The Manifestation of God in the View of Process Theology

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Shoghi Effendi presented the Bahá'í community with the challenge to connect with current progressive movements of thought and action;[1] it is even envisioned that another institution on the Arc at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa will be built, a library of sorts that would institutionalize such efforts permanently.[2] One of these movements, given my training and professional engagement in the areas connecting religion and philosophy over several decades, is process theology.[3] Process Theology is a venerable tradition of philosophical theology or a philosophy that does not exclude spiritual and religious realities, even a very elaborate concept of God. It originated with the Anglo-American mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), especially his work as a philosopher at Harvard University commencing in the 1920s.[4] Process philosophy developed along with its theological sister in mutual interaction with other concurrent streams of philosophical and religious discourse, but found its most persistent form in "Process Theology" as an expression of the implications of questions regarding ultimate reality and God, cosmology and the place of humanity in the cosmos.[5] Although historically process theology found its first home within progressive transformations of Christian thought, engaged in social justice and ecological sensibility, feminist and liberation theology, and discourses on science and religion,[6] it is especially its

ability to address interreligious questions of religious pluralism and the unity of religions across the boundaries of the east and the west[7] and in light of Whitehead's emphasis on the development of a future society of peace[8] that should be of interest to Bahá'í thought and scholarship.

Of the many points of contact between Whitehead, process theology, and the Bahá'í universe of discourse that one could elaborate on, I will focus on one of the central questions to which process theology has developed its most creative contribution, namely, how ultimate reality or God can be all-present in the world and, at the same time, be manifest in the form of human figures such as Christ, the Buddha, or Avatars such as Krishna, all of whom Bahá'ís understand to be Manifestations of God. Process thinkers have developed unique approaches of understanding "Christology" in the sense of a human and divine figure[9] in such a way that it genuinely explicates the concept of the Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i ilahi*) of Bahá'í provenance within its own thought patterns,[10] but also translates it in the multireligious context that the Bahá'í universe accepts as central basis for claiming the fundamental unity of religions.[11]

The following considerations will introduce to this unique connection between process theology and related Bahá'í concepts by highlighting their convergence in concentric movements from general relations on matters of philosophy and theology to the view on religion and cosmos, and to the notion of ultimate reality and God, to finally flow into a discussion of the congruence and convertibility of the concept of the divine Manifestation issuing from these approximations. For this endeavor, I will pursue original quotes from Whitehead's works in this regard and comment on them in the Bahá'í context, which also means to demonstrate the idea of Manifestation as translatable in a multireligious context.

1: Philosophy in Process

The exploration of philosophy for the Bahá'í universe is still very much in the making, that is, specifically in the western context.[12] Yet several elements can be identified as influential in the constitution of conceptuality in the Bahá'í writings, and several implications for

future explorations may be noted. First of all, it is, of course, necessary to recognize the philosophical influences that form the historical context and commencement of the articulation of the Bábi-Bahá'í religious complex: the immediate Shaykhi milieu of the birth of the Bábi movement and its influence on the Báb as well as his immediate disciples, the original Letters of the Living (and their writings), who were mainly recruited from this background, several of whom where highly educated and erudite thinkers in this tradition;[13] the wider Shi'i and Sufi patterns of thought and living that were primary modes of mediation for the message of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh;[14] the influx of Jewish and Zoroastrian modes of thought, as well as a wider Hindu context for some of the elaborations on the implications of Bahá'u'lláh teachings, as well as being a fainter context for Sufism, visible in the direct contacts of Bahá'u'lláh with Sufi orders and inquirers, but also his occasional elaborations on Hindu thought;[15] and, finally (but not last), the Christian and diverse western molds in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, themselves studying in, and traveling to, Europe and America, transposed the Arabic and Persian linguistic complexities of the original Bábi-Bahá'í writings with their own philosophical undercurrent into western thought patterns and languages.[16]

On another level, philosophy proper itself became a mode of critical and creative engagement of the Central Bahá'í Figures: with comments on the worth and dangers of thought images, concepts, and procedures;[17] with references to diverse philosophers and sages, often embracing the theological and religious connotations of their own philosophies, sometimes criticizing their methodological or ideological reductionisms as expression of a certain culture of material progress over and against the association with spiritual development;[18] in exploring certain philosophical concepts themselves such as were engrained in long-standing problems of the mind-body or matter-soul-spirit discussions, evolution and cosmology, epistemology (modes of knowing) and ontology (modes of being);[19] in explorations of philosophical theories with regard to ultimate reality in monistic and dualistic categories;[20] by intensely probing questions of human nature and its status in a world of impermanence;[21] and in following diverse philosophical developments of the time in the form of a differentiation of their qualities and claims to truth.

Finally, all Central Figures made comments on philosophy or philosophies, or more broadly, different concepts of philosophy in more eastern and western instantiations: on "Theosophy" or "Divine Wisdom" (*hikmat*), philosophical wisdom teachings in the wake of Ibn 'Arabi and his diverse streams of philosophical tradition, including the Persian metaphysical tradition manifest in Suhrawardi (philosophy of light, Illuminist philosophy) and Mulla Sadra, as well as the Persian Poet-philosophers, such as Rumi and Hafez (among many others) — a term that 'Abdu'l-Bahá retained even in western contexts to indicate philosophy, or philosophical theology, in contradistinction to materialist philosophies of the west;[22] on Greek philosophy, such as that of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle as fundamental expressions of western philosophy;[23] and in general with statements relating the importance and worth of philosophy as field of knowledge, different from, but related to, religion and its specific theological expressions, but especially as connecting to an interreligious context or comparative studies of religion in which many philosophies in the east and the west are harbored or from which they have emancipated themselves.[24]

In all of these engagements with, and appellation to, philosophy as valuable expression of humanity *as* humanity and as important instrument of reflecting on deep questions of existence, we can sense a fundamental affirmation of the philosophical project by the Bahá'í writings.[25] While sheer intellectualism is viewed through a critical lens,[26] any overstatement against thought and reason are refuted in strongest terms. "*The Reality of man is his thought,*" [PT #2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, indicating that investigations of the intellect are a primary gift of God to humanity and inevitable for the continuing relevance of religion.[27] "W*hen religion is upheld by science and reason we can believe with assurance and act with conviction, for this rational faculty is the greatest power in the world*" [ADP 102].

Philosophy as methodological use of intellect and reason in order to engage with questions of reality and truth is, therefore, an implication of the spiritual search after reality, often translated as "independent investigation of truth" — a basic Bahá'í principle of utmost importance, so much so that it is often mentioned first in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's conveyance of fundamental principles of the Bahá'í teachings in the west.[28] Yet, as mind, intellect, and reason, are not the

only sources of human insight — at least in need of coherences with empirical testing (especially in the western context) and intuition (the mystical insight, *irfan*, of generally more eastern provenience) as well as tradition (be it religious or philosophical), this cannot lead us into assuming that philosophy itself must end in any rationalist reductionism;[29] on the contrary, as Whitehead's whole philosophy demonstrates, all philosophical insights must be in resonance with art and poetry, on the one hand, and coherently relating reason and empirical experiment, on the other.[30] In fact, this makes philosophy an indefinite endeavor of approximation to reality and truth, an adventure in thought, as "all productive thought has proceeded either by the poetic insight of artists, or by the imaginative elaboration of schemes of thought." Hence, "[r]ationalism never shakes off its status of an experimental adventure."[31]

As, in Whitehead, philosophy is open to religious experience and empirical reality,[32] so does 'Abdu'l-Bahá value both approaches of philosophy to reality. "*Philosophy is of two kinds: natural and divine. Natural philosophy seeks knowledge of physical verities and explains material phenomena, whereas divine philosophy deals with ideal verities and phenomena of the spirit*" [PUP #105]. And as this duality cannot become a dualism without destroying the fabric of experience of reality as one interrelated whole, Whitehead with 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms the search for the philosophical understanding of the *one* Reality that expresses itself in infinite modes, but is, nevertheless, an emanation of unity in which nothing can be (viewed) in mere opposition to one another.[33] Rather, in the last analysis, we must seek to overcome intellectualism with its binary categories of thought in the non-duality of mysticism ('*irfan*, *ma'rifa*) and its fresh articulation in ever-new categorizations of relationality.[34] Hence, says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "*I will speak to you upon the intrinsic oneness of all phenomena. This is one of the abstruse subjects of divine philosophy*" [PUP #110]. And Whitehead confirms that "philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken. But the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism: not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated."[35]

While the term process philosophy has mainly been used for Whitehead's philosophy and philosophies in the wake of his work,[36] it

is, in fact, an ancient tradition of which Whitehead is aware and in which he positions himself consciously. In the eastern context, it goes back to radically processual forms of thought and understanding of reality in Indian and Chinese modes of thinking to which Whitehead feels his articulation of Process more akin than to most western expressions of substance thinking so that his philosophy "seems to approximate more to some strains of Indian, or Chinese, thought, than to western Asiatic, or European, thought," because "[o]ne side makes process ultimate; the other side makes fact ultimate."[37] In the western context, Whitehead commits himself to the ancient preference of Becoming over Being, Heraclitus over Parmenides. While the famous circumscription of process in Heraclitus proposes that "you cannot step into the river twice"[38] and "everything changes and nothing stands still,"[39] Whitehead illuminates this insight with the paraphrase: "No thinker thinks twice; and ... more generally, no subject experiences twice."[40]

