THE QUESTION OF SUBJECTIVE IMMORTALITY: A COMPARISON AND
CONTRAST OF PROCESS THEISM WITH CLASSICAL THEISM

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by

Dmitry A. Chernikov

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Thesis written by

Dmitry Chernikov

B.S., Kent State University, 1997

M.A., Kent State University, 2009

Approved by

David Odell-Scott, Advisor

David Odell-Scott, Chair, Department of Philosophy

John Stalvey, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine and critically assess the differences between process theism and classical theism. To accomplish this task I start with the father of process philosophy and process theism, Alfred North Whitehead. For Whitehead, to exist and to live is to be a process. And in order for a process is to continue, it needs to consume food. The consumer is termed an “actual occasion”; the consumption is called “prehension,” and what is consumed are “actual entities” and “eternal objects.” Whitehead’s theme is that all being is potential to all becoming. Now being for him is not alive and not an organism. As a matter of fact, being is dead; there is no process going on within beings/entities. Yet at the same time it is also complete. And as such, it is prehended by actual occasions, whose process has not yet finished operating. A surprising thesis of Whitehead is that the purpose of life, of process, of organismic metabolism is nothing more than to die. It is the fate of actual-occasions-in-process to concresce or solidify into dead yet finished actual entities.

As the process continues, an actual occasion acquires definiteness and a complex harmony. There is a variety of objects of differing complexities and unities. The many unite in a one, and each one contributes to the many-ness of the universe. The means to that is an occasion’s objectification of the actual world, particularly, of actual entities surrounding it. Each actual entity is disassembled into parts; suitable parts are assimilated into the process; unsuitable parts are rejected. Once an occasion is finished with its self-construction, it is completed and dies, whereby its process evaporates. Alternatively, an
occasion can prehend an eternal object which is its final cause, luring it towards some goal. The eternal objects are both immanent in finished actual entities and transcendent in God’s primordial nature. Whitehead’s concept of God is such that it incites processes to come to whatever end God has in mind for them, and, once the process is finished, God stores the resulting actual entity into its consequent nature, thereby preserving its being and history forever. The death of an occasion upon the exhaustion of its process of living is only apparent, and so is the perpetual perishing of any occasion as time goes on and the occasion’s present disappears into the past: God saves everything from these kinds of death.

The debate begins in earnest with Whitehead’s student, Hartshorne. The main thrust of my arguments is that Hartshorne’s concept of God is unique and different from every other process or being, the very charge he levies on classical theism. He is the victim of his own indictment, such that a *tu quoque* is most appropriate. Some of the more important particular arguments are reviewed below.

1. God, according to Hartshorne, remembers human lives perfectly. But why can’t a blessed person remember his or her own life and the lives of those he or she touched? For remembering a life from the first and second perspectives is far more precious that remembering them as having happened to someone else.

2. God is always a subject, never concrescing towards objective immortality. But a crucial consequence of prehending entities is that neither God nor man can really enjoy subject-to-subject communication or communion. A subject has only objects to penetrate and use for its own ends. Everything is a
means; everyone is a tool, every good is merely useful. How is *love of friendship* between subjects to be explained?

3. To the extent that God is a world-soul, there are all sorts of problems arising from trying to reason by analogy from human cells and organs to the human being him- or herself.

4. It is supposed to be an advantage for the Hartshorne’s concept of God that this God has sympathy for us, loves us as we love, is hurt when we hurt. But I argue that acting to help to dispel human pain and suffering is far more important than merely feeling our pain.

5. Hartshorne’s God depends in a crucial sense on the world. It is the happenings in the world that supply him with stuff to contemplate and enjoy in his solitude. In himself God contains only eternal objects which guide the evolution of actual occasions. But on the one hand, these objects are not suitable for contemplation. Therefore God must have the world. Unlike classical theism in which God is aseic and independent, process theism makes God depend on the events in the world. In fact, without the world God is absolutely helpless. On the other hand, it is unclear why God must grow actual entities, when he can combine his eternal objects in his imagination into whatever storylines he pleases.

6. For human beings Hartshorne’s God provides a means to transcendence. I argue, however, that the God of classical theism allows humans to transcend themselves far better.
Chapter 1: Whitehead

Whitehead starts out with a paean to “actual entities” or “actual occasions.” There is some controversy as to whether these two terms mean the same thing. If there is a difference, it consists in considering actual occasions to be “time-slices” of a process of concrescence, and considering actual entities to be satisfied, finished objects which have conscresed. Actual entities, he says, are “the final real things of which the world is made up.”\(^1\) They are what the erroneous doctrine of substance should instead have focused on. According to his “ontological principle,” any explanation, any power exercised is due to these actual entities influencing each other, or rather, the satisfied actual entities influencing actual occasions still evolving. Whether the whole Platonic pantheon of universals, properties, kinds, propositions, numbers, sets, states of affairs, and possible worlds are also actual entities is left unclear. For Whitehead the ultimate force working its way on actual entities is “creativity,” which is a principle of novelty, of flux, of advance among permanence. “It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity.”\(^2\)

Creativity is the production of novel togetherness, a drive of the many to unite into one. Such a unity contributes to the many-ness of the universe, since the created one takes its place among the many of the universe. There is a certain rhythm to this matter – from the publicity of the many to the privacy of the individual as the final cause; and the reverse as

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2 Ibid., 31
the efficient cause. That is, the many seek to unite into one which is their ideal, an aim, and the disjunction of ones causes the many to be with good reason identified. The many are public as subjects, processes, freely available to other entities’ processes of concrescence; the one is private as a competed superject, existing for and in itself. This is the creative advance, in which entities are moving both toward greater unity and toward greater variety with the passage of time.

Concrescence is the process of many becoming one, of attaining unity, the making up of “the real internal constitution,” the content of the many-ness, of an actual occasion. Even local decay can serve as a source of global creative advance; and on the contrary, highly organized entities can be causes of disorder – for example, a well-run concentration camp harms society. Actual occasions feel actual entities in order to absorb them into themselves and become satisfied. “Satisfaction” is a technical term in Whitehead’s writings; when applied to humans it means “happiness”; when applied to other things, it means completeness, finality, the exhaustion of the process of self-making. Through feeling we pass from the objectivity of data to the subjectivity of the entity. Or we can say that through feeling the actual entity absorbs “elements of the universe” into the real internal constitution of itself. This absorption or appropriation, as a result of which concretion is achieved, is termed “prehension.” Positive prehension is love, desire of an object whose attainment contributes to the entity’s actuality. Negative prehension means hatred, rejection, indifference to an object, banishing it, preventing it from influencing the internal constitution of the entity. The actual entity is the sum of its prehensions: you are both what you love (adversion, in Whitehead’s terms) and what you
hate (aversion). The objective datum of a positive prehension objectifies or represents the initial datum of the entity felt or desired. This is due to enduring influence of actual entities – that is why they are actual, because they have power to assist actual occasions in their concrescence. The aspects of the thing rejected from consideration are due to negative prehensions. Thus, only parts of an object are felt; some parts are ignored. “Objectification relegates into irrelevance, or into subordinate relevance, the full constitution of the objectified entity.” Negative prehensions seem to be normal choosing, as in I decided to be a philosopher rather than a football player. They are necessary so that incompatibilities between feelings can be resolved. Whitehead writes that “every prehension consists of three factors: (a) the ‘subject’ which is prehending, namely, the concrescing 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. … There are many aspects of subjective forms, such as emotions, valuations, purposes, adversions, aversions, consciousness, etc.” What is prehended either through other actual objects or directly are “eternal objects” which are somewhat like Platonic ideas, though unlike those together they constitute the “primordial” nature of God (on this, later). These objects are pure potentialities which, given their varying relevance and utility to particular actual occasions, determine their becoming. Prehensions of actual entities are called “physical”; prehensions of eternal objects are called “conceptual.”

Everything is capable of prehensions, including atoms and stones and trees. Whitehead’s organismic philosophy applies to everything that exists, though in differing
ways, intensities, and qualities. “Experience is not restricted to conscious experience, but in a primitive form permeates all reality as prehensive activity.”

There are three levels of perfection: the perfection of essence, of accidents, and of happiness. (Alternatively, there are three kinds of good and evil: metaphysical, moral, and physical.) Socrates is better than a pig in the first sense, adult Socrates is better than infant Socrates in the second sense, and Socrates satisfied is better than Socrates dissatisfied in the third sense. Along how many of these levels Whitehead’s creative advance improves actual occasions? If things loved are absorbed, does the process of this absorption and self-making alter the occasion’s essence, accidents, or happiness? My own view is that this question presupposes substance philosophy rather than process philosophy. For Whiteheadian actual occasions have no identity and therefore no essence; a concrescing occasion consists in the process of living. Nor need it possess consciousness or will to become happier. Its “happiness” is the complexity and sophistication of its internal constitution. The one level that remains is accidents or features of the process which it acquires or loses as it goes on with its life.

A process, according to Whitehead, is a creative power of self-making and, at the same time, a passive power of being made, in that an actual entity is a potentiality to some other actual occasions. The process of becoming comes from within an actual entity. Therefore the process is part of the entity. The end of self-making or “concrescence” is satisfaction, which, as we will see, ought not to be interpreted as happiness or as consummation of perfected activity, but rather as a completed feeling in

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4 Sherburne, *A Key to Whitehead’s Process and Reality*, 42.
which the process of becoming of an actual entity terminates. Satisfaction is the end, the contentment of the self-creative urge, once it has finally played itself out. Satisfaction involves a “completely determinate bond with every item in the universe, the bond being either a positive or negative prehension.”\footnote{Whitehead, \textit{Process and Reality}, 71.} Concræcence is a “progressive integration of feelings.”\footnote{Ibid., 355.} It is the realization of potentialities into a “completely determinate matter of fact,”\footnote{Ibid., 322.} actuality. The completed entity “passes into its objective immortality as a new objective condition added to the riches of definiteness attainable.”\footnote{Ibid., 340.} In other words, once an occasion becomes satisfied, it becomes objectively immortal and remains this way even as it perishes. “How an actual entity \textit{becomes} constitutes what that actual entity \textit{is}; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming.’ This is the ‘principle of progress’.”\footnote{Ibid., 34ff.} “The actuality of the atomic entity is both process and outcome.” The process then is the act of an actual entity, its functioning, its subjective experiencing the world as a thing tending toward concræcence. But “[a]n actual entity is at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences.”\footnote{Ibid., 43.} Superjects act by their satisfied or solidified essences, as objectively immortal, on the processes of concræcence of other yet unfinished occasions. An occasion that has achieved satisfaction and entered objective immortality “is divested of its own living immediacy” and “becomes a real component in other living immediacies of becoming.” “No actual entity,” Whitehead writes, “can be conscious of its own
satisfaction; for such knowledge would be a component in the process, and would thereby alter the satisfaction.”¹¹ In other words, a satisfied actual entity is no longer progressing towards concrescence; the process to which it was subject and which was, for all intents and purposes, the entity itself has exhausted itself and evaporated. Such an entity is subjectively dead yet objectively significant and immortal. Precisely because a completed entity cannot feel its own satisfaction, satisfaction must be treated as a technical term, devoid of any connection to happiness for an actual entity. An actual entity cannot know nor love itself.

