

# Ecotheology, Ecoprocess, and "Ecotheosis"

## A Theopoetical Intervention

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### 1. *Ecopolitics and Theology*

Global Warming is not simply a „threat“, and it is not simply a „sign“. To be a „threat“, it would have to be situated within a matrix of measured stability in which it could appear as an abnormality;<sup>1</sup> to be a „sign“, e.g. of the apocalypse, it would need to be placed within a matrix of religious insecurity fed by the fear of instability as an expression of sin or karma or any other causal repercussion resulting from bad behavior.<sup>2</sup> In public perception, however, it is both, and when it is not interpreted in this way, it is considered a hoax, a political strategy of liberal activists and theoreticians to manipulate (especially American national) politics.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 For an early study – long before Al Gore's Nobel Prize 2007 – that denies both on an economic level by being directed against Al Gore's campaign cf. Th. Moore, *Climate of Fear: Why We Shouldn't Worry about Global Warming* (Washington DC: Cato Institute, 2000). Besides the negation of Global Warming as a „threat“ that cannot be avoided in fact, I mean also the presupposition, which I will explain later, that, in principle, a „threat“ must be set against a background of an equilibrium that is understood as a „norm.“
- 2 Cf. I. Eric, *2010 Armageddon Apocalypse* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006); R. Bate & J. Morris, *Global Warming: Apocalypse or Hot Air?* IEA Studies on the Environment (Coronet Books, 1994); J. Romm, *Hell and High Water: The Global Warming Solution* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008); and counter-publications such as R. Bailey, *Ecoscam: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
- 3 For the recent heated discussion between liberal and conservative positions and their political interests as well as a sign of mutual understanding of the motives and urgency of the theme compare these books: B. Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming*. (New York: Knopf, 2007); N. Gingrich & T. L. Maple. *A Contract With the Earth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007); T. Nordhaus & M. Shellenberger, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007). For the hoax-thesis cf. R. Bailey, *Global Warming and Other Eco Myths: How the Environmental Movement Uses False Science to Scare Us to Death* (New York: Random House, 2002).



Global Warming is not a simple scientific reality either.<sup>4</sup> It is, and always will remain, unclear to what extent it should be considered a fact or a theory.<sup>5</sup> Any scientific theory is always, to some degree, both a theoretical interpretation of experiments (that are the outcome of a theory with its limitations of categories) and a structural one-sided perspective.<sup>6</sup> This fuzziness, however, is a matter of immanent, methodological restriction and not of intellectual inability.<sup>7</sup> This is reinforced by the multidisciplinary nature and the complexity of the character of chaotic systems at the root of Global Warming.<sup>8</sup>

To say that Global Warming is an ecological reality, however, is revealing.<sup>9</sup> To be an ecological reality something is recognized as a matter of degree rather than sharp opposition, e.g. of theory and fact or threat or sign, and as a matter of interrelation between a gradual reality and its multiple gradual contexts, which are themselves part of the situation of certain events.<sup>10</sup> As an ecological reality, Global Warming is acknowledged as an event of, and in, nature, even if the worrying-part is whether, and that, it has a human component.<sup>11</sup> With humans being

4 For a comprehensive scientific study of the economic reasons for and ecological consequences of Global Warming cf. J. Houghton, *Global Warming: The Complete Briefing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

5 For the complexity of studying chaotic weather systems as the basis for the scientific „fact-interpretation“ debate cf. S. G. Philander, *Is the Temperature Rising? The Uncertain Science of Global Warming* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000) and S. R. Weart, *The Discovery of Global Warming: New Histories of Science, Technology, and Medicine* (Harvard UP, 2004).

6 For the hard work of differentiating fact from interpretation and the inevitable gradual interdependence of both in relation to Global Warming cf. M. Leroux, *Global Warming – Myth or Reality?: The Erring Ways of Climatology. Springer Praxis Books: Environmental Sciences* (Chichester, UK: Springer Press, 2005).

7 Besides the classical studies on the importance of hypothesis and paradigm in science, especially of Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend, for the new fuzzy science, e.g., relating mathematics and social sciences, cf. M. J. Smithson & J. Verkuilen, *Fuzzy Set Theory: Applications in the Social Sciences (Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publ., 2006).

8 Cf. W. J. Burroughs, *Climate Change: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Cambridge UP, 2007).

9 In the contemporary deconstruction of the *philosophical presuppositions* of ecology, it has become a question whether we can speak of ecological systems at all, that there might not by any holistic quality to an ecosystem or, at least, that they are not relevant, so that „ideals“ of „stability“ or „diversity“ or „balance“ have become increasingly problematic if they are interpreted as „natural qualities“ of unities called ecosystems. Cf. Ch. Aus der Au, *Achtsam wahrnehmen: Eine theologische Umweltethik* (Neukirchner Verlag, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2003), 68-88.

10 For the development of the ecological paradigm cf. B. Beisner, *Ecological Paradigms Lost: Routes of Theory Change. Theoretical Ecology* (Academic Press, 2005).

11 For a study of extra-human, „natural“ reasons of Global Warming, e.g. through effects of the sun and quantum physical realities, respectively, cf. D. V. Hoyt & K. H. Schat-



part of nature, it is not super-, un- or counter-natural that human beings have an influence on their environment; even one that immediately influences their very existence.<sup>12</sup>

Given this (admittedly short-cut and rather superficial) analysis, the Global Warming we find so pressing an issue for intellectual recognition and political change is not recognized as an ecological reality to be observed but rather as an ecopolitical imperative to change the humanly conditioned influence on nature, that is, that of the geosphere, in order to save, protect, secure and perpetuate human existence in nature.<sup>13</sup> And in being ecopolitical, the problem of Global Warming is not viewed primarily as an ecological „reality“ (not to say „problem“) per se, i.e., a reality of natural relations, their natural rhythms of change and stabilization as such; but it obviously has a super-, un- and counter-natural side that becomes a „problem“ precisely because of its relation to human „reality“ and humanity's „inclination“ to not become extinct.<sup>14</sup> It is not a problem of ecology as science but of „political ecology“ or ecopolitics.<sup>15</sup>

As strange as this view may seem, this is the reason for an even stranger problem, namely that the relation of theology to ecology is based not on ecology but on ecopolitics.<sup>16</sup> This means: would the theological sensitivity to ecological matters of nature be based on ecology, i.e., the interrelatedness of environments, rather than the human need for security and self-sustenance, it would not only be not preoccupied with human reality (foremost or alone) but it would also not be

ten, *The Role of the Sun in Climate Change* (Oxford UP, 1997) and H. Svensmark, *The Chilling Stars: The New Theory of Climate Change* (Cambridge: Totem Books, 2007).

12 This is the widely acknowledged and connection with which Al Gore has won the attention of the world community and the Nobel Prize. Cf. Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming* (New York: Viking Press, 2008).

13 For the „naturally“ presupposed tendency to talk about environmental preservation cf. K. Eichmann, *The Biology of Complex Organisms: Creation and Protection of Integrity* (Birkhauser, 2003). For a critical review of such presuppositions as deeply enmeshed in our cultural constructions of ecology and the overlapping interconnection of science, culture and art in the term „ecology“ cf. D. Philips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford UP, 2003) and G. Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. New Critical Idiom (New York: Routledge, 2004) and for the human perspective on ecology cf. Ch. H. Southwick, *Global Ecology in Human Perspective* (Oxford UP, 2006).

14 Cf. B. Mickibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 2006).

15 Cf. Ph. Stott & S. Sullivan, eds., *Political Ecology: Science, Myth and Power* (London: Hodder Arnold Publications, 2000) and T. Forsyth, *Critical Political Ecology: The Politics of Environmental Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005). For the intricate relation of science and politics in relation to the uncertainty of chaotic systems and, hence, between the ecology and ecopolitics of Global Warming cf. A. E. Dessler & E. A. Parson, *The Science and Politics of Global Climate Change: A Guide to the Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

16 For the activism that drives the ecological analysis cf. B. McKibben, *Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community* (New York: Holt Press, 2007).



bound to appear without much theoretical consequences on the ecological analysis.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe this is its problem: Theology is interested in claiming a niche in the ecopolitical debate in order to regain a voice for (Christian) theology in the landscape of theoretical and ideological voices, either in claiming power for the formation of a human future on Earth or in seeing the environmental crisis as a chance to reintroduce the relevance of religion.<sup>18</sup> This interest in the theopolitical debate, hence, is uttered via references to the depth of the theological traditions and in which ways they were always „ecological“, i.e., talking about nested realities and interconnections of environments, talking about the importance of the bodily existence for salvation, talking about the Divine imperative to preserve creation.<sup>19</sup> „Stewardship for creation“ is one of the most perpetually imaged in which theology claims to be part of the ecopolitical debate.<sup>20</sup> But again, this is not an ecological debate, concerned with the interconnections themselves or the „good“ of these interrelations, but one that is concerned with the survival of humanity for which nature is too easily reduced to a mere background sine qua non human existence can be saved from extinction.<sup>21</sup>

This might also be the reason that the ecotheological discourse is widely irrelevant for the ecopolitical imperative, because survival is a common value of human existence and does not need any theological „foundation“ or „backup“ from tradition.<sup>22</sup> Ecotheological confessions are more relevant for the own

- 17 The practical influence on the ecopolitical movement is not questioned but it is concerned with the utilization of religion with its resources to change the political and individual practices to fulfill the aims of ecopolitical interests. Cf. Gottlieb, Roger S. „Introduction: Religion and Ecology – What Is the Connection and Why Does it Matter?“ in R. S. Gottlieb, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 12: „Once focused on the environmental crisis, the resources of religion have a distinct – and I would argue enormously valuable – role to play in trying to turn things around.“
- 18 Cf. K. C. Abraham, „A Theological Response to the Ecological Crisis,“ in D. G. Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 65-78; cf. N. Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).
- 19 Cf. T. Robinson & J. Chatraw, *Saving God's Green Earth: Rediscovering the Church's Responsibility to Environmental Stewardship* (Ampelton Publishing, 2006).
- 20 Of the many books cf. L. Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003) and C. Golligher, ed., *Healing God's Creation: The Global Anglican Congress On The Stewardship Of Creation : The Good Shepherd Retreat Center, Hartebeesport, South Africa, August 18-23, 2002* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2004).
- 21 There are other trajectories less concerned with extinction but rather with the communication of humanity with the Earth as a transformation of religion itself; cf. S. McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology* (Harvard UP, 2007).
- 22 This does not mean that the alliances of Christian groups and more or less official Church initiatives for Creation and Environment is not growing to an extent that, as



constituencies – either to soothe them in their efforts to be successful because it is God's will (as expressed in Scripture)<sup>23</sup> or – in the best case – to stimulate them toward a new awareness of the ecopolitical imperative – „that religion must play a central role in building a more environmentally sustainable society.“<sup>24</sup> This situation has its deeper reason in the fact that the very reflection on the real historical and ideological roots of the ecological crisis from 1967 on directly confronted the Christian heritage as guilty of anthropic reduction leading to the disrespect for the Earth. This confined theology's contribution to defense and internal revision.<sup>25</sup>

I am aware that many will find this a one-sided analysis and even offensive to all efforts to save nature, to protect God's creation, and to secure human survival with the Divine imperative at its back – after all, there is a new religious awareness of the interrelatedness of all creatures, on the one hand, and of the genuine „spiritual dimension“ of the environmentalist movement, on the other.<sup>26</sup>

Elizabeth Kadetsky in her article „Guarding Nature: Mending the Earth Requires Changing our Ways. Religious Leaders and Traditions Show us How,” in *Science & Spirit* (March/April 2002): 29 has mentioned, a „profusion of faith communities dedicated to spiritual approaches to environmental activism are becoming so visible a sector of the movement that mainstream environmentalism itself has become increasingly affected by religious and spiritual messages. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, for instance, has enlisted the participation of five thousand clergy and lay members of Catholic, Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, and Evangelical and other Protestant communities as environmental leaders.”

- 23 Cf. C. B. DeWitt, *Earth-Wise: A Biblical Response to Environmental Issues* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2008) and E. Brown, *Our Father's World: Mobilizing the Church to Care for Creation* (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2008). This might include a change of dogmatic presuppositions; but they are not necessarily in sync with the change of life-style either; cf. I. Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 212.
- 24 A. L. Peterson, „Talking the Walk: A Practice-Based Environmental Ethic as Grounds for Hope.” in L. Kearns & C. Keller, eds., *Ecospirit* (New York: Fordham, 2007), 23. An example of the latter, namely the new awareness and activation of religious communities for a new interrelation between ecology and economy based on a new understanding of God is D. K. Ray, *Theology That Matters: Ecology, Economy And God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).
- 25 In 1967 Lynn White published an article – „The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” – that stated that it was the anthropocentrism of Christianity with its immanent patriarchalism and imperialism of human dominion over nature that has directly led to the environmental crisis.
- 26 Cf. Wallace, *Finding God*, op. cit., 67: „Green spirituality empowers the antitoxics to go out and fight injustice by offering them spiritually potent visions of an interconnected world that can set free a primal sense of identification with all forms of life.” And, on the other hand, it is acknowledged that „it is also the case that environmental movements are by their very nature hospitable to religion. This is because environmentalism ... tends to have a spiritual dimension which other liberal or leftist political movements lack”; cf. Gottlieb, „Introduction: Religion and Ecology,” in op. cit., 14.



