



Whiteheadian Process Metaphysics & Trinitarian Theology

A Review of Literature

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Introduction

Noble academics of the post-modern West are yearning for a fresh metaphysical paradigm to close the wounds of a polarized intellectual class. The overflowing ideas of modernism are now the water from which all living generations have drunk since birth. Contemporary American families have neither the luxury of leisure enough, nor the sensitivity to the importance of, the historical development of human ideas, and, therefore, rely almost exclusively on the trickling spout of oral tradition – monopolized by special forces and limited by rising populations – to inform them of the basic propositions and conclusions which have been selected to be passed down, predictably: opium for the poor and jewels for the upper-class. Free to ignore the context of history, whether from naiveté or in philodoxy, the fathers and mothers of public opinion frequently stage their lectures on an academic landscape that is younger than they are. Inexorably, they engage in arguments that have already been won (often from the losing side), yet they are masters of gutting the straw-man (whether they know he is made of straw or not). Nevertheless, what is lost in the metanarrative is preserved in the *sensus fidelium*. Truth will make prophets out of beggars and leave academia behind if It must. Moving forward with these brash generalizations only for a moment longer, let it suffice to say that of the many ancient conversations that today’s storytellers replay, in their own partisan theaters, three stand out.

The limitations of language insist that these three groups be vaguely named and imprecisely defined, but the pattern which emerges in their relationship is transportable across subject-matter. The first can be stereotyped as *technologists*. These hold the argument that scientific reasoning has the potential to eliminate all the mysteries of human existence. The second group, caricatured by its *aversion to change*, would be like those who fantasize of the medieval utopia, a time when evil was supposedly more restrained and the “free-market” flourished. The third and smallest crowd shall be deemed “*trinitarians*,” whether they like it or not, because they are marked by an enthusiasm for open-ended systems; they employ technology and the legacy of history to a third end which is the realization of Divine Love in the present moment. Though they may be a mixture of pantheists, agnostics, and Christians, they appreciate, as Hegel did, that every genuine synthesis of opposing minds is a novel incarnation, a third and fresh entity. Incarnation is utterly mysterious, like the emergence of organic life or contingent existence itself, because these phenomena unite seeming contradictions (i.e. determinism and freedom; immutability and finitude). But the reconciliation of paradoxes in human life remains logically tenable. The metaphysical paradigm shift towards which humanity today reaches, it has always sought, and it lives as a trinitarian rationale. This system of thought is built on the immemorial faith that the divine and the human are not mutually exclusive but that incarnation, revelation, and theophany are actual occurrences. Defining and proclaiming the value of

“incarnation” – in relation to paradoxes such as the One and the many, God and the universe, Divine persons and human persons, unity and distinction – has been and is the work and mission of the theologian.

Crucial theological questions have arisen in the last century. How has theology incorporated the latest advances in the empirical sciences? How has theology responded to the macro-evolutionary worldview? Old questions beckon anew for deeper and clearer responses: Is it really tenable to speak of God as *only* immutable, static, and eternal, if He is to be truly providential, dynamic, and Incarnate? What does it mean to say God is in relationship with Godself, with man, and with creation? To answer these questions, process metaphysical theology has taken the route of Alfred North Whitehead who first said: “God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.” This paper analyzes the metaphysical system of Whitehead and its evolution into a coherent trinitarian metaphysics, progressing through the minds of Charles Hartshorne, Gregory Boyd, and Joseph Bracken especially. Critical discussion will be interwoven throughout these explications. The author, having deep sympathy and sincere admiration for the project of process metaphysics, entertains the possibility of accepting Joseph Bracken’s trinitarian model (notwithstanding future amendments) as a complementary metaphysical analogy to orthodox tradition. If this proposal fails in the judgment of the Magisterium, he replies with humble submission to the Catholic Church in which the living Incarnate God subsists,¹ bound by His unchangeable promise.²

The Metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead

A congenial relationship between philosophy and theology remains a perennial imperative due to the fact that philosophical language is the sea on which faith must traverse in this life, though individual faith need not traverse at all to be efficacious. The task of giving intellectual coherence to revelation is the primary goal of theologians throughout history. Thus, in a certain sense, attributing “process” to the Blessed Trinity began from the earliest moments of its formulation with the idea of “procession.” Seeking to reconcile Christian tradition with a Greek philosophical heritage, the fathers of the Church worked through the paradox, handed down by the Apostles, that Jesus Christ shared divinity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This reality was explained by adapting old words to signify new ideas. For Church fathers, “procession” encapsulated the essence of Jesus Christ’s divine sonship as well as the holy Spirit’s unique relation within the single Godhead.³

At first, the difficulty of accepting God as Father *and* Son was placated by the Greek equivalence of “con-substantiality.” Father and Son shared the same substance or nature. Later debates established the same truth about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons in one nature. In the fourth century, the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and

¹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964). *Lumen Gentium*. 8.

² “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19 NASB), and “...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20 NASB).

³ See Nazienzus, Gregory. "Fifth Theological Oration (Oration 31)." CHURCH FATHERS: (Gregory Nazianzen). <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310231.htm> and *S.T.*, I, 27-28.