Every actual occasionprehends the entire universe, so, “[i]n the real internal constitution of an actual entity there is always some element which is contrary to an omitted element.”¹² Therefore, no addition to an object’s satisfaction can be made without ruining the harmonious unity of the object. For every object in the universe, it is either positively or negatively prehended, however vaguely, and the becoming has yielded a determinate being which cannot be changed from without, only from within. However, such a change would at once do away with its satisfaction and restart the process of concrescence (which would yield a different actual entity).

Whitehead gives us nine “Categorial Obligations,” according to which actual entities operate. They specify the rules for all processes of actual occasions.

Category 1. Of Subjective Unity: Feelings within an actual entity, whether satisfied or not, must be compatible with each other. The goal is satisfaction and a harmony of feelings and their depth within the final complex feeling. Negative

¹¹ Ibid., 130.
¹² Ibid., 71.
prehensions eliminate contradictory feelings. They are felt as well and contribute in a way to the resulting feeling. These feelings are derived from other objectified entities and represent only parts of those entities, for otherwise the probability of incompatible feelings would be very high.

Category 2. Of Objective Identity: No element in a unity can play inconsistent roles in it.

Category 3. Of Objective Diversity: Conversely, diverse elements cannot play the same role. Each element in an actual entity is unique and performs a special function, e.g., organelles in a cell.

For example, the interaction of the “components” of an organism sustains the life and satisfaction of each component. Thus the various organelles of a cell function not only without intruding upon each other but in such a way that they are absolutely indispensable for each other's existence. In fact, no cell organelle or any bodily organ can survive on its own outside the system of which they are a part, at least not for long. What is gained by such tight interdependency is efficiency and organism integrity. The components “cling to” each other for dear life. The prospect of dissolution or separation from the whole spells disaster and impels the components by one means or another to stick together and cooperate as well as they can.

Category 4. Of Conceptual Valuation: The buck stops with eternal objects. Even if a feeling is derived from another actual entity, that feeling is itself derivative from some eternal object. Further, all sensitive experience originates mental operations which can, in turn, originate derivative mental operations.
Category 5. Of Conceptual Reversion: Which eternal objects are prehended positively and which negatively is determined by the subjective end of an entity. Also, original conceptual feelings of eternal objects can create novel conceptual feelings.

Category 6. Of Transmutation: This category governs the process whereby the simple physical feelings of the components of a nexus (society of actual entities) generate a single conceptual feeling of the nexus as a whole. The physical feelings are analogous to each other, because “their definite character exhibits the same ingredient eternal object”; the conceptual feelings are analogous, because “this one eternal object, or one reversion from this eternal object, is the datum for the various relevant conceptual feelings entertained respectively by members of the nexus.”\textsuperscript{13} Reverted conceptual feelings, that is, novel conceptual feelings produced from the original conceptual feelings, can either enhance or diminish the intensity of the final feeling, depending on whether there is concordance or discordance among the various conceptual feelings. In the latter case, the novelty is an error. In the case of a simple society which is no more than the sum of its parts, the eternal object which describes the entire nexus is the same object which describes the members of that society. The whole derives its character from its parts.

If a conceptual feeling is prehended positively, there is what Whitehead calls “adversion”: “the physical feelings are transmuted to the new concrescence with enhanced intensity in the subjective form.” With negative prehensions and therefore “aversion,” “the physical feelings are… either eliminated, or are transmitted… with

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 384ff.
attenuated intensity.” What transmutation does then is it integrates the physical feelings with the derived conceptual feeling with the reverted feelings into a feeling of the whole nexus. “For a quality, characterizing the mutual prehensions of all the members of a nexus, is transmuted into a predicate of the nexus.” Thus, we learn something about the nexus by appropriately transmuting the feelings about its parts. With the help of the Category of Transmutation “[t]he irrelevant multiplicity of detail is eliminated, and emphasis is laid on the elements of systematic order in the actual world.” In other words, what matters are the relationships between the members of the nexus, creating order which constitutes the nexus in which they participate. “In so far as there is trivial order, there must be trivialized actual entities. The right co-ordination of the negative prehensions is one secret of mental progress; but unless some systematic scheme of relatedness characterizes the environment, there will be nothing left whereby to constitute vivid prehension of the world.” Here Whitehead gives an example of a “low-grade” entity capable only of receiving energy and passing it on, unaffected, such as a billiard ball striking and moving another upon itself being struck and moved.15

Category 7. Of Subjective Harmony: Conceptual feelings are valued to the extent they harmonize with the existing feelings and with the complex subjective aim. (For Whitehead the subjective aim is a God-produced ideal of satisfaction. It is a relevant lure for feeling.)

Category 8. Of Subjective Intensity. The end of all things is intense happiness in the future (or high expected utility) brought about by one’s own actions. Here I use the

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14 Ibid., 388.
15 Ibid., 389.
terminology of praxeology or economics, because it makes it easier to grasp the desirability and lure of the satisfaction of an actual entity.

Eternal objects are pure potentials. God “combines the actuality of what is temporal with the timelessness of what is potential.” \(^{16}\) Through God the “inefficient disjunction of abstract potentialities obtains primordially the efficient conjunction of their realization.” \(^{17}\) Each eternal object influences each concrescing process differently. What is actual is the “primordial valuation of pure potentials.” So, each eternal object is valued, that is, has a pull with each concrescent entity, and the scale of values constitutes an object. Each concrescent entity, in other words, is defined/determined by its scale of values. Again, you are what you value. “The determinate definiteness of each actuality is an expression of a selection from these [Platonic] forms,” a.k.a. eternal objects. \(^{18}\) The ontological principle states that “apart from things that are actual, there is nothing.” \(^{19}\) But what of potency? “It is the principle that everything is positively somewhere in actuality, and in potency everywhere.” So, even potency is, according to Whitehead, not non-existence.

It is incorrect, our author says, to regard the difference between actual entities and eternal objects as the difference between particulars and universals. An actual entity is a particular but it is also a universal, entering into the constitution of all other actual occasions by being prehended by them. An eternal object is a universal, ingressing into various actual entities, but it is also a particular potentiality to each actual entity.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 64.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 69.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 64.
Therefore, the doctrine of substance as something which requires nothing but itself in order to exist makes no sense in Whitehead’s metaphysics. An actual entity is in everything and everything is in it. This is true also because organisms must be adapted to their environment, so the external entities to which they are adapted are in a way in them.

“The four stages constitutive of an actual entity” are “datum, process, satisfaction, decision.” An actual entity prehends some objective datum of the external world, incorporates it into itself in a process of concrescence, becomes complete and passes into objective immortality, and the “final state, the ‘decision,’ is how the actual entity, having attained its individual ‘satisfaction,’ thereby adds a determinate condition to the settlement for the future beyond itself. Thus the ‘datum’ is the ‘decision received,’ and the ‘decision’ is the ‘decision transmitted’.” The decision received is from another actual entity to this actual occasion, and the decision transmitted is the influence of this actual entity on other actual occasions. “According to this account, efficient causation expresses the transition from actual entity to actual entity; and final causation expresses the internal process whereby the actual entity becomes itself.”20 The final causation is exercised through the lure of the subjective aim. More on that later.

The “substance-quality” doctrine of actuality is rejected by Whitehead: “The philosophies of substance presuppose a subject which then encounters a datum, and then reacts to the datum. The philosophy of organism presupposes a datum which is met with feelings, and progressively attains the unity of a subject.”21 The same goes for Kant’s idea of

20 Ibid., 227ff
21 Ibid., 234.
the process whereby there is experience is a process from subjectivity to apparent objectivity. The philosophy of organism inverts this analysis, and explains the process as proceeding from objectivity to subjectivity, namely, from the objectivity, whereby the external world is a datum, to the subjectivity, whereby there is one individual experience.\(^{22}\)

In other words, the datum is turned by the actual entity into an experience of that entity through a complex process. The datum, having come about by a (partial) objectification of the external world and, in particular, other satisfied actual entities, is used by and in the process of creative advance. This process eventually finishes, resulting in a satisfied, actual entity which has worn-out its creative advance, which then becomes food for other future processes of concrescence. It is worn-out in the sense that the process in which its life consists has finished operating. The future is always using the objectively immortal past to become, while everything objectively immortal is subjectively dead.

“All the actual entities are positively prehended, but only a selection of the eternal objects. … The terminal unity of operation, here called the ‘satisfaction,’ embodies what the actual entity is beyond itself. In Locke’s phraseology, the ‘powers’ of the actual entity are discovered in the analysis of its satisfaction.”\(^{23}\) Why? Do occasions in the process of concrescence that are not yet satisfied still influence the world? Maybe satisfaction is not an all-or-nothing affair: the closer an occasion is to being satisfied, the greater its objective power is to participate in the concrescence of other entities. A satisfied entity is

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 236.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 335.
“the actual entity as a definite, determinate, settled fact, stubborn and with unavoidable consequences.”

24 “Its own process, which is its own internal existence, has evaporated, worn out and satisfied; but its effects are all to be described in terms of its ‘satisfaction.’ The ‘effects’ of an actual entity are its interventions in concrescent processes other than its own.”

25 Thus, an as yet unsatisfied occasion is not a being or a substance, “requiring nothing in order to exist,” but a process of becoming, of trying to reach satisfaction. A thing then is its act, its subjective experience of concrescence, of appropriating the world for itself in its own unique fashion, of creativity rushing through it in an attempt to build it up towards a satisfied organic unity of feelings. A satisfied entity is fully determinate regarding every single actual entity or eternal object out there. In other words, nothing can be added to it without contradicting and thereby weakening the intensity of what it already is, of its satisfaction. “The satisfaction of each actual entity is an element in the givenness of the universe: it limits boundless, abstract possibility [manifested by eternal objects] into the particular real potentiality from which each novel concrescence originates.” It is a potentiality, according to the principle of relativity, namely, that every being is potential to every becoming. Creativity works with actual entities by extracting the eternal objects from them and presenting them to entities still in the process of concrescence for consumption. It is thus that eternal objects in God’s primordial nature attain causal efficacy. After all, one can’t walk down the street and see an eternal object lying on the ground. All such objects are immanent in things. A question may arise: if any actual occasion builds itself up with the help of the entire universe, from where did

24 Ibid., 336.
25 Ibid.
the very first actual occasions get the initial data to process in their subjectivity? It is hard to say how Whitehead would reply; perhaps he would say that this question has no answer in process philosophy.