Thought is always in process, as is reality. "We are in the present; the present is always shifting; it is derived from the past; it is shaping the future; it is passing into the future. This is process, and in the universe it is an inexorable fact."[41] Process is fundamental to reality because of the infinite potentials that are unrealized in the world of becoming. It is, then, an infinite process of the actualization of potentials inherent in the past realizations of the cosmos for which "philosophy should make it easier to conceive the infinite variety of specific instances which rest unrealized in the womb of nature."[42] Without going into any detail of the inner workings of this Process in Whitehead's philosophy at this point,[43] we can identify its basic meaning by understanding the world as *process of processes* of which all things are expressions, that is, themselves processes of their becoming. Yet the *character* of this processual nature of all happenings in this world of becoming, and on every level of existence from stars to human beings, is not just actualization of potentials, but realization of values,[44] a process of deciding between potentials to be realized or to be excluded in order to create a more and always (in any situation) most valuable world: "The generic aim of process is the attainment of importance, in that species and to that extent which in that instance is possible."[45]

2: Theology in Process

It is interesting to recognize that the Bahá'í Writings' attitude toward the study of religion, at times, seem to exhibit a critical access to what in western parlance generally is called "theology," yet in the Islamic context was reflecting less on the Christian notion of theology but on the Islamic combination of dogmatic theology and legal reasoning of divines often harboring direct impacts on local or more general definitions of orthodoxy. It is not theology as intellectual engagement with religion, revelation, and scripture, however, with which the Bahá'í writings are primarily concerned in critical counter-distinction, but with expressions of religious orthodoxy that leans to establish power structures in religion and society, be it through striving for positions of power or the hybrids of intolerance and ignorance.[46] Of course, this situation is no stranger to Christian orthodoxies at different times with their similar powers of restriction by which any deviant view could be in danger of persecution and death.[47]

While this has not much to do with theology as practiced in contexts of critical distance to such orthodox expressions of power, instead seeking truth and creative innovations leading thought into liberating modes of engaging society for justice and peace,[48] we find Whitehead in line with such a criticism akin to the Bahá'í writings if theology was to be understood as such an expression of power over and against the impulses of the scriptural radicalism of humility and non-violence, tolerance and inclusivism, exhibited by the biblical representation of the Jesus tradition.[49] Hence Whitehead can concur in spirit with the Bahá'í writings when he affirms that "[w]hen the Western world accepted Christianity, Caesar conquered; and the received text of Western theology was edited by his lawyers," but that this development contradicted "[t]he brief Galilean vision of humility flickered throughout the ages, uncertainly."[50]

While Whitehead is disappointed in Christian theology insofar as it followed Cesarean expressions of power, he did not dismiss the *philosophical* engagement with theology and the relation it bears with religion, revelation, and scripture.[51] In fact, he understood the best in the Christ event as an expression in practice, or as a manifestation, of the best in philosophical theology: of a move away from viewing

God as a coercive force to that of a persuasive "force without power"; of peace, not war; and of a tenderness of love operating in the world of humanity and the cosmos alike.[52]

> It is the business of philosophical theology to provide a rational understanding of the rise of civilization, and of the tenderness of mere life itself, in a world which superficially is founded upon the clashings of senseless compulsion. I am not disguising my belief that in this task, theology has largely failed. The notion of the absolute despot has stood in the way.[53]

Whitehead, therefore, related the independent investigation of truth, the business of philosophical theology, to the adventure of truth over against that of power — philosophy as impassionate look at all motivations in light of truth and reality, but not impassionate to the non-violent creation of a future civilization of peace while critical to any such passion if it motivates and degenerates into blockages hindering this process to succeed.[54] Truth in a world of becoming must allow for the recovery of the suppressed and of novelty, as in a world of process reality must *become*, realize new possibilities, and its best potentials in new situations; and God becomes an expression of this movement.[55] In other words, as Bahá'í teachings would suggest: divine grace has never stopped engaging with the world; revelation is an ongoing process of creating such a civilization of peace and of seducing us to means and ends coherent with such a vision.[56] It is in this precise sense, and not any predilection for the way Aristotle bound his vision to a substance view of reality (over against a process view),[57] that Whitehead accepts and takes up anew Aristotle's project.

> Aristotle found it necessary to complete his metaphysics by the introduction of a Prime Mover — God. ... [H]e was entirely dispassionate; and he is the last European metaphysician of first-rate importance for whom this claim can be made. After Aristotle, ethical and religious interests began to influence metaphysical conclusions.[58]

In dispassionately following the impulse of truth over power, Whitehead relates to Aristotle's notion of God as Prime Mover. It is

of utmost importance to understand this move in the sense it is introduced here. Interpretations of this concept have generally always gone astray when they identify God as Cause of everything. While Aristotle accepts the notion of efficient causation, we have, today, not the least because of science, come to identify the effective cause with the *only* causality allowing us to rationally and empirically explore the world over and against all mythological and fantastic, supernatural and religious, claims of divine action on and in the world. In a closed causal circle, only natural causes are allowed, excluding not only spiritual renderings of reality, but in effect all non-material references to human reality: that of aesthetics and ethics; of motivation and purpose; and of meaning and general human values such as love, peace, justice, unity, and relationality.[59] Against such materialist reductionisms, unfortunately, certain renderings of efficient causation were applied to divine activity by defining God as First Cause, as efficient cause of creation, as ultimate causation of world — in the sense of one of Thomas Aquinas's primary demonstrations of the existence of God from nature (*quinque viae*).

Yet this is not the meaning Aristotle gave his Prime Mover and it is not the meaning that Whitehead recovers from this statement. What Aristotle means, here, is not any efficient cause that creates an effect by coercion, by pull and push, by external setting or influencing, but what he called a final cause. This means a cause that operates from the front, from the future, from the ideal; its power is persuasion, seduction, creating desire for fulfillment. This is an internal cause that awakens that which happens to its best possibilities, luring it to their realization and to become the best it can be at any moment and in any situation. God as Prime Mover is not at the beginning, not a ground of creation, not in the past as pusher, not a powerful tyrant who crushes, but the attractor, the aim, the goal of fulfillment and satisfaction.[60] In Whitehead's words, God "is the supreme Eros incarnating itself as the first phase of ... the new process of actuality."[61] And as God lures toward the realization of the best possible in any given situation, this God is not the creator of the word from nothing, but the aim and goal of any happening in an eternal creation, an infinite world without beginning and end.[62] Whitehead's universe involving this divine process is as infinite and always in process of becoming and renewal as is the universe according to the Bahá'í sources and scriptural references.[63]

We can immediately sense what difference such a theology in process would make: tenderness instead of force; love instead of power; persuasion instead of coercion; freedom instead of oppression; the immanence of God in all happening instead of distance; finding reality in lures of fulfillment instead of arbitrary and merely external rules.[64] Hence, for Whitehead, the task of theology is this insight into this attractive eternity within impermanence: "We ask of Theology to express that element in perishing lives which is undying by reason of its expression of perfections proper to our finite natures. In this way we shall understand how life includes a mode of satisfaction deeper than joy or sorrow."[65]

The philosophical element of this theology, then, has important critical and creative functions. It is an expression of the fundamental unity of reality[66] that, while "independent" from any limited motivation, is essentially related to both science and religion — hence also essentially *relating* religion and science, as the Bahá'í writings categorically insist.[67] "Philosophy frees itself from the taint of ineffectiveness by its close relations with religion and with science, natural and sociological. It attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought."[68] Yet it is also an expression of the pre-rational intuition or universal vision by which we perceive of the whole of reality before and beyond conceptual differentiation, to which it must give ear because in it has already enveloped the potential of divine revelation before and beyond human categories and intellectual limitations.[69] And considering the implication this has for the transformation of human society, the philosophical mind seeks the adventure of such a vision in process in order to revivify civilization.[70] Hence, "philosophy is akin to poetry," as "both of them seek to express that ultimate good sense which we term civilization," and the "use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system. It reverses the slow descent of accepted thought towards the inactive commonplace."[71] It is in this sense that theology is held open for the unprecedented, the event of divine presence, and new forms of understanding the world in process. Nothing is foreclosed, and we are immersed in an infinite process of becoming for which we must learn to use the articulations of our experiences and insights in a *destabilizing* way so that all

conceptual stabilizations can "remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap."[72]

Process theology, now, based on the work of Whitehead, has become a very differentiated endeavor following these prompts toward a cosmology of becoming; an epistemology of transformation and novelty; a social understanding of revivification in ever new forms of organic developments; and a theology that can transgress fixed boundaries of religious integrities and orthodoxies engaging diverse religions in the east and the west with their different pattern of thought and outlook of worldview.[73] It has in the last hundred years or so embraced diverse and diversified positions regarding all of these matters, which I will not rehearse here, but which I have documented, interpreted, and developed in a host of publications over the last two decades.[74] What I want, instead, to demonstrate, here, is rather how these multireligious developments rest on Whitehead's understanding of ultimate reality and the availability of this understanding for the central Bahá'í concept of the Manifestation of God.

