

## Religious Implications of Whitehead-Hartshornean Process Philosophy

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In spite of the scathing criticism of classical metaphysics, and the much acclaimed "end of metaphysics," the twentieth century also witnessed a renewed interest in metaphysics. Especially through the works of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897 -), a new, thoroughly modern system evolved, which in its scope and depth rivals the so-called *philosophia perennis*. Among the most outstanding intellectual achievements of the century has been the creation of a 'process' alternative to the metaphysics and philosophical theology of our classical tradition. As Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly acknowledges, process philosophy is "this century's most significant contribution to metaphysics."<sup>1</sup>

In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead has proclaimed: "The reality is the process."<sup>2</sup> And the major work of Whitehead's bears the title, *Process and Reality*, which is concerned with "the becoming, the being and the relatedness of 'actual entities'.<sup>3</sup> The most basic concepts of process thought are fairly simple, even though

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), xiv.

<sup>2</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*. First Paperback Edition of since 1925. (New York: Free Press, 1967), 106.

<sup>3</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. Corrected First Paperback Edition of 1929. (New York: Free Press, 1979), xiii.

they go contrary to much of popular wisdom. These simple ideas are: (1) that the whole of everything is not made up of things, but of events, and (2) that every event, however small, affects every other - that is, events are related.

Although Whitehead himself chose to label his system "the Philosophy of Organism,"<sup>4</sup> it has more readily been dubbed "process philosophy," a term which has gained wide currency and now embraces a growing number of philosophers under its tutelage. The very phrase, "philosophy of organism," used by Whitehead so often to capture the tenor of his approach, remains a challenge to attend to the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence which deserves to be appreciated as contributing substantively to any organic whole.

Like Whitehead, Hartshorne has also identified his philosophy with other terms. He has spoken of his system as "societal realism" to stress that there is a plurality of real entities intimately related. While describing his position on God, he has called himself a "neoclassical theist" to indicate his relation of continuity and discontinuity with classical theism; a "dipolar theist" to accentuate his critique of the monopolarity of classical theism; and a "panentheist" to indicate his view of the relation of God and the world. Nonetheless, we have retained the term "process" to identify this philosophical and theological movement simply because it highlights the chief feature of this movement, namely, the ultimacy of process combined with the primacy of relationship.

Despite its contemporaneity, process philosophy - understood in a broad sense - is not new but existed in ancient times. At the dawn of Western philosophy, Heraclitus stated that all things are in flux and left in his fragments enigmatic statements of process themes. Fragment 49a states

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<sup>4</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xi.

Heraclitus' vision of the flux: "In the same river, we both step and do not step, we are and we are not."<sup>5</sup> He equated reality with a river which forever flows; flowing reality changes, and changing, it ceases to be and becomes another. The flux, the process, the becoming, for Heraclitus, is "neither being nor not-being, but a union of these opposites."

However, he was overshadowed by the mainstream of Greek philosophy, which since the time of Parmenides affirmed the primacy of being over becoming and of absoluteness over relativity. Plato adopted the Heraclitean doctrine of flux, but he restricted its application to the world of changing sensible particulars, erecting above this world another world of immutable intelligible universals. Aristotle followed the footsteps of Plato in rejecting the flux philosophy. And process came to be seen as an attribute of substance, rather than as a category of equal or superior status. It was not until the nineteenth century that flux itself again took precedence over enduring substance in the theories of philosophers. The term "flux," taken from Latin *fluxus* (verb *fluere*, meaning 'to flow'), denoted in philosophy "a continuous succession of changes of condition, composition, or substance."<sup>6</sup>

This paper is composed of two parts. Part I presents the Whitehead-Hartshornean understanding of metaphysics, which provides us a philosophical framework with which one can logically, consistently and adequately understand what religiously is meant by 'God'. Here we focus primarily on Whitehead, whose *opus magnum*, *Process and Reality*, furnishes us with the as yet unsurpassed systematic

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<sup>5</sup> See, Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), 28.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew J. Reck, *Speculative Philosophy: A Study of Its Nature, Types and Uses* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 185.