“[T]he satisfaction of an actual entity is divisible into a variety of determinate operation. The operations are ‘prehensions’.26 Positive prehensions are feelings of love and acceptance of a particular influence of the outside world on the concrescent subject; negative prehensions are feelings of rejection of such influence as destructive to the progress toward satisfaction. “The process of concrescence is divisible into an initial stage of many feelings, and a succession of subsequent phases of more complex feelings integrating with earlier simpler feelings, up to the satisfaction which is one complex unity of feeling.” Thus, at first, an actual occasion is swamped with feelings, many of which will contradict each other and none of which are integrated. Then comes the stages at which through positive and negative prehensions the feelings are settled down, harmonize, achieving both stability and complexity through contrast. This contrast is such that each member of the occasion contributes its special part to the whole’s unity and is, in turn, taken care of the unity. Specified complexity cannot be taken apart: its members will fade into meaninglessness apart from the whole in which they participate and keep functioning. Thus, according to the category of objective identity, the many feelings of one object are integrated into the one feeling of that object.

Any feeling, Whitehead says, can be factored into “(i) the ‘subject’ that feels, (ii) the ‘initial data’ which are to be felt, (iii) the ‘elimination’ in terms of negative

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26 Ibid., 337.
prehensions, (iv) the ‘objective datum’ which is felt, (v) the subjective form which is *how*
that subject feels that objective datum.”27 The difference between the initial data and the
objective datum is that the latter is the former but winnowed by negative prehensions.
The subjective form is the name of the feeling. According to the category of subjective
unity, for example, feelings within an actual entity, whether satisfied or not, must be
compatible with each other. The goal is satisfaction and a harmony of feelings within the
final complex feeling. “The process of each feeling is such as to render that feeling
integrable with the other feelings.”28 And, according to the category of objective
diversity, each element in an actual entity is unique and performs a special function, e.g.,
again, organelles in a cell. These elements are not merely a logical disjunction; they are
involved in a reciprocal influence on each other; each one is both the end and a means.
Moreover, the five factors of any feeling condition each other, and this fact is “one
expression of the truth that the subject of the feeling is *causa sui*.”29

Whitehead goes on: “The feelings are what they are in order that their subject may
be what it is. Then transcendently, since the subject is what it is in virtue of its feelings, it
is only by means of its feelings that the subject objectively conditions the creativity
transcendent beyond itself.”30 What you love causes you to strive to possess and enjoy it.
Thus, there is an element of final cause present in every concrescence. “The creativity is
not an external entity with its own ulterior purposes,” Whitehead explains. It is rather a
force present in any actual entity being made by itself, by its own choices. It is, in the

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27 Ibid., 338.
28 Ibid., 341.
29 Ibid., 338.
30 Ibid., 339.
final analysis, the freedom of the will by which I mean the ability to choose the best course of action and the path of concrescence, present in some form or other in any object, from a stone to a human being. “An actual entity is at once the subject of self-realization, and the superject which is self-realized.” 31 So, to the pertinent question “Where does creativity reside?” Whitehead replies that it is actualized in every actual entity. For Whitehead, creativity is immanent and not transcendent.

Any new actuality, creatively produced, must, if it knows what’s best for it, find itself in a supporting environment. Otherwise, it may inhibit the global unity of actual entities rather than deepen and enrich it. “Then a weary task is set for creative function, by an epoch of new creations to remove the inhibition. Insistence of birth at the wrong season is the trick of evil.” 32

But how does an occasion know which feelings to reject and which to attempt to integrate? The answer is that each feeling must be referred to some subjective aim, and end to be achieved, a lure for its feelings. With its help what outstanding indeterminations are left within a subject are converted into the fully determinate actuality.

Whitehead continues: “The ground, or origin, of the concrescent process, is the multiplicity of data in the universe, actual entities and eternal objects and propositions and nexüs. … Each temporal entity… derives from God its basic conceptual aim, relevant to its actual world, yet with indeterminations awaiting its own decisions.” 33 It seems then that God provides the general goal of concrescence, such that to violate it is to cease to be

31 Ibid., 340.
32 Ibid., 341.
33 Ibid., 343.
an entity of its own particular sort. But even given this aim, its pursuit can occur in a
variety of ways and any resulting subject-superject, having made itself according to its
own desires, will be different from the rest of the creatures with the same subjective aim.

A physical feeling is a feeling of another actuality. A conceptual feeling is a
feeling of an eternal object. When an entity is objectified by its conceptual feeling, “the
physical feeling of the subject in question is termed ‘hybrid’. ” Hybrid feelings are
feelings of God through creatures; they are the result of an occasion participating in
God’s eternal objects. Each object may be prehended either directly or through one or
more media. In such a case, negative prehensions may be needed to eliminate
inconsistencies. “The same entity, be it actual entity or be it eternal object, cannot be felt
twice in the formal constitution of one concrescence. The incomplete phases with their
many feelings of one object are only to be interpreted in terms of the final satisfaction
with its one feeling of that one object.” This is due to the category of objective identity.
Further, each actual entity is undivided as a unity and a subject. Yet it is divisible, and the
“divisibility can thus only refer to its objectification in which it transcends itself.” In
other words, as a unity it is a subject; but when it is objectified for other entities in the
process of concrescence, various parts of it can be prehended, either positively or
negatively. Objectification takes an entity apart and picks and chooses which parts it likes
best.

Again, considering the organelles in a cell, each one is different from the rest.

34 Ibid., 343.
35 Ibid., 347.
36 Ibid.
This is the meaning of contrast explicit in any specified complex thing. Each contrast belongs to a particular organism. “Thus every realized contrast has a location, which is particular with the particularity of actual entity. It is a particular complex matter of fact, realized; and, because of its reality, a standing condition in every subsequent actual world from which creative advance must originate.”

The actual world of any actual entity is a nexus which involves a communion of all other entities in the universe. This communion is independent of the entity perceiving it. “It enjoys an objective immortality in the future beyond itself.” Now suppose that a nexus involving B is felt by A, and a nexus involving A is felt by B. Then B feels A feeling B, and A feels B feeling A. But we can continue this *ad infinitum*: B feels A feeling B feeling A feeling… To solve this problem, we must temporalize: in fact, A₁ feels B₁; then, later on, B₂ feels A₁; then A₂ feels B₂, etc.

“A feeling is the appropriation of some elements in the universe to be components in the real internal constitution of its subject.” Each actual entity works with the entire universe, objectifying it and unifying it in itself. In this way creativity manifests itself. The subjective form of a feeling is inseparable from the feeling itself; it is how that feeling feels, what kind of a feeling it is. “It expresses the purpose which urged it forward, and the obstacles which it encountered, and the indeterminations which were dissolved by the originative decisions of the subject.” There are (1) simple physical feelings which are feelings of actual entities; (2) transmuted physical feelings which feel

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37 Ibid., 352.
38 Ibid., 353.
39 Ibid., 354.
a nexus of one kind or another, and (3) conceptual feelings of eternal objects. How do these feelings result in concrescence? According to Whitehead, through positive and negative prehensions one feeling is added to another with which it is compatible, producing novelty until one final unity of feeling arises, and that is satisfaction. Each feeling is aimed at the construction of a subject and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

Each prehension is related to some piece of the total objective datum. Initial data are actual entities; objective data are the feelings entertained by those actual entities. These objectified feelings are felt by the concrescent subject. “The actual entity which is the initial datum is the actual entity perceived, the objective datum is the ‘perspective’ under which that actual entity is perceived, and the subject of the simple physical feeling is the perceiver.”  

Thus, the feelings felt by the object are reproduced in the subject, though not always due to the need to harmonize the feelings received by negatively prehending the contradictory feelings. “Simple physical feelings embody the reproductive character of nature, and also the objective immortality of the past.”

Objects felt are divided and their own feelings separated for the subject to prehend either positively or negatively. Thus, nexüs are reproduced but in such a way as to create novelty. Different entities contribute their feelings to the feeling of the subject, such that the totality of feelings is rearranged, somewhat like the genetic code is rearranged in sexual reproduction, resulting in a new unique creature.

Whitehead classifies simple physical feelings and conceptual feelings (of eternal

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Ibid., 361.

Ibid., 364.
objects) as primary feelings. Any other feeling of whatever complexity results from the integration of a number of these primary feelings. Yet there is a difference: “The actualities have to be felt, while the pure potentials can be dismissed.” The point is that actual entities are “stubborn facts”; they have being. Actual entities cannot help but influence the world, however weakly. In other words, actual entities cannot be ignored. “No entity can be abstracted from its capacity to function as an object in the process of the actual world.”

Immanence and transcendence are the characteristics of an [eternal] object; as a realized determinant it is immanent; as a capacity for determination it is transcendent; in both roles it is relevant to something not itself. There is no character belonging to the actual apart from its exclusive determination by selected eternal objects. The definiteness of the actual arises from the exclusiveness of eternal objects in their function as determinants. … The fact of incompatible alternatives is the ultimate fact in virtue of which there is definite character.

Thus, all actual entities are ultimately determined or defined by eternal objects they choose to accept and make immanent in themselves.

Integrated feelings have to contrast and complement one another, because if all feelings are identical, the resulting integrated feeling will be a simple conjunction of identical things, not at all complex or possessing any sort of intensity. Eternal object ingressing into a subject must pass the test of compatibility with the rest of the subject’s

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42 Ibid., 366.
43 Ibid., 371
44 Ibid., 366ff.
prehensions: “Thus, according as the valuation of the conceptual feeling is a ‘valuation up’ or a ‘valuation down,’ the importance of the eternal object as felt in the integrated feeling is enhanced or attenuated. Thus the valuation is both qualitative, determining how the eternal object is to be utilized, and is also intensive determining what importance that utilization is to assume.”45

Two causes operate on any concrescent actual entity: the efficient cause, by transmitting to it the information from the past, and the final cause in the form of the entity’s subjective aim. “This subjective aim is both an example and a limitation of the ontological principle.”46 It is an example because our entity is progressing toward the ideal that the lure of the subjective aim has set up for it and at each moment in time we can identify the entity in its immediacy. It is a limitation because the subjective aim lies in the future toward which the entity is concrescing. In a way, then, not all explanations lie with only actual entities, some depend on as yet unrealized subjective aims. The subject inherits the subjective aim “from the inevitable ordering of things, conceptually realized in the nature of God.”47

Thus, any actual entity makes itself with an eye toward its subjective aim. But precisely what manner of likeness the actual entity will actualize is left to the discretion of the entity itself.

For Whitehead it is God who provides the subjective aim. “That aim determines the initial gradations of relevance of eternal objects for conceptual feeling.”48 This

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45 Ibid., 368.
46 Ibid., 373.
47 Ibid., 373.
48 Ibid., 374.
term, gradations of relevance is just another term for the entity’s scale of values. For example, humans have competing ends. Not all of them can be satisfied at the same time. Therefore man has to choose which desires he will strive to fulfill. Suppose that I am faced with a choice between three alternatives: (a) to keep writing this paper, (b) to go out for a walk, (c) to eat a sandwich. These are mutually exclusive. Suppose I choose A. Then I have ranked the possible satisfaction of A higher than the possible satisfaction of B or C. Ranking ends is assigning values to possible ends or engaging in the process of valuation. Suppose that I have ranked my ends as follows: (First) A, (Second) C, (Third) B. This is my scale of values or scale of preferences. The scale of values is in the mind, but it is revealed by action. In this case it is called “demonstrated preference” (a standard terms in economics) The value scale is called variously happiness or utility or welfare or satisfaction.

