$\mathcal{T}$attva

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Editorial: Implications of Process Thought
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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 and Charles Hartshorne, 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."[1]

I. Introduction

In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead has proclaimed: "The reality is the process."[2] 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'. The most basic concepts of process thought are fairly simple, even though they go contrary to much of popular wisdom. These simple ideas are: (i) that the whole of everything is not made up of things, but of events, and (ii) 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',"[3] 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.

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[1] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, xiv.

[2] A.N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: Free Press, 1967, 106.

[3] A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xi.

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.

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."[4] Whitehead's definition of metaphysics, in some ways, resembles what is suggested by Hartshorne: "Metaphysics is the study of ideas universally applicable."[5] 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."[6]

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."[7] For these notions underscore his endeavour to base philosophical thought upon "the most concrete elements of our experience."

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.

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[4]   A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 3.

[5]   Charles Hartshorne, "Metaphysics for Positivists," *Philosophy of Science* 2/3C. Hartshorne, "Metaphysics for Positivists," *Philosophy of Science* 2/3 (1935), 288.

[6]   C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic* Method, Lanham: University Press of America, 1983, 73-4.

[7]   A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 18.

II. God's Eminent Relativity

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."[8] 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.

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,[9] or that "the absolute is defined in terms of relativity."[10] Because of this principle, 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 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 requires qualification: Adequate

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8   C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 76.
9   C. Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 233.
10 C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 74.

knowledge "must be knowledge of the actual as actual and of the possible as possible."[11]

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.[12] 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 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.[13] 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 not prehend. 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."[14] 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.[15] 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

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[11]   C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 121. Cf. C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, La Salle: Open Court, 1965, 194.

[12]   See, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970, Ia. 14, 15 ad 2.

[13]   C. Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistake*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984, 26-7.

[14]   C. Hartshorne, *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935-1970*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972, 125. Cf. A.N.Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 234.

[15]   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."

the discussion turns to God. As Hartshorne puts it: "God knows all things, but in 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."[16]

Moreover, the Biblical statement "God is love" 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.[17]

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."[18]

III. 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.[19] 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 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."[20] 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."[21]

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[16]   C. Hartshorne, The Divine Relativity, 8. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Ia. 13, 7.

[17]   Walter Kasper, Theology and Church, London: SCM Press, 1989, 30.

[18]   Abraham J. Heschel, Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism, ed. Fritz Rothschild, New York: Free Press, 1965, 141.

[19]   C. Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1964, 102.

[20]   C. Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism, 47.

[21]   C. Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism, 47.

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."[22]

On the contrary, Hartshorne thinks that such cannot be the case, as there are "mutually incompatible yet positive values."[23] 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.[24]

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."[25] For instance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches explicitly that wo/man "was created to serve and love God."[26] 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,

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22   C. Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism*, 505.

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

24   C. Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 242. Cf. A.N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 276-7.

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

26   *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, § 358.

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.[27]

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."[28] Thus, as Hartshorne puts it: "Ultimately we are contributors to the ever-growing divine treasury of values. [...] Our final and inclusive end is to contribute to the divine life."[29]

IV. 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." The traditional argument for God's immutability may be summarized as follows: If God changes, he either acquires 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.[30]

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 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.

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[27]   C. Hartshorne, "The Dipolar Conception of Deity," 274.
[28]   P. Teilhard de Chardin, Hymn of the Universe, trans. Marie-Jose, New York: Harper & Row, 1965, 151.
[29]   C. Hartshorne, Aquinas to Whitehead, 43.
[30]   Joseph Donceel, "Second Thoughts on the Nature of God," Thought 46 (1971), 346-47.

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"[31] 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.[32]

In his view, when we talk of the absolute and immutable as 'outgoing' or 'overflowing', we are 'smuggling activity into them'.

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."[33] 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. 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."[34] Here Paul Fiddes'

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[31]   C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, 158.
[32]   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.
[33]   C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 143.
[34]   C. Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, 235.

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.[35] 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.

V. Conclusion

Process thought, with its emphasis on a network of relationships that are interdependent and mutually enriching, provides us with an adequate conceptuality – a metaphysical framework – for a profound understanding and meaningful interpretation of reality. In tune with Whitehead-Hartshornean metaphysics, the contributors of this volume of *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy, have taken up various issues of life with scholarship and imagination and have come up with profound implications and applications of process thought. Robert Neville in his "One and many" addresses the problems of pluralism in the context of theory of religions; Eiko Hanaoka in "The Problem of Ethics and God" draws the differences between Nishida's and Whitehead's ethics, dwelling upon the understanding of God; in "Causal Processes," Ludwig Jaskolla sketches a theory of causality, connecting it with the general metaphysical claims of Whitehead; "Concept of Religion in Whitehead and Basaveshwara" by M.A. Jalihal offers a comparison between the 12th century saint and thinker Basaveshwara and 20th century mathematician and philosopher Whitehead in an unending quest for true religion; Megan Altman in "Aristotelian Efficiency and its Determinate Possibilities for Process Ontology" inquires into the respective potentiality-actuality ontological frameworks of process metaphysics and Aristotle's metaphysics; in "Imagination and Process in Ancient Greek Philosophy," Daniel Regnier examines to what extent the concept of 'imagination' plays a role in the thought of Whitehead, as we find it developed by Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics; and Midori Horiuchi in her "Whitehead and Religion," presents, based on the teachings of Miki Nakayama and Whitehead, the world as the place of realizing God's salvation for human beings.

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[35]   Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, Oxford: University Press, 1988, 66-7.