Gregory Nazianz, labored to re-define the Greek terms “person” and “nature” until there could be three persons and one nature in One God without logical contradiction. They employed an ingenious amalgamation of Greek language and Biblical revelation. Basil in particular took John 14:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:3 to show how the “oneness” of the Godhead is in the eternal relationship that each has to the other:⁴

“The idea behind John 14:9 expresses what it means for the Son to be divinely begotten, and what it means for him to be Image and Resplendence: “divine generation” (stripped of all corporeal and material connotations) means that the Son perfectly makes known the Father. The idea behind 1 Corinthians 12:3 explains what it means for the Holy Spirit to be the Spirit of knowledge and of wisdom and what it means to worship in Spirit and in Truth. The Son and the Spirit are, for Basil, primarily epistemically related to the Father.”⁵

St Basil’s theology of God remains the cornerstone for orthodox Trinitarian theology and has had lasting significance for A.D. history, providing rational defense for the Christian faith without asserting three gods or merely one God. “It must well be understood that, as he who does not confess a community of substance falls into polytheism, so too he who does not grant the individuality of the Persons is carried away into Judaism.”⁶ This line of reasoning eventually led to the articulation of the Christian God as a *perichoresis* (*circumincessio* in the West), or a single simultaneous mutual procession, of three divine Persons. “As Alfred North Whitehead comments in *Adventures of Ideas*, this was potentially a major philosophical insight into the way that everything in this world is interconnected and interdependent with one another. But, unhappily, the idea of *perichoresis* was never carried over from the doctrine of the Trinity to the world of creation.”⁷

Alfred North Whitehead, teacher and colleague of Bertrand Russell, was an influential mathematician of the late 19th century, who in his later years turned his attention to the philosophy of science and metaphysics. In *The One the Many and the Trinity*, Marc Pugliese has shown how Whitehead's philosophical labors have been adapted into trinitarian theology, especially in the work of Joseph Bracken S.J. In this book, Pugliese retraces the development of process trinitarian metaphysics beginning with Whitehead. Whitehead was influenced by many great thinkers and ideas himself, most notably the atomism of Leibniz, relativity-theory, quantum physics, vitalist phenomenology, German idealism, the science of organism, emergent evolutionism, and Anglo-American pragmatism.⁸ Like his contemporary Teilhard de Chardin, Whitehead sought to synthesize the mechanisms of science with a philosophical metaphysics

⁴ John 14:9 – “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” 1 Corinthians 12:3 – “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

⁵ Hildebrand, Stephen M. 2007. *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea : A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. 190.

⁶ Kariatlis, Philip. 2010. "St Basil's Contribution to the Trinitarian Doctrine: A Synthesis of Greek Paideia and the Scriptural Worldview." *Phronema* 25, 62.

⁷ Bracken, Joseph A. 2008. *God : three who are one / Joseph A. Bracken*. n.p.: Collegeville, Minn. : Liturgical Press, c2008., 2008. 24.

⁸ Pugliese, Marc A. 2011. *The One, the Many, and the Trinity : Joseph A. Bracken and the Challenge of Process Metaphysics*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011. 1-22. Whitehead, Alfred North. 1960. *Process and reality ; an essay in cosmology*. n.p.: New York, Harper [1960], 1960. vii-viii.

corresponding to the quantum worldview while incorporating the indeterminate actions of mind. He believed mind and matter were actually different manifestations of spiritual “energy.”⁹

Avoiding a mental-physical (spirit-matter) dualism, Whitehead said all material beings, from electrons to galaxies, have a degree of subjectivity and are, therefore, “living” and interdependent.¹⁰ “All of this led Whitehead to conclude that the numerous infinitesimal subjects of experience as events called ‘actual entities’ are the only real beings that exist.”¹¹ These individual and integrated moments of experience are the ground of *all* reality (God, ideas, and nature alike), its irreducible and identical parts.¹² Actual entities do not move or change, but undergo instantaneous (outside of time) “concrescence” that has only a *notional* chronology, like the procession of Son from Father in the Holy Trinity. However, actual entities are experienced in time as “actual occasions.”¹³

Every actual entity is the cause of its own existence by its free subjective creative choice. However, “Whitehead does give other reasons or causes for the final constitution of the actual entity insofar as the indivisible entity can be abstractly analyzed in terms of parts. These causes include: (1) ‘feelings’ from all other actual entities having completed their concrescence [complete entities are ‘superjects’]; (2) the initial aim that God provides for the actual entity; and (3) ‘eternal objects,’ which correspond to Platonic Forms. The relatedness of each newly concrescing actual occasion entity to the actual entities of the antecedent universe is ‘prehension.’”¹⁴

Because the “feelings” of a newly concrescing entity go through a phase of passivity wherein they can either be rejected or incorporated, an actual entity is free to disconnect from all or some of the causal influences of the past. In this way, all forms of determinism become impossible. The fact that most concrescing entities tend to follow strict material causality is due to a lower level “depth of subjectivity” in many actual entities. Actual occasions have “four grades” that only on the higher levels possess consciousness, allowing for greater freedom to manipulate causal factors. God gives every entity its “initial aim,” its ideal outcome of concrescence (final cause), consequently giving meaning and order to the whole universe. This is the only sense in which God is Creator according to Whitehead. A subject entity can become adverse or averse to the aims of God. The role of “eternal objects” (God’s ideas) are to act as a pool of potential definite forms from which all entities can equally choose in their process of becoming. “The temporal realm of change, then, is the description of the adventures of eternal objects in the evolving temporal universe of actual things.”¹⁵ The eternal objects only exist as the prehensions in God’s primordial nature.

God and all other actual entities are “di-polar,” having a physical and a mental pole, each with its own prehensions. In God these poles are his primordial nature and his consequent nature. Within God’s consequent nature are all “superjects,” entities that have finished their

⁹ Sherburne, Donald W. "Alfred North Whitehead." *American National Biography* (From Oxford University Press) (2010): *Research Starters*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁰ *Process and Reality*. 75.

¹¹ *One, Many, Trinity*. 25.

¹² *God: Three Who Are One*. 63.

¹³ *Process and Reality*. 26-7.

¹⁴ *One, Many, Trinity*. 28.