But this is not my intention. Far from it! What I want to say is that in order for a theological perspective to become relevant, it must look deeper, it must not ride the tide by hopping on the ecopolitical band wagon or by riding the ecological wave by saying that what is said there is what „we“ have said since the time of the Fathers.<sup>27</sup> The fatal flaw of such surfing the back of the ecopolitical monster, like Global Warming, is that it repeats the same structural restraints from which the ecopolitical foundations suffer.

## 2. *The Anthropic Fallacy*

To say it again and more differentiated: The ecopolitical imperative to save the world's nature *from* human influences that, eventually, will lead to human extinction is problematic *insofar* as it is motivated by the aim of human *survival*. I call this the Anthropic Fallacy of ecotheology and ecotheopolitics. It indicates that the ecopolitical imperative is anthropocentric and anthropomorphic in its theoretical decisions and, therefore, is not *per se* interested in ecology, either as recognition of mutual environmental relations or as demand for such a redefinition of nature as a whole. I will call this reductionism the Anthropic Principle of ecotheology and ecopolitics.<sup>28</sup>

It is *anthropocentric* insofar as, although the rhetoric is directed at the integrity of nature, the deepest impulse is to secure human existence in nature.<sup>29</sup> This „nature“, however, is not understood in its own organic integrity of which humanity is just a relational moment but is only, or foremost, *technically* analyzed with regard to the ranges and community of quantifiable parameters that allow human survival, e.g., the level of carbon dioxide in the air or the degrees of temperature that allow us to exist at all or at certain places on Earth, and so on. Insofar as ecotheology, like other non-religious responses, is voiced to enforce this quantitative approach cloaked with sacredness and disguising the real motivation of survival, it only combines Anthropocentrism with a hidden Materialism (important for the restraints of a truly ecological approach).<sup>30</sup> One is reminded of the movie *The Matrix*

27 Cf. J. Sleeth, *Serve God, Save the Planet* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006).

28 For a turn away from the „anthropocentric“ to an „ecocentric“ paradigm of ecopolitics cf. R. Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007).

29 To revive Earth-centered religions is not necessarily an exception. Although it might lead to a new awareness of the „the interconnections among all members of the biosphere in contradistinction to the privileged ideal of maximizing self-interest,“ it can still presuppose human survival as its motivation ; cf. M. I. Wallace *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 66.

30 I will argue later with Whitehead that this „materialism“ was the basis for the ecological crisis in its economic dimension altogether. For the environmental motivation with the



(1999) in which the machines faced a major difficulty in securing the survival of human beings for the production of energy in that their system could not function without the development of a mental world by which the human minds could engage in specific human activities within a human world.<sup>31</sup>

It is *anthropomorphic* insofar as it presupposes that Earth, or even Nature as a whole, does *conspire* to our survival or, as in theology, that this Earth, or even the World as a whole, was constructed to allow for our very appearance and survival, and that we, out of reasons of the holiness of nature, or a Divine command to care, or because it is our „mother“ must take care of it as a response to these „calls“. <sup>32</sup> Needless to say, the *Gaia*-project – first proposed by James Lovelock from 1965 on and at last in his 2006-book *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth is Fighting Back - and How we Can Still Save Humanity* – has not only relativized our anthropocentric condescendence – which is important – but unfortunately also sealed our complicity in perpetually viewing nature as if it was an entity that must be „preserved“, if not for itself (which is too static), at least for the anthropic reason of human survival.<sup>33</sup> Counter to a simplification of theological „stewardship“<sup>34</sup>, we should not forget how astonishing the fact is that even in times of seemingly all-pervasive anthropocentric and -morphic simplicity – like in the middle ages – we find a complex discussion of the image of „nature“ as Divine and devilish, as mother and as monster, as Goddess, but as a strange one that cannot be calculated.<sup>35</sup>

Two strategies can be implemented against both anthropomorphic and anthropocentric reductions of ecology: one talks of nature in alien terms, the other in terms of integrating terms. The first one understands nature, because it is unaware of our presence and our understanding of ourselves as persons or cultures or artists (and if it were aware it would have realized that we are also beings of inhumanity, given

sacredness of the World when discussing the quantities of economic and environmental parameters, cf. Th. Berry, *Evening Thought: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006).

31 Cf. W. Erwin, ed., *The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003).

32 For the Divine command to care for the Earth as motivation for ecology cf. R. J. Berry, *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2000). For the Mother Spirituality cf. Ed McGaa, *Mother Earth Spirituality: Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and Our World (Religion and Spirituality)* (New York: HarperOne, 1990). This is not to speak against such a spirituality but only to allow for the awareness that a hidden agenda is always, at least symbolically, an extension of human imaginaries.

33 Cf. R. R. Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York: HarperOne, 1994).

34 Cf. D. Hall, *The Steward* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

35 Cf. B. Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), ch. 2-3.



the Holocaust and our utmost destructive potential), in mechanical terms, cold to anything „mindful“, unrelated to love and hate, only blindly repeating atomic collisions and their aggregations. Jacques Monod's 1971-book *Chance and Necessity* is typical of this approach. But much of the use of sciences insofar as they are politically used to reduce anything subjective – like human experience, feeling, attraction, intellect and thought – to illusions of material, spatial or quantum movements, is heading in the same direction. Welcome to the Newtonian world of pure extension!<sup>36</sup> This is the world of Descartes' *res extensa* for which the human mind, *res cogitans*, is as alien or only related in God – and, yes, both have disappeared anyway.<sup>37</sup> This, then, is the world of reductionism, of scientism or social Darwinism.<sup>38</sup>

Conversely, the other strategy is not simplification but complication. If there *is* human mind, subjective experience, art, science and love, then, if we don't want to end up in reductive dualism (and any reductive monism is based on such a dualism), we must acknowledge that all subjectivity must be part of nature, that the differences „in“ nature must be gradual and not alien, intensive and not essential. This is the integrative path that Whitehead has taken.<sup>39</sup> In his 1933-book *Adventures of Ideas*, he states prophetically (and retrospectively as developed in his „philosophy of organism“ of *Process and Reality*) that

An occasion of experience which includes a human mentality is an extreme instance, at one end of the scale, of those happenings which constitute nature. As yet this discussion has fixed attention upon this extreme. But any doctrine which refuses to place human experience outside nature, must find in descriptions of human experience factors which also enter into the descriptions of less specialized natural occurrences. If there be no such factors, then the doctrine of human experience as a fact within nature is mere bluff, founded upon vague phrases whose sole merit is a comforting familiarity. We should either admit dualism, at least as a provisional doctrine, or we should point out the identical elements connecting human experience with physical science.<sup>40</sup>

36 Cf. G. Borchardt, *The Scientific Worldview: Beyond Newton and Einstein* (Lincoln, NV: iUniverse, 2007). Newton himself, against the dynamics of his scientific thought, has, of course, a more integrated view of things, e.g., viewing space as the „sensory of God.“

37 Cf. M. Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism* (Harvard UP, 1998). While Descartes' dualism disappeared in Spinoza's monism, it was only a small step to identify his position with materialism. Modern Science (of the same time) with its materialism is just a reflection of the loss of the *res cogitans*.

38 Cf. R. Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007); P. Dickens, *Social Darwinism: Linking Evolutionary Thought to Social Theory (Concepts in the Social Sciences)* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000).

39 For an introduction in the non-dualistic and non-monistic philosophy of Whitehead cf. E. Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's „Process and Reality“* (New York: Fordham UP, 1997).

40 A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 184-5.



As John Dewey has shown, it would be dangerous to „identify“ such elements *essentially* (by content) and not *functionally*, and it is my reading of Whitehead that a *functional* „identity“ is not an identity at all, or an essence, but rather a manifold of activities growing together into a momentary act that Whitehead calls an „event“ or „occasion“ of activity or its „occurrence“. <sup>41</sup> If it is an *event* rather than an essence, it cannot be fixed as a particle, content or form but has to be understood as occurrence of togetherness. Any such occurrence has a moment of novelty in its specific togetherness that cannot be reduced to the factors of which it is constituted but is a *complication* of the elements by which it arises. It is the other side of the same coin, however, that the novel togetherness of a multiplicity in an event must be finite and perishing since otherwise we might well end up in a relational universe that is rather immovable; a fixed, crystalline cosmos in which everything has already happened and novelty is only an illusion. <sup>42</sup>

### 3. The Ecological Model

In all of modern theology, the conscious move toward a truly *ecological* statement that is neither anthropomorphic nor anthropocentric was taken by John Cobb who in his 1972-book *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* and later in his 1981-book *The Liberation of Life*, co-authored with the Australian biologist Charles Birch. He has built on precisely those of Whitehead's suggestions of an organic universe that do not necessitate humanity as part of its organicity but also not exclude it. <sup>43</sup> Thereby, it becomes a world of emergence of novel structures and levels out of a vast network of interrelated and momentary events instead of dead substances and dualistic accounts of such substances, e.g. atoms or extension. Whether one calls this truly ecological move „process theology“ (as it does for itself) or otherwise is not of importance. <sup>44</sup> But it is *this* move that has intro-

41 Cf. J. Dewey, „The Philosophy of Whitehead,“ in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*. Library of Living Philosophers, vol. 3 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1999), 641-700. Cf. my systematic interpretation of this „common“ function in my *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville: WJK, 2008), § 43.

42 For the explication of this rhythm of relationality and processuality in Whitehead cf. M. Weber, *Whitehead's Pancreativism: The Basics* (Heusenstamm: Ontos, 2006), ch. IV. With all of its interesting implications it otherwise has, David Bohm's *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980) exhibits this weakness.

43 Instead of being human-centered, or even God-centered, he calls the universe Life-centered, where Life is understood in a sense that includes intensity and novelty; cf. Cobb/Birch, *Liberation*, op. cit., 91-4.

44 One of his earliest attempts to develop a theological cosmology which is ecological in nature by being built on Whitehead's philosophy of organism is Cobb's newly published *A*



duced an alternative into the *ecothological* discussion (that is even older than the ecotheological discussion itself) and certainly conditioned the potential for the defection of many theologies from an openly anthropic theology (although mostly ending up with a more hidden anthropic ecotheopolitics).<sup>45</sup>

Why, we may ask, is Cobb's move not part of this problematic alliance between theology, the anthropic principle and eco(theo)politics; and why is Whitehead's move towards an organic integration not rather a new form of extended anthropomorphic imperialism of nature? In answering the second question first, it must be admitted that many interpreters of Whitehead have not seen him taking a functional route of interpreting the „common element“ in which nature and human experience coincide but an essential route, e.g., by naming a „common energy“ or a common „form“ that would be some kind of panpsychic „identity“.<sup>46</sup> However, Whitehead's vision of the universe as consisting of a network of processes, of becoming and perishing relations, of a *creative advance of occurrences of togetherness* prevents this „identity“ from becoming one of essence. And it is widely misunderstood that naming these processes of „growing together“ (*concrescence*) of relations, which are also such processes in themselves, occurrences of „experience“ (not human experience, however!) does not intend to establish a common essence or form.<sup>47</sup> Rather this language indicates only an abstraction from the infinite multiplicity of different occurrences which have only a common *function*, namely the *becoming of novel togetherness* (and not the perpetuation of any substantial form) – *whatever* (essence) it „is“ that might become.<sup>48</sup>

*Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Louisville: WJK, 2007).

45 For a comprehensive list of literature on ecotheology up to the mid 1990s cf. the booklist compiled for the 1995 edition of John Cobb's *Is it Too Late?*

46 Cf. the treatment of this „common“ element as „energy-events“ in „energy-fields“ in J. Bracken, *Society and Spirit: A Trinitarian Cosmology* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 1991), ch. 2.

47 It remains dangerous to exploit Whitehead's language of „subjects of experience“ because it always seems to imply „subjects“ as „selves“ in an anthropomorphic way. This seems to me a danger all-present in process theology. Cf. the notion of „intersubjectivity“ in J. Bracken, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the God-World Relationship* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001). To shift away from „subjectivity“ to „experience – as in „panexperimentalism“ is the right move. Cf. D. R. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001).

48 Cf. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corr. ed., ed. by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 7 & 21. For my interpretation of the wholly de-substantialized notion of „creativity“ as „common“ function of becoming without any essence and form cf. R. Faber, *Prozeßtheologie. Zu ihrer Würdigung und kritischen Erneuerung* (Mainz: Grünewald, 2000), § 11 and *God as Poet*, op. cit., §§ 16, 24 & 28.