All occasions, including God, have both the physical and the mental pole. “In these ways conceptual feelings pass into the category of physical feelings. Also conversely, physical feelings give rise to conceptual feelings, and conceptual feelings give rise to other conceptual feelings…”49 Without God and the conceptual feelings derived from his primordial nature, there could be no novelty, “with all balance and intensity progressively excluded by the cross currents of incompatibility.”50 In other words, if entities could prehend only the physical feelings of actual entities, degeneration would quickly set in. Progress requires the addition of conceptual feelings and conceptual valuations.

49 Ibid., 376
50 Ibid., 377.
Simple things are characterized by transference of energy. Complex things, by self-making.

“The mental pole introduces the subject as a determinant of its own concrescence. The mental pole is the subject determining its own ideal of itself by reference to eternal principles of valuation autonomously modified in their application to its own physical objective datum.”\(^{51}\) So, the mental pole determines what lures the subject; it chooses the ideal that is will pursue. “The integration of each simple physical feeling with its conceptual counterpart produces in a subsequent phase a physical feeling whose subjective form of re-enaction has gained or lost subjective intensity according to the valuation up, or the valuation down, in the conceptual feeling.” You judge the stimuli, the inputs to your mind as good or bad, important or unimportant, and therefore the “subjective form of re-enaction has gained or lost subjective intensity.”\(^{52}\)

“This ‘aim of contrast’ is the expression of the ultimate creative purpose that each unification shall achieve some maximum depth of intensity of feeling, subject to the conditions of its concrescence.”\(^{53}\) The more elements can be incorporated into a unity without contradicting each other, the better; the more complex a unity is whose diverse and unique components contribute to its function, the greater the depth of the intensity of feeling.

The seventh Category of Subjective Harmony says that conceptual feelings are valued to the extent they harmonize with the existing feelings and with the complex

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 380.
\(^{52}\) Ibid.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 381.
subjective aim.

[A]n eternal object refers only to the purely general any among undetermined actual entities. In itself an eternal object evades any selection among actualities and epochs. You cannot know what is red by merely thinking of redness. You can only find red things by adventuring amid physical experiences in this actual world. This doctrine is the ultimate ground of empiricism; namely, that eternal objects tell no tales as to their ingressions.\(^{54}\)

Then there are propositions and propositional feelings. The former are objective data for the latter. These feelings lie “between the beginning and the end of the integration into consciousness. … Such a feeling does not in itself involve consciousness.” But consciousness requires propositional feelings and their integration with other feelings, either physical or conceptual. Propositions are either true or false, and in that way they differ from eternal objects which do not have truth values. “But the proposition in itself, apart from recourse to [the reasons of actual entities], tells no tales about itself; and in this respect it is indeterminate like the eternal object.” This is obvious, because all propositions must involve some actual entity to be about, and in the absence of such an entity a proposition is neither true nor false. Further, a propositional feeling integrates a physical feeling about an actual entity or a nexus, that is, a particular subject with a conceptual feeling or a universal predicate. “The leaf is green” is such a proposition. Here the “leaf” is a “logical subject” of the proposition, and “greenness” is now restricted in application by specifying the quality to this particular leaf; its absolute

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 391.
generality of reference is eliminated. The eternal object “greenness” is called by
Whitehead the “predicative pattern” of the proposition. Because what matters is merely
the predication of the eternal object, the logical subject is “reduced to the status of food
for a possibility”; these subjects “supply the element of givenness requisite for truth and
falsehood.” Thus, both the subject and the predicate move from potentiality to actuality.
Another obvious point expressed in arcane terminology is that “new propositions come
into being with the creative advance of the world.” Of course, if there are new actual
entities in the world, then new propositions can be formed about them.

Whitehead further subdivides propositional feelings into perceptive feelings and
imaginative feelings, which I understand as feelings coming from sensation or reflection.
If the indicative feeling and the physical recognition are both derived from the same
source, viz., the external world, then the feeling is called “perceptive”; otherwise,
“imaginative.” Those propositional feelings which are marred by the prehending
subject’s own influence on the truth of their propositions are termed “inauthentic,” those
which are not so marred are called “authentic.” Authentic feelings can be direct (where
they involve no reversion) and indirect (when they do involve it). The purpose of these
distinctions is purely academic; nothing seems to turn on them.

The chapter on consciousness or “higher phases of experience” must be saying
something important, but unfortunately I have found it far beyond my intellectual powers.
“In itself an aversion promotes the elimination of content, and the lapse into triviality.”
Physical feelings are integrated with their conceptual correlates. “In this way, the dipolar

55 Ibid., 394-295.
56 Ibid., 422ff.
character of concrescent experience provides in the physical pole for the objective side of experience, derivative from an external actual world, and provides in the mental pole for the subjective side of experience, derivative from the subjective conceptual valuations correlate to the physical feelings.” The former represents the efficient cause of concrescence; the latter, its final cause through the subjective aim. “Secondly, the physical purposes of a subject by their valuations determine the relative efficiency of the various feelings to enter into objectifications of that subject in the creative advance beyond itself.” Thus, the mental pole creates the subject through final causation and creates other entities by objectification of the subject through efficient causation.

“It follows that balanced complexity is the outcome of this final category of subjective aim. Here ‘complexity’ means the realization of contrasts, of contrasts of contrasts, and so on; and ‘balance’ means the absence of attenuations due to elimination of contrasts which some elements in the pattern would introduce and other elements inhibit.” Here complexity corresponds to variety, and balance, to unity, together making up “unity-in-variety,” a familiar criterion of beauty.

Allow me to expound a little bit about human creativity. There are a number of differences between an action intended to attain a particular end and an act of creation. The former entails a clear separation of the means and the end. The end is well-defined. The value of the means depends entirely upon the utility of the end. The expenditure of effort required in order to accomplish the task at hand is a “psychic” cost, meaning that it has disutility; it is toil and trouble. Attaining the end changes the psychological state of

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57 Ibid., 423.
58 Ibid., 424.
the person from less satisfied to more satisfied.

In the beginning or during any creative act, on the contrary, the utility of the state of affairs immediately following creation is never known. The motivation lies not in the anticipation of the future conditions in which the obstacle that prevents one from becoming more satisfied has been removed but in the creative process itself. There is no disutility of labor: the process, being the means by which one’s power and competence are actualized, is pleasing in itself, and the final product is merely its culmination to be later enjoyed or discarded depending on its quality. A creative act need not change the person: it is rather the “pouring out” of oneself into a thing (or creature) being created.

This applies even to procreation (which for at least some Christians has a good deal of theological significance). Under normal circumstances no couple intends to conceive a child by going in the bedroom and deciding heroically to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of their goal. Rather, they engage in a process which for them is an end in itself and of which the child is the final result. The end and the means are one.

Ludwig von Mises puts it this way:

For the pioneering genius to create is the essence of life. To live means for him to create.

The activities of these prodigious men cannot be fully subsumed under the praxeological concept of labor. They are not labor because they are for the genius not means, but ends in themselves. He lives in creating and inventing. For him there is not leisure, only intermissions of temporary sterility and frustration. His incentive is not the desire to bring about a result, but the act of producing it. The
accomplishment gratifies him neither mediately nor immediately. It does not gratify him mediately because his fellow men at best are unconcerned about it, more often even greet it with taunts, sneers, and persecution. Many a genius could have used his gifts to render his life agreeable and joyful; he did not even consider such a possibility and chose the thorny path without hesitation. The genius wants to accomplish what he considers his mission, even if he knows that he moves toward his own disaster.

Neither does the genius derive immediate gratification from his creative activities. Creating is for him agony and torment, a ceaseless excruciating struggle against internal and external obstacles; it consumes and crushes him.\(^59\)

So, creativity is the result of and consummated in the form of the process itself with its unity of opposition.

The actual occasion that completes Whitehead’s metaphysics is called God. Exactly why Whitehead postulates God and why God is in his understanding such and such is unclear. Nor is God the any sort of ultimate principle; if anything qualifies for this role, it would be “creativity”: “In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed ‘creativity’; and God is its primordial, non-temporal accident.”\(^60\) God obeys Whitehead’s metaphysical principles with the same slavishness as any actual entity, no matter how trivial. Yet God is different from any such actual entity, and it is worth detailing how.

God’s primordial nature consists of a disjunction of the infinity of the eternal objects. “In this abstraction he is ‘deficiently actual’ – and this in two ways. His feelings are only conceptual and so lack the fullness of actuality. Secondly, conceptual feelings, apart from complex integration with physical feelings, are devoid of consciousness in

\(^59\) Mises, Human Action, 139.
\(^60\) Whitehead, Process and Reality, 11.
their subjective forms.” His creative acts consist of the ordering of the scale of values of temporal actual entities, their subjective aims. His God works by luring things to their objective immortalities.

But God has a second pole to his nature called the consequent pole. Again, once a thing becomes satisfied, it becomes objectively immortal and stays this way even if it perishes later on. God feeds on these objectively immortal entities in order to grow in his consequent nature. The growth is neither good nor evil but is rather an increase in experiences; God is a kind of collector of satisfied though dead actual entities. Since Whitehead does not argue for subjective immortality, the purpose of the world and life, he says, is to enrich God’s storehouse of experiences. Whitehead does not conceive of the world as having been made due to the outpouring of God’s love, a self-diffusion of goodness but as an appendage to God’s primordial nature, serving to get God out of his boredom and into some novelty. The consequent nature is “determined, incomplete, consequent, ‘everlasting’ [meaning without beginning or end though not timeless, i.e., aeviternity], fully actual, and conscious.” It is also finite. God saves every actual entity from the evil of perpetual perishing with which its temporal existence has cursed it by taking it unto himself. Each actual occasion is safely stored within God’s consequent nature.

Whitehead calls the perfect God of Christianity a victim of the “vicious separation of the flux from permanence.” Let’s consider his contrasts:

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

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61 Ibid., 521.
62 Ibid., 526.
is permanent and God is fluent.” God is permanent in his primordial nature, fluent in his consequent nature; The World is permanent with respect to the objectively immortal entities in God’s little menagerie, and fluent in the becoming of actual occasions.

- “It is as true to say that God is one and the World is many, as that the World is one and God many.” God is the unity of feeling in its consequent nature and an inefficient disjunction of many eternal objects in his primordial nature. The World is one in that every actual entity is prehended by every actual occasion, forming a global unity for that occasion; in other words, each occasion prehends the entire world and is a world in itself; it is many insofar as there are many actual entities, societies, and nexus.

- “It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.” God is more actual in his consequent nature than any actual entity in the World by virtue of seeing, possessing, and enjoying numerous experiences of entities from whenever the time began. Yet any actual entity, regardless of how inconsequential, is more actual than the set of all of God’s eternal objects.

- “It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World.” The objectified relics of the World find their resting place in God’s consequent nature; thus, they are immanent in him. God’s subjective ends inform the telos of actual entities and thus are immanent in all that there is.