¹⁵ *One, Many, Trinity*. 31.

concrecence, and these provide the content of the physical feelings, in the physical pole, that all currently concrecing entities experience as efficient causes. God's initial aims and the eternal objects, in his primordial nature, are the conceptual prehensions in an actual entity's mental pole. In entities other than God, the mental pole registers the values of the physical pole and then forms a subjective aim according to eternal objects.¹⁶ Concrecence unifies the two poles in experience. "This is also a movement from the possibilities of the mental pole, derived from prior actualities in the physical pole, to a new actual entity once concrecence is completed."¹⁷ Concrecence completes with the satisfaction of the subjective aim and the entity is thereafter a superject of data for the other actual entities. Thus, an entity moves from subject to object or from a "private" to a "public" function as it becomes, actualizes, and then perishes.¹⁸ Entities have objective immortality in God's consequent nature but no subjective immortality, because reaching the satisfaction of subjective aims ends the purpose of subjective awareness. The unity of reality is obtained in the "everlasting life" of all superject actual entities in God's consequent nature.¹⁹

In classical metaphysics the ideas of "substance" and "accident" allow for the identity and continuity of the distinct objects of the natural world. In Whitehead, the only categories of existents seem to be entities that pop in and out of reality, and then, God. To deal with the apparent atomism of his thought, Whitehead devised the ideas of "nexūs" and "societies."²⁰ Nexūs are simply aggregates of actual entities but also as real, individual, particular, and factual as those entities. Nexūs become superject along with actual entities and correspond to complex eternal objects that can be made part of any entity's subjective aim in concrecence. "A society is essentially a nexus perduring across time due to a 'defining characteristic' or 'common element of form' perpetuated by each of the society's member actual entities and imposed on new actual entities in the society."²¹ Thus, only societies persist across time and are able to change, though it is not "substance" that defines them but rather "form." It will be this aspect of Whitehead's philosophy that Bracken manipulates to accommodate the Trinity. As Thomas Regan has said: "I think that the only position that one can take regarding the suitability of Whitehead's philosophy as the basis for trinitarian theology is that it is *not* suitable by itself."²²

Whitehead's system is built upon a "relativity theory" that replaces traditional substance ontology with event ontology. This theory makes the classical distinction between universal and particular unnecessary, or, at least, metaphysically inaccurate. There are no external relationships between entities because every entity is part of the self-constitution of every other. "No entity can be abstracted from the entire cosmic process by which it is essentially and internally related to all other entities."²³ Everything always exists in *internal* relatedness to everything else. Substance is merely a pragmatic abstraction without real existence; eternal

¹⁶ *Process and Reality*. 334.

¹⁷ *One, Many, Trinity*. 33.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Process and Reality*. 403-413.

²⁰ *One, Many, Trinity*. 35.

²¹ *Ibid.* 36.

²² Regan, Thomas J. 1985. "The problem of the Trinity in Whitehead's philosophy of God." *Modern Schoolman* 62, 317-329. *ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index*, EBSCOhost. 328.

²³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 38.

forms instantiated in constant events, process, activity, or creativity are all that is permanent. Here enters one of the most challenging reforms of classical metaphysics.

“One,” “many,” and “creativity” are the three realities of Whitehead’s “category of the ultimate.”²⁴ “New entities perpetually form a complex unity or ‘one’ as an entity or being emerges out of the ‘many’ or world of many antecedent actual entities now superject. Creativity connects unity or the one with plurality or the many for Whitehead. Creativity is the principle of novelty seen in the perpetual appearance of new actual entities.”²⁵ The metaphysical principle of creativity is a spiraling continuum of plurality to unity as “the many become one and are increased by one,” and this is the essential truth about reality. While all actualities are finite because their possibilities are limited by the laws of existence, creativity is infinite possibility and absolute indeterminacy. Creativity is the one thing that never ceases to exist (in so far as it is instantiated in all things) and is the power by which all other actualities are produced. It can only be defined by itself; it is the absolute principle.

Norris Clarke and David Schindler have pointed out the weakness of Whitehead’s philosophy on the issue of creativity. In *The Philosophical Approach to God*, Clarke states that the “amorphous force of creativity which is just *there*, everywhere in the universe, as a primal fact with no further explanation possible—[is] a kind of generalized necessity of nature, with striking similarities to the ancient Greek *ananke*.”²⁶ Plotinus solved a very similar dualism in Platonic metaphysics by claiming that all reality emanated from the One. Joseph Bracken does likewise by grounding creativity in God’s primordial nature. But since creativity in Whitehead has no “actuality” it essentially emerges out of nothing with every new actual entity.²⁷ Schindler reiterates: “Creativity is finally inadequate as ultimate in Whitehead’s metaphysics because, not being itself actual, it cannot ground the actuality of actual entities, in contrast with *esse* in Aquinas, which is concretized in a single Source that is supremely actual, God as *ipsum esse subsistens*.”²⁸ Whitehead likely saw this logical problem, as many of his students certainly have, but in the end decided it was less problematic than traditional substance-ontology.²⁹

“In some ways, Whitehead introduces the concept of God to account for unity in reality. Reality is unified because: (1) all entities share the common principle of creativity; (2) God as eternal actual entity is the primordial instantiation of creativity providing an ontological basis for the fact of creativity; and (3) there is a common past retained in God’s consequent nature.”³⁰ Without God there would be no connection between past superject entities and future concrescences, no continuity between the universe now and the universe a moment ago. God *is* an actual entity, but the only entity who contains the sum of all other entities and whose concrescence is never finished. God’s concrescence also moves from unity to plurality, from

²⁴ *Process and Reality*. 25.

²⁵ *One, Many, Trinity*. 39.

²⁶ Clarke, W. Norris, and William Ray. 1979. *The philosophical approach to God : a neo-Thomist perspective / by W. Norris Clarke ; edited by William E. Ray ; with an introd. by E. M. Adams*. n.p.: Winston-Salem, N.C. : Wake Forest University, c1979., 1979. 72.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 73.

²⁸ Schindler, David L. 1973. "Creativity As Ultimate: Reflections On Actuality In Whitehead, Aristotle, Aquinas." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 13, 161-171. *Philosopher's Index*, EBSCOhost. 171.

²⁹ *The Philosophical Approach to God*. 75-78.

³⁰ *One, Many, Trinity*. 40.

mental to physical, the opposite of all other actual entities. In this way, God is invoked as the locus of resolution for the philosophical paradox of the one and the many.

