait allowed to become the only real thing. The body of

Shakespeare is not less real than the innumerable productions of his plays, nor are those plays, as always ending, less real than the bones of the Bard, just differently real. The Rock of Gibraltar is not more real than my thirst, just differently real. And finally, the natural complex god is not one drop more real than *anything* else within the innumerable natural complexes of 'nature.'

Personal Photographs of the Two Worlds



With Justus Buchler in his home in Garden City, New York in 1982



With Dorothy and Charles Hartshorne at Penn State University in 1984

Two Letters from Charles Hartshorne

(July 10, 1992)

(October, 30, 1992)



Warkhoyce to Corrington 1/10/92

Dear Robert,

You pay me a high compliment by writing such a letter. It brings me back to my first impression of you, or at least an early one. It has been my experience that if I ever like a person I usually do right away. The best people are usually for me transparently good. Few people are transparently bad and it was years before it dawned on me why. Wickedness soon learns it has to hide, or knows that from the start. If you had a tough childhood then you've done mighty well!

Some time ago I wrote disagreements with me, which somewhat puzzled me. I'm still puzzled after he replied at some length. My guess is he has the hope some bright light is going to shine into his mind in the future, in relation to the difference between two forms of non-being, Greek me on and Greek ouk on. I'm sceptical and think that's not the great key, though Buddhism and N. Berdyaev are on his side, I guess.

Carl Sagan replied to my Open Letter, sending me his science fiction book Contact, about which I, oddly, had not heard. He and his wife (not so called) have done another book on our close relationship to chimpanzee's. I'll have to read it because I've written a long essay for the same journal, if they accept it, about Sagan and two other important living scientists, and how I've learned from ⁹⁰ ~~of~~ ~~different~~ ~~books~~ ~~them~~. I'm postponing finalizing the article until I see the ^{new} ~~new~~ ~~book~~. I want to see if he realizes that in some important respects we're closer (not genetically of course but in our abilities) to birds of songbird type, also to parrots, ^{its} ~~so~~ ~~obvious~~ so they must be aware of it. Also the delay may make it easier for the journal to accept ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~essay~~.

I'll get around to your book too. There's a book on Shakespeare in his mature period, my favorite part of his work, along with the sonnets, that I feel like getting hold of. Imagine, there are people who don't know what to do with their spare time--with all the books there are to read, or read again.



Dear Robert,

Warm thanks for your book and nice letter. I take the book as confirming the high opinion of you I expressed to Vaught many years ago, I forget how many. I've skimmed your book quite a little, and may never be able to do it full justice. I'm in good health, about the same as fifteen or more years ago, no new symptoms. But I'm doing final touches on two books, neither of which is yet guaranteed a publisher, one on philosophy, the other on birds, but philosophy and birds come into both. I have also some articles I think well of, several accepted for publication, the others not yet submitted. I'm plenty busy. My age has one effect, that I must spend more time resting than I used to, but can still work more hours per day than perhaps most elderly people. My principle loss is not my health but Dorothy's Alzheimer's. She is in a nursing home, after it became obvious she could not endure being at home alone while I was busy working. The marvelous mind she used to have is slowly disappearing, though she can still speak flawless English (in short phrases) and sing with the words & musical notation before her.

My muscular control is less good now and typewriting became a losing game. But I've learned to use an SCM processor, as I'm doing now. A fierce struggle to learn this, but it's done.

Your book shows you trying, even harder perhaps than I do, to utilize all the people you find helpful, giving them credit. Very many of the people you deal with I met and knew personally. Thus Jaspers; I read him with interest and respect and once talked with him for 20 minutes or so. He was very unforthcoming. I write about his encompassing and why I think mind or spirit is both encompassing and encompassed, and mere mindless matter is a mere fiction or a mere word for some very low but pervasive forms of mind, sub-animal and sub-cellular. In plants only cells feel not the macroscopic plant. Your one reference to Leibniz is to him as least convincing to me. Your one reference to Plato is similarly partial from my point of view. Like so many Americans nowadays your Plato is a radically truncated version of the Plato I see, along with Burnet, Shorey, Cornford, Lewis Campbell (11th Britannica), R. Levinson.

On Peirce you come closer to my perspective. I suppose you've met Eco? I have. For me he is interesting chiefly in his depicting of Medieval and Dark Age theology as the dismal mistake I think it was.

Your basic stance overlaps a good deal with mine, as you are aware. I trust contemporary fashions less and great philosophers all the way back more than you do. Plato's theology means much more to me than it did even to Whitehead. He allowed A.E. Taylor, too close to conventional Christianity, to mislead him, and did not accept Plato's view that the divine psyche, like all psyche's, is embodied mind and has self-activity or freedom. Wh. did agree about the freedom. Apparently you're closer to Plato than you

know. The cosmos is the divine body. However for Plato the divine psyche encompasses the divine body, and your or my psyche encompasses our body. This is an analogy, which means a difference in principle and a likeness in principle.

You bet heavily on Buchler, whom I knew personally before he became famous, but was determined he would be famous, or as he put it, "I want to better myself." I say that if complex has a good meaning then so does simple. This is the Principle of Contrast. Everything is complex and everything is simple. There are many kinds and degrees of complexity.

Stop, I'm doing what you said you would not do, laboring you with a long letter. Apologies. Thanks again for your gift.



10/30/92