- “It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends
God.” God transcends the World, because of the infinity of the eternal objects floating in his primordial nature, ready for evaluations by actual occasions. The World transcends God, insofar as the novelty that God seeks for his own amusement occurs within the World; he is merely a consumer of it.

- “It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.”

The first, through subjective aims, the second, through an accumulation of experiences of the adventures of actual entities in God’s consequent nature.

At this point we are entitled to ask, Is God merely a collection of all possible worlds? If he is such a collection, then Whitehead is absolutely right, at least as to his notion of God’s “primordial nature” consisting of “eternal objects” whose “ingressions” by God’s decrees in varying ways ultimately are “prehended” by and make up all “actual entities.” But, forgetting Whitehead and remembering Aquinas, that would seem to make God comprehensible. There is no reason why a creature who is seeing God while in the state of glory will not be able to get to know all of those possible worlds. Even in this life, we can let our imaginations run wild and come up with a world full of Flying Spaghetti Monsters (despicable creatures, I might add), a world in which tree leaves are blue, and an infinite amount of other nonsense like that. I suspect that God is far more than merely all possibilities for creation. In him are the secrets of infinite love, knowledge, and power, of eternity and simplicity, and these, I think, are his to keep for himself forever and a day.

For how long this peculiar dance of the World and God will go on, and to what end, Whitehead leaves unclear. Perhaps Hartshorne will enlighten us. Let’s see what he has to say on these matters.
Chapter 2: Hartshorne

In this chapter, I will take into consideration the process conception of “immortality” as proposed and defended by Charles Hartshorne. Hartshorne was a student of Whitehead at Harvard University and is credited as the philosophical theologian who continued and furthered the development of process thought beyond the work of the founder of the school.

My reason for focusing on the topic of immortality is that the differences between process metaphysics and what I define as a classical Christian metaphysics comes into stark relief when the conceptions of “mortality” and “immortality” are taken into consideration.

Hartshorne proposes that given a process metaphysics, process thought provides for the possibility of “immortality” or “life after” or “beyond” death. The details of Hartshorne’s proposal will be explicated below. However, while Hartshorne develops a process conception of immortality, I will take issue with the conception on a number of points, and argue for a position which I will define (stipulatively) as a classical theistic (Christian) metaphysical conception of immortality. I do not propose to defend a classical conception of immortality but to employ such a position in contrast to what I take to be questionable in Hartshorne’s alternative process proposal.

Hartshorne’s position on the matter of immortality stands in stark relief from what he takes to be the naïve conception of human immortality in Christian religious convictions. Hartshorne writes: “Accepting the two commandments said to sum up Biblical religion is one thing, belief in tall tales about human careers after death is
another…” 63 He continues: “The real death is indeed something which we undergo every minute, and for which there is no human remedy. This death is forgetting. The value of life is in the experiences of living; but these experiences perish almost as fast as they are born.” From this our author derives his doctrine of objective immortality: “the forgotten experiences are not thereby lost, since they are one and all additions to the experiences of God, the all-cherishing or cosmically social being…” 64

For Hartshorne, the lives lived are perfectly preserved in God’s consequent nature. God remembers them, cherishes them, and contemplates them. God’s subjectivity exceeds any occasion’s subjectivity. All subjective experiencing leads to a conclusion, to an end. Each conclusion marks the end of that particular subjectivity. What remains of the particular experience, what remains of the specific subjectivity, is the objectivity of the having experienced other objects. In the midst of all subjective mortality, there is the possibility of an other subjective-experiencing which experiences the earlier experience as an object in the moment of prehension. And yet, the subsequent subjective-experiencing also comes to an end, reaches a conclusion, and attains objectivity. Thus, the subsequent experiencing subject which experienced the previous mortal objectivity of the earlier experience also perishes. Each subjective-experiencing of previous objects subsequently extends the “life” or “influence” of the previous objectivity of the previous mortal subjective-experiencing.

Here it must be added that Hartshorne views God as the world-soul, such that humans are the cells which, though partly autonomous and self-created, are nevertheless

63 Hartshorne, Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes, 117.
64 Hartshorne, Reality As Social Process, 41ff.
short lived and perish quickly only to become prehended in the next-generation of cell life. The ordering of the cells is both the outcome of the objective certainly established by previous mortal cell life and the opportunities for novel cell life. But such generational becoming cannot be said to be ordered to God’s well-being, like the bodily cells of a human being are ordered to the good of the person in whose body these cells are located.

Now Whitehead contends that “It is fundamental to the metaphysical doctrine of the philosophy of organism, that the notion of an actual entity as the unchanging subject of change is completely abandoned.”65 “The ancient doctrine that ‘no one crosses the same river twice’ is extended. No thinker thinks twice; and to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice. This is what Locke ought to have meant by his doctrine of a ‘perpetual perishing.’”66 “Thus,” contends Whitehead, “God has objective immortality in respect to his primordial nature and his consequent nature.”67

In what follows I will try to argue that this statement is problematic. Let’s consider a position I will stipulatively define as classical Christian theism. I believe that it is not without resources to deal with Hartshorne’s objections; and I will argue that even on his own terms Hartshorne fails to make the case. Let’s assume, according to that position, that human beings enjoy everlasting life from at least birth onward, and that an aspect of such immortality is perfect memory. In other words, God is omniscient and invites others to remember their lives. This can be argued for in a number of different ways, such as for identity. In order to be what you are, you must know how you became

65 *Process and Reality*, 29.
67 *Process and Reality*, 32.
this way, and if almost every moral human action is either good or bad in a morally
significant way, almost everything you’ve done must have had an effect on your own
continuing identification and so present state and must therefore be remembered. Note
that I have not addressed in this critique the question of whether or not human
immortality is that of an actual entity (which would be more in keeping with traditional
or classical Christian theism in which selves enjoy singularity) or as an integrated society
(more in keeping with a process metaphysics). Otherwise, God might as well have
created humans as already fully formed with complete personalities and with imagined
memories of how humans acquired them.

Human mortal actions have natural psychological consequences. We are in a
position to influence our well-being either towards happiness or sorrow; and so immortal
satisfaction is not entirely independent of how we arranged our mortal affairs. To what
extent we attained happiness is inseparable from the means by which we attained or
failed to attain satisfaction. These actions, including thoughts and feelings, must be
remembered, lest we be forever perplexed by effects without knowing their causes.

Now immortal life is mortal life transcended. But it is still one’s own life in some
significant sense of belonging. Though there is a transition, there is also a continuation.
In some significant sense, the immortal life would be no less the same life than one’s own
life from moment to moment, day to day, year to year, decade to decade. It’s the same
life, even if it is continuing much differently than before. The question that gets to the
point would be “if there is no memory of one’s own, no process of social or individual
recall, how are we to make sense of continuity of a society from one moment to the next,
day to day, year to year?” These three points tell against the objection that once lessons are learned and transformation accomplished, subjectivity ends as does the memory of one’s own society, because otherwise one would be in a position to recall for all eternity one’s own most horrid episodes.

God’s grace and mercy (as understood in classical Christian metaphysics) and our own efforts may help us attain salvation but the precise reward given is proportional to one’s charity and deeds. In order for us to understand why we are given this particular immortal reward, we must remember our lives in excruciating detail, because God takes everything into account. Aquinas writes that God loves more the better things\(^{68}\), meaning that (1) God wills more good to A than to B; that is, wills A to be better than B, and because of that A is better than B; and (2) God bestows a greater reward on A than he does on B due to A’s greater merits. In the Catholic theological tradition, at least, any saint is by definition perfectly content with his or her particular station in the celestial hierarchy, but that can only occur if the saint agrees with God’s or his or her own judgment of their life, and that, once more, requires perfect memory or knowledge of it. It may be objected that even in the state of glory we will not have an omniscient understanding of our lives’ full significance. But the Catholic Church disagrees, saying in the Catechism, §314 that “Only at the end, when our partial knowledge ceases, when we see God ‘face to face,’ will we fully know the ways by which – even through the dramas of evil and sin – God has guided his creation to that definitive sabbath rest for which he created heaven and earth.” Another objection is, why can’t I agree with judgment without

\(^{68}\) *Summa Theologica*, I, 20, 4.
perfect knowledge? Because the dictum “know yourself” applies in immortality fully. Aquinas likens glory to “clarity” which, according to one of my interpretations, means complete self-knowledge which presupposes the knowledge of your history as argued above.

Human powers or energy are the source of human actions. We have the dignity of causation and not just any such but free causation. We must know what impact we made on the world, how the world might perhaps have been worse or even different if we had never been born. We are not irrelevant to the sequence of events in the world, the way its affairs progress, or the world’s meaning and purpose. Our lives must have mattered. This it seems to me is the purpose of subjective immortality. Remembering “how bravely we fought, how fiercely we loved”\textsuperscript{69} is essential to attaining human subjective immortality. Now Hartshorne might object that the past is prehended by God, too. But I would argue that the urgency of this knowledge or prehension is far greater for the subject of the prehension of the objects from the perspective of the subject prehending. Our lives are more important to us in some ultimately significant way than to God, because, as Aquinas might say, we are substantially united with ourselves. (“But a man loves himself more than another: because he is one with himself substantially, whereas with another he is one only in the likeness of some form.”\textsuperscript{70})

If God has perfect knowledge of all our adventures, why can’t an immortal subject have similar knowledge about his or her own finite experiences? Hartshorne’s God misses no detail during his prehension of human lives. But if God can remember all,

\textsuperscript{70} Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II-I, 27, 3.
why can’t each immortal subject be endowed with similar power with respect to his or her own life? Hartshorne would seem to have no response to this argument. We need to acknowledge this in order to understand that it is not contradictory to suppose that human memory in immortality can be perfect.

It might be argued that many episodes of our lives are, in fact, better left forgotten, so much guilt and shame their remembrance would bring. But suppose that free-will compatibilism is true. A person’s acts are determined by his or her value scale or desires, beliefs, and powers. In other words, given what a person loves or the end he or she wants to attain, the knowledge of the means by which the end is attained, and the ability to actualize the plan of action, the desire will invariably be acted on and satisfied. Knowing these things can allow one to predict what a person will do. External objects and internal states or body and mind determine the desires, etc. In this case then for any action you performed during this life, you could not do otherwise. (For example, you may have had the power to do otherwise but not the desire. Or knowledge.) Hence there is really nothing to be ashamed of, only learned from. In addition, God’s providence took our actions into account in that if he allowed us to sin, it must have been for a purpose. Remember away!

I question Hartshorne’s adequacy to differentiate between active life and contemplative life. The becoming ceases with death; there is no more striving, no more dissatisfaction that human action can correct. Aquinas writes that angels, in the course of their immortal lives, “enlighten” each other. There is no reason why humans can’t grow in the intellectual, non-active virtues, as well, of which three are commonly
distinguished: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The infinity of God ensures that this process need not ever end. The (actually infinite) riches of God require a (potentially infinite) life to discover all of them.