Thus the universe is to be conceived as attaining to the active self-expression of its own variety of opposites – of its own freedom and its own necessity, of its own multiplicity and its own unity, of its own imperfection and its own perfection. All the ‘opposites’ are elements in the nature of things, and are incorrigibly there. The concept of ‘God’ is the way in which we understand this incredible fact – that what cannot be, yet is.³¹

God is the actual “location” of eternal objects and he is also the source of conceptual potentiality for the cosmos in his primordial nature. In God’s consequent pole he participates in temporality and growth with every new superject actual entity, while in his primordial nature he remains immutable.³² God’s consequent nature makes him “really actual” and accessible to the physical universe as opposed to only “conceptually actual” as in his primordial nature.³³ God also has a third, “superject,” nature that is part of the datum prehended by every new actual entity. In addition, God like every other entity is a “creature” of creativity, though God is its “primordial instantiation.”³⁴ This is what makes creativity the real absolute of the system. Whitehead’s famous axiom asserts: “God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.”³⁵ This motivation will become the mantra of many process theologians who adopt elements of Whitehead’s system.

It seems, in order to fulfill the demands of his axiom, Whitehead displaces God with creativity, or rather makes creativity the true Transcendent exception, and thereby relegates God to the status of a demiurge. It should be noted that in this rigorously logical system, devised in large part to reconcile modern science and philosophical theology, as well as the problem of the one and the many, Whitehead’s explanation for reality is inherently forced into trinitarian principles. Whether it is one-many-creativity or God’s primordial-consequent-superject aspects, the necessity of a three-term expression of reality, with at least one term being super-logical or indeterminate, may be the most important idea to take from Whitehead.

Charles Hartshorne and “Open Theism”

In the mid-1900s, Charles Hartshorne, a doctor of philosophy and son of a clergyman, developed a metaphysical system challenging the philosophical and theological mainstreams of his time. Greatly influenced by Alfred North Whitehead, Hartshorne criticized classical theism for holding and asserting only half of the truth about God, essentially, his omnipotence and immutability. The other “half” of God required him to be in process and limited in power because his true perfection had to involve a giving and receiving relationship with temporal creatures and with changing creation. Hence, Hartshorne created a “di-polar” theism to account for both God’s absolute pole and God’s relative pole. Without this alteration of traditional theism, both deism and atheism could be considered reasonable consequences of an unreachable

³¹ *Process and Reality*. 531. As quoted in *One, Many, Trinity*. 45-46.

³² *Ibid.* 527-29.

³³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 46.

³⁵ *Process and Reality*. 289.

God who either eclipses, or else becomes irrelevant to, the living and fluctuating universe. Hartshorne would become a central figure, often called the father, of process theology.³⁶

Gregory Boyd has reconstructed Hartshorne's thought and analyzed its transportability into a trinitarian metaphysics in *Trinity and Process*. Along with Whitehead, understanding Hartshorne's philosophical system is crucial in grasping the process mindset. Hartshorne sees metaphysics as a search for those "a priori" truths that are *both* necessary, or non-contingent, and categorical, or non-theoretical. These truths are necessarily embodied in all possible experiences. "This means that ontological and logical possibility and impossibility coincide."³⁷ Being and intelligibility are synonymous, as in Anselm's famous ontological argument. This is not to say that whatever truths one might hold to be self-evident or certain are therefore unmovable principles upon which all rational deduction functions, but rather, these axiomatic truths are to be presented as candidates to the metaphysician. They must be tested by on their applicability and appropriated accordingly. Thus, "self-evidence is the goal, not the starting point, of metaphysics."³⁸ For Hartshorne, a priori truths must necessarily exist, must be nonrestrictive and existential (unlike mathematical axioms which cannot be experienced literally), and must be verifiable but not falsifiable.³⁹

Hartshorne builds his theology on six a priori truths. The first is that "something exists." In this truth Hartshorne argues against the "reigning dogma that a statement is rendered contingent by the mere fact that it asserts existence."⁴⁰ Following this assertion, the second a priori truth is that "something is concrete," or definite, and that this concreteness implies an asymmetrical relation to abstractness – abstract is a derivative of the concrete, and therefore less real than the concrete. Boyd points out that this second a priori will be the main characteristic of Hartshorne's whole metaphysical system, as it was also fundamental in Whitehead.⁴¹ Both philosophers' concern with "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness" is connected to their sympathy for modernity's aversion to categories outside of those which make up the physical universe.

Hartshorne's third a priori states that "experience occurs." Like "something exists," "experience occurs" cannot conceivably be false, for even the perception of its falsity would be an experience.⁴² Similar to Whitehead's universal subjectivism, Hartshorne extends experience, which requires some mind-like event, to every part of nature in order preserve an analogy between higher and lower material things. In so far as a thing is concrete, it also has experience; in whatever way a part of matter may appear lifeless, this observation is a mere abstraction. The universality of experience then necessitates the fourth a priori that every experience must be relational. No subject can be the content of its own experience. For Hartshorne, the content of experience is to "feel a feeling," parallel to Whitehead's "prehension." Neither pure external

³⁶ Cobb, , John B. 2010. "Charles Hartshorne." *American National Biography (From Oxford University Press)Research Starters*, EBSCOhost.

³⁷ *Trinity and Process*. 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 29-30.

⁴⁰ Hartshorne, Charles. 1970. *Creative synthesis and philosophic method*. n.p.: La Salle, Ill. : Open Court Pub. Co., [c1970], 1970. 162-163.

⁴¹ *Trinity and Process*. 37.