presentation of process metaphysics. This system takes into account the critical epistemology of David Hume, the relativistic physics of Einstein, and the broad, post-Darwinian paradigm of our world as evolutionary phenomenon. At the same time, Whitehead's thought has been existentially attractive to Christian thinkers, whose understanding of the world is already attuned to what Whitehead calls "the brief Galilean vision of humility" that dwells upon the tender elements in the world which slowly and in quietness operate by love."<sup>7</sup>

Part II discusses some of the most significant implications of the "process concept of God" which has become very influential both in philosophy of religion and theology. Here, we take Charles Hartshorne, a contemporary thinker who has spent considerable time exploring the God-problem, as a reliable guide both for an independent understanding of process theism and for a lucid interpretation of Whitehead's philosophical theology. For, "Hartshorne's clarity of presentation and argument, coupled with a freedom from Whitehead's neologisms, has made him a most influential exponent of process thought, and many read their Whitehead through Hartshorne's spectacles."<sup>8</sup>

## II

Indeed in his masterwork, *Process and Reality*, Whitehead sets out to elaborate "a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>9</sup> Whitehead's definition of metaphysics, in some ways, resembles what is suggested by

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<sup>7</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 342-43.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis S. Ford, "Hartshorne's Encounter with Whitehead," in Lewis Ford, ed., *Two Process Philosophers* (Tallahassee: American Academy of Religion, 1973), 1.

<sup>9</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

Hartshorne: "Metaphysics is the study of ideas universally applicable."<sup>10</sup> In other words, metaphysical categories try to answer questions about "the generic meaning of concreteness as such, or what can be said universally about the most concrete levels of reality."<sup>11</sup>

Of the forty-five categories sketched in Chapter II of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead himself has singled out four notions for special consideration: "that of 'actual entity', that of a 'prehension', that of a 'nexus', and that of the ontological principle."<sup>12</sup> However, we discuss here the first three notions among them along with the 'derivative' concept of "God." For these three notions underscore, by Whitehead's own assertion, his endeavour "to base philosophical thought upon the most concrete elements of our experience."<sup>13</sup>

The concept of an "actual entity" is at the heart of Whitehead-Hartshorne's metaphysical system. The term "actual entity" is Whitehead's equivalent of Aristotle's *ousia*.<sup>14</sup> He has coined this term because the traditional term "substance" (translation of Aristotle's *ousia*), which has been used in traditional philosophy for the ultimate existent, is greatly unsatisfactory. Etymologically, it fails to bring out that on which both Aristotle and Whitehead insist in their respective terms, namely the ultimate sense of 'existence'. For Whitehead,

<sup>10</sup> C. Hartshorne, "Metaphysics for Positivists," *Philosophy of Science* 2/3 (1935), 288.

<sup>11</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*. Reprint of the 1970 Edition. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 73-4.

<sup>12</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics: An Introductory Exposition* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1965, 22.

an actual entity is an entity which is "fully existent." Actual entities are all that, in the full sense of 'to be' or 'exist', are: "apart from the things that are actual, there is nothing."<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the doctrine of substance seems to emphasize the aspect of unity, while it slights the relatedness of things. Descartes, for example, defined substance as "an existent being which requires nothing but itself to exist."<sup>16</sup> Each substantial thing, for Descartes, is complete in itself, without any reference to any other substantial thing. The universe is thus construed in terms of a multitude of disconnected substantial things, and such an account of the ultimate subjects renders an interconnected world of real individuals unintelligible.

Whitehead has defined "actual entities" -also termed "actual occasions"- as "the final real things of which the world is made up."<sup>17</sup> An actual entity is conspicuously what Whitehead has called "a complete fact," and there is nothing more real than actual entities.

They are, for Whitehead, "drops of experience, complex and interdependent."<sup>18</sup> Each actual entity is conceived by Whitehead as "an act of experience arising out of data."<sup>19</sup> The basic model for these entities is a moment of human experience, which has a genuine unity and which exhibits derivation from some past (data) and some self-determination in becoming the definite thing which it finally

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<sup>15</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Rene Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, trans. Valentine R. Miller (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1984), 62.