This „ecological model ... , in distinction from a mechanical model, is one that pictures the organism as inseparably interconnected with its environment.“<sup>49</sup> On every level of organic togetherness – be it human, a cell, DNA, or the electromagnetic field – the components are not substantial, formal or essential, i.e., divided into independent structural moments of a machine that functions identically in any given environment. Rather they express the creative advance of networks of processes – the growing together of environmental relations – within a multiplicity of nested environments that is *internally constituted* by which it is conditioned, namely its environments. The difference of events is functional and gradual, allowing us to „speak“ of quantum events and events of human art at the same time.<sup>50</sup>

Besides the intrinsic environmentalism of networks of nested levels of events, which Whitehead calls „societies“ (of quanta and cells and human beings), it is the novelty of the togetherness that allows for levels of integration, complexity and depth of becoming, issuing in *emergent features* of nature, in evolution, and in grade of depth of „experience“ to reach and even supersede human experience, subjectivity, intellect, culture and art. „In the ecological model an event at a higher level can be explained partly by events at a lower level, but the event at a lower level cannot be explained fully without reference to the event at the higher level.“<sup>51</sup> On *no* level, therefore, will an explanation ever become independent of environment and emergence, i.e., it will never become mechanistic, substantial, or dualistic. And on every level, it is *novelty* that out of the event of togetherness leads to its emergence that cannot be reduced to the environment out of which it grows.<sup>52</sup>

This *functional* account of the universe as a creative advance not only of events but also of the *structures* that events and societies in their social interconnection harbor is radically different from the ecopolitical presupposition that it is about the survival of human beings and that it can be secured if they just would take into account the wider contexts of the application of natural laws. While we could still think of these laws as mechanistic interconnection, e.g., the emission of carbon dioxide or other substances into the atmosphere of the Earth, in Whitehead's environmental interconnection it is really about the *non-linearity* of

49 Ch. Birch & J. Cobb, *The Liberation of Life* (Denton, TX: Environmental Ethics Books, 1990), 80.

50 Conversely to Kraus, *Metaphysics*, *op. cit.*, 7-8, I do not understand this „common language“ as that of genus and species, but of *functional resonance* without the clear (morphological) relationship of classification, which seems to me a reintroduction of a substantialism that Whitehead wanted to avoid at all costs.

51 *Ibid.*, 87.

52 For a new collection of approaches related to Cobb's account of evolutionary emergence cf. J. Cobb, ed., *Back to Darwin: A Richer Account of Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).



new laws at any given level, the emergence of *novel* spheres or layers of natural laws, of a vast universe of *changing* laws, and maybe infinite universes of all possible laws of togetherness. They, in principle, cannot be imagined without the event of novelty, of the *emergence out of indeterminacies* of the basic laws of nature, or even more fundamental, of the event-character of the emergence of any Law at all.<sup>53</sup> In the embrace of novelty, *chaos* is not simply a threat anymore as in „conservative“ (conservationist) approaches but it plays a positive, developmental role.<sup>54</sup>

Paul Davies has convincingly demonstrated that the contemporary understanding of natural laws allows for creativity to be a driving force precisely because „chance and lawlike necessity conspire *at the basic physical level* felicitously to produce (incredibly!) emergent lawlike behavior at the higher level of complexity.“<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, however, these „regularities observed in complex systems, which are often quasi-universal (e.g., Feigenbaum’s numbers in chaos theory), are *emergent* phenomena, not pale manifestations of the ‘underlying’ laws of physics.“<sup>56</sup> This is the ecological, not the ecopolitical, statement of togetherness: the event of novelty is based on the *indeterminacy* of laws, there *immanence* in the body of events and societies of events, exercising them, and the *emergence* of new structures and sorts of universal laws in such events of novel, environmental togetherness.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4. Ecological Disequilibrium

This move as an *ecological* move is, indeed, not part of the ecopolitical imperative of human survival. Rather it is an integrative interpretation of the creative

53 For the *plasticity* of any laws as characters of „groupings“ of events by which they can happen, can be sustained, and finally can be abandoned cf. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, ch. XIII.

54 For Whitehead’s embrace of chaos as a constitutive element of a cosmology of becoming and as a basis for indeterminacy and emergence of natural Laws (which includes an emergence of even „matter“ out of events!) cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 95 & 111.

55 P. Davies, „Teleology without Teleology: Purpose through Emergent Complexity,“ in Ph. Clayton and A. Peacocke, eds., *In Whom We Live And Move And Have Our Being : Panentheistic Reflections On God’s Presence In A Scientific World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 105.

56 Ibid.

57 For the importance of emergence in current philosophical and theological discussions on natural sciences cf. Philip Clayton, „Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective,“ in *ibid.*, 73-91. In general cf. Ph. Clayton & P. Davies, eds., *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).



advance of cosmic laws and emergent orders in which human existence is nested and in any possible sense integrated by influencing these emergent processes.<sup>58</sup> In such an ecological context, human existence is neither without value nor the only value of the world worth considering for survival or prosperity. In such an emergent context, human existence is neither secured nor necessitated, neither predictable nor eternal. In this *ecological* interpretation, human existence is neither subordinated to „nature“ (which would include just a reverse dualism) nor understood „equally“ with everything else. Human emergence is a *serendipitous happening* of intersecting environments – without necessity but also without exception from the perpetual perishing of the creative advance. The universe as the happening of events of togetherness with their laws as nested in societies of such occurrences in their hierarchies of novel levels of law-like universals will neither sustain humanity nor extinguish it by any measure of necessity.<sup>59</sup> It is all the more a matter of mystery that the universe might not have given birth to humanity and it is all the more a matter of a contingency gap that the universe might „naturally“ bury humanity in the course of its advance. This is reflected in the abysmal ending of Whitehead's 1925-book *Religion in the Making* where Whitehead ponders that

The universe ... is thus passing with a slowness, inconceivable in our measures of time, to new creative conditions, amid which the physical world, as we at present know it, will be represented by a ripple barely to be distinguished from nonentity.<sup>60</sup>

Although this approach philosophically connects with new philosophical approaches not based on anthropocentric and individualistic but on wholistic and collective views of Ecology,<sup>61</sup> especially Deep Ecology, the problem with these approaches is that they often not only *integrate* humanity into nature but, by seeking the equality of a „right“ of survival or doom of all creatures, *subordinate* humanity to nature as a recipe for overcoming anthropocentrism in the philosophical foundation of ecology.<sup>62</sup> While Arne Naess considered the ecological

58 Cf. Aus der Au, *Achtsam wahrnehmen*, *op. cit.*, ch. 6. One implication is that the rules of ecological movements are not pre-given and, hence, *indifferent* to human ideals or, if it allows for values, gradually differentiated instead of qualitatively dualistic in juxtaposing humanity and nature.

59 This is the reason that Whitehead – and any ecotheology relating to his organic thought – holds that the universal process must be open, not only in a temporal sense of permutation, but also in the sense of emergent levels or spheres of groupings of occasions with their own laws that cannot be anticipated. Cf. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), ch. XII-XIII.

60 A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*. New ed. (New York: Fordham UP, 1996), 160.

61 For a good overview of the differences of these movements, cf. C. Palmer, *Environmental Ethics and Process Thinking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

62 „Deep ecology philosophy is the worldview that animates much of grassroots environmentalism today“ by Wallace, *Finding God*, *op. cit.*, 69. Cf. A. Naess, *Ecology*,



approach based on Whitehead's organic process view as not radically following their Charta which states that there is an *equality of the right of survival* among any species, John Cobb and David Griffin, in avoiding equality by subordination, want to *differentiate between levels of intensity* which cannot be ignored in the ecopolitical sphere.<sup>63</sup> If, however, in a universe of nested environments levels of structural complexity and intensity should not be leveled out but highlighted in their *diversity*, equality must not be a matter of substantial identity but of *functional* „diversity“.<sup>64</sup> The preciousness of humanity is its ability to be creative – in culture, art, and love. On the other hand, humanity is not *per se* the peak of the universe and it has no absolute right of survival either.<sup>65</sup> It is *contingent felicity* that produced it, and it is the *chaotic basis of all natural law* that might lead to its perishing.

The *political* imperative based on *such* a ecological cosmology is vastly different from both the radical equality of Deep Ecology and the utilitarian Anthropoc Ecopolitics.<sup>66</sup> It is based on the *intrinsic value* of all events and their social (or collective) appearance, their *environmental integrity* and the *grade of*

*Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) and F. L. Bender, *The Culture of Extinction: Toward a Philosophy of Deep Ecology* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2003).

- 63 This is the reason that in B. Devall & G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985), 236, the authors state that the Whiteheadian view „fails to meet the deep ecology norm of ‘ecological egalitarianism in principle’.“ Cf. G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), 124. Cf. Cobb's response to Deep Ecology in H. Daly & J. Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy towards Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 384-5. In D. R. Griffin, *Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 2007), 70-85, Griffin addressed these differences with the formula „Egalitarianism without Irrelevance.“
- 64 This criticism of „equality“ as a new philosophical presupposition is similar to the (post-) feminist deconstruction of the equality of genders as still based on the patriarchal structures feminist equality (politically) criticizes. Cf. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: New York, 1999).
- 65 For a naturalistic theory and politics that do not reduce humanity to ecological equality cf. T. Hoy, *Toward a Naturalistic Political Theory: Aristotle, Hume, Dewey, Evolutionary Biology, and Deep Ecology* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2000). This Dewey-based approach differs from Whitehead's insofar as it is not directed toward a „common“ functional ground of humanity and nature that allows for differentiation in intensity but toward the extension of the Anthropoc Principle by way of human sympathy for nature.
- 66 It is precisely the problem that either side thinks that the other destroys the nature but that both sides have a dialectical connection. Cf. M. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1994).



novelty they create or implement.<sup>67</sup> It is based on the protection of the integrity of environments but not their perpetuation; it is based on the furthering of the grade of intensity that these environments sustain but not their legitimacy as necessary law or indestructible right of preservation. There is an *ethical* impulse, however, to allow for the creative advance to develop *new levels and regions of intensities* that is not related directly to or not aiming at humanity.<sup>68</sup> The political consequence, then, is not the preservation of humanity and the struggle for its survival *per se* but the *diversification of its environment in order to allow for the most creative openness for novelty that does not exclude humanity but does not center around humanity, either*.

Whitehead addresses the thrusts for creativity in terms of aesthetics of intensity and transgressive harmony, which are *not anthropic* in nature but *not subordinationistic*, i.e., anti-anthropic, either.<sup>69</sup> On the contrary, Whitehead's ecological counter-statement indicates a fundamental *disequilibrium of intensity* as basic for the ecological process to exist at all.<sup>70</sup> Two quotes will demonstrate the borderline Whitehead is walking with his ecological cosmology of disequilibrium processuality. First, he insists that any

new occasion, even apart from its own spontaneous mentality, is thus confronted by basic disharmony in the actual world from which it springs. This is fortunate. For otherwise actuality would consist in a cycle of repetition, realizing only a finite group of possibilities. This was the narrow, stuffy doctrine of some ancient thinkers.<sup>71</sup>

All reactions to this Disharmony through Novelty will include striving for Harmony on a higher or lower level. Either harmony is attained by exclusion of diversity or by integration of diversity: The first way will lower intensity; the second will heighten it. This is where an ecological imperative in Whitehead distinguishes between ecological Good and Evil. By saving or losing intensity, any occurrence enables a structure that will make „possible the height of Beauty and height of Evil“ *if* „it saves both from a tame elimination or a tame scaling

67 For an unprecedented analysis of the importance and understanding of value and intensity, cf. W. Leue, *Metaphysical Foundations for a Theory of Value in the Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (Ashfield, MA: Down-to-Earth-Books, 2005).

68 For the relation of intensity, value and ethics in Whitehead cf. R. Sayer, *Wert und Wirklichkeit. Zum Verständnis des metaphysischen Wertbegriffs im Spätdenken Alfred North Whiteheads und dessen Bedeutung für den Menschen in seiner kulturellen Kreativität* (Würzburg: Ergon, 1999).

69 Cf. B. G. Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity: Beauty, Morality and Nature in a Processive Cosmos* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005).

70 Cf. R. Faber, „'O bitches of impossibility'! – Programmatic Dysfunction in the Chaosmos of Deleuze and Whitehead,“ in: A. Cloots and K. Robinson, eds., *Deleuze, Whitehead and the Transformation of Metaphysics* (Brussels: Contactforum, 2005), 117-28 and revised in K. Robinson, ed., *Deleuze, Whitehead, Bergson: Rhizomatic Connections* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

71 Whitehead; *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 259.



down<sup>72</sup> or if it falls into such an elimination of the intensity of affection and structural integrity. It is this „final Beauty with which the Universe achieves its justification. This Beauty has always within it the renewal derived from the Advance of the Temporal World.“<sup>73</sup> Therefore, its Harmony is somehow „meta-stable“ – never stable but always transitory between states of relative stability and phases of relative novelty.<sup>74</sup>

The human peril, then, is not that of extinction through imbalance or changing conditions (even if human-induced!), e.g., through Global Warming, *per se* but the inability to achieve higher levels of fluent harmony. And in religious terms: human „salvation“ is not a symbol of disguise of the adjustment of environmental parameters to survive but it addresses the loss of intensity, of the discord of novelty, of the aiming beyond itself. The use of ecology in environmentalism, then, is not a matter of disguised mechanicism – the change or adjustments of „natural“ parameters for survival but that of *symbolic transferences of intensity*. The second quote addresses this deeper peril.