⁴² *Creative Synthesis*. 164.

relations nor pure internal relations are possible, since the former would be absolute plurality and the latter absolute monism, so Hartshorne contends that only asymmetrical terms of relation can solve the paradox.⁴³ Symmetrical relations (atemporal relations) are mere abstractions from the a priori concrete universal experience that “asymmetrical relations occur.”⁴⁴ Asymmetrical relation is exemplified in human perception: the object perceived determines the perception, but the perception does not determine the object – the assumed simultaneity of subject with object in perception is an illusion, like seeing a star that burned out a thousand years ago.⁴⁵ Thus, temporality is intrinsic to experience and causality is memory, or “prehension.”⁴⁶

As in Whitehead’s idea of prehension, “the many become one and are increased by one,” so that every asymmetrical relation is also, a priori, a creative synthesis. The novelty of the synthesis of all past experiences with the present is a result of every subject’s indeterminacy. “Each occasion ‘remembers’ the world in a unique and relatively unpredictable way. This remembering constitutes its being, which is at the same time its inherent freedom.”⁴⁷ Hartshorne spent much time defending the relative freedom of entities (this is also very important to many other process thinkers). If there is not an element of unpredictability in every synthesis of the past with present, in other words, if reality is truly determined by previous cause/s then it would be impossible to distinguish past, present, and future ontologically. Freedom of subjects is also important as a template for understanding God’s freedom. Hartshorne believes quantum physics corroborates this picture of relative indeterminacy in its probabilistic model of physical events.

The consequence of this logic is that “becoming” is the concrete instantiation of the abstract “being.”⁴⁸ Becoming has asymmetrical logical priority over being. Thus, like Whitehead again, creativity is the ultimate metaphysical principle. “To exist – to be concrete, to experience, to be related, whether we are referring specifically to God, electrons, or whatever – is to exemplify free creativity.”⁴⁹ Substance has no metaphysical status in Hartshorne’s system, though it is useful for describing phenomenological stability.⁵⁰ As Joseph Zycinski points out, Aristotelian substance no longer has the support of natural science as it did in Medieval times. The substance-accident paradigm has become a poetic anthropomorphism in a physical reality made of raging photon particles “the life time of which is of the order of 10^{-16} seconds.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, both Whitehead and Hartshorne preserve a similar concept to substantial form in the ideas of “defining characteristics” in societies and a “personally ordered series.”⁵² These ideas explain the enduring identities of things abstracted from the nexūs of similar actual occasions, or quantum events.

⁴³ *Trinity and Process*. 47-50.

⁴⁴ *Creative Synthesis*. 221-23.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 217-218. *Trinity and Process*. 54.

⁴⁶ *Trinity and Process*. 56.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 62.

⁴⁸ *Creative Synthesis*. 26.

⁴⁹ *Trinity and Process*. 71.

⁵⁰ *Creative Synthesis*. 20.

⁵¹ Zycinski, Joseph M. 1989. "The Doctrine of Substance and Whitehead's Metaphysics." *Review Of Metaphysics* 42, 765-781. *Philosopher's Index*, EBSCOhost. 769.

⁵² *Trinity and Process*. 74. Cf. *The Doctrine of Substance*. 772.

The main paradox which Hartshorne grants is that every entity is *causa sui* in regard to its pure creative synthesis.⁵³ Neither human reason, nor God, nor the entity itself can know itself until it has completed and become a prehension of another entity, because its existence consists of a self-creating act that is utterly mysterious (like the “quantum leaping” at the Planck-scale). The sixth and final a priori of Hartshorne’s metaphysics is that “aesthetic value is experienced” and “aesthetic value is enjoyed.” Every fact of reality always coincides with a value. The common belief that value or emotion is evoked by facts is a false psychology; the fact is the feeling and the feeling is the fact. “Toprehend a past datum is to ‘feel its feeling’.”⁵⁴ Unlike ethical or logical value, aesthetic value is not abstracted but is inherent to concrete experience. To Hartshorne, creative synthesis is the very definition of beauty. “Beauty (as an intrinsic value) is the ‘mutual adaptation of the elements of an experience.’”⁵⁵

For Hartshorne, the world makes God concrete, giving Him contingency; divine necessity and immutability are abstract. “Hartshorne maintains that God’s character, like God’s existence, lacks contingency, but the actual state of the divine knowledge or will at any given moment is contingent.”⁵⁶ This is Hartshorne’s “invention” of di-polar theism, which distinguishes God’s necessary existence from his temporal actuality. God has “dual transcendence;” “God is the most *and best* moved mover.”⁵⁷ In his preference for the “concrete,” Hartshorne has also made the existence of the world part of a priori truth. “The only other non-atheistic alternatives, says Hartshorne, are to follow Aristotle and deny that God knows the world or to follow Spinoza and deny that nothing in God or in the world could be other than it is. What is impossible is a God with no contingent aspects knowing a contingent world.”⁵⁸ Boyd thinks creation *ex nihilo* is tantamount to Hartshorne’s creative synthesis and so not an act unique to God, even though God is its supreme practitioner. If this were not the case, the actions of the world could not avoid being determined by God’s Will. It is in this mutual self-creation that God and the world are in relationship, although Hartshorne does want to let God set limits on the freedom of non-divine entities through the laws of nature that influence the “causes” in relative prehension.

Justus Buchler addressed the tendency of Whitehead’s system to “arbitrarily” assign greater actuality or “realness” to the smallest parts. “A society, or other nexus, is ‘less’ concrete than the actual occasions that compose it. The latter are the true individuals, each of which, as a process of becoming, as a synthesis or concrescence of everything in the universe into one actuality, is a true unity.”⁵⁹ Boyd sees the same prejudice in Hartshorne:

But why suppose the perspective of physics to be ‘truer’ than the perspective of our senses? Why suppose that the atomic and subatomic world is in any sense ‘more real’ than the experienced world? What grounds this supposed ontological superiority of the small? Why is it not sufficient to simply

⁵³ *Creative Synthesis*. 2-3.

⁵⁴ *Trinity and Process*. 82.

⁵⁵ *Creative Synthesis*. 303.

⁵⁶ Viney, Donald Wayne. 2006. "God as the Most "and Best" Moved Mover: Hartshorne's Importance for Philosophical Theology." *Midwest Quarterly* 48, no. 1: 10-28. *Sociological Collection*, EBSCOhost. 23.