<sup>17</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

is. From such an understanding of the actual entity, it follows that the inter-relatedness of the actual entities is essential to their very being.<sup>20</sup> The actual entities, through their essential interconnectedness, make up the composite world of rocks, trees and humans. Hence Whitehead describes the universe as "a solidarity of many actual entities."<sup>21</sup>

As explained, the world consists of individuals and aggregate of individuals or composites.<sup>22</sup> The word "individual" properly refers to an actual entity, although the composites, which are made up of actual entities, also exist as functioning individuals in their own right. Each actual occasion is an instance of absolute individuality. However, Whitehead's doctrine of individuality is "bound on either side by essential relativity."<sup>23</sup> The occasion arises from relevant objects, and perishes into the status of an object for other occasions. He thus balances and limits the doctrine of absolute individuality with his doctrine of continuity/relativity.

The notion of "**prehension**," another category of existence, comes to the forefront, when the actual entity is analyzed. The word "prehension" is formed by dropping the first syllable from "apprehension," which has the meaning of 'thorough understanding', or 'grasp' by the intellect or senses.<sup>24</sup> The word "prehension" has thus the literal meaning of 'grasping' or 'seizing'. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead

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<sup>20</sup> James A. Keller, "Some Basic Differences between Classical and Process Metaphysics and Their Implications for the Concept of God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 22/1 (1982), 6.

<sup>21</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Darkness and the Light* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 229.

<sup>23</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, First Paperback Edition of 1933 (New York: Free Press, 1967), 177.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

offers a description of prehension: "I use the term 'prehension' for the general way in which the occasion of experience can include, as part of its own essence, any other entity, whether another occasion of experience or an entity of another type."<sup>25</sup>

In order to appreciate how the other actualities can be 'included in' the actual entity through prehension, we should analyze the dynamics of prehension. A prehension, for Whitehead, involves three factors: "(a) the subject which is prehending, namely, the actual entity in which that prehension is a concrete element; (b) the 'datum' which is prehended; (c) the 'subjective form' which is *how* that subject prehends that datum."<sup>26</sup> All three factors are essential to the consideration of a prehension in its concreteness, since prehension is the whole concrete act of the subject feeling the datum with a subjective form.

What Whitehead terms "subjective form" is the 'how' of the feeling; it is the particular affective tone qualifying the feeling. According to Whitehead there are many "species of subjective forms," such as emotions, valuations, aversions, aversions, consciousness, etc.<sup>27</sup> But he maintains that the term "feeling" will be used as the generic description of such operations.<sup>28</sup>

Taking into account the nature of datum, prehensions may be classified as "physical" or "conceptual." Prehensions of actual entities - i.e., prehensions whose data involve actual entities - are termed "physical prehensions."<sup>29</sup> Whitehead also speaks of "mental" or "conceptual" prehensions, which

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



are defined as having "eternal objects" for their data.<sup>30</sup>

By "subject" what we mean is "anything that can be said to be aware of (know or feel or intuit) anything."<sup>31</sup> A subject or experience depends upon the things given or "objects," which are absolute in respect to it. As Hartshorne explains:

"The subject-object relation is external, or non-constitutive for the thing given or prehended; on the other hand, it is internal or constitutive for the subject prehending. [...] since the earlier does not depend upon the latter."<sup>32</sup> The subject-object relation, for Whitehead, is one of sympathy in a very literal sense, namely, "participation by one subject in the feelings of others, and temporally prior subjects." Physical prehensions are Whitehead's technical label for what in ordinary language are acts of immediate sympathy.<sup>33</sup> Hartshorne, like Whitehead, describes the "participation of experiences in other experiences, i.e. sympathy," in its higher and happier forms, as "love."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, love, as the relation of sympathy, for Hartshorne, "is the foundation of all other relations."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 232, 239 & 240. Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 194.

<sup>31</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, Reprint with Corrections of the 1953 Edition (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), 69.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. Cf. C. Hartshorne, *Creativity in American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 200 & 210.

<sup>33</sup> C. Hartshorne, "The Organism According to Process Philosophy," in Stuart F. Spicker, ed. *Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978), 144.