We have already encountered three basic parameters of Whitehead's process theology: God as Eros, as Attractor, internally evoking movement as one of novelty and the establishment of value; the infinite openness of such a world process to the ever-new production of value and meaning; and the unending processual openness of divine reality to this world process, or its grace of unending revelation. Three further elements will suffice, here, establishing the conceptual relevance of Whitehead's philosophical parameters for a theology of this world process. First, ultimate reality in a world of process is *immanent* to it as a measure of achievement and perfection and can be expressed as the personal character of a friend: "There is a rightness [in things, which] ... is a revelation of character, apprehended as we apprehend the characters of our friends. But in this case it is an apprehension of character permanently inherent in the nature of things."[75] Beyond simple alternatives between a personal God or an ultimate reality as moral law (*dharma*), Whitehead immediately connects with Bahá'u'lláh's affirmation of the mystery of the "The Friend" in which reality achieves its existence and meaning, but also its non-dual limit and ego-less nothingness.[76]

Second, Whitehead affirms that all religions, when in conjunction with reason can, in a philosophical theology,[77] be understood in such a way that they express a *unique* outlook on existentiality as manifestations of their unique divine experiences that always transgress mere reasonability and closed mental projections. "The doctrines of rational religion," Whitehead says, "aim at being that metaphysics which can be derived from the super-normal experience of mankind in its moments of finest insight."[78] These insights, which are related to the extraordinary figures of saints and sages, but also to figures to which religions relate as their founders and inspirers, prophets and divine appearances,[79] are not irrational, but "surrational,"[80] that is, in their own right valuable to and inexchangable in the philosophical endeavor, which in their multiplicity is to be expected in a world of becoming in which divine novelty has never ended.[81]

Third, for process theology, religion is an *unending* process that, in accordance with these unique revelations of divine reality, must, therefore, itself never recoil into its own sedimentations. In other words, no religion can claim finality; there will always be a new measure of revelation. Religion must become the home not of conservation of the past, but in even greater measure of novelty and inspiration by reality, divinity, and temporality.[82] It is in this sense that Whitehead understands religion akin to science: "Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development."[83] In accordance with Bahá'u'lláh's criticism of the opposite attitude, that of the orthodox limitation of understanding to the past, theology must be the endeavor to appreciate this changeability in light of new experiences and revelations, being the basis of, and motivation for, new religions.[84] I will come back to the implications of these features of process theology in relation to religion and God later. But first, I must venture deeper into the inner workings of Whitehead's philosophy that make these parameters possible.

3: Event, Creativity, and the Universe

Whitehead expounds a fundamentally relational understanding of the universe, which, in its impermanence or permanent becoming, is

not just an expression of fading and illusion, but of creativity, of divine encouragement to become — become what it could be, what it should be, what it already is and always was, but with the potential of an ever anew actualization of its hidden creative and relational essence.[85] Hence, the universe does not consist of things or of (for unclear reasons) fixed states of brute facts and essences, substances and stabile entities the movement of which is and remains external to them. On the contrary, the universe, as it harbors only beings that are already internally related to everything else, is a moving whole of relations that actualize themselves in events of becoming, always anew and unceasingly. Nothing is just what it is, unchanging, and moving only as an external exhibition of a clash of forces like billiard balls. The universe is not constructed from either atoms in empty space or independent things encountering one another just by accident or an external order of push and pull or of decreed laws of nature or of God. Rather, everything that exists *is* already the whole universe, however faint the influences may be of the vast background of the myriad happenings that constitute the universe as a whole, in *this* moment, in *this* actualization, at *this* place, unique and unrepeatable.[86] Yet, as there *are* persistent things and beings without which there would not be any groupings of events to things, persistent throughout time, for instance, as societies and persons, structures appear as *repetition* of these influences on every happening in the universe in ever-new series of events, forming more or less stable organisms, societies, and persons. And since every happening is also a decision whether to repeat or to change such structures to the extent that it is in its situation and on its level of complexity able to do so, everything on whatever level of existence, from the elementary particle to human persons, has some degree of freedom and creative potential for becoming different, for better or worse.[87]

So the fundamental "entities" in this universe are not substances, independent and needing nothing in order to exist, or being able to persist through time as the same, but events, that are all-relational, constituted by everything: the facts of their past and the potential inherent in them, but as of yet unrealized, and even possibilities not actualized anywhere. The basic event-constitution of the universe in its becoming (or stability as repetition of the same structure in always new generations of happenings) is not external to it like an acting

subject on passive objects or a mathematical axiom on its mathematical entities, but (almost in reverse) the *internal perception* (Whitehead calls this relation "prehension")[88] of the relational influences out of which an event actively constitutes its unique unification, as a realization of its creative potential, and its *self-surrender* to the flow of becoming beyond itself in which it will have importance and influx for the process at large.[89] "The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the 'many' which it finds, and also it is one among the … 'many' which it leaves; it is a novel entity … among the many entities which it synthesizes. The many become one, and are increased by one."[90]

All beings are becomings in the same sense that "[i]n the language appropriate to the higher stages of experience, [its] primitive element is sympathy, that is, feeling the feeling in another and feeling conformally with another."[91] And, hence, such sym-pathy, the feeling of others, which are themselves feelings of other relations they accept as internal "essence" of their self-constitution, demonstrates that the "general common function exhibited by any group of actual occasions is that of mutual immanence."[92] While "'becoming' is a creative advance into novelty,"[93] on the scale of the structural complex organization of the cosmos into nested spheres of organisms and environments with their own emergent and mutually sensitive rules, such an organization is the more alive the more it allows *novelty* to enter the picture, change to alter fixed structures, history to create new conditions, and so on.[94] The ingredient of novelty in any event varies according to the overall organization of the environment and the organisms that allow for more or less integration of novelty and change in their becoming such "that an organism is 'alive' when in some measure its reactions are inexplicable by any tradition of pure physical inheritance."[95]

In Whitehead's universe, *creativity* is the ultimate reality immanent in all events.[96] "'Creativity' is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the 'many' which it unifies. Thus 'creativity' introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively."[97] Creativity is the moving "energy" (without doing anything since it is not a thing or event or substance) of unification and multiplication, growing together and transitioning into a new context in which all unification

becomes again a moment in the ongoing process of the renewal of the universe.[98] "For the creativity is not separable from its creatures. Thus the creatures remain with the creativity. Accordingly, the creativity for a creature becomes the creativity with the creature, and thereby passes into another phase of itself. It is now the creativity for a new creature. Thus there is a transition of the creative action,"[99] by which the universe never comes to a standstill — no beginning or end constrains that process; only the process itself, in the decisions imposed by every event on the universe, constrains its "history" and renewal. Or in more poetic language: "The creativity of the world is the throbbing emotion of the past hurling itself into a new transcendent fact. It is the flying dart, of which Lucretius speaks, hurled beyond the bounds of the world."[100]

In this sense, we can "speak in the singular of The Universe, ... which can be translated as Process. There is the one all-embracing fact which is the advancing history of the one Universe." This universe is the whole community of the world's becomings exhibiting an all-embracing, immanent, and relational "matrix for allbegetting, ... whose essence is process with retention of connectedness."[101] As every event in this relational matrix becomes in the actualization of potential directed toward the realization of values of more intensity and harmony, creating a world suggesting (but not forcing to realize) the greater good, the wonder, the harmony of ever more refinement, Whitehead understands the "teleology of the Universe [as being] ... directed to the production of Beauty. Thus any system of things which in any wide sense is beautiful is to that extent justified in its existence."[102]

Because the world process proceeds in the production of beauty, that is, maximal intensity with maximal harmony at any given moment, in any given society, and in the universe as a whole, as its very *movens*, Whitehead, in a subtle and suggestive move, sees this inherent "worthing" as the place of the witnessing, experience, perception, and intuition of God in the universe.[103] Instead of imagining God as effective cause, as controlling power, as chief moralist and external force (as the substance model would imply and the monarchical model of a king merely complements by suggesting the subduction of "his subjects"), here, God is the internal beauty,

intensity, and harmony of harmonies, internally motivating and driving the universe to its most refined realization of its potentials.[104]

> The order of the world is no accident. … The religious insight is the grasp of this truth: That the order of the world, the depth of reality of the world, the value of the world in its whole and in its parts, the beauty of the world, the zest of life, the peace of life, and the mastery of evil, are all bound together — not accidentally, but by reason of this truth: that the universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom, and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but that this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the completed ideal harmony, which is God.[105]

God comes into play as the ideal harmony, as the "harmony of harmonies"[106] and as the reality in which this harmony is always most intense. The universe, in its own turn, is a process of the actualization of its harmonies and intensities that are available in any event at any given cosmic situation, on different levels of existence (from the stone to human persons), and to the degree that this history of the cosmos and the organismic structures of environments and beings to which such environments are patient allows. As this process is never external in its relational becoming, and because God appears in it as the harmonious ideal (the prime mover) seducing the becoming relations of the universe as they actualize themselves in events and complex societies of events, into patterns of degrees of order and freedom, experience and consciousness, and aesthetic and ethic valuation in all existents, the picture that arises from this process universe is one of an unimaginable, infinite process, a world of great beauty and the risk of failing its realization, of an adventure that lives from the mutual immanence of God and the world, and the mutual immanence of potentials to be realized, creativity to be actualized, and divine wisdom to be the ideal inherent in any such actualization as well as its whole process.[107]

> The present type of order in the world has arisen from an unimaginable past, and it will find its grave in an unimaginable future. There remain the inexhaustible realm

> of... forms, and creativity, ... and God, upon whose wisdom
> all forms of order depend.[108]

It is a universe of becoming *and* perishing, to be sure, but one in which nothing is lost.[109] Like the phoenix, it is a universe of spiritual ascension from the ashes of perpetual perishing. "The universe shows us two aspects: on one side it is physically wasting, on the other side it is spiritually ascending."[110] As this is both a process of becoming and fading, of indefinite impermanence, the presence of the ideal harmony (God) as the *movens* of the whole process is not enough: the creation of order in any form will be exhausted; no structure is salvific per se; no achievement of goodness and beauty, intensity and harmony in this universe will bring solace to the impermanence on which it is built. This all may be a sign of this ideal, but also a question: In what way can God be salvific? In what way can the ideal harmony of harmonies, immanent in the whole process, also be the harvest of its achievements? These questions direct us back to the function of the religions and the meaning of the concept of God as they relate to a world in becoming.