⁵⁷ Hartshorne’s revision of Abraham Herschel’s “the Most Moved Mover.” *God as Most and Best Moved Mover*. 27.

⁵⁸ *God as Most and Best Moved Mover*. 17-18.

⁵⁹ Buchler, Justus. 1983. "On a strain of arbitrariness in Whitehead's system." In *Explorations in Whitehead's philosophy*, 280-294. New York, NY: Fordham Univ Pr, 1983. *ATLA Religion Database*, EBSCOhost. 283.

say that physics has a perspective on reality which is *different* from, but no more 'ultimate' than, our phenomenological experience?⁶⁰

This problem is connected to a rebellion against traditional substance ontology. However, neither Whitehead nor Hartshorne could bypass the necessary role of Aristotelian substance as an ordering principle; they simply relocated substance in "eternal forms" or "abstract poles."⁶¹ But, as Boyd has argued, the asymmetry of concrete to abstract does not concede any causal power to the abstracts which supposedly 'cause' prehensions.⁶² God's abstract pole must have subjective actuality in order to preserve His absolute freedom.

Boyd imagines a situation in which the necessary actuality of God independently exists, before the decision is made to bring forth a world. Roughly speaking, the necessary actuality apart from the world has the properties of classical theism, while God with the world has most of the properties of process theism... This means that creation must be a temporal act, for there was a time when the world was not. Then no answer can be given why the creation did not occur earlier than it did. At any earlier moment there was the same God, the same nothingness.⁶³

Here, borrowing from Johnathan Edwards, Boyd inserts the ontological category of "disposition" to ground causation (potentiality with actuality) in the process system and to unite a contingent element to God's classically immutable being.⁶⁴ The philosophical conception of the Trinity takes form in the primordial divine disposition to communicate Himself and His Love. God's being is identical both to His dispositional power and to the actuality of that power, so that God's disposition to communicate is perfectly satisfied within the Trinity. At the same time, the quality of disposition remains potent even after its exercise (denying that potentiality and movement are a deficiency). Boyd balances between the "extremes" of *actus purus* and divine process by stating that "the intensity of an aesthetic experience is not necessarily contingent upon of the scope of the experience."⁶⁵ Immutability, then, is not the traditional unchangeable divine nature, but an everlasting disposition that is always open to novel expressions, such as the creation of the universe. God's internal love relationship "overflows" into contingent illustrations.⁶⁶

Boyd purports to tighten the reasoning of Edwards' theological system by adding to it Hartshorne's concept of creative spontaneity. Edwards sees dispositions in a Calvinistic and Newtonian determinism, which finally puts God *ad intra* in state of "eternal frustration" until the world is created. God's essential being is "the eternal event of God relating to Godself with unsurpassable [intensity of] beauty and love; the event of God eternally becoming triune and celebrating this triunity."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, contrary to classical theism, the quality of absolute intensity is distinct from the quality or scope of aesthetic manifestation. God's immutable and necessary inner constitution does not exclude freedom, spontaneity, and contingency, even

⁶⁰ *Trinity and Process*. 103.

⁶¹ *On a Strain of Arbitrariness*. 776.

⁶² *Trinity and Process*. 107.

⁶³ Ford, Lewis. 1994. "Trinity and process." *Modern Schoolman* 71, 322-325. *ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index*, EBSCOhost. 323.

⁶⁴ *Trinity and Process*. 383.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 387.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 391.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

“before” the creation of the world.⁶⁸ Boyd “proclaim[s] the Scriptural truth that ‘God is now not willing to be God without humanity’,” yet acknowledges the importance of protecting the graciousness and freedom of creation that is God’s absolute metaphysical intensity.⁶⁹

The mediating concept of “disposition” functions for Boyd as an explication of the transcendent power of love. God’s disposition of love has the ability to leap metaphysical categories and reconcile paradoxical premises. Among these he includes God’s imminence versus human freedom as well as a Chalcedonian definition of the Incarnation. Boyd is representative of a larger movement referred to as “open-theism,” because of the idea that God’s disposed-being is “open” to spontaneous acts of free will. Pugliese perceived this position’s similarity to the medieval distinction between God’s absolute will and ordained will.⁷⁰

If one can say, with Hartshorne, that simultaneity is an illusion, and that all experience, even God’s experience must be in some degree temporal, one could say, conversing but with a very similar logic, that temporality is the illusion and that creative synthesis is really one eternal moment. It seems to the author that this is one way in which a quantum-physics worldview could be maintained without violating the “law” of Revelation - namely, that what God says about himself through the definitive teaching of the Church is true. The quantum “popping” which is so well illustrated in a Whiteheadian metaphysics might also be imagined as God from eternity “recreating” the entire universe in every “moment” in response to the free movements of self-determining beings (God’s creativity responding to creaturely creativity on an epic level). A *similar* position has been put forward by physicist Amit Goswami.⁷¹ Such a position allows for due respect to Christian doctrine - immutability, the problem of evil, and the creator-creature distinction especially - while admitting a fresh analogy for the God’s perfect relationality.

Joseph Bracken S.J. and other commentary

While Bonaventureans, Missiologists, Feminists, and others have devised theological, social, and psychological models of the Trinity that are relevant to this study, there is only one further thinker whose model adheres closely to that of Whitehead and Hartshorne. Joseph Bracken S.J. sides with process theism in interpreting substance-based metaphysics as more separatist than social. He longs for a more relational, scientific, and ecological understanding of the Trinity’s action in the world.⁷² Bracken embodies a unique, perhaps the best yet, fusion of classical theism, trinitarian systematic theology, and process metaphysics:⁷³

Bracken is important for Catholics thinkers because he makes a well-informed case that process metaphysics must not be rashly dismissed but seriously considered as a necessary rethinking of metaphysics in our day. Bracken is also important for process thinkers because, by drawing not only on the great Catholic tradition but also on a litany of non-process theological and philosophical

⁶⁸ Ibid. 392.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *One, Many, Trinity*. 66.