<sup>34</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, xvii.

<sup>35</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism*, Reprint of the 1937 Edition (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1975), 26.

Thus the third notion central to Whitehead's metaphysics looms into view - the notion of "nexus" or "society." A nexus is "a particular fact of togetherness among actual entities."<sup>36</sup> When actual entities are together in a sequence with some degree of "order," involving genetic relations among themselves, this togetherness is termed a "society." A society is distinguished by "a defining characteristic" or "form" which is inherited by each member from all the preceding members of the society. The identity of a society thus is founded upon the self-identity of its defining characteristic, and upon the mutual immanence of its occasions.<sup>37</sup>

These societies of occasions can be divided into two: the linear or "personally ordered" and non-linear societies. A society becomes a "personally-ordered society," when a defining characteristic forms "a single line of inheritance."<sup>38</sup> The most familiar example of a personally ordered society is a "stream of consciousness" or a person; and an example for a non-linear society is a tree considered as a colony of cells.

Human personality is thus understood primarily "as a society of actual occasions with personal order." What accounts for self-identity is the identity of "form," shared by all experiences which constitute the becoming of a person. For, "in the philosophy of organism it is not 'substance' which is permanent, but 'form',<sup>39</sup> or 'character'.<sup>40</sup> This could be compared to an "artist's style" which is a unifying element throughout a life's work without inhibiting originality.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 20.

<sup>37</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 204.

<sup>38</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 197.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 68.

Whitehead's primary achievement, thinks Hartshorne, is his conception of organism as a society of entities, feeling each other, compounded of each other's feelings.

Finally, Whitehead's notion of "God" is worthy of consideration. His doctrine of God, according to his own statement, was "vague," and it seemed likely to him that it could be further clarified and improved.<sup>42</sup> We can clearly trace a gradual evolution in Whitehead's own understanding of God. For many, Whitehead appears to have affirmed a personalistic theism beginning with *Religion in the Making*, and the very personalistic language about God in chapter four of the book supports their conclusion.<sup>43</sup> However, the composition of *Process and Reality* was dominated by the dichotomy: God is either nontemporal and impersonal, or personal and temporal. At first he maintained that "God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far off empty space."<sup>44</sup> Towards the end of *Process and Reality* Whitehead, however, introduced an understanding of God, which is dipolar: God, analogous to all actual entities, "has a primordial nature and a consequent nature."<sup>45</sup> His prior analysis of an actual occasion as possessing both physical and conceptual prehensions clearly contributed to this novel conclusion.

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<sup>42</sup> See, Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Conception of God," *Actas: Segundo Congreso Extraordinario Inter-americano de Filosofia, 22-26 Julio, 1961*, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1963, 165.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 133-7. See, A.N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, Reprint of the 1926 Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 109-45.

<sup>44</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18. Among the commentators on Whitehead, William A. Christian holds that God is an actual entity and therefore not a person, since a person is definitionally a nexus of actual entities. See, William A. Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 409f.

<sup>45</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 345.

Hartshorne thinks that Whitehead's view of God as a "single actual entity" involves serious flaws. The general line of criticism is that it seems to make God an exception to the metaphysical principles, which Whitehead himself said to have been avoided.<sup>46</sup> In his Harvard Lectures of 1926-27, Whitehead enunciated six main principles of his metaphysics, adding that "the principles apply to all actualities, including God."<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, Hartshorne thinks that God should be regarded as a "living person," i.e. a "personally ordered society" or sequence of divine experiences, each of which objectifies or prehends the world as it then is.<sup>48</sup> Hartshorne has also reported that once in private conversation, Whitehead has described God "as a society of occasions" (with "personal order.")<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, God is conceived both as affecting all other beings and as being affected by and enriched by the world: "What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back to into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion - the fellow-sufferer who understands."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Lowe, "Whitehead's Gifford Lectures," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 7/4 (1969-70), 332f.

<sup>48</sup> C. Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Theory of Prehension," *Actas: Segundo Congreso Extraordinario Inter-americano de Filosofía, 22-26 Julio, 1961*, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1963, 170.

<sup>49</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, Reprint of the 1948 Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 30-1.