Thus mankind by means of its elaborate system of symbolic transference can achieve miracles of sensitiveness to a distant environment, and to a problematic future. But it pays the penalty, by reason of the dangerous fact that each symbolic transference may involve an arbitrary imputation of unsuitable characters. It is not true, that the mere workings of nature in any particular organism are in all respects favorable either to the existence of that organism, or to its happiness, or to the progress of the society in which the organism finds itself. The melancholy experience of men makes this warning a platitude. No elaborate community of elaborate organisms could exist unless its systems of symbolism were in general successful.<sup>75</sup>

This warning in Whitehead's 1927-book *Symbolism* represents one of the earliest accounts of ecology not, or not yet, influenced by anthropic ecopolitics.<sup>76</sup> It leads to Whitehead's conviction that any social development is environmental and that its „advance“ is always based on being radically off-balance, far from stability, a *process of imbalance between repetition and novelty*. Extinction and survival, then, are not primarily a matter of stability and care *as* (identified with) conservation but a matter of destabilization of given orders and of the transgressive integration of disturbances of novelty without which any society will „decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows.“<sup>77</sup>

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 295.

74 Cf. P. Rose, *On Whitehead* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning, 2002), ch. 3.

75 A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Fordham UP, 1985), 87.

76 Cf. St. Rohmer, *Whiteheads Synthese von Kreativität und Rationalität. Reflexion und Transformation in Alfred North Whiteheads Philosophie der Natur*. Alber Thesen, vol. 13 (Freiburg: Alber, 2000).

77 Ibid., 88.



### 5. *Anthropic Ecotheology*

Current ecotheology, if it is not directly skipping its cosmological presuppositions in favor of its ethical and political implications, is preeminently concerned with three themes: Regaining a theological notion of „creation“ and its salvation in Christ; a spirituality of creation or an eco-spirituality; and a ecological, i.e., a relational, understanding of the human „stewardship for creation“ meaning a sustainable approach to natural resources.<sup>78</sup> In order to understand the departure of ecoprocess theology from its ecotheological siblings, I will (for now) address the first issue of an ecotheological doctrine of God the development of which can be tracked to three paradigmatic theologians: Jürgen Moltmann, Sally McFague and Gordon Kaufman.<sup>79</sup>

After Cobb's writings from the early 1970s on, it was probably Jürgen Moltmann's 1985-book *God in Creation* that initiated a boost of ecological thought in Christian constructive theology, thereby already indicating these three themes. For Moltmann, a „doctrine of creation is to be ecological“, i.e., it has to „revert to the pre-modern concept of reason as the organ of perception and participation.“<sup>80</sup> Thereby it will understand that „Life is communication in communion.“<sup>81</sup> The theological consequences are profound: it must be a „messianic doctrine of creation“ that „sees creation together with its future – the future for which it was made and in which it will be perfected“<sup>82</sup> – by integrating a creation theology of the beginnings with an eschatology of glory for which creation and salvation are one in Christ, and it must be about the Spirit of God in Creation and about the Trinitarian Community as the paradigm of ecological communication. He states boldly that an „ecological doctrine of creation implies a new kind of thinking about God“<sup>83</sup> that is not about the distinction of God and the world but about the immanence of one in the other. It must live from the „*Principle of Mutual Interpenetration*“<sup>84</sup> of God and the world based on the Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*.

78 Cf. D. T. Hessel & R. R. Ruether, eds., *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans* (Harvard UP, 2000).

79 The choice is, of course, *heuristic* but certainly not unfounded since these theologians have either great influence on the whole ecotheological endeavor or produced highly creative directions of investigation. For newer developments of ecotheology cf. the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* (Florida), which (before) was known under the name *Ecotheology*.

80 J. Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 2.

81 Ibid., 3.

82 Ibid., 5.

83 Ibid., 13.

84 Ibid., 16.



In detecting a certain deficit in this ecotheology of creation of the type Moltmann was proposing, Sally McFague – representative of many other theologians, ethicists, and ecopolitically motivated activists of which Rosemary Radford Ruether's Eco-Feminism is only the most prominent counter-part<sup>85</sup> – has called us to new paradigms, not based on classical theism (even in its Trinitarian forms) and its infection with the sovereignty of God. Especially in her 1993-book *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, she invites us to „think about God and bodies“ and to implement „the model of the universe or world as God's body.“<sup>86</sup> Instead of the transcendent creator, she favors the immanent God (like the soul in the body); instead of the pre-modern patriarchal imagery of Father, Son and Spirit, she offers the Mother (*agape*), the Lover (*eros*) and the Friend (*philia*); instead of the (male) Logos, she offers (the female) Wisdom; instead of Moltmann's paradigm of a bodiless participation in the mind, she offers the material image of the world as Body of God. By heavily relaying on Whitehead's and Cobb's ecoprocess image of „organic process“ (against mechanism), paradigms of evolution and solidarity, and Teilhard de Chardin's „cosmic Christ“, she seriously wants to turn our thought about everything as being a moment of either the problem or a solution of the ecological crisis.<sup>87</sup>

Talking in „largely *ecological* terms, that is, in terms of interconnectedness and interdependent powers and processes of nature“<sup>88</sup> and understanding ultimate reality in these terms, Gordon Kaufman radicalized this „embeddedness of humanity in the natural order“<sup>89</sup> in terms of a new theology that calls for a radical deconstruction of „the deeply rooted *anthropomorphism* of most of the received concepts and images of God – a vestige of the deeply rooted *anthropocentrism* of the Jewish, Christian, and Moslem traditions.“ Instead, he turns to „the idea of *serendipitous creativity* as a basic metaphor for the thinking of God.“<sup>90</sup> In his 2004-book *In the beginning ... Creativity* he proposes that in today's evolutionary/ecological world the only way to *not* single out humanity in the process of the universe (as final aim of the creator), is to avoid to talk about „God“ (as transcendent person); but instead we should only talk of the happiness, holiness, and grace of a creativity within natural processes, which can never be captured

85 Cf. R. R. Ruether, *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

86 Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1993), vii.

87 Although there is not space to develop the ecological and evolutionary theology of Teilhard de Chardin further, he must be recognized as one of the earliest theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to insist on the ecological interrelation between God and World as central to any Christian theology. Cf. A. Fabel & D. P. John, eds., *Teilhard in the 21st Century: The Emerging Spirit of Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

88 G. Kaufman, *In the beginning ... Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 25.

89 Ibid., 24.

90 Ibid., 26.



by any image except that of being all their transcendence – an icon of the ineffable novelty of the processes. Thereby, Kaufman points also to the fact that he is indebted to Henry Nelson Wieman, who, first in his 1927-book *The Wrestle of Religion with Truth*, had adopted Whitehead's ecoprocess theological concept of God and creativity in order to theologically articulate that „creativity is the only proper object of worship, devotion, and faith today, the only ultimate point of reference for our valuing.“<sup>91</sup>

Following these three paradigmatic approaches to ecotheology today, we can observe an increasing awareness of the entanglement of the patriarchal restrictions of classical theism (so readily identified as *the* Christian position) and the anthropic reduction of its accounts of creation (and salvation).<sup>92</sup> With theologians in the sphere of Moltmann's ecotheology (and most theologians concerned with the *conservation* of certain traditions are), who want to save the *sovereignty* of God as *basis* for any ecological interrelationality, a reservation of a *primordial unilateralism* remains: God must be „before“, not *with* creation, and God must be a (Trinitarian) community „before“, not *with*, creation; God must create *the* world out of nothing, not in relationship *with* the world.<sup>93</sup> In all ecological awareness, these are the positions taken, e.g., by Radical Orthodoxy and certain forms of Open Relational Theology.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* has become the ideological stronghold for this unilateralism of God's omnipotence despite its patriarchal and oppressive implications.<sup>95</sup> And

91 Ibid., 60. Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 7. There are, as Kaufman mentions, differences between him and Wieman in relating creativity to the world process insofar as Wieman identifies it with God (creativity being „good“) and Kaufman identifies God with creativity (God being beyond good and evil), while Whitehead differentiated both precisely along these lines: creativity as „neutral“ and God as power of the „Good.“ For Whitehead's differentiation, cf. Griffin, *Reenchantment*, *op. cit.*, ch. 7.

92 For these intricate relations cf. N. Howell, *A Feminist Cosmology: Ecology, Solidarity, and Metaphysics* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000).

93 Cf. the famous Whiteheadian statement that God „is not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation“; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 343.

94 Th. Oord, „Evangelical Theologies,“ in J. McDaniel and D. Bowman, eds., *Handbook of Process Theology* (Atlanta: Chalice, 2006), 251-261; John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, & Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (New York: Routledge, 1999); H. W. House, *Charts on Open Theism and Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2004).

95 Cf. J. Cobb & D. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 64-5; Moltmann's critique of process theology in *God in Creation*, *op. cit.*, 78-9 is misconstrued because it presupposes already the patriarchal thesis that to deconstruct shifts the view on creation in a way that *relation* and not *power* becomes the paradigm in which process theology restates creation theology. Only in the paradigm of power must the thesis of the creation out of chaos, which is a metaphor for open relationship, appear as negation of the doctrine of God as creator (*ex nihilo*) and as a reduction of God to a God of preservation. Another line of thought that would fit Moltmann's understanding of future as coming of God – that I have developed



even if one wants to go so far as Moltmann to take this *nihil* not in the form of a sovereign act but as an act of Divine *passio ad intra*, there remains a sublime and hidden unilateralism of power which is *not* ecological in nature.<sup>96</sup> Because of these connections, Catherine Keller, in her 2003-book *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*, has suggested that since Moltmann's *nihil* in God (before creation) is „a pure God-forsakenness within God, or of a within that is after all outside“, we need an „anapologetic expansion of Moltmann's own trinitarian perichoresis: a sociality of rhythmic interrelations in which within and without no longer bifurcate.“<sup>97</sup>

Even in McFague's and Kaufmann's more radical account of ecology, the ecological crisis and a radically ecological concept of God, we find remaining anthropic reductionisms. Although it is not generated by the patriarchal and power-inflicted imagery of the theological tradition, which they have taken on on deep levels of deconstruction, their anthropic remnants are related to the *methodological metaphoric* of their statements. Both theologians, paradoxical as it is, bind their non-anthropocentric, ecological notions of God to an anthropic principle since they seek the best metaphors of God *for* the ecological age and crises – which is about a human state of affairs, utilizes a crisis of *human* survival, and addresses human needs for respective metaphors.<sup>98</sup> This is all the more clear in the eco-feminist and ecopolitical danger of „identifying“ the suppressed feminine with characteristics of a suppressed nature (suffering of unilateral, androcentric changes of its presupposed integrity) – a danger against which Ruether has recently made available moves of conscious strategies.<sup>99</sup> But a hidden anthropic implication is even present in Kaufman's anti-humanist metaphor of „creativity“. He does not escape anthropic implications because his creativity seems to tend to direct us toward a devaluation of specific human creativity – not by negating it (he knows of a human level of creativity of culture and art) but by subordinating it to the strange alien figure of impersonal and (over against its immanence,

in my „Zeitumkehr: Versuch über einen eschatologischen Schöpfungsbegriff,“ in *ThPh* 75 (2000) 180-205 – is based on the disentanglement of creation and „beginning“ and Eschaton and „temporal future.“

96 Cf. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, *op. cit.*, 86-7

97 C. Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 18.

98 Cf. Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), ch. 1; Kaufman, *In the beginning ...*, *op. cit.*, ch. 1.

99 Cf. R. R. Ruether, ed., *Feminist Theologies: Legacy and Prospect* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) and *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. Ecology and Justice (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996). For the general analysis of ecology I relate to gender and other issues beyond theology cf. L. Coupe, *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (New York: Routledge, 2000).



strangely) distant relentlessness of creativity.<sup>100</sup> Similar to Deep Ecology's lack of differentiation, this amounts to a dialectic of *negation* by which un-anthropocentric ecology remains bound to what it denies.<sup>101</sup>

## 6. *Ecoprocess Theology*

How, then, can an *ecoprocess* approach, as sketched with Whitehead's „philosophy of organism“ and its theological alterations, overcome the ecotheological infection with anthropocentric ecotheology (without losing humanity altogether)? This implies two questions: How is this approach theologically *different*, i.e., what difference does it make in the context of theological appropriation of ecotheological thinking today? And what can such an *ecoprocess theology* if it really thinks *strictly* ecologically say differently about God?

Converse to the anthropic residue of current ecotheologies, an *ecoprocess* theology, based on Whitehead's cosmology (and aesthetics) of intensity and harmony, combines the *functional resonance* (instead of „identity“ or „equality“) within the *ecoprocess* with an *anthropic indeterminacy*, i.e., its freedom from „essential“ determination that is either anthropic in nature or anti-anthropocentric.<sup>102</sup> It was Whitehead's insight that, if the *ecoprocess* is inclusive of humanity but not in any way necessarily directed towards its emergence or sustenance, it also is free to express the intrinsic value of *any* creative event of ecological togetherness. This insight also freed Whitehead from the restrictions of a metaphoric for God that *must* name and satisfy human interests. I will explore the theological implications of Whitehead's account of the *ecoprocess* by differentiating it from Moltmann, McFague and Kaufman (and the ecotheologies they represent) through three features of an *ecoprocess* doctrine of God.