⁷¹ See Goswami, Amit, Richard E. Reed, and Maggie Goswami. 1995. *The self-aware universe : how consciousness creates the material world / Amit Goswami with Richard E. Reed and Maggie Goswami*. n.p.: New York : Putnam's Sons, 1995, c1993., 1995.

⁷² *God: Three Who Are One*. 69-72.

⁷³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 69.

sources, he makes informed and nuanced modifications to process metaphysics in order to address some of its inherent difficulties.⁷⁴

Building on St. Thomas, Bracken recognizes that “analogical predication” applies to entire metaphysical systems as well as particular statements about God. Unlike Thomas, he agrees with Whitehead that metaphysical categories can apply to God and creatures univocally within these analogical systems.⁷⁵ His is akin to the critical-realist model dominant in the philosophy of science. “Aquinas’s model was good for making clear how God is present to every creature as its First Cause or Creator, but he could not do justice to Saint Paul’s claim that in God we live and move and have our being.”⁷⁶ Thus, Bracken introduces Whitehead’s model to supplement for the lack of metaphysical interaction between God and world in the scholastic system.

Bracken follows Whitehead in locating all real being in the irreducible subjects called “actual entities.” Constant creative concrescence and superjection through conceptual prehension is the hyperactive fabric of space-time. Becoming is the primary category of being; creativity displaces substance. “Only interrelated processes ultimately exist. Event ontology must replace substance ontology.”⁷⁷ Likewise, unity should be rooted in process and not substance. Drawing from Schelling and Heidegger, as well as Whitehead, Bracken grounds subjectivity in decision-making. It is not subjects that make choices but choosing that makes subjects.⁷⁸

Bracken calls his own metaphysical system neo-Whiteheadian because he alters Whitehead in certain key respects. “One difference is the claim that actual entities in concomitant concrescence influence each other... for Whitehead, actual entities canprehend only past actual entities.”⁷⁹ Bracken’s system also allows subjective immortality, unlike Whitehead who only allowed the objective immortality of actual entities in God.⁸⁰ The most important modification which Bracken makes to Whitehead is the change in “societies” to create a trinitarian societal metaphysics and, supposedly, a superior solution to the problem of the one and the many. “Bracken attributes to societies a greater ontological reality and a quasi-independent agency akin to the agency of actual entities.”⁸¹ Thus, structured fields of activity replace Whitehead’s mere aggregates of actual entities. Fields endure over time as actual entities come and go and this provides a clearer understanding of organisms:

For theology, modifying Whitehead’s societies into unified fields explains how three divine persons co-constitute the absolute field of their one reality, how creation is subsumed within the society of God, and how Jesus’s humanity and divinity are co-constituted in the single field of his person.⁸² For Bracken, the mutual determination of societies and entities creates the

⁷⁴ Ibid. 68.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 70.

⁷⁶ Bracken, Joseph A. 2009. *Christianity and Process Thought : Spirituality for a Changing World*. West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2009. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost. 8.

⁷⁷ *One, Many, Trinity*. 74.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 76.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 77.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 78.

⁸¹ Ibid. 80.

⁸² Ibid. 82.

“social ontology” for which Whitehead was striving. In fact, Whitehead wanted to adopt the idea of *perichoresis* from the Cappadocian fathers and apply it to all of reality, rather than to God alone.⁸³ Thus, in many ways, societies, as organized fields, do the job of substance, preserving continuity, as in classical metaphysics with a few differences. Unlike substance, a society derives its identity from individual entities within it while still becoming something greater than the sum of its parts. For this reason, Bracken argues that society contains what is meant by substance, but Aristotelian substance does not contain all that is meant by society.⁸⁴ Societies preserve the ontological status their parts.

To demonstrate the primacy of becoming over being, Bracken argues that Aristotle’s own articulation of motion as self-perpetuating should have extended into the Unmoved Mover. “Aristotle considered prime matter as infinite since it has no specification or determination through form; it is pure possibility. Whitehead clearly and explicitly equates creativity with Aristotle’s prime matter.⁸⁵ Bracken concludes, then, that for Aristotle substance or actuality cannot be infinite, but only potentiality, prime matter, or creativity can be infinite.”⁸⁶ Therefore, the Unmoved Mover is not the cause of motion, but rather, its primordial instantiation; motion is the ultimate reality. It will be this principle of absolute activity that, for Bracken, creates the distinction between God’s transcendent immutable nature and the contingent “openness” of his Persons:

In short, it is a God who acts but is never acted upon and can therefore never interact. This is captured in the Aristotelian formula: unmoved mover. Fritz Rothschild described the God of Rabbi Abraham Heschel—a God with *pathos*, who feels and is felt by the creatures as “the *Most Moved Mover*.” Hartshome greatly admired Heschel and amended this formula in an attempt to distill the essence of dipolar theism: “God is the most *and best* moved mover.”⁸⁷

David Schindler points out: it is “precisely the point that Whitehead's actual entities are instantiations of creativity and that Aquinas' individual substances [taken from Aristotle] are instantiations of *esse*. It seems equally true that Whitehead's creativity and Aquinas' *esse* are pure activity.”⁸⁸ Thus, Bracken initially agrees with Thomas Aquinas, who defined God’s being as pure act, however, “being” in Aquinas is not well enough defined, as Heidegger also said.⁸⁹ Being should not be another entity ontologically separate from the entities it empowers to exist, but Aquinas seems to do this, accidentally making God both determinate and infinite, thereby conflating the pure act of the divine nature with the entitative reality of the three persons. Because the pure act of being is not an entity in process thought, there is no cause-effect distinction between God’s nature and persons, and this is how Bracken takes Aquinas’ Subsistent Being and makes it Subsistent Action.⁹⁰ Other important aspects of Aquinas that Bracken tweaks include God’s attributes of perfection and immutability, among others. God’s perfection

⁸³ *God: Three Who Are One*. 24.

⁸⁴ *One, Many, Trinity*. 94.