<sup>50</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

## III

Whitehead-Hartshornean analysis of the central notions of "actual entity," "prehension" and "nexus" as the key to the understanding of God's eminent relativity, and their polemic against classical tradition, which has tried to keep the concept of God as love along with a denial in God of all sorts of changes - all dependence, all passivity, and all increase in value - is an attempt to show that the logic of metaphysical assertions leads to conclusions quite different from those of the tradition.

### God's Eminent Relativity/Dependence

One of the most significant implications, which results from God's eminent relativity is the notion of God's 'dependence' upon the world, and particularly upon humankind. In *The Divine Relativity* Hartshorne elaborates what "eminent relativity" means: "To be relative in the eminent sense will (accordingly) be to enjoy relations to all that is, in all its aspects. Supreme dependence will thus reflect all influences - with infinite sensitivity registering relationship to the last and least item of events."<sup>51</sup> This argument of Hartshorne suggests that God as dependent is depended upon (meaning 'influenced by') *all* others, whereas we are dependent only upon some. Similarly, God as independent is independent of all others, while we are independent only of some.

Writing about "The Logic of Panentheism" in *Philosophers Speak of God*, Hartshorne defines the meaning of the term "cause" in theology as "something whose existence is requisite for, implied by, inferable from, the existence of its effect."<sup>52</sup> He goes on to ask whether there is a

<sup>51</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 76.

<sup>52</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God*, Midway Reprint of the

converse relation between cause and effect - namely, if the effect requires the cause, does the cause also require the effect? In contrast to classical understanding, Hartshorne proposes an alternative view, well founded in the current scientific findings. According to which the cause necessitates the occurrence of some effect or other within a specified range of variability. Building on this view, Hartshorne maintains that "God's existence would make it inevitable that there be a world but only possible that there be just this sort of world. Deity would be independent of (would not require or necessitate) any particular world, but he would not be independent of world-as-such."<sup>53</sup> In Hartshorne's metaphysical system then "God is not and never was without a world. There is a certain necessity in creation since God could not have been without some kind of world."<sup>54</sup>

Hartshorne defends God's dependence on the world on various grounds: (1) the methodological principle that the concrete includes the abstract, (2) the human decision-making, and (3) God's knowledge and love.

**First**, Hartshorne takes as a methodological principle fundamental to his thought that the concrete includes the abstract,<sup>55</sup> or that "the absolute is defined in terms of relativity."<sup>56</sup> Because of this principle, Hartshorne thinks that the absolute cannot be independent of the relative *per se*, but it can be independent of any given relative thing or things. The outcome of this consideration is the doctrine that upholds

1953 Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), 500.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 501. Cf. C. Hartshorne, "God and the Social Structure of Reality," in *Theology in Crisis* (Ohio: Muskingum College, 1967), 27-8.

<sup>54</sup> Santiago Sia, *God in Process Thought* (Dordrecht: Martinus, 1985), 86.

<sup>55</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 233.

<sup>56</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 74.

the independence of God's existence (i.e. God cannot *not* exist) regardless of the particular state in which his existence is realized, while alongside God's existence is the correlative necessary existence of some or other contingent reality to which God is eminently related.

**Secondly**, God's dependence on the world is illustrated from human decision-making. He argues that God can know that Tom decides to do *X* only if he does so decide. If he decides to do *Y* instead of *X*, then that is what God knows him as deciding. Thus on determining how to act, we determine something of God's knowledge. In his own lucid style, Hartshorne reasons that God cannot know eternally how we decide, for our decisions do not exist eternally. Until a decision is made, there is no such thing for God to know. He comes to know actions, only as they come to be. Hence the omniscience of God, as Hartshorne rightly insists, requires qualification: Adequate knowledge "must be knowledge of the actual as actual and of the possible as possible."<sup>57</sup>

Of course, it may be objected that Hartshorne's view of God's knowledge is incompatible with the divine cognitive perfection or omniscience. Traditionally it is held that God knows everything knowable, and the "knowable" includes not only everything past and present, but also everything that for us temporal beings is future.<sup>58</sup>

On the other hand, Hartshorne, while defending God's omniscience, insists that God's perfect knowledge implies that God knows things correctly as they are. Accordingly, if decisions do not exist eternally, a knowledge which had them

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 121. Cf. C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery* (La Salle: Open Court, 1965), 194.