The first feature to mention in an *ecoprocess* view of God is that it offers a very different account of the Divine in its relationship to the world by introducing a *radically ecological understanding of God*.<sup>103</sup> Instead of understanding God in terms of the substantial paradigms of radical independence and sover-

100 Cf. Kaufman, *In the beginning ...*, *op. cit.*, ch. 3.

101 Cf. E. Katz, A. Light & D. Rothenberg, eds, *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

102 This leads deep into the structure of his whole philosophy, which is not grounded in any metaphysical law, but in process, open to any development it may take and aiming towards a unity that is always „one“ only in being overcome by the process. For an analysis in the context of the development of systematic thinking and the thinking of systems in philosophy cf. R. Faber, „Whitehead at Infinite Speed: Deconstructing System as Event,“ in C. Helmer, M. Suchocki, and J. Quiring, eds., *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2004), 39-72.

103 For an analysis of the specific features of such an *ecoprocess* doctrine of God and its diverse features cf. the exploration in my *God as Poet*, *op. cit.*, part IV.



eignty, ecoprocess theology in its ecological foundation understands *God as interrelated* on the most fundamental level. If relation is first, ecology is basic. If God is always thought of as *with* the world, as creator *with* creation, then *mutual creativity* is the basic expression of what the universe as ecological interrelatedness and process of creative advance is about, namely that, as Whitehead's states in *Process and Reality*, „God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task“ and, even bolder, that it „is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God“ (PR 348).<sup>104</sup> This is nothing but the *radical implication of the ecological truth* that the becoming togetherness of relationships is the occurrence of something besides which there is (or would be, or will be) nothing at all.<sup>105</sup>

A second feature in this radically ecological doctrine of God is that it is not directed toward „equality“ but toward *manifoldness*. Hence, it must not destroy the difference between God and creation by establishing the creative interrelationship between God and the world as its first truth.<sup>106</sup> Whitehead addresses this second truth by an important differentiation between God and the multiplicity of finite happenings that are the creative network of relationships or the ecoprocess of the world by explicating their relationship as one of diversity in mutuality. While the diversity of ecological emergence is contingent and radically a matter of novelty for both God and the world, the radically ecological account of the God-world relationship must exhibit a certain *necessity*, not of Law but of *inter-relatedness* without which there is no ecology.

God and the World stand over against each other, expressing the final metaphysical truth that appetitive vision and physical enjoyment have equal claim to priority in creation. But no two actualities can be torn apart: each is all in all. Thus each temporal occasion embodies God, and is embodied in God. In God's nature, permanence is primordial and flux is derivative from the World: in the World's nature, flux is primordial and permanence is derivative from God. Also the World's nature is a primordial datum for God; and God's nature is a primordial datum for the World. Creation achieves the reconciliation of permanence and flux when it has reached its final term which is everlastingness – the Apotheosis of the World.<sup>107</sup>

In this mutual relationship, only *functional* differences are mentioned, no substantial dualities. Whatever can be said about God or the world must be said

104 It is a long-standing criticism of process theology that to disentangle ecological relationality from the God-World relationship leads to the patriarchal dream of power and respective structures. Cf. Cobb & Griffin, *Process Theology*, *op. cit.*, introduction.

105 This is a basic presupposition of Whitehead's eco-cosmology; cf. *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 3-4.

106 This is the fundamental difference to any approach that is based on equality. In case of M. Abe, „Mahayana Buddhism and Whitehead,“ in M. Abe, *Zen and Western Thought* (Honolulu: UHP, 185), 152-170, which in the end would lead to a dissolution of the difference between God and the world.

107 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 348.



about all sides (against dualism) without equality (against monism) but differentiated in modes of diversity.<sup>108</sup> The basis for this approach is Whitehead's appropriation of Plato's *khora*, which, as Whitehead states, indicates the *most basic features of ecology*: the „general common function exhibited by any group of actual occasions“ being „that of mutual immanence. In Platonic language, this is the function of belonging to a common Receptacle“<sup>109</sup>, which indicates „the fostermother of all becoming“, the „natural matrix for all things“, the way in which „the many actualities of the physical world as components in each other's natures.“ It is before any law; formless and without any presupposition she is „derived from the mutual immanence of actualities“ and „the medium of inter-communication.“<sup>110</sup>

If this ecoprocess theology speaks of the *mutual immanence of God and any occurrence* as more basic than *anything* that determines this common adventure, it not only avoids the substantialist error that leads to the Anthropic misconception of the aim of theology (and its non-ecological reductionism) but also the trap of defining the adventure in terms of a fixed origin and aim beyond the *actual* creative advance it takes.<sup>111</sup> In the universality of mutual immanence – *the ecological relation* – ecoprocess theology discovers a Divine dimension (not one among others, however), which cannot be substituted by any uniform law of immanence that would strip mutual immanence of diversity, e.g., by forcing any statement of God to be exactly the same way it must be for any mundane occurrence. On the contrary, if there is a Divine dimension in the ecological relation, it is that it has an infinite *depth of intensity* that cannot be restated in terms of quantities, parameters, logarithms, machines, and linear cause-effect feedback loops.<sup>112</sup>

A third feature concerns the ecological relation between everything and God or the creative advance between God and the world insofar as only in a truly ecological relationship, in which there is mutual immanence of relationality and novelty of creative advance, God and the world necessarily (not by any fate but by the destiny of *being* ecological!) become „the instrument of novelty for the other.“<sup>113</sup> In suffering one another's existence and novelty, God and the world become *mutual environments of one another* – of course, by way of any number of nested, non-linear and undetermined levels and spheres of mutually immanent environments. One side of it may be called „panentheistic“ insofar as it says that

108 This is Whitehead's methodological and ontological account of dynamic instead of the inconsistencies of dualism, modal monism, and morphological pluralism; cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, op. cit., 6-7.

109 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 201.

110 Ibid., 134.

111 Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, op. cit., 111.

112 Cf. ibid., 105.

113 Ibid., 349.



God is the environment of the world „in whom we live and move and have our being“ (Acts 17:28) – a term Charles Hartshorne has revived for Whitehead's ecological God, but a term that was taken over by many theologians to address the specific ecological dimension of their theology, e.g. Moltmann.<sup>114</sup> The other side, however, states even more boldly that the ecological multiplicity of what we call „world“ is the environment *for God*, „in which“ *God* „lives, moves and has God's being.“ This „trans-panteism“, for which God is not identical with the world, but the world *transcends God* (cf. PR 94), is the truly ecological determination of ecotheology! It does not reserve *anything* for God, e.g., a unilateral sovereignty (classical theism is so insisting on), except the uniqueness of God's insistence on the ecological process of which God, then, cannot be the exception.<sup>115</sup>

The uniqueness of God, then, is not God's *exception* from the ecological process but God's *exemplification* of it par excellence.<sup>116</sup> It is unique insofar as it does not take any exception from being *radically* situated in ecological relation and as ecological event of togetherness. Rather, God carries *all* the implications and consequences of such an ecological situation. To name just two of the most important ones: God is, in a radical sense, *absolutely powerless* and *pure love*. The first implication means that God cannot – and should not – be expressed in terms of power (in whatever sense, even that of the power of love!).<sup>117</sup> In feminist, post-colonial, and post-structuralist deconstructions of the tradition in relation to the formulation of the doctrine of God in terms of power and its consequences and „ecological“ implications for the social construction of religion and culture, we know enough today to be very skeptical as to whether „power“ should be part of our ecotheological language. Omnipotence, hierarchy, eternal

114 For Hartshorne cf. Ch. Hartshorne & W. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). For Moltmann cf. *God in Creation*, *op. cit.*, ch. IV.

115 Against the simple „pantheistic“ idea that God is the environment of the world, but the world would not be an environment of God, this Whiteheadian approach is more trans-panteistic than pantheistic. The simple view leads to the criticism that Whitehead just reinstates a theory of the world-anima (or -animal) as the widest context of the world as living being. Cf. M. Hampe, *Die Wahrnehmungen der Organismen: Über die Voraussetzung einer naturalistischen Theorie der Erfahrung in der Metaphysik Whiteheads* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

116 If anything, *this* is what Whitehead *meant* by saying that „God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification“ (PR 343). It does not indicate that God is like every other occurrence. When Whitehead calls God the „primordial, non-temporal accident“ (PR 7) of the ecological process, God is not simplified to fit the creative process, but radically ecologically situated. This does not take anything from the *uniqueness* of God in the ecological process, which is really what the *khōric* definition of ecological relationship wants to further, not to reduce.

117 Cf. Whitehead's deconstruction of the power-ideal in formulating the theistic doctrine of the omnipotent God in *Adventures of Ideas*, *op. cit.* 168-9.



Divine Law, double predestination, eternal hell, excommunication – these are all terms implicating absolute power and its social applications. Not the power of love, but the power to *annihilate*, was the center of the medieval discussion around the power of God.<sup>118</sup>

The second implication, then, means that God is *pure love*. It is the pure love that has no, is no, and does not need any power. Any power-infection will *per se* lead to violence. This is radical: It is not about differentiating the term „power“ in a good and a bad use, e.g., the power to save and the power to destroy, but to *abandon the term „power“ altogether!* Only then is God *pure love*, i.e., nothing besides it. In taking on Feuerbach's paradox of love and power, this means God is nothing besides love, not even a subject of love, not any essence, but only the *act* of love.<sup>119</sup> Both implications need one another mutually and are the radical expression of the uniqueness of the ecological God. Any anthropic ecotheology will fall short as long as it is based on the power of God (to create and to save) directed at the (heavenly) survival of humanity.

Whitehead, in his 1925-book *Religion in the Making*, addresses this concern by insisting that the „life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power ... Its power lies in its absence of force.“<sup>120</sup> Although he goes on to differentiate the term „power“ instead of abandoning it, the direction of this thought is clear: It is about the *eradication* of an image of an omnipotent, sovereign God „beyond“ the world who rules it and in it by over-ruling power (or at least is believed to do so in the apocalyptic reversal of the level powers of the world). In Whitehead's eyes, it has led to the loss of the gospel of love and, as a necessary implication, to a loss of the credibility of the concept of God altogether. The following quote anticipates the later criticisms by drawing a clear relation between the concept of an omnipotent, external God and the social implications of a power of fear as well as the loss of the credibility to talk of God in terms of love, or at all.

The modern world has lost God and is seeking him. The reason for the loss stretches far back in the history of Christianity. In respect to its doctrine of God the Church gradually returned to the Semitic concept [of God as transcendent, omnipotent person] ... It is a concept which is clear, terrifying, and unprovable. It was supported by an unquestioned religious tradition. It was also supported by the conservative instinct of society, and by a history and a metaphysic both constructed expressly for that purpose. Moreover, to dissent was death. On the whole, the Gospel of love was turned into a Gospel of fear. The Christian world was composed of terrified populations. „The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge“, said the Proverb (i. 7). Yet this is an odd saying, if it be true

118 Cf. E. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), ch. 5.

119 For the Paradox of love and power cf. L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989), ch. IV.

120 Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, *op. cit.*, 57.



that „God is love.“ ... If the modern world is to find God, it must find him through love and not through fear ...<sup>121</sup>

In consequence, Whitehead began to speak of Jesus „with his message of peace, love, and sympathy“<sup>122</sup> in terms of a power that, if it is power at all, is of a „decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time“;<sup>123</sup> and he began to realize „that the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency“, which he thought to be „one of the greatest intellectual discoveries in the history of religion.“ Instead of the omnipotence as „metaphysical sublimation of this doctrine of God as the supreme agency of compulsion“<sup>124</sup>, he committed to a radically ecological understanding of God's *sharing of God's nature* (which is no power of coercion at all!) as that of „Ideals“ amounting to

a solution exhibiting the plurality of individuals as consistent with the unity of the Universe, and a solution which exhibits the World as requiring its union with God, and God as requiring his union with the World. Sound doctrine also requires an understanding how the Ideals in God's nature, by reason of their status in his nature, are thereby persuasive elements in the creative advance.<sup>125</sup>

If these „Ideals“ name the Divine power that „dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love“<sup>126</sup>, the mutual immanence of God and the world must be seen as an ecological circle of love – without exception and without end. Because of the „universal relativity“<sup>127</sup> – Whitehead's term for ecological relationality – „the love of God for the world“, which „is the particular providence for particular occasions“ *transforms* what is in the world

into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands.<sup>128</sup>

## 7. Eco-Theopoetics

These three features together articulate the *theological* difference that an eco-process theology makes for a full impact on a theological account of ecology re-

121 Ibid., 74-6.

122 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 167.

123 Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, op. cit., 57

124 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 166.

125 Ibid., 168.

126 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, op. cit., 343.