4: Religions and God

Before venturing somewhat into the inner workings of the process universe, we have left the question of religion and God with six characteristics that can now be taken up again in order to understand more clearly the impact of process theology on their reality and conceptualization. These six characteristics (without being exhaustive) have been: (1) God as internal Attractor, not as external cause; (2) the immanence of God in the world process as production of value, not as controlling the perpetuation of a world in vain; (3) the unending revelation of God to the world as novelty, not as self-same order; (4) religion as recognition of a rightness inherent to the process of the universe revealing a character of the divine Friend, not any tyrannical power obsessing with arbitrary rules; (5) the diversity of the characteristics of religious harvests of this divine character as unique forms of divine presence, not as deviations from a fixed pre-ordained program; and (6) the unending process of religious renewal in light of such dynamic divine presence, instead of an fixation on

certain limited appearances as definition of divine reality, binding it to the past as if it were fulfilling all possibilities of realization.

Religions, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are embodiments of divine Reality, pointing to the One beyond and in all things and happenings so as to discern the value in them and of them for themselves and beyond themselves for the All and God;[111] they are the yearnings towards the eternal in the impermanent, the realization of meaning in the temporal (realizing oneness), and the expression of divine peace[112] — not as a mere idea, but as the foundation of existence.[113] These are also the insights conveyed by Whitehead's philosophy based on the cosmological and experiential premises just reviewed.[114] Three quotes may substantiate this resonance. The first quote is one of the most beautiful and poetic renderings of the nature of religion, its intention and meaning, in philosophical literature.

> Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest.[115]

This vision of religion clearly embodies the six characteristics: religions are about the integration of the ineffable Beyond, the unknowable and inconceivable divine Reality, into our human and cosmic reality by recognizing the becoming world as enveloped and permeated by, and being attracted to, the greatest of "facts", the "final good," the "ultimate ideal," the ultimately "real" within the flux of things, which within is beyond and always before its movements, realized in the actualization of its attributes and always moved to transcend any realization as just one in a process that is already always, through divine grace, beyond itself transmuted into divine Reality.[116] The vision of religion, here, is that of a *salvific* experience in the midst of impermanence, elucidated in the second quote.

> The fact of the religious vision, and its history of persistent
> expansion, is our one ground for optimism. Apart from it,
> human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a
> mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient
> experience.[117]

The experience of salvation, here, is not one of finding only
individual meaning in a sea of misery and pain, the rumination of
desire for and enjoyment of fulfillment, but a process of cosmic
importance in which the universe as a community of becoming
extracts from its expansion an unconstructed Reality at its heart, and
references experiences of undeconstructable meaning; a meaning that
flows through the world process with an unobstructed vision of
realization.[118] Religion, as the third quote demonstrates, is, therefore,
if it fulfills this vision, the true energy of unification for civilization.

> The great social ideal for religion is that it should be the
> common basis for the unity of civilization. In that way it
> justifies its insight beyond the transient clash of brute
> forces.[119]

This brings us to the concept of God in such a cosmology of flux
and permanence, implicit in Whitehead's rendering of the function of
religion, in the ideal sense embodying (though in practice not always
following the experience of the ideal) divine Reality as the true
movens of the world process toward the realization of its utmost
values and their ultimate unity.

> [God] is the binding element in the world. The consciousness
> which is individual in us, is universal in him: the love which is
> partial in us is all-embracing in him. Apart from him there
> could be no world....[120]

God and the world — in Whitehead's process view of the universe (of
which humanity is a highly developed expression) — exhibit a *mutual*
movement: of that of the world toward the ideal divine Reality,
which, however, is not an empty ideal in front of it, but the very
ground permeating every event as its ideal of realization in the flux
of actualizations of its best potentials in any given situation; but also
that of Reality toward the world, offering its own transcendent

vision of the creative process as that of a "divinization" by becoming embodied in it as initial "eros" and as "final aim."[121]

> The theme of Cosmology, which is the basis of all religions, is the story of the dynamic effort of the World passing into everlasting unity, and of the static majesty of God's vision, accomplishing its purpose of completion by absorption of the World's multiplicity of effort.[122]

What is more, both movements find their confluence in the passing of the world, in every moment of its actual achievement of events and patterns of approximation to this Reality, into God's perception of the world, transmuted into God's perfection, and released again into the world process.[123]

> [God's] purpose in the world is quality of attainment. ... Every act leaves the world with a deeper or a fainter impress of God. [God] then passes into his next relation to the world with enlarged, or diminished, presentation of ideal values.[124]

It is in this sense of mutual immanence that Whitehead — in his Six Antitheses[125] — ventures into one of his most challenging and audacious formulations on the relationship of these two movements. The last three of the six antitheses will suffice to feel the impact they may have on any non-relational, monarchical model of conceptualizing God.

> It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World. It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God. It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.[126]

Mutual immanence, mutual transcendence, and mutual creation![127] God and the world are entangled in a non-dualistic movement beyond dualism and monism, illusory conceptual differentiation and identification, non-different, but in mutual alterity, beyond simple categorization.[128] In another mode, Whitehead circumscribes this mutual movement as the essence of the creative process itself, a process that captures our epistemological limitations by which we try

to simply differentiate God from the world by opposing them — the world of impermanence, the God of permanence, and so on — transforming them into *one creative* movement beyond simplification, but always only finding their meaning in actualizations of the movements themselves, the religious experience in which they become the essential character of religious existence.

> God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast.[129]

Because of the mutual immanence of God and the word as these non-different movements towards one another, never identical, never simply different, this non-dual movement of mutuality stated, here, is not only that *between* the world and God, but also one between all happenings *in* the world and *in* God. If no event is non-relational, but is rather always the becoming-one of such relations into a novel unity of events that then again become part of the rhythm of the world process of a moving whole of processes of this nature, all processes are *dipolar*, that is, in flux and permanent, in time and beyond, material and ideal, physical and mental, and so on, in which polarity Whitehead paradigmatically captures at once the inescapability of relationality and process *as* the mutual immanence of God and the world: mind and matter, consciousness and senses, ideal and perception, and so on.[130] And so does God exhibit both poles non-dually, which Whitehead names the Primordial and Consequent Natures of God:[131] divine *Consciousness* of all possible worlds and divine *Perception* of all actualizations of creativity in the myriads of creatures and their relationships, broken or whole; divine *Creativity,* hosting and providing all possibilities as values of best realization, and divine *Transmutation* of the worlds achievement and misses of value or divine attributes; divine *Attraction* through immanent ideals that release every event into its own creativity and divine *Harvest* of this creativity in patient suffering of its outcomes, but also in divine Judgment and transformation into God's all-relational nature; divine *Wisdom,* seducing to the Good, and divine *Love,* saving everything into God.

> [God] has a primordial nature and a consequent nature. The consequent nature of God is ... the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God's physical feelings upon his primordial concepts.[132]

Again, this conceptualization of God is not of violent action, oppression, or the arbitrary sovereignty of despots, but of love and attraction; not of "power," but of harmony: not of subduing and control, but of the mutual immanence of the *Poet* of the world; not of division, but of the movement of harmony of harmonies.[133]

> God's role is not the combat of ... force with ...force ...; it lies in the patient operation of ... harmonization. [God] ... is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.[134]

Regarding one direction, the non-dual movement of mutual immanence from *God* toward the *world* (in which both natures are involved, of God and all world processes), this means: The order of the world, its evolution, history, realization, and perfection, is not that of arbitrary laws or external decrees, but one of inherent patterns of processes of *attraction*, of a *love* that tends to all happenings, of mutual perception and relationality, of *sympathy*, that is, mutual knowing und patient suffering of one's existence by the All and God; it is "*aesthetic*" order, refinement in light of the Beauty of Reality. *Beauty* is the "form" of the immanence of God in the world as a whole and in any process and all of them, attracting to patterns of mutual recognition and creative movements of unification that value such interrelatedness.

> All order is therefore aesthetic order, and the moral order is merely certain aspects of aesthetic order. The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order, and the aesthetic order is derived from the immanence of God.[135]

Regarding the other direction, the non-dual movement of mutual immanence from the *world* toward *God* (in which all events and God engage with their inherent polarity), this means: Salvation,

transformation of the world into the *Kingdom* of God (Consequent Nature), is the realization of the truth and revelation of the true value of any happening for itself, for the world as it happened and happens, and for God, in God's *Wisdom* (Primordial Nature), regardless of any world that has been or will be realized.[136] This salvation is harvest, perception, judgment, and transformation *in* God for all events and any world.