<sup>58</sup> See, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970), Ia. 14, 15 ad 2.

as items in an eternal reality would know them as they are not. A not-yet-made decision is not a definite entity, but a more or less indefinite one. To know the definite as definite and/or the possible as possible is to know it correctly. God knows definite actions as they are, i.e. definite entities or actualities; and God knows partly indefinite, or not-yet-determined actions, as they are, indefinite entities or possibilities.<sup>59</sup> This does not, however, imply that Hartshorne limits God's knowledge; rather he avoids implying logical inconsistency in God's knowledge.

**Finally**, Hartshorne argues for God's dependence for some qualities on the creatures from the traditional belief that God knows and loves the creatures. Like Whitehead, Hartshorne argues that knowledge rests on prehension, intuitive or cognitive grasp of actualities which do notprehend. Explaining Whitehead's theory of prehension, Hartshorne writes: "The subject-object relation is external, or non-constitutive, for the thing given or prehended; on the other hand, it is internal or constitutive for the subject prehending."<sup>60</sup> It is indeed the Thomistic doctrine that in knowledge, it is the knower who is really related to the known, not the known to the knower.<sup>61</sup> Thus the cognitive relation, for Thomas Aquinas, is external to the known and internal to the knower. This principle in the theory of knowledge is, however, reversed, when the discussion turns to God. As Hartshorne puts it: "God knows all things, but in

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<sup>59</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistake* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 26-7.

<sup>60</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 125. Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 234.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 14, 1 ans: "The difference between knowing and non-knowing subjects is that the latter have nothing but their own forms, whereas a knowing subject is one whose nature it is to have in addition the form of something else; for the likeness of the thing known is in the knower."



such a fashion (it was held) that there is zero relativity or dependence in God as knower, and maximal dependence in the creatures as known."<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the Biblical statement "God is love," Hartshorne thinks, is the fundamental assertion of the essential relatedness of God. Walter Kasper has posed this problem correctly, when he asks:

If God is love, who is the eternal Thou of that love? If it were the human beings, then [...] God would no longer be thought without human beings and without the world. God and the world would then stand in a necessary connection to one another.<sup>63</sup>

Kasper, however, avoids this inevitable conclusion through his acknowledgement of the triune God. Unlike Kasper, the Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel answers the question by asserting that "God is now in need of man, because he freely made him a partner in his creation."<sup>64</sup>

### Notion of God's Enrichment

A second implication of God's relatedness to the world is that God is subject to increase in value, and the world has the opportunity to "contribute to the colour and richness" of his existence.<sup>65</sup> Does this mean that God was previously 'imperfect' in the sense of lacking in value? Answering the question with a firm negative, Hartshorne affirms: "If God

<sup>62</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 8. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 13, 7.

<sup>63</sup> Walter Kasper, *Theology and Church* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 30.

<sup>64</sup> Abraham J. Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*, ed. Fritz Rothschild, New York: Free Press, 1965, 141.

<sup>65</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*, Reprint of the 1941 Edition (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1964), 102.

rejoices less today than he will tomorrow, but ideally appropriately at both times, our reverence for him should in no way be affected by the increase in joy."<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, Hartshorne contends: "If he were incapable of responding to a better world with greater satisfaction, this would infringe upon our respect; for it would imply a lack of proportionality in the divine awareness of things."<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, this is not the traditional idea of God, which deemed perfection as "unsurpassable possession of value." Perhaps no one could have insisted on God's immutability and impassibility more than Augustine did. Although he admits explicitly that there is "difference in God's knowledge according as it is produced by things not yet in existence, by things now or by things that are no more," he insists that, unlike us, "there is no alteration whatsoever in his [God's] contemplation."<sup>68</sup>

On the contrary, Hartshorne thinks that such cannot be the case, as there are "mutually incompatible yet positive values."<sup>69</sup> Explicating his argument, he writes:

If [...] there are incompatible possibilities for realization confronting God, so that an exhaustive actualization or achievement of values is excluded, and hence deity reaches or possesses no final sum of perfections but goes on endlessly to enrich itself with new values, then one may say, with Whitehead, that such contradiction among possibilities necessitates or grounds process in the divine life.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>69</sup> C. Hartshorne, "The Dipolar Conception of Deity," *Review of Metaphysics* 21/2 (1967), 280.