127 Ibid., 350.

128 Ibid., 351.



versing the anthropic infection. It speaks of a *Divine depth of intensity of ecological relationality* that can be expressed in at least three dimensions of what could be called *the God of, as, and for the ecoprocess*. First, it articulates the primordially of the very diversity of the non-formal (non-lawlike) relationship of mutual immanence as one that is aiming towards diversity beyond any simplifying unification. This God loves multiplicity and it is the „uniqueness“ of God in the ecological process to *insist on diversity, diversification, novelty, and the adventure of no return*. „God is the organ of novelty, aiming at intensification.“<sup>129</sup> The Life this God is insisting on is born out of the *khora*, the chaos, that allows „happenings wandering in ‘empty’ space amid the interstices“<sup>130</sup> by aiming at the unknown cloud of creative novelty, the intensity of unknowing, the adventure of eternal non-return (the return of only novelty).<sup>131</sup> I call this first aspect of the God of the ecoprocess of multiplicity God’s *polyphilia* – God’s love of the manifold.<sup>132</sup>

Second, in not naming „order“ – or any pre-given Divine Law the world has to fulfill – but the insistence on the diversifying multiplicity *the* Divine dimension of the ecological process, „God“ must neither be one among the relations nor the transcendent ground beyond (in isolated sovereignty), but its own, unique ecological process par excellence. God, in some sense, „is a component in the natures of all fugitive things“ so that all „existents in nature are sharing in the nature of the immanent God.“<sup>133</sup> God, however, is not just *an* ecological occurrence but also the *insistence on the depth* of ecological occurrence *as event* of its occurrence. In other words, God is both the principle of its concretion and its concrete occurrence.<sup>134</sup> As such, God is the concrescence, the ecoprocessual togetherness, or ecoprocess of the primordial chaos of potentials (Whitehead calls the primordial nature of God), and the final (eschatological) *khora* of togetherness of the most intensely differentiated multiplicity of the actual world of occurrences (Whitehead calls consequent nature of God or the kingdom of God).<sup>135</sup> These are not two aspects or dimensions of God (not to say „dipolar“ distinctions) but rather *directions of „one“ ecoprocess* towards the complex interconnection of two dimensions of novelty: the passage of an indeterminate fu-

129 Ibid., 67.

130 Ibid., 339.

131 Gilles Deleuze’s appropriation of Nietzsche’s „eternal returns“ as „return of novelty“ is another (although very creative and unique) off-shoot of Whitehead’s explorations. Cf. G. Deleuze, *Desert Island and Other texts 1953-1974* (Paris: Semiotexts, 2004), 117-27.

132 Cf. R. Faber, „Bodies of the Void: Polyphilia and Theoplicity,” in C. Keller, ed., *Apo-phatic Bodies* [in production].

133 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 130.

134 Cf. A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York, Free Press, 1967), 178.

135 Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, op. cit., §§ 38 & 39.



ture into actual past and the re-opening future of a determinate past.<sup>136</sup> I call this aspect of God *as* multiplicity *theoplicity* – God’s manifoldness or the *Multiple Divine*.

Third, in the ecoprocessual relationship, the *khoric* God is not only *insisting* on the creative ecoprocess as a multiplicity – *polyphilia* – and *is* creative, ecoprocessual „multiplicity“<sup>137</sup> – *theoplicity* – but, in the circle of love, *insists on an ecoprocess of multiplication* as what could be called the *salvation* of the manifold. This is what Whitehead calls the „Apotheosis of the World“<sup>138</sup> – really an appropriation of the Eastern Orthodox *theosis*<sup>139</sup> – in which mutual immanence constitutes a twofold, strictly ecological process transformation: „the transmutation of that temporal actuality into a living, ever-present fact“ in God’s nature and a transformation of God’s „nature itself [that] passes into the temporal world according to its gradation of relevance to the various concrescent occasions.“<sup>140</sup> I call this third aspect of the ecoprocess, in which God *lives* for the manifold, *ecotheosis* – the mutual transformation of the world into God and in its Divine transformation flowing back into the world for its most intense multiplication.

In its threefold character of *polyphilia*, *theoplicity*, and *ecotheosis*, the Divine dimension of the ecoprocess as being of, as, and for the intensity of the manifold can be called *eco-theopoetics*.<sup>141</sup> It is a technical term that underlines Whitehead’s *nonviolent way of God’s loving interaction with the ecoprocess of the world as insisting on multiplicity* in which

we conceive of the patience of God, tenderly saving the turmoil of the intermediate world by the completion of his own nature. The sheer force of things lies in the intermediate physical process: this is the energy of physical production. God’s role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization. He does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.<sup>142</sup>

136 The many discussions on the „dipolar“ concept of Whitehead’s God and its incommensurability with the Christian concept of Trinity are idle and mostly incorrect as are most of the defending strategies confirming this opposition. Cf. *ibid.*, §§ 33 & 34.

137 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 349.

138 *Ibid.*, 348.

139 Cf. St. Finlan & V. Kharlamov, eds., *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology*. Princeton Theological Monograph (Pickwick Publicationns, 2006).

140 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 350.

141 For an earlier integration of polyphilia and theoplicity with the ecoprocess and as part of a future ecoprocess theopoetics cf. my two lectures: *Theopetics, Polyphilia, and Theoplicity* (Claremont School of Theology, March 2006); *Process Theology as Theopoetics* (Claremont School of Theology, February 2006);

142 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 346.



God is the „poet of the world“, as the „creator“, *not* insofar as God acts unilaterally as „external creator“<sup>143</sup> but *insofar* as God insists *on, as and for* the manifold to have the last word, i.e., *not ever to be overcome* by any simplification, unification, any logic of the One that suppresses diversification without losing its aim of intensity, harmony, multiplicity, and adventure.<sup>144</sup> This „poet“ „saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life“<sup>145</sup> and as „itself passes into the temporal world.“<sup>146</sup> This ecoprocess theology, then, is *eco-theopoetics* not because of God-language being „poetic“ (metaphoric) but in precisely the sense indicated: *polyphilia*, *theoplicity* and *ecotheosis*.<sup>147</sup>

### 8. *Ecoprocess Spirit*

Returning to the second of the three main themes of current ecotheology, namely *eco-spirituality*, the consequences of ecotheology in deconstructing the Anthropoc Principle as explored with eco-theopoetics will be of grave consequences. First, we must detect the anthropic residues in ecotheologies by discerning three of its interrelated restrictions: *mind/matter or God/world dualism; unilateral novelty; and restricted environmentalism*.

It is an implication of the eco-spirituality of Moltmann's trinitarian paradigm of a perichoretic community, opening a space for creation in an inner-Divine *nihil*, that the world has to be born out of an act of Divine suffering, which, although it is an act of Divine community, is *not* ecological in nature but profoundly unilateral. The Spirit, which is Moltmann's immanence in the world, the medium of communication, a „cosmic spirit“<sup>148</sup>, even a „principle of creativity on all levels of matter“, and a „holistic principle“<sup>149</sup>, is constrained by being of *spiritual* nature, i.e., in *not* being material, bodily, but always tied to the paradigm of „reason“ and a participation in it.<sup>150</sup> In other words, this Spirit is still hiding a residue of the mind/body dualism, haunting Western thought. This problematic, systematic background of unilateral theology is hardly overcome by McFague's *icon* of God as „Soul“ of the world-body, which also remains within a certain spiritualization that, although it binds God to God's body (the world),

143 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, 236.

144 Cf. my lecture *In the Wake of False Unifications: Whitehead's Creative Resistance against Imperialist Theologies* (Claremont School of Theology, March 2005).

145 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 346.

146 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 350.

147 „Theopoetics“ was the integral term I used to systematically unfold the ecoprocess theological view in my *God as Poet*, *op. cit.*, *passim* & Postscript.

148 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, *op. cit.* 98.

149 *Ibid.*, 100.

150 Cf. *ibid.*, 2.



differentiates God as spiritual essence over against matter and so furthers (involuntarily) a tendency to understand the „completion of creation“ in leaving this „matter“ behind. It is interesting that in the paradigm of Kaufman, „creativity“ is *pure opposition* to creation; although it is not mind over matter, it preserves the clear dualism between both.

Consequently, the Spirit, especially in Moltmann and (indirectly) in Kaufman is an organ of novelty *only insofar as* it expresses either the Divine community or the undetermined creativity. It signifies *not* a mutual relation because Moltmann's Spirit cannot be „surprised“ by what happens in the world – she is the expression of a (Divine) *structure* of novelty, not of (the surprises of) *novelty as such*. Kaufman's „creativity“, on the other hand, is novelty *as such* (and not a structure or matrix!) but it does *not* stand for any structure (or harmony) of novelty, which would presuppose that God's Spirit is not only a condition for novelty but also a *recipient* of novelty. Hence, as long as an anthropic (or counter-anthropic) paradigm reigns, God is an environment for the world – expressed in form of a variety of pantheisms – but the world is *not* an environment of God.

The ecoprocess account, however, addresses these themes radically in ecological terms of *mutuality*. Against the remaining mind/body and God/world dualism, Whitehead's ecoprocess theology proposes God as ecoprocess – although in the Divine uniqueness of *theoplicity* – that profoundly blurs the strict border dissecting mind and body, spirit and matter, God and world in non-ambivalent oppositions.<sup>151</sup> Every event not only is always an ecological togetherness of a multiplicity of processes but also is its creative unifications. Mind and body, spirit and matter, are not alien, mutually exclusive entities or essences or substances but become *functional directions* of the ecoprocess.<sup>152</sup> In the ecoprocessual rhythm of the „cycle of love“ God's primordial appetite is the Eros in the world and God's consequent reception is the apotheosis of the world in God. In this mutuality, this ecotheosis, God always incarnates – *becoming* world – and the world always transforms into the nature of God – becoming God. This said, it must also be always clearly articulated that this rhythm never „identifies“ God and world because such a pantheistic identification would violate the two most profound moments of the ecoprocess, namely to establish *relationships of, in,*

151 That the whole architecture of Whitehead's philosophy discourages any dualism, be it ontological, cosmological, epistemological or anthropological, was already seen clearly by Rainer Wiehl, e.g., in his study of Whitehead and Hegel in R. Wiehl, „Whiteheads Kosmologie der Gefühle zwischen Ontologie und Anthropologie,“ in F. Rapp & R. Wiehl, eds., *Whiteheads Metaphysik der Kreativität. Internationales Whitehead-Symposium Bad Homburg 1983* (Freiburg: Alber, 1986), 141–68.

152 For a good introduction in the basics of a „process spirituality“ and the account of creative unification as breaking the mind/body dualism cf. J. Cobb, B. Epperly & P. Nancarrow, *The Call of the Spirit: Process Spirituality in a Relational World* (Claremont: P&F Press, 2005).



and as a manifold – addressed as God's *polyphilia* – and the ultimacy of process as hindering any static perfection of these relations – addressed as *ecotheosis* as Divine insistence on the ecoprocess.<sup>153</sup>

Ecoprocess spirituality will agree with current eco-spiritualities in blurring these borders, not in order to undermine the truth of a difference between God and the world, but in order to find this truth as a radically ecological truth of the ecoprocess. Whitehead's understanding of differences in the ecoprocess as matters of degrees of intensity and moving fields of harmonic structures resonates well with tendencies to understand the eco-spirit as deconstructive of all dualisms – of race, gender, sex, power and categorical dissection. Blurring the distinction between animal and human beings (with all the ethical implications), blurring the differences between individual and society (biological species and genus), blurring the difference between living and non-living matter, is not just a strategy of ecological awareness but a profound ontological and spiritual habit towards „universal relativity“ and mutual immanence in the ecoprocess.

Eco-theopoetics, however, would strive beyond these spiritual efforts with at least four dimensions of the ecoprocess. First, as Bernard Loomer has demonstrated so diligently, in an ecoprocess paradigm, God is the Spirit of *ambivalence*, of Life as differentiation that cannot be unified in any clear-cut way, which would always be a form of selection, emphasis and reduction, if not oppression; it is always a matter of the insistence on the manifold.<sup>154</sup> God's *polyphilia* organically indicates a spirituality of the *profound ambivalence, imbalance, and disturbance of the event of intensity and harmony*. The novelty that differentiates the manifold of the ecoprocess is always a matter of profound discord, disharmony, imbalance. Only death is a matter of equilibrium, of „satisfaction“ – a saturation that is (also) a loss of Life.<sup>155</sup>

It is not without merit to import the images from physics and mysticism to indicate the imbalance of Life as the spiritual basis for living the ecoprocess. In current cosmology, the „super-symmetry“ as being the lowest energy level attainable in which nothing happens at all is an indication that the „cosmic landscape“ (of maybe many universes) is always at a distance from symmetry.<sup>156</sup> The mystical blurring of symmetry, on the other hand, articulates images of the cloud and the swarm, the paradoxical logic of neither „neither-nor“ nor „either-or“,

153 For the exploration of this perpetual recycling with the concept of „infinite be/coming“ cf. my lecture *On In/Finite Becoming: Philosophic Considerations on Whitehead's Many Multiple Worlds* (Claremont: Cosmology Conference of CPS, October 2006).

154 Cf., R. Faber, „Ambiguität und Größe. Überlegungen zu einer skeptischen Theodizee,“ in: *Impulse* 56/4 (2000): 3-6.

155 Cf. R. Faber, „The Crisis of Becoming: Reflections on a Whiteheadian Spirituality,“ in *Creative Transformation* (Spring 2007): 2-10.