> [God] saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also the judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage.[137]

Together, in the *mutuality* of these non-dual processes between God and the world and within them, a view of the universe arises that can now address the becoming of the world in light of the divine Reality as a *unity in becoming* that, at no point, lacks divine presence, but never, at any point, fulfills it, either.[138] The "unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujud*) is not a monistic dissolution of reality into Reality, here, but the *mutuality of love* in which the polarity of these movements non-dually become one, *one* movement of mutuality, *one* love in unity of diversity, *one* adventure of existence, in its beauty exhibiting its only justification for existence, but aware of the risks and failures of such an adventure and the salvific nature of its relationality becoming the expression of peace.[139]

> The Adventure of the Universe starts with the dream and reaps tragic Beauty. This is the secret of the union of Zest with Peace: — That the suffering attains its end in a Harmony of Harmonies. The immediate experience of this Final Fact, with its union of Youth and Tragedy, is the sense of Peace.[140]

God, the unknowable Beyond — beyond any access of praise or imagination of projected worldly power into God's nature — has become the unimaginable greatness that our existence hides and only reveals if it discovers the immanence of God in which all becomes revealed as immanent in God, and in which immanence the world process becomes transparent as a process of the realization of God,

because "[e]very event on its finer side introduces God into the world."[141]

> The depths of [God's] existence lie beyond the vulgarities of praise or of power. [God] gives to suffering its swift insight into values which can issue from it.[142]

5: The Manifestation of God

The figure and concept in which all of these elements collected so far come together, in the Bahá'í universe, is that of the Manifestation of God — as *process*, God-manifesting (*zuhur*), and as *event*, God-manifest (*mazhar*). It means (1) the *figure* in which (in Whitehead's terminology) the non-dual movements of mutual immanence of God and the world reside; (2) the *theophany* in which the Adventure of the Universe converges, as in it the process of Youth and Tragedy, Eros and Harmony of Harmonies becomes visible; (3) the *concept* that always points beyond praise and power; and (4) the *sacred person* in which the suffering of the world is transformed in the transparency of (the love of) Reality — as divinization and as humanization; as permeation and as transcendent circumambulation; as hidden silence and as brilliant light; as immanent soul of the cosmic body and as the One beyond all characterization, even that of being and nothingness.[143]

In perhaps no other symbol than the Bahá'í Ringstone pictogram do we find the coalescence of these elements more intensely harmonized, the symbol of the whole divine-cosmic process being eminently and as a whole "identified" as that of the (figure, site, concept, and theophany of the) Manifestation itself.[144]
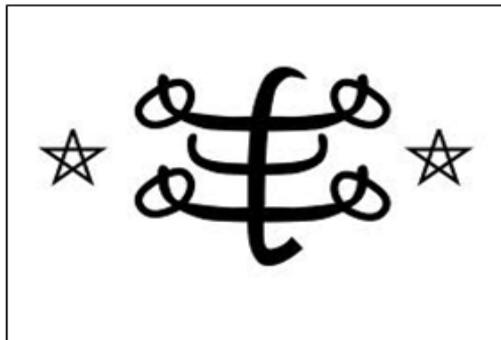
Yet before I proceed to explore these connections further, I must acknowledge two questions that might have arisen in the meantime so as to clear the way from potential misunderstandings. The questions are these: As Whitehead's notion of God is eminently interwoven with that of the world process: in what sense does this *mutual* immanence reflect or differ from the insistence of Bahá'u'lláh on the unknowability of God and the ir-relationality between God and the world?[145] And, if Whitehead's God is so eminently "incarnated" in *every* event of the world process: how are we to understand the extraordinary theophany in rare sacred figures in the history of humanity as *the* Manifestations of God?

Without being able to go into any technical details about the concept of the Manifestation in its complexity and background,[146] but in light of the previous exploration of Whitehead's understanding of the world process *as* divine process, the answer to both questions is quite simple: For Whitehead, we cannot talk about God beyond relationality; hence, no access to God beyond the world process is possible. The general "incarnation" of Whitehead's God in the world process as its attractive and attracting *eros* is, therefore, most intense in processes that have been transformed into nothing but the transparency of this universal divine process in the world, that is, exhibit this all-relationality (of love) in the life of persons that *are*, thereby, the theophany of divine Reality, being in this sense concurrently both (fully) divine and human.[147] The insight that I hope is arising from this characterization is this: that the divine-cosmic process of mutual immanence *is* the universal process of God becoming manifest (*zuhur*) and that, therefore, Whitehead's "God" *is*, in fact, (nothing but and precisely) the Manifestation of God (*mazhar-i ilahi*).[148]

Let me back up this approach by a few quotes of Whitehead, approximating this point of insight, before elucidating the thesis directly in my final considerations. First, Whitehead is well aware that religions cannot be reduced to doctrines and rituals, but must be anchored in *human persons* who present themselves to the world *as ultimate Reality "in person."*[149] Although the relation between religions and Manifestations in the Bahá'í understanding is in itself complex,[150] they can be exemplified directly, for instance, in Christ

and the Buddha, as the following corroborating quotes from Whitehead demonstrate.

> Religions commit suicide when they find … inspirations in their dogmas. The inspiration of religion lies in the history of religion.[151]

> Buddhism and Christianity find their origins respectively in two inspired moments of history: the life of the Buddha, and the life of Christ.[152]

The lives of these Manifestations of God exhibit the "life of God" in the form of exemplification, realization, and sacrifice, and imply a whole different mode of divine power than we might assume in anthropomorphic modeling of divinity on clashes of force, conflictions, and coercion. In fact, as in Bahá'u'lláh's recollection of the history of such Manifestations in his *Book of Certitude* and many other writings, it is a sign of their transparency of Reality that they rather suffer the world than to imitate human impulses of violence.[153] So says Whitehead about the impact of the life of Christ:

> The life of Christ is not an exhibition of over-ruling power. Its glory is for those who can discern it, and not for the world. Its power lies in its absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme ideal, and that is why the history of the world divides at this point of time.[154]

As this would be true for all Manifestations, the following quote can be generalized to all of them, too — with regards to the characterization of Manifestations as revelation of the nature of God and the character such a life exhibits in making divine agency in the word transparent.[155]

> The essence of Christianity is the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world. … [It] evoked a response from all that is best in human nature. The Mother, the Child, and the bare manger: the lowly man, homeless and self-forgetful, with his message of peace, love, and sympathy: the suffering, the agony, the tender

words as life ebbed, the final despair: and the whole with the authority of supreme victory.[156]

In light of these characterizations of the Manifestations of God as persons in which the nature and agency of God in the world process becomes transparent, Whitehead risks a prophecy on the future of religion as the future of such a religion that would become the site of *such* a manifestation of God (*zuhur*), and which may exhibit it in a Manifestation of God (*mazhar*) of *that* very nature.

> I hazard the prophecy that that religion will conquer which can render clear to popular understanding some eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact.[157]

In what sense, then, does the Manifestation of God display these characteristics of a divine-cosmic process, transparent in a person of such nature as to manifest the divine permanence in the flux of things? For this, I return to the Ringstone symbol and its congruence with the divine-cosmic movement of mutual immanence in Whitehead's process theology.

The Ringstone symbol is a complex image consisting of artistic renderings of the two Arabic letters *ba* and *ha*. They do not only form the initials of Bahá'u'lláh (while the third letter of BHA', the *alif*, remains hidden) with which he, for instance, signed his *Book of Certitude*.[158] They are rather "*real* symbols" of a complex cosmology of creative divine letters presenting and initiating the realities of the hiddenness of God's inaccessible essence, God's *huwiyyah* (*ha*), *and* the creative process, which begins with the hidden *alif*, but manifests with the second letter of the Arabic alphabet, the *ba*, a pictogram of a ship afloat with a point below it, the point from which all creation flows.[159] Their mutual interweaving in the Ringstone symbol, then, indeed, presents us with the process of creation as a divine process in which the hiddenness *and* manifestness of God intertwine[160] and, as a whole, form the divine-cosmic process of the manifestation of God (*zuhur*) besides which there can nothing be or become.[161]

The understanding of this creative process implies, in the Ringstone symbol, another feature that is vital for the further discussion of its congruence with Whitehead's process theology, namely, that the universe is not a mere impermanent flux of events

and processes, but exhibits layers of intensity and complexity that in the mystical cosmologies of the Sufi background and the writings of the Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá amounts to infinite worlds beyond the physical one, which can on occasion be signified into three or five layers of emanation or spiritualization, but form altogether the *one* world process *as* a divine process.[162] Sometimes they are in their writing symbolically simplified into the triad of the World of God, the World of Command or Revelation, and the World of Creation.[163] In other contexts, they can be expanded to another correlated symbolization (used by Bahá'u'lláh and also symbolized in Sufi language) of five layers: the world of Creation and Humanity (*khalq, nasut*), the Kingdom of God (*malakut*), the realm of divine Powers (*jabarut*), the world of the Will and Mind, Spirit, and Word of God (*lahut*), and the Hidden Inaccessible Divinity (*hahut*).[164]

What is important in either of these differentiations is this: the whole process of emanation (creation) and spiritualization (return to God) symbolized with these worlds and spheres not only indicates the divine-cosmic process of manifestation (*zuhur*), but *as a whole* and its *layered* differentiation *comprises* the Bahá'í concept of the Manifestation of God (*mazhar*). The human person in which Reality as a whole is transparent *is* the transparency of this whole process. The Ringstone symbol *as a whole* stands for the immensity of what it means to be *the Manifestation* of God. I will now correlate these differentiations as enshrined in the Ringstone symbol of Bahá'í mystic cosmology of the manifestation of God (*zuhur*) with Whitehead's divine-cosmic process and his concept of God, indicating it to present us with the expansive concept of the Manifestation of God (*mazhar*).[165]

Although Whitehead for many of his interpreters seems to have developed a "flat cosmology" in which the Process of the Universe is a connected micro- and macro-cosmic, interpenetrated, creative movement of ordering that, while infused by divine Eros in any event of its happening, seems to represent the physical universe we perceive as the only one we live in, he was well aware of the necessity to differentiate this universe into layers of organization.[166] From the widest form of expansiveness, as the space spanned by all events of the universe, he builds up a nested cosmology in which the wider "society" of processes forms a "field" of reference that is the

environment of organisms such an environment allows to exist, but in turn makes such organisms organizations of a layer of the universe that are themselves environments for more developed, specified, and sophisticated organisms. Dimensions, forces, fields, material organizations, life, and mind, appear as such nested environments and organizations of related organisms — with the greatest liberation of life and mind in human persons and societies, as they allow for degrees of freedom and creativity as well as embodiments of originality, which expresses itself in consciousness, reason, intellect, and spiritual sensitivities.[167] As these characteristics are not just appearing out of nothing in humanity, but are enshrined in the *whole* process of existence in various degrees of intensity and organization, the world has in *all* of its layers a *spiritual* dimension.[168] Like 'Abdu'l-Bahá's all-pervading divine Spirit, all "worlds" of matter, life, and mind are expressions of degrees of freedom of the embodiment of Spirit.[169]