<sup>70</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 242. Cf. A.N. Whitehead,

Thus, inexhaustibility of all possible values, and mutual incompatibility of some positive values offer one aspect of the very rationale of becoming and acquisition of additional value in God.

The idea of God's on-going enrichment in value is not only a logical deduction, but it matches the religious idea as well. This religious idea finds expression in phrases, such as "serving God," and "to the glory of God."<sup>71</sup> For instance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches explicitly that wo/man "was created to serve and love God."<sup>72</sup> In an important passage, Hartshorne states:

I take "true religion" to mean serving God, by which I do not mean simply admiring or "obeying" him, or enabling him to give benefits to me and other non-divine creatures, but also, and most essentially, contributing value to God which he would otherwise lack. Even in this religious case, to "serve" is to confer a benefit, in precisely the sense that the served will to some extent depend upon the server for that benefit.<sup>73</sup>

Is it not a consoling Christian thought that we humans can contribute something to God? The testimonies of the saints and the witness of the Scriptures attest to "the intrinsic value of our human undertakings."<sup>74</sup> Thus, as Hartshorne himself puts it:

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<sup>71</sup> C. Hartshorne, , *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 8; *Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Publications, 1976), 43.

<sup>72</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), § 358.

<sup>73</sup> C. Hartshorne, "The Dipolar Conception of Deity," 274.

<sup>74</sup> P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. Marie-Jose (New

"Ultimately we are contributors to the ever-growing divine treasury of values. [...] Our final and inclusive end is to contribute to the divine life."<sup>75</sup>

### Notion of Divine Immutability

A third and final implication of God-world relationship is the question of change in God, which serves as the bedrock for our notions of God's dependence on, and subsequent enrichment by, the world process. It has been an axiom of Christian theology that "God is immutable, unchanging and unchangeable."<sup>76</sup> The traditional argument for God's immutability may be summarized as follows: If God changes, he either acquires a perfection, or he loses some perfection. But, if God acquires a perfection, he was not infinitely perfect, he was not God, before acquiring it. And, if he loses a perfection, he is no longer infinitely perfect, he is no longer God. Hence it is quite evident that God cannot change, i.e. he is immutable.<sup>77</sup>

To the objection that 'if God changed, God would not be perfect, for if God were perfect, there would be no need to change', Hartshorne makes the rather obvious reply: "To be supremely excellent," God must at any particular time be the greatest conceivable being, the all-worshipful being. The God who was perfect in relation to an earlier state of affairs would have to change in order to be perfect in relation to a later state

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York: Harper & Row, 1965), 151.

<sup>75</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Aquinas to Whitehead*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> Gerry O'Hanlon, "Does God Change?: H.U. von Balthasar on the Immutability of God," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53 (1987), 161.

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Donceel, "Second Thoughts on the Nature of God," *Thought* 46 (1971), 346-47.

of affairs. He was perfect then, he is perfect now, and he will be perfect hereafter. And, if it be objected that in that case God is relative to his creatures, the answer is that if he were not, he would soon be inadequate to his creatures. Thus God's perfection for Hartshorne does not just allow God to change, but requires God to change.

Moreover, Hartshorne thinks that the reasons, on the basis of which God's immutability is defended, reflect more the influence of Greek thought and values, which included the appraisal of being as superior to becoming and of activity as superior to passivity than logical or religious considerations. The attempt to reconcile the Greek notion of God as the absolute and immutable with the Biblical attributes of God such as creativity and love results in various difficulties. Firstly, God conceived as *actus purus*, who is "absolute and self-sufficient"<sup>78</sup> cannot account for "outgoingness" or activity, such as creation. For, the notion of self-sufficiency does not cohere with that of abundance, but excludes it. Corroborating this argument, Boyce Gibson writes:

[...] (1) what is self-sufficient cannot add to its inward resources any more than it can be lacking in them. (2) Only through an addition to the inward resources of God could there be an overflow. (3) And principally, both operations postulate a passage of time for the self-sufficient timeless God to deploy himself in.<sup>79</sup>

In his view, when we talk of the absolute and immutable as "outgoing" or "overflowing," we are "smuggling activity into them."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, 158.