156 Cf. L. Susskind, *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2006).



the non-different (neither being identity nor difference), the impossible, the non-linear, the chaotic, the khoric, the ambiguous, the irreducibly complex.<sup>157</sup> And it is only paradigmatic that God not only loves the manifold (*polyphilia*) but also is (in complex ways) this manifold (*theoplicity*).

A second moment of the spiritual expression of the ecoprocess (over against unilateral and anthropic reductions and as a consequence of the first) is – and this may sound provocative – that we „are“ always world *and* God. Whitehead addresses this in two ways. One way implies that the functional directions of any event intersect its actual world, which is the world as a manifold of interrelated ecoprocesses, and of God, in offering its „initial aim“ for its becoming – every event being the *creative becoming* of both God and the world *as its environment*.<sup>158</sup> The other way to address this mundane-Divine „cloud“ is to indicate that in *ecotheosis* the world always *becomes God in God* and *God becomes world in the world*. One is not only reminded of Nicolas of Cusa's identical formulation,<sup>159</sup> but also of Whitehead's dictum that „in the sense in which the present occasion is the person *now*, and yet with his own past, so the counterpart in God is that person in God.“<sup>160</sup>

A third moment of spiritual importance of a non-anthropic understanding of ecoprocess concerns the importance of the basic nexus of relationships as being not at all defined by any Law, be it a Divine Law as traditionally implied in the notion of the Logos – the so called Divine order(s) of creation and salvation. Rather it is the mutual immanence as event, the empty *khora* or the space of intercommunication, that defines the spiritual relationship to the ecoprocess (including God!).<sup>161</sup> One consequence is that God is the environment of the world and the world is the environment of God. Joseph Bracken in his 1995-book *The*

157 Cf. R. Faber, „De-Ontologizing God: Levinas, Deleuze and Whitehead,“ in: C. Keller and A. Daniells, eds., *Difference and Process. Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernism*. University of New York Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought (New York: SUNY, 2002), 209-234. For this profound shift of metaphors that is not anti-scientific per se (mysticism as opposition to science) cf. M. Serres & B. Latour, *Conversations Science, Culture, and Time* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1995), 118.

158 Cf. Th. Hosinski, *Stubborn Fact and Creative Advance: An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

159 Cf. R. Faber, „‘Gottesmeer’ – Versuch über die Ununterschiedenheit Gottes,“ in Th. Dienberg & M. Plattig, eds., *„Leben in Fülle“. Skizzen zur christlichen Spiritualität*. Theologie der Spiritualität 5 (Münster, 2001), 64-95.

160 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, op. cit., 350. Although the Christological consequences cannot be addressed here, the complex understanding of a „person“ as being always a togetherness of its environments, which are God and the world, will have great implications for the understanding not only of the relationship of any (not only human persons) to the Divine community but also for the understanding of the „hypostatic union“ of Christ in this context. Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, op. cit., § 38.

161 Cf. R. Faber, „Prozesstheologie,“ in: C. Barwasser, et alia, *Theologien der Gegenwart. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2006), 179-197.



*Divine Matrix*, on the basis of Whitehead's understanding of events as grouped into societies, has addressed this with the metaphor of a „field“ in which the three Divine persons live and allow creation to participate.<sup>162</sup> While this process view leads to an understanding of the Divine matrix as a „structured field of activity“, my own account of this „Divine matrix“ in my 2008-book *God as the Poet of the World* understands the „field“ not in terms of a force-field of structures but as *khora*, i.e., as a *chaotic nexus* of intercommunication, only defined by mutual immanence and in its process only defined by the occurrences of the ecoprocess.<sup>163</sup> While Bracken integrates the tradition on which Moltmann grounds his ecological approach, namely the Trinitarian community, what is missing is the strictly ecological mutuality of the relationship in which not only God (always) transcends the World, but also the world transcends God by being God's environment. The implication is that chaos is a necessary moment of the ecoprocess, not just as unpredictability and irreducible complexity but also as the possibility of the impossible. It is the (infinite) *depth* of the ecoprocess that harbors chaos in a way that it never can be closed down to either a static finality (a final eschatological state) or a stable rule of any harmonious law (a final stability of the ecoprocess, which would be its death!).<sup>164</sup> It is precisely the beauty of the ecoprocess to not have such static implications.

A fourth consequence concerns this mutuality in relation to the *materiality* of environments. While the hidden unilateral and anthropic eco-spiritualities cannot overcome the split between pure spirit and the materiality of the ecoprocess, a strictly ecological account of mutuality, as has been postulated with the *khoric* approach to the „Divine matrix“ and the rhythm of *theosis*, will be radically different when it comes to the understanding of the „spirit“ in which matter becomes Divine or the Divine is differentiated from matter. We get a good sense of

162 Bracken's Trinitarian approach to ecoprocess theology is a counter-example that the mis-conceived dipolar theism of process theology must be an enemy of Trinitarian thought. My own account of this trinitarian matrix of Whitehead's thought, however, varies greatly from Bracken's and other's insofar as I do not base it on either a field theory of societies or Hartshorne's understanding of persons as societies of events with stable character, but on the profound Trinitarian structure of Whitehead's thought on every level of its expression of the God-world relationship: the *foundational* level of Creativity (one-many-creativity), the *microcosmic* level of events (with its threefold character of physicality, mentality and satisfaction or primordial, consequent and superjective nature) and the *macrocosmic* level of the Universe (with the triangle of God, the World and Creativity). Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, *op. cit.*, §§ 32 & 46.

163 Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, *op. cit.*, § 32 & postscript. Although I define a difference between the „Divine matrix“ and the „chaotic nexus,” identifying the latter with the world and the first with the intercreativity *between* God and the world, it is not a field of any sorts and not an order of any kind but pure openness for the birth of the ecoprocess, its openness, and its destiny for the world and God as mutual organs of novelty.

164 Cf. R. Faber, „Apocalypse in God: On the Power of God in Process Eschatology,” in *Process Studies* 31/2 (2002): 64-96.



the sensitivity of this „clouding“ of matter and spirit when we remind ourselves of long forgotten but radical attempts of Renaissance philosophy, e.g., in Pico della Mirandola, to establish „spirit“ as material in relation to the World-Soul, as precisely being the element of Divine eros in the world in which the world is *materially* „glued“ together as community of attraction.<sup>165</sup> Today, it is, e.g., Catherine Keller's „panincarnationalism“, i.e., the „dusty incarnation“ in the insistence of the „breathy spirit“ on the „Earth Character“ of the „genesis collective“ by which we speak of the „Spirit of Life“<sup>166</sup>, that points us to the reconsideration of God's „materiality“.

In the context of eco-theopoetics, it has become clear already that God is understood as the *environment* of the world. But *if* God is to be *seriously* considered the environment of the world, its „nature“ cannot be purely spiritual without unilaterally spiritualizing the notion of „environment“ for God. Instead, it must – in the cloud of categories – be „material“ in order to count as environment. Here, the confession to pantheism of Moltmann and many other eco-theologians has been *restricted* by their hidden mind/matter and God/world-dualism. Whitehead, instead, in one of his most bold and undiscovered accounts of this reversal has accepted this radically ecological consequence. In his 1938-book *Modes of Thought*, Whitehead boldly states against the grain of spiritualism (and as utmost consequence of his seriousness of the ecological paradigm) that God

is that factor in the universe whereby there is importance, value, and ideal beyond the actual. It is by reference of the spatial immediacies to the ideals of deity that the sense of worth beyond ourselves arises. The unity of a transcendent universe, and the multiplicity of realized actualities, both enter into our experience by this sense of deity. Apart from this sense of transcendent worth, the otherness of reality would not enter into our consciousness. There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise every thing experienced would be merely a barren detail in our own solipsist mode of existence. We owe to the sense of deity the obviousness of the many actualities of the world, and the obviousness of the unity of the world for the preservation of the values realized and for the transition to ideals beyond realized fact.<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, it is the presence of the God in every occurrence of the ecoprocess that establishes its feeling of bodyliness, of the relevance of the other, the material feeling of the world beyond the singular events of its happening. It is the „sense of the deity“ as the environment of every event in which every environment in its diversity and complexities, in its worth and depth, enters into our experience in the way that it constitutes us as what we become by this experience. Not only

165 Cf. Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man: On Being and the One: Heptaplus* (Hackett Publishing Company, March 1998).

166 C. Keller, „Talking Dirty: Ground is not Foundation,” in: Kearns & Keller, *Ecospirit*, *op. cit.*, 74-5.

167 A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York, Free Press, 1968), 102. Given the whole direction of Whitehead's thought, it is astonishing that this passage is virtually absent in the related literature.



is the world the body of God but, here, *God is the „body of the world“, saving us from spiritual solipsism.*

### 9. Divine Eco-Economy

Returning to the third dimension of contemporary ecological discussions, earlier mentioned besides the doctrine of God and eco-spirituality, namely ecological sustainability, we finally come back to the question, how eco-theopoetics overcomes the anthropic implications of ecotheopolitics. In order to structure this thought with eco-theopoetics, I invoke the old theological term of the Divine *oikonomia*, which in the antique development of the Christian doctrine in difference to Divine *theologia* meant not God's immanent Life but *God's creative and saving activity in the world*. Paradoxically, immanent theology indicated God's transcendent essence (apart from the world) and *economic* theology meant God's *immanence in the world*.<sup>168</sup> In an ecoprocessual approach, the former has become impossible to define without mutual relationality (thereby not excluding mutual transcendence!) and the latter has become the expression of this mutual immanence as the ecoprocess. In other words, the immanent theology formulates God as *theoplicity* and the economic theology names the ecoprocess as *ecotheosis*. This is the Divine *ecological* economy or Divine *eco-economy*.<sup>169</sup>

On a very basic level and immediately, any ecological account of things will have *economic* consequences. More profoundly, if we define ecology with Ernst Haeckel as „economy of nature“, *ecology is economy insofar* as it takes into account the interdependence of all circles of energy – be it inorganic or organic forms of metabolisms.<sup>170</sup> If this connection is lost, as it was in the constitution of 19<sup>th</sup> century's „science of economy“, it inevitably leads to a mechanicism that establishes economy as a closed system of exclusivity and nature excluding economy.<sup>171</sup> Whitehead's profound criticism of this *homo economicus* as a con-

168 The Kapadocian Fathers distinguished „immanent trinity“ and „economic trinity“ in such a way that the Divine economy expressed God's active relationship with the world; cf. G. L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik. Für Studium und Praxis der Theologie*. 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 13.

169 The term „eco-economy“ is used for the ecological revolution of economy; cf. L. R. Brown, *Eco-Economy: Building an Economy for the Earth* (New York: W.W. Norton) 2001. But instead of the ideology that any change of the equilibrium of the earth is its „destruction“ as basis for the ecological revolution of economy, which is again the recurrence of the Anthropic Principle, I would prefer to refer to the disequilibrium as *conditio sine qua non* for ecology and hence for an eco-ecology – as explored in the text.

170 Cf. Birch & Cobb, *Liberation*, op. cit., 29.

171 For the mechanicism on the basis of the non-organic, non-environmental structure of 19<sup>th</sup> century economy, see the new study on the misuse of Herman von Helmholtz's law of the conservation of energy, which led to the impression that the economic cycle is closed



struction of 19<sup>th</sup> century's „political economy“ with its „economic fallacies“<sup>172</sup> is the critique of substantialism, unilateralism, coercive power, and unilateral violence as loss of ecological organicity of the universe and its reductions to mechanical materialism.<sup>173</sup>

Its materialistic basis has directed attention to *things* as opposed to *values* ... Thus all thought concerned with social organisation (sic!) expressed itself in terms of material things and of capital. Ultimate values were excluded. They were politely bowed to, and then handed over to the clergy to be kept for Sundays. A creed of competitive business morality was evolved, in some respects curiously high; but entirely devoid of consideration for the value of human life. The workmen were conceived as mere hands, drawn from the pool of labour. To God's question, men gave the answer of Cain – ‘Am I my brother's keeper?’; and they incurred Cain's guilt.<sup>174</sup>

Any non-ecological economy, therefore, is tied to the substantialism of a world of „things“ in isolation used as „material“ for the production of wealth, i.e., with values attached through the market and not intrinsically revealed through the value that every event *becomes* because of its creative togetherness, thereby *defining* the ecoprocess.<sup>175</sup> This market of external values is regulated by capital. Indeed, the criticism of capitalism is inescapably the beginning of an ecological deconstruction of our human world. The ecological criticism of capitalistic economy expresses nothing but the deconstruction of the masks of the Anthropoc Principle of economic politics. As Whitehead says clearly, it not only structures a „region“ of human existence, it also reigns over the relationship of human beings to nature, to fellow-humans and to anything of aesthetic importance. If all of these relationships only represent a *monetary* function, nothing of value exhibits more than the desire of a market and the strategies of the capital to gain more of its own (actually beyond any desire besides to gain more!). Monetary reductionism of capitalist strategies only reveals the utmost consequence of an anthropic logic, namely to manipulate everything on the basic assumption that humans are able and allowed to do so because of the vacuous „reality“ of everything as being the mere material of capital interests. The inherent *mechanicism* of economy was inspired and led to the enrichment of the few who have the monetary capac-

and does not have to take into account that it is sustained by the exploitation of the environments that „from the outside“ suffered a passivity of being viewed only as the supply for what was „within“ in the economic system in R. Nadeau, „The Economist Has No Cloth on: Unscientific Assumptions in Economy Are Undermining To Solve The Environmental Problem,” in *Scientific American* (April 2008): 42.