Yet Whitehead goes further — again like 'Abdu'l-Bahá[170] — in claiming that there is no end to possible worlds beyond and above such expressions, for instance, by audaciously stating that there is no metaphysical reason that all worlds in their organization necessarily must imply the loss of their past achievements when allowing for novelty, new and possibly more refined forms of life and mind, or degrees of spiritual embodiments.[171]

> The most general formulation of the religious problem is the question whether the process of the temporal world passes into the formation of other actualities, bound together in an order in which novelty does not mean loss.[172]

With this general trans-temporal assumption, we can now follow the cosmic-divine mutual immanence of the relationship of God and the world in *direct resonance* with the threefold or fivefold movement of emanation and spiritualization as represented by the Ringstone symbol.[173] On the material, human, and historical plane of the world process — the World of Creation, *nasut*, represented by the lower horizontal *ba-ha* of the Ringstone symbol — Whitehead senses the spiritual Beyond as immanent, but different from it, namely, as a sense of the Kingdom of God (*malakut*) in the immediacy of its happenings. Again exemplified by the figure of Christ, Whitehead says:

[This] Galilean origin of Christianity ... does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world.[174]

This spiritual Kingdom — the World of Command, the Kingdom of Life, *malakut*, represented by the intermediate horizontal *ba* of the Ringstone symbol — Whitehead identifies as the perceptive, saving, and transformative Consequent Nature of God.[175] In a sense, like in Sufi and Bahá'í renderings, everyone lives in both worlds, *nasut* and *malakut*, as every event forms a person in the physical world and in the divine transformative memory.[176] It is the transhistorical dimension of all human Manifestations, in which they are divine Persons of different character and mission.[177]

[God] is the ideal companion who transmutes what has been lost into a living fact within his own nature. He is the mirror which discloses to every creature its own greatness.[178]

Yet beyond this transformative perceptivity of God (the Consequent Nature), Whitehead knows of the initiative, creative, and ideal aspect of God, the Primordial Nature, as the one in which all possibilities and possible worlds are conceived, related, and suggested to every event and process for its own fulfillment of greatest intensity and harmony with the whole universe (and the particular societies and organisms to which it is immediately related).[179] This layer presents us with the higher aspect of the intermediate *ba* of the Ringstone symbol, *jabarut*, the World of Ideal Powers, the transhistorical world of divine values and purposes, in which all Manifestations are interwoven in the manifold of all divine attributes, powers, virtues, and potentials.[180] Of this divine dimension, Whitehead says:

This ideal world of conceptual harmonization is merely a description of God [God]self. Thus the nature of God is the complete conceptual realization of the realm of ideal forms.[181]

Insofar as Whitehead can summarize both the Primordial and the Consequent aspects of God, *jabarut* and *malakut*, as the (ideal and actual) Kingdom of God, and *identifies* this Kingdom with *God*,[182] we approach the "identity" of the upper horizontal *ha-ba* of the Ringstone symbol, the "World of God" in a more focused sense, differentiated (in the fivefold formula) into *lahut* and *hahut*. When Whitehead says: "The kingdom of heaven is God,"[183] he indicates the divine creative-receptive act of unification, in which both aspects of God are indifferentiated into the Oneness of the Wisdom of God.[184] It represents the indifferentiated unity of all Manifestations in the Manifest-Divine, the Mind, Will, Sprit, Word, and Wisdom of God.[185] While *lahut*, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, presents us with the unity of all divine attributes and the hidden divine sphere of all ideals and forms, it also signifies its emanation from the hidden inaccessibility of the Unmanifest-Divine, *hahut*, which cannot be represented.[186] In a turn of Whitehead's insight that nothing can be said of anything that has no relation to the all-relational divine-cosmic process as a whole, we may now understand this limitation not as a closure toward or from nothingness (as there can be no absolute nothingness, neither for Whitehead nor Bahá'u'lláh),[187] but as surrender to the mystical unknowability of the unmanifest Godhead Beyond.[188]

> [A]ll related experience must exhibit the same texture ... of bearing in itself its own warrant of universality throughout all experience, provided that we confine ourselves to that which communicates .... But what does not so communicate is unknowable, and the unknowable is unknown ....[189]

Finally, we are left with the vertical *ba* of the Ringstone symbol, which some have identified with the divine Spirit spanning all of these worlds from *lahut* to *nasut*, hiding *hahut* as its background,[190] which could now also be understood as the *interwovenness* of all the worlds, the divine cycle of love though all worlds, cutting through any mutual isolation, indicating the mutual immanence of the movements of emanation and spiritualization, and the *unity* of the Manifestation of God (in the symbol) *as a whole* as the *Divine Manifold* in which it operates between indifferentiated unity and historical embodiment.[191] Whitehead characterizes this cycle of love thus:

> What is done in the world is transformed 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.[192]

In summary, in my understanding, we can say: The divine-cosmic
process presents us with the immanence of God in all events, while
Whitehead's concept of God indicates the divine dimension of this
process of mutuality in the mutual embrace of emanation and
spiritualization in an unending cycle of love.[193] As a whole this
divine-cosmic process *is* the Manifestation of God of which the
human persons in which it becomes transparent are its
Manifestations.[194] In apophatic silence, Whitehead and the Bahá'í
writings acknowledge the unknowable Beyond as inaccessible, and,
therefore, identify "God" with the manifestation of the divine
dimension of Process.[195]

6: Conclusion

The central Bábi-Bahá'í concept of the Manifestation of God not
only has its own history related to diverse religious and philosophical
traditions confluent in its uniqueness, such as that of divergent
Islamic denominations, Sufism, and other Jewish, Christian,
Zoroastrian, and even Hindu streams of thought and belief. It also
displays exciting resonances with the philosophical tradition of
process thought, which is itself steeped in history from Heraclitus to
Hegel in the west and Daoism and Buddhism in the east. Yet it
connects especially with Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of
process and relationality, and its religious explications in what has
come to be called process theology. As process theology asks deep
philosophical questions regarding God and ultimate reality as well the
spiritual and cosmological reality of the world and humanity, it has
provided a connecting place within a multiplicity of religious
traditions of the east and the west. Its ability to perform the role of a
contact theory in interreligious discourses and religious pluralism
renders it a preeminent candidate for the reflection on the profound
expression of God's Manifestations in the Bahá'í writings, in the

search for mutual interreligious understanding, the vision of a unison of religions, and the establishment of universal peace. In the present considerations, I concentrated on the way process theology may facilitate such a mediation between diverse religious traditions by highlighting its potential of understanding the concept of Manifestation as a universally accessible reality from within diverse religious traditions and, thereby, of connecting to notions such as Incarnation, Avatar, and Buddha-body in amicable and non-distorting ways, but without losing its own uniqueness among them.

Several authors in the field have succeeded in relating Whitehead's notion of the world process and God to questions of human Manifestations of God in these diverse traditions, for instance, by exploring how the Christian claim to Incarnation, of the concurrent divine and human natures of Christ, can be understood without violating either divinity or humanity, that is, by avoiding simplifications of absorption, in the Bahá'í context identified with the Islamic theory of the "incarnation" of Godself into a body (*hulul*), or of the Arian bifurcation, by which the Manifestation of God is not "really" God, but a being in between.[196] Several authors have also tried to differentiate such a process view of Incarnation from the reality of the Buddha,[197] such that the latter one would not indicate a personal presence of the Process God (in both natures), but the "other" ultimate in Whitehead's metaphysical thought, namely, Creativity — the nameless, immanent, and non-personal absolute of the creative process itself.[198] Others have connected the general "incarnation" of God in any world event (Whitehead's aesthetic immanence of God in the world process) with personal approximations of extraordinary saints such as represented in Jainism or Hinduism, without claiming their divinity, although expressing divine attributes such as omniscience.[199]

In the preceding considerations, I have suggested an entirely different approach: that, without denying the usefulness of the other theses, the more expansive perspective on the concept of God and the mutual immanence of the divine-cosmic process in Whitehead would indicate that "God" in Whitehead's rendering is the divine aspect of the Manifestation, emanating from its oneness and circulating through the creative process, manifesting itself on the cosmic level and in human reality, and reabsorbing the process in a cycle of love

again into its inaccessible unity, without violating the different spheres or worlds while they remain intertwined and inextricably interwoven; instead, relating them as *one* divine process of differentiation and unification. Thus, in fact, all Manifestations of God would be (the transparence of) ultimate Reality "in person" by embracing all of these levels of ideal, transhistorical, historical differentiation, *and* of unification in the divine identity of the Will, Mind, Word, Wisdom, and Spirit of God, which *is* God, that is, everything we can name and know of God,[200] without violating the inaccessible Beyond from which the whole divine process arises "without syllable and sound"[201] and in which it is absorbed and without a trace.[202]

As with the symbol of the Dao, the inaccessible mystery of God that releases the Manifest from the Unmanifest in the Ringstone symbol cannot be symbolized: the Dao that can be named is not the Dao.[203] Yet it releases in its symbolization the myriad processes of unification and diversification from which the universe springs and in which it is harbored.[204] In this sense, the Manifestation of God *is* God in Whitehead's sense (the Manifest Divine), and is *not* God (the Unmanifest Divine). Yet the same Manifestation is the expansion of the whole divine-comic process of the mutual immanence of God and the world in the non-dual processes of emanation into difference and reabsorption into indifferentiated unity.