Finally, the knowledge of mortal life need not be such as to cause one to relive or even to be able to relive every misfortune or evil (whether moral or physical), once the life review is complete. One can know X or that X took place without experiencing X. One can further interpret his knowledge in any useful way whatsoever without re-experiencing the events known. If there is no action in immortality but only contemplation of truths or the good in one’s possession, then one should be able to contemplate his or her own mortal life with the same complete detachment with which he contemplates everything else. And even if memories may in principle retain the capacity to cause pain even in the state of bliss, I would speculate that in transcending one’s own mortal life in immortality one will simply not think about one’s mortal life. The quote “the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4) might poetically illustrates the argument. Once one is finished, whatever he will be, the rigors of being made will no longer occupy one at all.71 The past is objective, and with that I agree with Hartshorne, but only in the sense that a deed may be in the past and done, but either guilt or glory is in the present and remains. This means that subjectivity and the process of living need not disappear even with the radical diminution of the power of the mortal past to affect the “present” in the immortal aevidernity.

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71 It may be asked what kind of memories are restored to the saints. I think they are the memories of goings-on crucial to conscious experience. Hence the memory of the experiences of cells within one’s body will not be part of what they know, though the “muscle memory” of how to play tennis will, at least after resurrection.
Thus, the past, the lives of the humans are preserved (perfectly) not only from the 3rd-person perspective of God but from the 1st-person perspective of the immortal subject. In fact, it is preserved in the second way more perfectly than in the first way: I own my life and my identity in the way that God does not own them. Further, in the phenomenon known as “life review” during many near-death experiences people are often shown in great detail how their actions affected other human beings. In a manner of speaking, their consciousness is working at 100% efficiency, and they feel and are profoundly affected by what other people felt reacting to them. If we draw upon this as an analogy, then we might contend that human lives are preserved also from the 2nd-person perspective of those influenced by a person’s actions. In the communion of saints the blessed, after all, are members of one another (through charity). Thus, it is my contention that the classical account of our careers as potentially everlasting subjects is far richer and more interesting for both God and men than the Hartshorne’s account.

Further, Hartshorne accuses classical theism of making God different from everything else, transcendent and totally other. But Hartshorne himself treats God differently from any other actual occasion. For these occasions are means to God’s happiness. God himself never finishes the process of becoming, never solidifies into an objectively immortal entity. God forever enjoys his activity of prehending the actual occasions in the world as a subject. Thus, God alone for Hartshorne among all actual occasions and actual entities continues for all time to enjoy subjectivity.
Chapter 3: Comparison and Critique

The disanalogy between God as the world-soul and a human being is that humans don’t care about the lives of their bodily cells, unless something is wrong with the body. Old cells constantly die, and new cells are generated. There is no immortality for cells of any kind, subjective or objective. We are not even aware of this process of bodily renewal. As world-soul, why would God be any more interested in us than we are of our bodies’ cells? For example, the purpose of pain is to alert the person to some danger to his or her health or life. The cells are means to an end, an indispensable means if conscious processes in the mortal life depend heavily on proper functioning of the body, the brain, etc., but a means nonetheless. The damage to the cells would be irrelevant if human health did not depend on it. A man does not “feel the feelings” of his cells, especially if they are healthy. Even sick cells, if they are few, are not felt. Moreover, the lives of cells go on independently of consciousness. The mind does not exercise “supreme influence upon growth”72 of the body. If the world is at all like the human body, God could care less about most of our travails. On the other hand, there is a lot of evil, pain and suffering in the world — is God in perpetual agony? Then there is the problem of motivation: What’s in it for me, that my life will be preserved as a file in God’s celestial computer, to be “aesthetically enjoyed” by God? Also, with the world-soul Hartshorne seems to slink back into the dualism he inveighs so much against. It is the fate of all actual occasions except God finally to “become,” to die and be “raised up” as objectively immortal. But God remains a subject, forever and ever. God has to, lest the

72 Hartshorne, Man’s Vision of God, 193.
past be forgotten. In order for the past to endure, some process must go on somewhere. That process, for Hartshorne, goes on without interruption in God.

A related problem is that the future is not yet and not even for God. Yet how does the Hartshornian risk-taker God know that the future will be to God’s satisfaction, at the very least that the good will outweigh the evil, so as to make God’s life worth living? If God suffers, as well as rejoices, as we do, then what’s to guarantee that there will be less suffering than enjoyment? What’s to guarantee the eventual victory of good over evil, if that is even a concern? Hartshorne’s God is irresponsible both with us and with himself. This is not an attractive concept of God. But if God knows God’s own future (which Hartshorne denies), then he must be atemporally eternal. And then we are back to the classical concept of God. In addition, human bodies die. Can God’s body die, too, if, say, the human race perishes? Hartshorne gives no indication of how God can exist without the world.

In addition, our author is wrong that “the value of life is in the experiences of living”; the value of life is in virtue and in happiness. Thus, the experience of one’s own moral evil is not valuable. The experience of being punished is not valuable, except, perhaps, if it teaches you a lesson, and if you can recover from your error. So, God cannot be a collector of both good and evil as if they were equally valuable. Yet this is what Hartshorne seems to suggest.

Hartshorne is preoccupied with the idea that a worthy God has to have “sympathy” for us, that he loves as we love: by feeling our feelings, our joys and sorrows. At first glance this seems a good thing, better than Aquinas’s contrary idea that
Mercy is especially to be attributed to God, as seen in its effect, but not as an affection of passion. In proof of which it must be considered that a person is said to be merciful, as being, so to speak, sorrowful at heart; being affected with sorrow at the misery of another as though it were his own. Hence it follows that he endeavors to dispel the misery of this other, as if it were his; and this is the effect of mercy. To sorrow, therefore, over the misery of others belongs not to God; but it does most properly belong to Him to dispel that misery, whatever be the defect we call by that name.\textsuperscript{73}

Yet what is the point of sympathy for misery without dispensing that misery? What is more valuable, a mere feeling or good deeds? Hartshorne’s God feels sympathetical feelings without actually going out and helping me with my predicaments. If he is the world-soul, and we are cells, then the least he can do if he has a cut, and the cells are suffering, is to put a band-aid over the wound. Ironically, the chief reason why the God of classical theism allows people to suffer is precisely what Hartshorne himself is pushing, namely, to allow for soul-building or self-creation. God cannot decide for us what we want to do and what we want to become. He lets us make ourselves to an extent and to resist evil. Yet in doing so God does not abdicate his control or providential government over the world.

Further, what makes Hartshorne think that God cares about humans at all? Perhaps he is rather more interested in planets and stars and galaxies. Don’t those, too, comprise God’s body? And why believe that humans are the pinnacle of “creation,” to use that idiom? Perhaps we are but means to some superhuman beings who will evolve

\textsuperscript{73} Aquians, \textit{Summa Theologica}, I, 21, 3.
later on in the life (used literally) of our universe. For, indeed, humans are not at all like Hartshorne’s God; more Godlike things might be in the making, and we are mere useful but ultimately irrelevant stations on the way to them. Hence, there is no immortality for us, not even “objective.”

Our author might object that a perfect God is a mere tool of humans, a means to their happiness, nothing more. Now Aquinas divides goodness into three kinds: virtuous, useful, and pleasant: the useful is a means to an end; the virtuous is the end itself, sought for its own sake; the pleasant is the will’s rest in the end attained. Why can’t God be all three of useful, virtuous, and pleasant? In other words, God is a (useful) means by which we get to (virtuous) God, and, having attained him, (pleasantly) rest in possessing him. Or, Aquinas argues that in order to see the essence of God, a human intellect must be illuminated by grace “in order that it may be raised up to such a great and sublime height.”74 This grace is a means to the end of seeing God and to the happiness resulting therefrom. Further, God is not a tool to be used by humans for their own ends; while it is true that only God can lift a person up into fellowship with him, and in this sense he is indeed a useful good, it is he who acts on us, not we on or with him. The end of all this is friendship between God and man; the pleasure felt is secondary to this friendship. And friends do not use or think of each other as if they were mere things.

Speaking of tools, both Whitehead and Hartshorne make impossible subject-to-subject communication. All communion is of a subject appropriating for itself as an object or part of an object in order to prehend it. God may cherish human lives, but he is

74 Ibid., I, 12, 5.
never in communion with any person. A subject never loves another subject, he just uses that subject to further its own interests. And that includes God. Everything is a resource being drawn on by God; the objective past is influencing God’s subjective ongoing becoming.

And what of sympathy for sin? I suggest that God has and ought to have no sympathy for that. Our author does not treat the subject of virtues and vices at all, nor does he tell us how God is supposed to react to evil.

Hartshorne argues that God is perfect in some ways and imperfect in others. By “perfect” he means unsurpassable by anyone including oneself. By “imperfect” he means unsurpassable by anyone except oneself. In particular, God is metaphysically perfect: “God is perfect in love, but never completed, ever growing (partly through our efforts) in the joy, the richness of his life, and this without end through all the infinite future.”75 Even if God is perfect also in wisdom and power, Hartshorne argues, God might well be capable of improvement in happiness. Given also that “God loves us, and through love shares in our sorrows, and is grieved by our misfortunes and errors,”76 Hartshorne’s God is also morally perfect. Yet he is not perfect in happiness, that is, he can surpass his present happiness. Unfortunately for him, however, this is impossible:

[Action can only be imputed to a discontented being, and repeated action only to a being who lacks the power to remove his uneasiness once and for all at one stroke. An acting being is discontented and therefore not almighty. If he were contented, he would not act, and if he were almighty, he would have long since

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75 Hartshorne, *Reality As Social Process*, 156.
76 Ibid., 157.
radically removed his discontent. For an all-powerful being there is no pressure to choose between various states of uneasiness; he is not under the necessity of acquiescing in the lesser evil. Omnipotence would mean the power to achieve everything and to enjoy full satisfaction without being restrained by any limitations. But this is incompatible with the very concept of action. For an almighty being the categories of ends and means do not exist. He is above all human comprehension, concepts, and understanding. For the almighty being every “means” renders unlimited services, he can apply every “means” for the attainment of any ends, he can achieve every end without the employment of any means.  

Thus, a metaphysically and morally perfect God cannot help but be at least perfectly satisfied and happy. If he is not fully happy, then he is not omnipotent. Now Hartshorne may try to weasel out of his predicament by saying that God is perfect in love but not in power. But this, too, is impossible, as an elementary analysis of the Trinity (wherein the Father stands for essence, the Son, for self-knowledge, and the Holy Spirit, for self-love) demonstrates.

Hartshorne objects: “To be happy is not a mere function of these three variables. For to know all that exists is not to know all that might exist, except as potentialities, and if potentialities are as good as actualities, then let us all cease to exist and be done with it.”78 I don’t understand Hartshorne’s problem. God knows what exists as actual and what might exist as possible. Hence his knowledge is complete.

Hartshorne’s God feels or is influenced by our joys and sorrows. God loves us as we humans love. But if he loves, then he must have a will. What does this God will aside

77 Mises, *Human Action*, 69.
from passively feeling our feelings? Presumably, he enjoys his present happiness, and he
wills an increase in his own happiness, his happiness depending solely on the size of his
storehouse of human experiences. But how can it be, when the world, which is God’s
body, is co-eternal with God and uncreated and necessary? The world is a given. God
then is a passive recipient of human experiences. He is a toy of human emotions, thrown
to and fro by what we feel. He may enjoy this process, as I may enjoy a roller coaster
ride, but he cannot will it, the process being independent of God’s volition.