<sup>79</sup> Boyce Gibson, "The Two Strands in Natural Theology," in William L. Reese & Eugene Freeman, ed. *Process and Divinity - The Hartshorne Festschrift* (La Salle: Open Court, 1964), 483.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 490.

Secondly, if God were self-sufficient and thus in no need whatever of human kind or other contingent reality, then surely it must make no difference to God whether we exist at all or whether we are happy in our existence. As he puts it: "If God is in no need of anything else, then the world is to him literally a matter of indifference."<sup>81</sup> The implication of this argumentation is that since the true and living God is personal and intimately involved in the world, his self-sufficiency cannot be conceived without qualification.

The term "self-sufficiency" is an incomplete symbol which requires us to specify in which respects something is self-sufficient and in which respects it is not.<sup>82</sup> Hartshorne makes a clear distinction of respects, when he writes: "God is not in every sense self-sufficient, for although He exists independently, He depends for his particular actuality, or *how* He exists, upon what other things exist."<sup>83</sup> Here Paul Fiddes' distinction between "self-sufficiency" and "self-existence" is very useful in understanding Hartshorne's thought. According to him, to affirm that God is "self-sufficient" for the fact of his existence does not necessarily mean that he is self-sufficient for the whole mode of his divine life.<sup>84</sup> Although God is the ground of his own existence, this does not necessarily entail that he must be unconditioned by anything else in every conceivable way.

#### IV

Indeed, Whitehead and Hartshorne are proponents of typical process philosophy. For Whitehead, however, process

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<sup>81</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 143.

<sup>82</sup> Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 237.

<sup>83</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, 235.

<sup>84</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: University Press, 1988), 66-7.

is not the sole theme of metaphysics. To formulate "the complete problem of metaphysics" in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead cited two lines of a famous hymn: "Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide." He then proceeded to comment: "Here the first line expresses the permanences ...; and the second line sets these permanences amid the inescapable flux. ... Those philosophers who start with the first line have given us the metaphysics of 'substance'; and those who start with the second line have developed the metaphysics of 'flux'. But, in truth, the two lines cannot be torn apart in this way."<sup>85</sup> For, resuming the commentary on the lines of the hymn, Whitehead said: "In the inescapable flux, there is something that abides; in the overwhelming permanence, there is an element that escapes into the flux. Permanence can be snatched only out of the flux."<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, for Hartshorne the two aspects - abstract and concrete - of the "Dipolar God" do not have the status of two gods. Dipolarity is indicative of "two main aspects in the essence of supreme being." Taking the polar correlates being and becoming, Hartshorne states: "God's being and becoming form a single reality [...] diverse aspects of this individual."<sup>87</sup> Or, in short, the divine being becomes, or the divine becoming is. The being of God in dipolar terms is to be comprehended within the context of an ontological understanding of the unity of God. Such a unity of God is based on the affirmation that God is the conjunction of the polar correlates, and is not to be defined in terms of their disjunction.

Nonetheless, it is true that it is very difficult to synthesize conceptually permanence and flux, being and becoming. This "higher synthesis" is probably a new form of

<sup>85</sup> A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 209.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>87</sup> C. Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 14-5.

the Heraclitean "unity of opposites," or the Jungian "marriage quaternio," or may be related to the present "wave-corpuscle" antinomy. In most instances, resistance to a genuine acceptance of change and novelty stems from the failure to overcome the deeply rooted emotional and volitional attitudes, and from the often unconscious commitment to the traditional patterns of thought, especially to the metaphysics of 'substance' or 'being'. Hence, a dialogue between Parmenides and Heraclitus, between "the preferred and the preferable" must still go on.

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