> *Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God," He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. … And were they to say, "We are the Servants of God," this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of Being were deep immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of Divine mysteries, they claimed their utterances to be the Voice of Divinity, the Call of God Himself.* [GWB #22]

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Notes

[1] Cf. Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day*, I (on progressive movements); and: "It is hoped that all the Bahá'í students will follow the noble example you have set before them and will, henceforth, be led to investigate and analyse the principles of the Faith and to correlate them with the modern aspects of philosophy and science. Every intelligent and thoughtful young Bahá'í should always approach the Cause in this way, for therein lies the very essence of the principle of independent investigation of truth," in *Compilation*, 17 (#50).

[2] Cf. Smith, *Encyclopedia*, 48.

[3] Cf. Faber, *Prozeßtheologie* (2000); *God as Poet* (2003; 2004; 2008); *Becoming of God* (2017). The presentation of A. N. Whitehead and process theology is, of course, mine. While I teach, develop, research, and apply process philosophy and theology in a decade-long professional effort to creatively contribute to the academic study of the interface between philosophy and religion, and the insights this can provide for their exercise, I have developed an understanding of these matters that does not necessarily reflect other process thinkers or speak for the field as such. With regard to Bahá'í thought, all reflections and comparisons are, of course, only mine, without any claim to anything except excitement for its depth.

[4] Whitehead's main works in this time at Harvard between 1924 and 1937 are: *Science* (1925); *Religion* (1926); *Process* (1929); *Adventures* (1933); and *Modes* (1037). For the emergence of Whitehead's metaphysical thought, cf. Ford, *Emergence*.

[5] Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*.

[6] Cf. Dorrien, *Making*, chs. 2, 4.

[7] Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, chs. 4-5, 8-9; Griffin, ed., *Pluralism*; McDaniel, *Hope*.

[8] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, ch. 15; Faber, "Religion," 167-182.

[9] Cf. Cobb, *Christ*, chs. 4-5.

[10] Cf. Cole, "Manifestation."

[11] Cf. Faber, *Garden*, ch. 7; Fazel, "Pluralism," 42-49; Buck, "Interface," 157-180.

[12] A notable exception in this context is the work of Ian Kluge who, in many substantial articles on comparison of western philosophers and philosophical movements, as well as some eastern philosophies, with the Bahá'í writings has promoted a "Bahá'í philosophy" in the making; cf. https://www.bahaiphilosophy.com. He is also maybe the only one, or at least the first one, who has engaged with Whitehead and process philosophy; cf. Kluge, "Process Philosophy," 109-162.

[13] Cf. Lambden, *Aspects;* Smith, *Bábi-Bahá'í Religions*; Cole, "World"; Hamid, *Metaphysics*.

[14] Cf. Momen, *Introduction*; *Islam*; "Mysticism," 107-120; McCaron, "Cosmology";

[15] Cf. Savi, *Summit*; Momen, *Bahá'u'lláh*, 38-42; *Scripture*; *Hinduism*; Ma'sumian, "Seclusion."

[16] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*; *Divine Philosophy*; Stockman, *Bahá'í Faith*, chs. 8-9; *'Abdu'l-Bahá*.

[17] Cf. Savi, *Quest*.

[18] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets*, #9 (Tablet of Wisdom); Brown, "Hermes," 153-188; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, SAQ #5, 51; PUP #35; PT #51; Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* (The Unfoldment of World Civilization).

[19] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet*; *Promulgation*, #111; Brown, *Evolution*; "Perspective," 15-44.

[20] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablet of the Uncompounded Reality*; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Commentary*; "'Abdu'l-Bahá's Response," 1-29.

[21] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, part 4.

[22] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, PT #54; PUP #12, 20, 24, 96, 105; SAQ #5.

[23] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tables*, #9; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, #75; *Paris Talks*, ##51, 111; *Questions*, ##7, 83; Hornby, Lights, #1682.

[24] Cf. Shoghi Effendi, *Destiny*, 445; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, #121.

[25] Cf. Kluge, "Philosophy." (2009) @ https://www.bahaiphilosophy.com/philosophy-and-the-baha-i-writings.html.

[26] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets*, #10. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the importance of the equal development of the intellectual, spiritual, and material capacities as the condition for the unification of humankind; cf. *Promulgation*, #82.

[27] Cf. Promulgation, ##89, 97, 111; *Paris Talks*, # 29; *Selections*, #121.

[28] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, #105 (among the many instances 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to this principle in America, but here especially in conjunction with philosophy); *Paris Talks*, #41; *Questions*, #34.

[29] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, ##58, 83; Faber, *Garden*, 34, 45.

[30] Cf. Whitehead, *Science*, chs. 5, 9; Adventures, ch. 9; *Modes*; Faber, *Becoming*, vii-xviii; Sphere 2.

[31] Whitehead, *Process*, 9.

[32] Cf. Whitehead, *Religion*, part 1.

[33] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 4, 21; *God as Poet*, part 2; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, #27; *Paris Talks*, #15.

[34] Cf. Faber, *Garden*, chs. 6-7.

[35] Whitehead, *Modes*, 174; Faber, "Mystical Whitehead," 167-182.

[36] Cf. Rescher, *Metaphysics*.

[37] Whitehead, *Process*, 7.

[38] Heraclitus quoted in Plato, *Cratylus*, 401d.

[39] Heraclitus quoted in Plato, *Cratylus*, 402a.

[40] Whitehead, Process, 29.

[41] Whitehead, *Modes*, 52-53.

[42] Whitehead, *Process*, 17.

[43] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, parts 2-3.

[44] Cf. Leue, *Foundations*.

[45] Whitehead, *Modes*, 12.

[46] Cf. McLean, "Prolegomena," 25-67.

[47] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #23; but, contrarily, see #66; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, ##57, 118; McLean, "Introduction," xiii-xix; Faber, "Sense of Peace," 36-56.

[48] Cf. Dorrien, *Making*; Kaufman, *God*.

[49] Cf. McFague, *Body*; Cobb, *Process Theology*.

[50] Whitehead, *Process*, 342.

[51] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §36. In this function, philosophical theology my be compared with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's rendering of "Divine Philosophy"; cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, #96; McLean, "Prolegomena."

[52] Cf. Whitehead, *Religion*, parts 1, 4; *Science*, ch. 11; *Process*, part 5; Whitehead, *Adventures*, ch. 10.

[53] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 170.

[54] Cf. Faber, *Divine Manifold*, chs. 10-12.

[55] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 350-351.

[56] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, ##13, 19; *Tablets*, #7.

[57] Cf. Faber, "Bahá'u'lláh," 53-106.

[58] Whitehead, *Science*, 173.

[59] For Whitehead's criticism of scientific materialism of this sort, cf. *Concept*, ch. 2; *Science*, chs. 6-8; Faber, *God as Poet*, §§41-44; *Becoming*, Spheres 1-2.

[60] Cf. Humphrey, *Metaphysics*; Aristotle, *Met.*, 1072a 26–27.

[61] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 198.

[62] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §35.

[63] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #79; Brown, "Beginning," 21-40.

[64] Cf. Mesle, *Process Theology*.

[65] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 172.

[66] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §24.

[67] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, #44; Taylor, *Reality*.

[68] Whitehead, *Process*, 15.

[69] Cf. Whitehead, *Religion*, 31; *Process*, 4; *Science*, 168-169; Weber, *Pancreativism*, chs. 2-3; Faber, *Garden*, 19, 36, 62.

[70] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventure*, part 1; Faber, *God as Poet*, §46.

[71] Whitehead, *Modes*, 174.

[72] Whitehead, *Process*, 4; McFague, *Body*, ch. 1.

[73] Cf. Cobb, ed., *Religions*.

[74] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, part 2; *Becoming*, Sphere 4.

[75] Whitehead, *Religion*, 61.

[76] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Seven Valleys*, 11-12, 58; Faber, "Bahá'u'lláh"; *Garden*, ch. 7, section 5.

[77] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, also understands religion (with science) as expression of "pure reason"; cf. *Promulgation*, ##44, 49.

[78] Whitehead, *Religion*, 31-32.

[79] Cf. Whitehead, *Religion*, 18-20; *Adventures*, 165-166.

[80] Cf. Faber, "Surrationality," 155-175.

[81] Cf. Faber, *Divine Manifold*, part 1.

[82] Cf. Griffin, ed., *Pluralism*, chs. 1-2; Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 3.

[83] Whitehead, *Science*, 189.

[84] Cf. Lundberg, "Bedrock," 53-67.

[85] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, parts 1, 2; Faber, *God as Poet*, parts 2-4.

[86] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 36.

[87] Cf. Whitehead, Concept, chs. 7-9; *Process*, part 2; *Adventures*, chs 11-13; Hosinski, *Fact*, chs. 2-6.

[88] Cf. Hartshorne, "Concept," 102-113.

[89] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Sphere 1.

[90] Whitehead, *Process*, 21.

[91] Whitehead, *Process*, 162.

[92] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 203; Faber, *Prozeßtheologie*, §21; *God as Poet*, part 3; *Becoming*, Exploration 10.

[93] Whitehead, *Process*, 28.

[94] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 2.

[95] Whitehead, *Process*, 104;

[96] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §16; *Becoming*, Sphere 3. For a comparable, but unrelated, appreciation of cosmic creativity in the Bahá'í context, cf. Johnson, "Force," 29-60.

[97] Whitehead, *Process*, 21.

[98] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, 236; Garland, "Ultimacy," 212–38; Bracken, *Matrix*, ch. 4.

[99] Whitehead, *Religion*, 92.

[100] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 177.

[101] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 150; Faber, *God as Poet*, §§16, 24.

[102] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 265; Henning, *Ethics*.

[103] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 31-32; Faber, *God as Poet*, part 3.

[104] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, 294-295.

[105] Whitehead, *Religion*, 119-120.

[106] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 285, 296; cf. Faber, *Divine Manifold*, chs. 1, 4, 8; *Becoming*, Sphere 4.