Therefore, Hartshorne’s God does not act, freely or otherwise; God is merely
acted upon. It is as if God’s brain’s pleasure centers were being stimulated by electrodes:
it is a good thing, I suppose, but God does not act to bring about an increase in his own
happiness; it happens “by itself.” In other words, God does not have a will of his own; he
does not love himself as he is in himself — there is nothing to love, and the potentialities
for creation in his primordial nature are not the sort of things that can be loved. He is
totally dependent on us for any feelings he might have; he lives vicariously through us.
Suppose there is a nuclear war; most of the population is wiped out, and the survivors
have turned into barbarians. Would God hurt? Yes, on Hartshorne’s theory, very much
so. I feel sorry for this God.

God, according to our author, without creation, would have no good worth
mentioning. God is not goodness, much less his own goodness; all goodness that he has
(since only actuality is good) resides solely in creation. We are images, then… of what?
We don’t have primordial and consequent natures. What has human nature to do with
these wild speculations? What do we imitate in God? Once again, Hartshorne’s conceives
of God as a unique being, unlike anything found in this world. Yet it is arrived at neither by way of negative theology nor by way of the perfect being/positive theology. What reason, is there, then, to accept Hartshorne’s theology?

Even eternal objects used by actual entities in their self-making are not chosen by God; they are made effective by a process of prehension as one entity objectifies another, thereby disassembling it into the eternal objects that went into its construction. This raises an additional question. Humans have been on this planet in a more-or-less modern form for at most some several hundred thousand years, while the universe is 13.7 billion years old. What was God doing waiting all this time for the appearance of humans in order to suck up their life experiences? And what will he do when the human race disappears?

Moreover, what is it that Hartshorne’s God does not know and must find out through the lives of humans? If God has within himself (that is, within his primordial nature) all the potentialities of actually existing things, then why does he need to actualize some of these potentialities? Why can’t he simply copy some of them into his consequent nature without going through the highly roundabout method of the Hartshornian “production of experiences” in the attendant to it world? God uses a very inefficient method of production of experiences. Our author writes that “Actual value is not mere intent or cause of achievement, but achievement itself.”

But if God’s goal is contemplation of human lives (for what else could it be?), then God should be able to do this even if these lives are lived only in his imagination. Hartshorne might reply that God has no knowledge of how the self-making or concrescence of actual occasions will

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proceed. Still, it seems that the infinite riches of God’s potentialities can provide for far more interesting works of God’s imagination than the actual lives.

Hartshorne’s God is the world-soul, a cosmic “group mind” of a kind. We shall deal with what seem to me to be problems of this concept below. Our author writes:

Man has an ultimately *rational* need to regard himself as contributing to something quite as concrete and individual as himself, but, unlike himself, not limited and localized in space and time (nor yet, for all that, purely timeless and immaterial!). If religion persists in telling us that God is eternally complete and self-sufficient in all respects, so that no contribution of any kind can be made to the divine experience, then men will look elsewhere for the concrete meaning of the “good of all” or the common good. But where shall they find it? Obviously in some dangerous myth of a non-divine group mind.80

This is an argument for process theism from “bad consequences.” If *belief* in classical theism leads to the evil myths of nationalism and Nazism and total wars and so on, then it cannot be true. First, of course, the argument is invalid. A belief in the God of classical theism can be true despite the alleged fact of its widespread existence’s having negative consequences. Second, is it true that classical theism, which does posit a perfect God, results in nationalism? I very much doubt that. Christianity, as a faith interpreted by classical theism, is a universal religion. It teaches that everyone is one’s neighbor. It demands allegiance before any other person or institution, including the nation-state. It blesses the peacemakers. And it demands perfection in these from every one of its adherents. Hartshorne reduces political perversions to a single explanation – bad religion.

80 Ibid., 66.
But this is surely too simplistic; e.g., nationalism is a product of bad economic reasoning, anti-libertarian ideologies, hatred of the other — all vices which have nothing to do with Christianity. Third, if we take the phrase “group mind” metaphorically, then it need not be dangerous. Why may not a person express his desire to contribute to the common good not by being a belligerent nationalist but by donating to Food for the Poor or to any charity that cares for the most unfortunate in the human family? In fact, if you want to know what you can do for God, Christianity provides an answer. As Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25:40) Fourth, the God of classical theism is not inaccessible to human beings, as God is fundamentally goodness which is communication of being or perfections (thus, goodness is on one level communication of being and on another level, the being communicated). This communication has not ceased with creation but is continuing ever second of every day.

But Hartshorne is not done yet. He comes up with another objection:

The “group mind” in the bad sense was the result of the common failure of atheism and traditional absolutistic theism to furnish any rational conception of a concrete whole to which we can devote ourselves and which, by this devotion, we can enrich with a value that it would otherwise lack. Thus, men were condemned to live for themselves, or for one another as together constituting a collection without concrete inclusive unity, the entire collection being apparently doomed to extinction when the planet ceases, some day, to be habitable. Men were separate entities, but infinitely far from any kind of self-sufficiency. … [Hence,] the
concrete or group mind conception of God.81

In other words, what Hartshorne is saying is that his God as the world-soul provides a means to *transcendence* by humans away from their limitations. Like cells in the body of an animal, they participate in something greater than they, namely, God’s life and the swelling up of his consequent nature. It is that which gives meaning to their lives.

I find many difficulties with this idea. First, this sort of transcendence is temporary and ends with death of the subject. It is hardly meaningful to describe objective immortality as a state of transcendence, because there are no longer any prehensions going on and no experiencing.

Second, transcending oneself to a level which is still imperfect does not solve the problem that Hartshorne’s ideas are supposed to solve. It only postpones it and its symptom, namely, dissatisfaction with what there is. Only absolute perfection can fully satisfy the human mind and heart.

Third, service to Hartshorne’s deity is thankless and tiresome. What’s the reward? The meaning and purpose? Not so fast. To be part of God’s collection of dead butterflies (aka human lives) forever and ever somehow does not strike me as a proper reward for providing God with something to “aesthetically enjoy.” What I want, at least, is to be part of the beauty and goodness that I helped create not only as an object, but as an experiencing subject. In order for that to happen, that is, to enjoy those beauty and goodness, I have to be conscious and alive. I, too, want to enjoy what God enjoys. Otherwise, why bother? As a Christian, I have long realized that one need not bother

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81 Ibid., 67.
doing favors for God. So, my view is that Hartshorne “bothers” due to habit not serious and genuine reflection.

For example, in an earlier work our author writes: “every child that comes into the world and brings a new note of freshness, every youth for whom the world looks young, contributes this freshness… to God…”82 Herein lies an apparent injustice of Hartshorne’s worldview, given his own theism. The child is not loved for his own sake, as a new being ready to experience the world afresh. He is valued only as a source of aesthetic enjoyment by God after he is dead. He is a laborer of the only employer in the cosmos, and he is allowed to live only as long as he produces.

To put it in different words, Hartshorne wants to involve God into the world. He is reticent to let humans “use” God for their own ends, as per his interpretation of classical theism. But instead of somehow equalizing the situation, Hartshorne inverts it, making God use humans for their his own ends, while still being unable to enter into subject-to-subject communion with them.

Fourth, Hartshorne writes:

Though in religion one speaks of ’serving’ God, in reality, according to technical theology, one can do nothing for God, and our worst sins harm God as little as the finest acts of sainthood advance him. Religious motivation is not altruistic desire to benefit God but solely individual or collective egoism of the creatures, who serve themselves through God, but never God through their own achievements.83

I can sense several apparent problems here. First, by sinning you hurt not God as

82 Hartshorne, Man’s Vision of God, 228.
83 Ibid., 114.
a being but goodness, whose extent is diminished, and by doing good you increase the
length to which goodness extends. The state of affairs after sin is worse than the state of
affairs before sin. As has already been mentioned, God is first and foremost goodness,
understood as communication of being. Second, service to God is a means to an end, the
end being acquiring virtues and God’s own perfections. It is a part of progress in love,
whereby slavery precedes servanthood, and servanthood, sonship. Aquinas, too, writes of
the three stages of moral progress which he labels “beginning,” “proficient,” and
“perfect,” corresponding nicely to the other three stages just mentioned. For beginners
must combat sin to which they are enslaved; the proficient, advance in virtue through
service and works of mercy and good deeds; and the perfect, prepare for the union with
God. Third, God rejoices at our good deeds and therefore receives accidental happiness
through his goodness.

Finally, Christianity, as an implementation of classical theism, offers its own path
to transcendence, and that is through faith, hope, and most important of all, charity.
Through faith one is lifted above one’s nature in knowledge. Through hope, one believes
that salvation and perfect happiness are possible, and so the lifting up is in power. And
charity is a unitive force, which unites one in a bond of friendship and love with God and
neighbor.

The analogy of the human soul’s quickening and commanding the body as master
commands the slave is used to postulate a world-soul God which must, though
Hartshorne does not say it in so many words, quicken and animate the universe. Here the
question arises: How does the world depend on God? What kind of a body is it? How did
it happen to become suitable to be ensouled by God when it is uncreated, according to our authors? By lucky accident? Suppose that Hartshorne’s God died. What would happen to the universe? One answer is that God provides the lure for becoming and concrescence. So, would all motion stop? (That’s strange, since all motion is relative.) Would all laws of nature stop working and pure chaos reign? (We can’t imagine anything like that.) What does God do for the world? Another answer is that God preserves the world’s dead past. That’s good for God, I suppose, but it does not answer the question as to why the universe would not be perfectly happy without God at all. The preservation of the past happens in God’s consequent nature, isolated from the universe which is copied into it. The copy is dependent on the original, but not the original on the copy. So, that’s a dead end.

Further, God’s body, the world, seems to have no brain and no nervous system; it is barely integrated and is not really a “society” of any kind. It is far less suitable for ensoulment than an animal body, especially for a being as great as God. It would seem that the body of God should be much more tightly stitched together and unified than a human body. Yet it clearly is not. Hence the world cannot be God’s body.

It is certainly not true that “physical pleasure is enjoyed by the bodily cells, and participated in by us.” Bodily cells don’t have pleasure centers. It is unknown, of course, how the right chemical and electrical impulses are translated into a subjective experience of pleasure. Regardless, sensual pleasure belongs properly to higher animals, certainly not individual cells.

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84 Hartshorne, Man’s Vision of God, 152.
Hartshorne’s God is composite. But if God and being are potentially separable to the point of God’s being mortal, then what or who sustains God in existence and prevents his death? What, for example, keeps God’s primordial and consequent natures united with one another? Or, what force preserves the connection between God and the world?