172 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 201.

173 For a good introduction into the tools of ecological economy in general cf. A. M. Husen, *Principles of Environmental Economics: Economics, Ecology and Public Policy* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007).

174 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 202-3.

175 For a good introduction to the concept of value and the mechanistic turn of its understanding in 19<sup>th</sup> century economy cf. Sayer, *Wert und Wirklichkeit*, op. cit., 39-60.



ity to do so. This unmasks the *anthropic* principle to be an *androcentric* principle and the androcentric principle to be the *patriarchal* basis for a society of economic exchange.<sup>176</sup>

If the ecological deconstruction of economy must have such political implications, it is evident that *any* ecotheology would have to take into account this criticism of capitalism as the very beginning of reformulating the androcentrism and patriarchalism of an economic „of material things and of capital“<sup>177</sup> as an act of *establishing an eco-economy* as a livable alternative.<sup>178</sup> For any theology that wants to liberate from these structures that are oppressive of human existence and nature, it is almost mandatory to become critical of the capitalism that forces us into such a slavery in which everything is only mere material for monetary exchange and the enrichment of the powerful.<sup>179</sup> While Liberation Theology, from Gustavo Gutierrez's 1972-book *Theology of Liberation* with its political implications of the „option for the poor“, began with the economic side of the criticism, John Cobb, with the already mentioned *Is It too Late?* of the same year, developed his ecotheology beginning with the recognition of the ecological crisis and moving to the economic analysis in his landmark theological deconstruction of capitalist economy in his 1989-book with Herman Daly *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, Environment, and a Sustainable Future*. This eco-economy in theological perspective is one of the first profound criticisms of the intricate vicious circle between economic materialism and the non-ecological mechanisms of human and human-nature relationships. It was succeeded by the eco-economic strategies of the *sustainable* use of our natural recourses in his 1992-book *Sustainability: Economics, Ecol-*

176 Note for the intimate interaction between capitalist economy and its androcentrism Claude Levi-Strauss' in his 1949-book *Elementary Structures of Kinship* proposed analysis of economy in terms of its *primordial* act, namely the *exchange of women* between clans. To understand the profound impact this thesis has made in post-structuralist and feminist studies cf. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, *op. cit.*, 49-55.

177 Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, *op. cit.*, 202.

178 There is a use of the term Divine economy for a criticism of economy, its capitalist underpinning in Liberation Theology, but also in the sphere of Radical Orthodoxy. Cf. D. St. Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market*. Radical Orthodoxy Series (New York: Routledge, 2000). But while this study favors John Milbank's subordination of the useful to the good and beauty, the eco-theopoetic approach to eco-economy, without denying this valuation, is more concerned with the *ecological* „universal relativity“ and *processual* disequilibrium of the Divine eco-economy as *nomadic Eros*. There is agreement, however, that if there were any heresy today, it would be Capitalism.

179 For the relation of capitalism and slavery cf. R. Faber, „Amid a Democracy of Fellow Creatures“ – Onto/Politics and the Problem of Slavery in Whitehead and Deleuze,” in R. Faber & H. Krips, eds., *Event & Decision: Ontology and Politics in Badiou, Deleuze and Whitehead* (in production).



ogy, and Justice and the 1995-follow up *Sustaining the Common Good: A Christian Perspective on the Global Economy*.<sup>180</sup>

While today it has become abundantly clear that there is an intrinsic relation between eco-economy, sustainability, social justice, democracy, and liberation, and that ecotheology is the promotion of these issues out of the theological traditions out of which it grows, the implications of the *Divine* eco-economy remain hardly addressed beyond the anthropic limitations of ecotheology and ecotheopolitics.<sup>181</sup> In other words, while today the literature on ecotheology and ecopolitics is immense and the manifold of organizations promoting ecotheological strategies of sustainability and eco-justice are abundant, much of the discourse is still bound to the Anthropic Principle. This is obvious by at least three characteristics of the ecotheopolitical imperative: it is vastly, if not exclusively, aimed at *human survival* for which the ecological embeddedness is mandatory; it is, therefore, oriented towards sustainability as a medium of the *conservation of energies* in order to stabilize the resources for human survival; and it legitimates the economic and ecological development as the *stabilization* of conditions for survival with the theological notion of God's order of creation and human stewardship for the conservation of this order.<sup>182</sup>

In eco-theopoetics, however, the aims will be different because of its characteristic triad *polyphilia*, *theoplicity* and *ecotheosis*. God's *polyphilia* always means that God insists on a process of novelty that has no fixed aim (or essential completion) ever to be reached; it is the very *resistance* against any such completion – as reintroduction of a „logic of the One“ – that has caused or implied or expressed the patriarchal, coercive, and anthropic reduction to simplicity where only complexity and novelty should reign. God's nature *itself* stands for this resistance; it should always be written in exclamation – „*theoplicity!*“ Hence, it is not God's eco-economy to complete creation or to overcome its multiplicity in process by any preservation of a perfect state of harmony. On the contrary, if God is „seeking intensity, and not preservation“<sup>183</sup>, the chaotic openness of the ecoprocess is „final“ and, hence, ecoprocess is *ecotheosis*.<sup>184</sup>

180 For Cobb's early use of „sustainability“ in the context of human economy, cf. Birch & Cobb, *Liberation*, *op. cit.*, 36.

181 Cf. the themes in D. Hessel & L. Rasmussen, eds., *Earth Habitat: Eco-Injustice and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

182 Cf. R.A. Butkus, „Sustainability: An Eco-Theological Analysis,“ in C. J. Dempsey & R. A. Butkus, eds., *All Creation is Groaning*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 161.

183 Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, *op. cit.*, 105.

184 Cf. R. Faber, „God's Advent/ure: The End of Evil and the Origin of Time,“ in: J. Bracken, ed., *World Without End: Christian Eschatology from Process Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 91-112.



Consequently, Divine eco-economy, is not primarily directed towards human survival and all its strategies but towards intensity and harmony, i.e., the disequilibrium of discord and disharmony that allows for Life. In God's eco-economy, the primordial function of Divine immanence in the world is not a fixed state (or the „fixing“ of its loss) but the flexibility of „nomadic“ movement, disturbance, ambivalence, complexity, and appetite. The *nomos* of eco-economy indicates God's „incarnation“ to be that of the disturbing Eros of Life.<sup>185</sup> And the very existence of the Universe is initiated as *erotic disturbance issuing in the disequilibrium of Life*.<sup>186</sup>

Divine eco-economy leads „naturally“ to an awareness of the *limitations of an anthropic ecotheopolitics of „preservation“ of an ecological status quo*. And if the ecoprocess does not indicate any equilibrium – what is called „ecological equilibrium“ – but if its Divine Eros always „desires“ disequilibrium, *no relatively stable ecological state can indicate an ideal to be preserved*. The consequences for wildlife preservations or a certain state of global temperature are obvious: they are not the expression of a Divine aim in God's eco-economy but rather surprising points of calmness in the turbulence of the ecoprocess.<sup>187</sup> In fact, if no „state“ is „ideal“, the very conditions of human existence on this planet are not pre-ordained by Divine order; and if we feel them to be „holy“, it is not because of their stability but because of their intrinsic value.

What, then, in an ecoprocess view of *ecotheosis* is the relevance of Global Warming? If no equilibrium is *per se* „normal“ or even „just“, the problem of Global Warming is not that its happening is evil, not even if it is caused by human beings – there were times in which global temperature was such that human existence was impossible and there will be times in which this will become reality again.<sup>188</sup> If, in an ecoprocess view, Divine eco-economy is not directed toward stability but toward disturbance, the evil of Global Warming is the *anthropic denial of intensity, complexity and harmony of the manifold of the Earth*

185 Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, op. cit., 198.

186 The use of „*nomos*“ instead of „*logos*“ does not indicate a repetition of the problem of a pre-given „Law“ but, in following the definition of both terms by Deleuze, indicates the *nomadic* openness of chaotic movements that always, in Whitehead's terms, are creative of laws which then are also contingent on the *khoric* space of mutual immanence. Cf. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 36.

187 This is the problem with „ecological“ approaches to conservation that, even if they are sympathetic to certain environments, not wishing them to become extinct, they actually presuppose an ecopolitical ideology of the status quo. Cf. D. Egan & E. A. Howell, eds., *The Historical Ecology Handbook: A Restorationist's Guide to Reference Ecosystems. The Science and Practice of Ecological Restoration Series* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2005).

188 For the inclusion of natural rhythms and its influences on human history (but not primarily based on economic manipulations) and its relation to economic intrusions cf. G. E. Christianson, *Greenhouse: The 200-Year Story of Global Warming* (Walker, 1999).



by capitalist androcentrism which negates the ecoprocess altogether.<sup>189</sup> The warning Global Warming in Divine eco-economy represents is twofold: that the recognition of the contingency of the equilibrium of global temperature asks human beings always to develop into the direction of *higher intensity and complexity*, not into the direction of the interests of the *anthropos economicos*<sup>190</sup> and that the recognition of the *interdependence*, in which the world becomes part of our metabolism and we become part of the Earth's metabolism, must not seek any stability that would arrest any Life but must seek the metabolisms of which human beings are a part to take an ever more *non-violent development*.

Global Warning, hence, could become a paradigm for how an eco-economy with its ecological strategies doesn't look back but *activates* us to transcend ourselves toward a *new future* as yet unknown. If it is an *eco-economically* informed future, it will seek intensity and complexity, but it always will understand the grace of the contingency that allows humanity to exist without guarantee and entitlement. For the eco-economical development of human society,<sup>191</sup> we might follow Whitehead's *eco-economic* imperative as being expressive of the ecoprocess of the Universe, we may say that the

foundation of all understanding of sociological theory – that is to say, of all understanding of human life – is that no static maintenance of perfection is possible. This axiom is rooted in the nature of things. Advance or Decadence are the only choices offered to mankind. The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe. (AI 274)

For the realization of this non-anthropoc adventure of eco-economy, we might want to realize this higher intensity and harmony by taking into account all the interrelated metabolisms of nature and humanity in nature as the formation of a new interdependent „society of societies“ not of human beings but *between* humanity and Nature. As advocated by Bruno Latour's 2004-book *Politics of Nature*, we would have to give up a Political Ecology that is still based on the dualistic distinction of human „persons“ and natural „things“ and would bring us together in a Collective of Humans and Nonhumans with a new form of „togeth-

189 Cobb's differentiation between „balance of nature,” which can never be reached, and „sustainability,” which takes care of the resources we waste in our metabolism and economies despite their intrinsic value, is important for the motivation of the respect for circles of life. Cf. Birch & Cobb, *Liberation, op. cit.*, ch. 1.

190 In her new book, Sally McFague also argues for such alternative economic order and for our relational identity as part of an unfolding universe that expresses divine love and human freedom; cf. Sally McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

191 For a good understanding of the interrelation between ecology and human society cf. M. Redclift & T. Benton, *Social Theory and the Global Environment* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007). For a good introduction to such a future field of research of transformation cf. F. L. Bates, *Sociopolitical Ecology: Human Systems and Ecological Fields*. Contemporary Systems Thinking (Springer, 1997).



erness“ where, as Whitehead says, we „find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures.“<sup>192</sup>

It is my thesis that theology, especially in the form of ecotheology, only will become relevant for the current ecopolitical discussion – and avoid being just an immanent recipient of outside developments it just repeats ineffectively – if it assumes the ecoprocess by overcoming the anthropic principle of ecotheopolitics. In other words, the ecopolitical imperative based on the Divine eco-economy – the immanence of the Divine Eros in the ecoprocess – is this: We should not try to preserve any status quo of society and the ecological present of the Earth but transform the Earth and ourselves toward instabilities of deeper intensities and harmonies of deeper complexities – thereby realizing ever more the non-violent „circle of Love“ that is *the metabolism of God and the World*.

In light of *this* eco-economic imperative of ecotheopolitics, we should not „stop“ Global Warming (in preserving an already lost *status quo*) but actively *transform us with* the Earth by learning to understand the world differently in a way that allows for the recognition of the „environmental field“ of social-economic structures and reforms, by accepting the *functional openness* of the future of the developing disequilibrium (i.e., by not expecting any final state), and by allowing for a „creative transformation“ *with* the world. Theologically, this means to leave home like Abraham towards an unknown land that *transforms* the Earth *and* us with it – *and* God.

All the more, this *Divine metabolism* will induce an *eco-economy of compassion and sympathy*. Instead of aiming at the preservation of any „state“, it will want to find and feel and develop and „save“ the intrinsic intensities of every becoming. It is the hope of ecoprocess theology that in the Divine eco-economy we all have a place in the compassion and sympathy of God's *theoplicity* – as the expression of the eco-economy of *ecotheosis*.