[107] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Sphere 3, Exploration 10.

[108] Whitehead, *Religion*, 160. As Whitehead and process theology do not necessitate only one world or a limited creation of only one finite universe, this infinity is so inscribed in Whitehead's and the process conceptualization of God and God's mutual immanence with the world that, while this understanding does not easily satisfy certain orthodox expressions of Abrahamic traditions, it allows for substantial communication with Dharmic and Daoic religions of the east.

[109] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 347; Faber, *Divine Manifold*, ch. 10.

[110] Whitehead, *Religion*, 160.

[111] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, #47, 96, 113.

[112] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, ##63, 82, 109.

[113] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, #40.

[114] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Explorations 3, 13.

[115] Whitehead, *Science*, 191-192; cf. Faber, *Garden*, 39.

[116] Cf. Suchocki, *Process Eschatology*.

[117] Whitehead, *Science*, 192.

[118] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 346-351; Faber, *God as Poet*, §39.

[119] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 172.

[120] Whitehead, *Religion*, 158.

[121] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, 294-295.

[122] Whitehead, *Process*, 349.

[123] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 351.

[124] Whitehead, *Religion*, 158-159.

[125] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §31; *Divine Manifold*, chs. 2-3; *Becoming*, Exploration 8; *Garden*, ch. 5.

[126] Whitehead, *Process*, 348.

[127] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 10.

[128] Cf. Faber, "De-Ontologizing God," 209-234; *God as Poet*, §40; *Garden*, ch. 6.

[129] Whitehead, *Process*, 348.

[130] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, part 2.

[131] Cf. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, ch. 2; Hosinski, *Fact*, part 2; Faber, *God as Poet*, part 4.

[132] Whitehead, *Process*, 345.

[133] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, Introduction; *Divine Manifold*, part 1.

[134] Whitehead, *Process*, 348.

[135] Whitehead, *Religion*, 105.

[136] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §§38-39.

[137] Whitehead, *Process*, 346.

[138] Cf. Faber, *God as Process*, §§16, 24, 32.

[139] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 351; *Adventures*, 295; Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 9. This correlates to Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation of the often monistically understood Sufi doctrine of the "unity of being"; cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablet of Uncompounded Reality*; Faber, "Bahá'u'lláh."

[140] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 296.

[141] Whitehead, *Religion*, 155-156.

[142] Whitehead, *Religion*, 154-155.

[143] Cf. Momen, "God"; Cole, "Manifestation."

[144] Cf. Faber, *Garden*, ch. 1.

[145] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #27.

[146] Cf. Sours, *Station*.

[147] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §38.

[148] Cf. Faber, Becoming, Exploration 16; *Garden*, chs. 6-7.

[149] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, 167.

[150] Cf. Faber "Laozi," section 10.

[151] Whitehead, *Religion*, 144.

[152] Whitehead, *Religion*, 55-56. While most of the consideration of process theology, early on, develop in a Christian theological context so that the incarnation of Christ was a natural matter of reflection, that is, how in this person God and Humanity can be fully present and united without diminishing either side, the seeming "defect" (sometimes mentioned or even criticized from Christian orthodox views) that process theology was not able to "prove" the uniqueness of the Incarnation in Christ, must now be seen as its advantage: as there are infinite worlds, so is there also no reason that, expressed in process categories and in exploring Whitehead's notion of God, there should only be one Manifestation of God "in person" in either this or any other world; cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §38.

[153] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Iqan*, part 1; Cole, "I am all the Prophets"; "Behold the Man."

[154] Whitehead, *Religion*, 57.

[155] This correlates with the Bahá'í writings; cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #21; Momen, "God."

[156] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 167.

[157] Whitehead, *Adventures*, 33.

[158] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Iqan*, 257.

[159] Cf. Lambden, "Background"; Saiedi, *Gate*, chs. 1, 7.

[160] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #14.

[161] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Commentary*; Momen, "Relativism," 191-192.

[162] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, #82; Faber, *Garden*, Epilogue, section 4; the cycle of emanation and spiritualization, or arc of descent and ascent, in the Bahá'í writings, is a truly cosmic cycle, as well as a spiritual one, all at once; cf. Saiedi, *Gate*, ch. 2; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, #81; and it correlates with Whitehead's cycle (or ecology) of love; Faber, *God as Poet*, §30; *Garden*, ch. 5, section 3.

[163] Cf. *Hornby*, Lights, ##907-11; Momen, "God," 30; Faber, *Garden*, chs. 1, 5, 7. The twin star, indicating the Twin Manifestations of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are not explicated in the following comparative interpretation, although it does in no way contradict it; rather, it indicates the symbol to be that of the Manifestations of God.

[164] Cf. Momen, "God," 23-26; Faber, *Garden*, chs. 1, 5, 7.

[165] Cf. Faber, *Garden*, ch. 7; Momen, "Relativism," 197-198.

[166] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, part 2, ch. 4.

[167] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, parts 2, 3; *Becoming*, Sphere 1.

[168] Cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §24, 32; *Becoming*, Sphere 3.

[169] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, #55.

[170] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections*, #12; *Questions*, #81; *Promulgation*, #19.

[171] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 340; Faber, *God as Poet*, §39; *Divine Manifold*, ch. 7; *Garden*, ch. 5.

[172] Whitehead, *Process*, 340.

[173] I have explored this connection in detail in Faber, *Garden*, chs. 7-8.

[174] Whitehead, *Process*, 346.

[175] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 343, 350.

[176] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 350; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections*, #92; *Promulgation*, #81.

[177] Cf. Momen, "God," 27-28; "Relativism," 192.

[178] Whitehead, *Religion*, 155.

[179] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 31-32.

[180] Cf. Momen, "God," 26-27.

[181] Whitehead, *Religion*, 154.

[182] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 350.

[183] Whitehead, *Religion*, 154.

[184] Cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 346; and so does process theology; cf. Cobb, *Christ*, chs. 2-3.

[185] Cf. Saiedi, *Gate*, ch. 7; Momen, "God," 23-26.

[186] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Commentary*; Momen, "God," 23; Lambden, "Background"; Momen, "relativism," 190-191; Faber, *Garden*, ch. 6.

[187] Cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Questions*, ##47, 60; Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* (The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh), 101; Whitehead, *Process*, 95; *Adventures*, 236; Faber, *God as Poet*, §§35, 43.

[188] Cf. Faber, "Mystical Whitehead."

[189] Whitehead, *Process*, 4; Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 16.

[190] Cf. Sour, *Station*, chs. 6-7.

[191] Cf. Faber, *Divine Manifold*, part 3; *Becoming*, Sphere 5; *Garden*, ch. 7.

[192] Whitehead, *Process*, 351.

[193] Cf. Faber, *Becoming*, Exploration 9.

[194] Many interesting interreligious resonances could be harvested from such a correlation between the concept of the Manifestation of God in the Bahá'í context with Whitehead's God and God-world relationship, some of which I have pondered on in other places. For instance, how, with such a solution, the identification of Whitehead's God and mutual immanence with the world, the Bahá'í understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity could be conceptualized; how Trinity could be understood as interreligious rendering of that God-world mutuality; how it would

explicate the mutuality of divine and human nature of the Incarnation without intermediary being (Arianism) or substance inherence (*hulul*); and how this again would fit a universal category for the consideration of a fundamental unity of religions as it would also allow to integrate Hindu categories of *saguna* and *nirguna brahman* as well as the Buddhist categories of *thatagatagarba* and the manifestations of the *dharmakaya*. Cf. Faber, *Garden*, chs. 7-8.

[195] Cf. Momen, "God," 25; "Relativism," 193.

[196] Cf. Faber, God as Poet, §38; Cobb, *Christ*, chs. 4-5.

[197] Cf. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue*; Cobb and Ives, eds, *Emptying God*; Griffin, *Pluralism*; McDaniel, *Gandhi's Hope*; Faber, *God as Poet*, §32.

[198] Cf. Bracken, *Divine Matrix*.

[199] Cf. Donaldson, *Cosmologies*; Long, "Vedanta." Yet in the same interreligious context, there also remain fascinating questions demanding further reflection. As conceptualizations integrated into the Bahá'í understanding of Manifestation, such as that of Jewish major and minor prophets, the Islamic concepts of *rasul*, *nabi*, and *wali*, but also points of contact and resonance with Buddhist and Hindu renderings of embodiments of ultimate Reality or God ("reincarnation") in the Buddha and Krishna as well as many holy figures are plenty, one wonders about the extent to which the many *avatars* and *tulkus* can be related to the claim of the one Manifestation of God (for an era), especially if they were proclaimed *at the time and aft*er *Bahá'u'lláh*, such as that of famous holy Hindu and Sufi and Parsi figures like Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Shirdi Sai Baba, and Meher Baba. Cf. Faber, *Garden*, chs. 8-9.

[200] Cf. Whitehead, *Adventures*, 168; Momen, "God," 24-26. Whitehead's insistence on the "immanence" of God — contrary to Platonic transcendence, which leaves only simulacra in the cosmic interchange of relationality — is, therefore, the best indication of the equivalency of Whitehead's "God" with the Bahá'í understanding of Manifestation as "God," which, again, in both universes of discourse is identified with the Logos or Wisdom of God (*lahut*); cf. Faber, *God as Poet*, §38. This does, of course, not substitute the transcendence of the manifest "God" beyond any world; cf. Whitehead, *Process*, 93-94.

[201] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets*, #9.

[202] Cf. Bahá'u'lláh, *Seven Valleys* (Valley of Love).

[203] Cf. Laozi, *Tao De Ching* (*Dao De Jing*) verse 1; Faber, *Garden*, ch. 3.

[204] Cf. Faber, "Laozi."