God has to save himself from death by switching universes when the current one he is using is about to die. By this I mean any kind of “heat death” or “big freeze” in which there is really no more becoming, no processes going on worthy of preserving by God. In other words, the world-soul has to continuously re-incarnate into different bodies. Now it is logically possible that no world exists at some time (and if God has no beginning, then in infinite time all possibilities are realized, so there has, in fact, been time at which no world existed). Does it mean that God does not always exist, and if God is necessary, then God must be impossible? (This is a simple deduction from the modal logic involved. Let it be that according to our concept of God, if God exists at all, then God exists necessarily. But we have seen that it is possible that God does not exist. Therefore, our conception must be self-contradictory and hence God is impossible.)

Is it true that, if God is limited to space and time, then he cannot think any faster than the speed of light? In other words, God feels his entire body, but his nervous system, so to speak, works no faster than 186,000 miles per second. Can God comprehend and direct the entire universe when his body acts and reacts so slowly?

Hartshorne goes on: “Again, a man’s complexity is greater than that of an atom, and this is much more obvious that that his integrity or unity is greater. Aquinas admits
this, but pretends that it proves nothing as to complexity of God."\(^{85}\) That’s quite a jab. Aquinas believes that God, too, is a unity in variety. It’s just that he holds that God’s variety is such that he is infinite and incomprehensible by any finite creature; and that his unity is such that he is a simple being. God is thus the limit of both categories (unity and variety).

“Surely,” Hartshorne exclaims, “it is absurd to quarrel with an unflinching and complete devotion to the good of others simply because this good is also a good for self! No pragmatic or operational difference can be imagined between this love and the alleged love without need. What is there but word-idolatry in the traditional insistence upon the latter?”\(^{86}\)

Well, if no difference can be imagined, than why not conceive of God as perfectly happy? God’s nature is goodness which sits on top of (1) his absolute freedom from any necessity issuing demands on him and (2) his lack of subjection to the drive of self-interest. Here is a difference. If God is dissatisfied and acts in order to increase his happiness, then even devotion to the good of others is ultimately self-interested. God sympathizes with his body, but only to the extent that damage to the cells or organs (whatever they are) hurts him. In short, he cares only about himself and cares for us only insofar as we are means to his own well-being. He does not give of himself; he does not create and infuse goodness as the Christian God does.

Nor can he love unconditionally. For one, we are dispensable. For another, God uses us for his own ends rather than willing us good for our own sakes. It is true,

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\(^{85}\) Hartshorne, *Reality As Social Process*, 137.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 140
Hartshorne can argue, that our interests may correspond to God’s. The healthier the human society and individual humans are, the more pleasurable God’s experiences will be. A God with a sick body is unhappy. So, our well-being is a concern for God, but, again, only insofar as God himself feels good. Besides, concern and worry for self have to distract God from other-regarding actions.

Hartshorne’s God is never satisfied. He wants more and more experiences to fill his insatiable consequent nature. He is an addict. Yet he is not omnipotent, such that he could satisfy himself fully at one stroke. Thus, this God is weak and greedy beyond any human sin. He devours us, grinds us into his experience juice which he will wolf down and perhaps enjoy, for a second or two, but will never be content with what he has. That’s what we are to worship?

For Hartshorne the divine becoming entails that “God is a new being every moment of his life, and since he is really a knowing and loving being, this succession of beings in God is in a sense a succession of persons. However, the number of such divine persons would presumably be infinite, not three.”87 God then has no personal identity, no more than humans do. This goes completely against human experience as enduring subjects. And if my present self is a fleeting wraith, then why should I “sympathize” with “my” future selves? They won’t be mine; “I’ll be gone. I won’t care. It’s beyond my understanding why Hartshorne would endorse such a counter-intuitive doctrine. Can’t becoming be paired with endurance through change?

Furthermore, the reason why Hartshorne privileges becoming over being, as I

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understand it, is that he thinks that becoming involves new experiences or novelty or creative advance; it embodies change and therefore life. Being, on the contrary, is static and dead. This reminds me of Mises:

The state of absolute perfection must be conceived as complete, final, and not exposed to any change. Change could only impair its perfection and transform it into a less perfect state; the mere possibility that a change can occur is incompatible with the concept of absolute perfection. But the absence of change — i.e., perfect immutability, rigidity and immobility — is tantamount to the absence of life. Life and perfection are incompatible, but so are death and perfection.

The living is not perfect because it is liable to change; the dead is not perfect because it does not live.88

Hartshorne fails to understand that if God is a perfect being, then he is supremely alive. True, he does not act in the sense of moving towards a more satisfied state. But he contemplates his own perfection and is therefore in act with respect to his intellectual understanding and enjoyment of all being. An operation can be both an activity and at the same time something “at rest.” Thus, in contemplating some truth the mind is “rotating” about that truth’s particulars, yet in fully grasping all the facts and connections, it is at rest; you are not crunching numbers in your head or trying to figure anything out.

Understanding entails seeing the whole thing, whether big or small, and this seeing is an act or an expression of being, yet the mind which has attained understanding is at rest with regard to that activity relative to the thing or subject understood. Same with the will:

88 Human Action, 70.
enjoyment is an operation, yet the will is said to be at rest when it has reached contentment.

The purpose of becoming is acquisition of definiteness, of being. It is not the fate of being to indefinitely become. It is not true that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive: if it were, then traveling would not be hopeful. A completed being is not dead; it is happy to have become, and we can use Hartshorne’s metaphor against him: any being “aesthetically enjoys” what it is, as the process God is supposed to do with the perfectly remembered lives of actual entities. It is true that virtue is a perfected activity, but the activity of beings with intellect and will is contemplation (or knowing) and enjoyment (or loving) oneself, others, and God.

In other words, being can be found not in the social and mutual process of actualization but in the possession of and taking pleasure in the acquired actuality.

Aquinas, our author charges, had never had an idea of “pure actuality.” Poor Thomas. He built his entire metaphysics and theology on the idea of the pure actuality of God. And, oddly enough, he did not know what he meant by it! Pure actuality does not mean that God embodies “maximum value” in himself, whatever that means. God does not like ice cream of all kinds. In fact, God has never tasted ice cream at all. Yet liking ice cream is a value, e.g., of humans. In other words, God is potential neither to liking ice-cream nor to not liking ice-cream. Hence his pure actuality is safe. “‘Pure actuality,’ for example, is just as absurd as maximally happy righteousness. Actuality implies

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89 Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosphic Method*, 70.
90 Ibid., 74.
potentiality and hence its own impurity. Thought is irreducibly polar.\textsuperscript{91} In other words, if God is actual in A, then he is potential in \neg A. But why think that? God may well be necessarily actual in A, such that \neg A is impossible for him. For example, having a body entails potentiality, because bodies are divisible, so a body is potential to being split into two sub-bodies. But God has no body, nor is he potential to having one. Similarly, all the attributes of God are necessary to him.

I have already mentioned the fact that humans rarely care about their cells. But another, related, point is that humans form a society of which they are members equal in dignity, possessing equal rights, etc. God, on the other hand, is not part of any society. His body — the universe — is a society, according to Hartshorne. But ultimately, God is alone. Maybe contemplating the lives of his cells is enough to make him happy. But the analogy is highly strained. If I were Hartshorne’s God, I’d be miserable. In other words, yet again we encounter unique qualities in God which privilege him in comparison to other actual occasions.

Our author attacks Aquinas by calling his doctrine of God as absolute rather than both absolute and relative with dual transcendence “too simple and crude.” I couldn’t disagree more. The idea that God is a simple being is highly non-trivial and non-obvious. And it is disputed by many Christian theologians. At least Aquinas tries to \textit{prove}, whether correctly or not, that there must exist an unmoved mover, an uncaused cause, and so on. He calls the being with these attributes God, because that’s what he thinks is or ought to be worshipped. Hartshorne calls Aquinas’s God mere “theory,” yet he does not refute

\textsuperscript{91} Hartshorne, \textit{Man Vision of God}, 137.
Aquinas nor gives us any proofs regarding the existence and properties of his own God. What, for example, is the relation between creativity and God? Perhaps creativity allows God to become. So, creativity reflects the fundamental structure of reality, namely, the process. Yet who made this reality? Who created creativity? And isn’t merely to ask this question, to affirm the primacy of being?

Hartshorne goes on:

Similarly, infinity in the absolute sense is simpler and is less than the finite, not more; for definiteness is required for actuality… The finite or actual includes the infinite as an idea or potentiality… But the exaltation of ‘the absolute’ or ‘the infinite’ or the necessary is simply a preference for something which in principle is less than the relative or the finite or the contingent. In worshipping the independent, people really worshipped the abstract, and preferred the less to the more valuable. I venture to regard this as a species of idolatry.92

Let’s start by pointing out that that which is in itself is greater than that which is in another, ceteris paribus. Thus, “every act inhering in another is terminated by that in which it inheres, since what is in another is in it according to the mode of the receiver. Hence an act that exists in nothing is terminated by nothing. … But God is act in no way existing in another, for neither is He a form in matter…, nor does his being inhere in some form or nature, since He is his own being… It remains, then, that God is infinite.”93 Thus, God retains his greatness, strangely enough, “in spite of” (I mean, of course, “because of”) being infinite.

92 Ibid., 126ff.
93 Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, I, 43, 5.
But doesn’t God’s aseity make him undefined? On the contrary, Aquinas writes, “The fact that the being of God is self-subsisting, not received in any other, and is thus called infinite, shows him to be distinguished from all other beings, and all others to be apart from him.”⁹⁴ God has a perfectly formed identity: as pure act he is subject to no becoming, no sharpening of what he is. He is the very definition of goodness and perfection. He is pure and infinite form, meaning that it takes an actually infinite amount of information to describe him. God’s powers, habits, and acts are one and the same thing. Further, it is a grotesque straw man to claim that the God of classical theism is abstract. In fact, in God the abstract and the concrete are one and the same: God is wise and is also Wisdom; God is Father and is also paternity, etc.

Hartshorne thinks that God apart from the world is a disconnected collection of possible worlds. When one of these worlds is actualized, then, of course, there is definiteness where before there was merely an infinitude of potentialities. But that’s a fallacious view of God. Hartshorne understands as well as anyone that God is not possible worlds; he knows the possible worlds. (God knows even those possible worlds in which he does not exist.) The perfections of all things are modes of being, whose perfect receiver and source is God.

The process theology’s deviation from classical theology becomes particularly evident when we consider the question of the relevant being’s last end and happiness. According to Aquinas, man’s last end is to contemplate God “seen in His Essence.”⁹⁵ According to Hartshorne, God’s last end is to contemplate man in the latter’s objective

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⁹⁴ Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I, 7, 1, ad 3.
⁹⁵ Summa Theologica, II-I, 3, 8.
immortality. Not only is this inversion explicitly bizarre, but man becomes a mere means to God’s happiness, a piece of meat to be devoured in God’s insatiable greed, whereas in classical theism God is, as I have mentioned above, both useful, virtuous, and pleasant good.

To sum it up: in this thesis I have been mostly concerned with problems with Hartshorne’s own theological innovations. Limitations of space have prevented me from addressing more fully Hartshorne’s critiques of classical theism. Nevertheless, I conclude that process theism requires far more work in order to compete successfully with classical theism.
References