⁸⁵ *Creativity as Ultimate*. 163.

⁸⁶ *One, Many, Trinity*. 101.

⁸⁷ *God as Most and Best Moved Mover*. 26-27.

⁸⁸ *Creativity as Ultimate*. 165.

⁸⁹ *One, Many, Trinity*. 105.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 106.

is always increasing but never decreasing. God is still immutable but in the sense that the creative love of God (which is his absolutely indeterminate nature) never changes.⁹¹

Creativity is the infinite motion that is the divine nature. Although it only exists in cohort with actual entities, creativity is not an attribute or generalization but an ontological reality. Whitehead's creativity has no rational coherence, unless creativity be understood, not as a disconnected ultimate principle, but rather as a gift from God to all other beings. Bracken makes it so, opening the possibility of God's logical (not temporal) primacy over creation (rather than total mutual dependence in Whitehead). Creativity then is the activity embodied in every entity, very much like the "act of being" in classical theology.⁹² "In terms of the one and the many, creativity is the one."⁹³ This alteration of Whitehead had been suggested by Norris Clarke as the critical step toward reconciliation with Christianity, although "Thomists would still have their problems with the notion of an entity that partially determines its own essence, but this problem might well be contained inside the confines of a strictly philosophical discussion within the general horizon of a shared Christian vision of God as creator."⁹⁴

For Bracken, allowing God's nature to be pure potential, rather than totally actual (assuming this distinction is necessary), is the only way God can be a dynamic subject of experience, as opposed to a mere object of thought. At the same time, this need not be seen as a limitation on God's perfection since perfection is still the starting point in the model and "the only admissible change within the relations of the divine persons to one another would have to be positive [from perfection to more perfection], allowing for reciprocal growth and development."⁹⁵ Bracken argues this is an enhanced idea of perfection. God in process is necessary for God in relationship with creation. The whole difficulty of human freedom versus divine providence disappears in this system. "If God is immutable in the sense of being deathless and trustworthy, it does not follow that God is immutable *in all respects* as classical theism [purportedly] requires."⁹⁶

"Bracken criticizes the traditional view of participated being for making created entities accidental modifications of the divine substance with no real existence in their own right. Without at least a formal distinction between God as the primordial instantiation of the Act of Being and the Act of Being itself, all finite beings would become accidental modifications of the one divine entity, and a universe like Spinoza's results."⁹⁷ Participated being for Bracken means both the communication of God's nature, creativity, and the sharing of God's persons, intersubjectivity, to all created beings.⁹⁸ God remains distinctly creator, but what he creates, in varying degrees, shares the ability to self-constitute, which is the signature of the divine persons. This is much more participation than in Whitehead's initial aims and divine forms.

⁹¹ Ibid. 107.

⁹² *God: Three Who Are One*. 84.

⁹³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 107.

⁹⁴ *The Philosophical Approach to God*. 83.

⁹⁵ Bracken, Joseph A. 1984. "Subsistent relation: mediating concept for a new synthesis?." *Journal Of Religion* 64, 188-204. *Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost. 194.

⁹⁶ *God as Most and Best Moved Mover*. 16.

⁹⁷ *One, Many, Trinity*. 112.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 113.

Bracken's search for a consistent social ontology has led him to develop a panentheistic cosmology that is perhaps the most tenable yet developed.⁹⁹ Bracken believes his position is not far from Aquinas' in that it makes God the creative power that brings all into existence without compromising the ontological identity of creatures. God is completely free in the act of creation because he is prior to all actual occasions, but the entities of the created universe are self-constituting and therefore create their own unity and objectivity.¹⁰⁰ The cosmic society exists "within" the divine society.

The trinitarian structure of Bracken's process theology is one of his essential and unique achievements. Seeing classical trinitarianism as separatist from creation and biased toward intelligibility over relation,¹⁰¹ Bracken reconstructs the person-nature unity of classic theism into an entity-society union. God is a society of three entities, wherein society and entity are equiprimordial. Bracken accepts "the revision of Whitehead's concept of God put forward by Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb, and other distinguished process philosophers to the effect that God is not to be understood as a unique non-temporal actual entity but rather as a personally ordered society of actual occasions."¹⁰² Bracken goes further than Hartshorne making God tripersonal, or three sub-societies of actual occasions within the one God. Bracken avoids the quasi-modalism of Rahner and Longergan by speaking of "three consciousnesses in God."¹⁰³

Bracken also takes issues with social trinitarians who confuse the Holy Spirit with the divine nature. "Discussing Mühlen and Jüngel, Bracken says we must associate the divine nature with process, action, and dynamism, not the individual person of the Holy Spirit, who must be understood in personal terms just like the Father and Son."¹⁰⁴ Each person of the Trinity is a subjective center, though all three know and will the same due to their perfect harmony in love. Distancing himself from the hierarchal view of the Trinity, he prefers to emphasize the equality of service in friendship.¹⁰⁵

I propose that the Father is the originator of the divine being in that he continually proposes to the Son and the Spirit a new possibility of existence for themselves as the triune God, based on what they jointly were a moment ago. I likewise propose that the Son is the one originated because by his decision from moment to moment he continually says yes to the Father's proposal. Thereby he converts what was mere possibility into actuality, not only for himself but for the Father and the Spirit as well. Finally, I suggest that the Spirit is the hypostatized condition of this relationship between the Father and the Son since as divine love itself he continually urges the Father to make the proposal of a new possibility of existence and inspires the Son to keep saying yes to that same proposal.¹⁰⁶

God the Father offers to created entities and persons new possibilities of concrescence and growth through the same offering which He makes to His Son. The Son incorporates all creaturely decisions within the cosmos into his own yes to the Father's proposal. "The Spirit

⁹⁹ Ibid. 120.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 123.

¹⁰¹ *God: Three Who Are One*. 50.

¹⁰² *Subsistent Relation*. 193.

¹⁰³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 127.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *Subsistent Relation*. 197.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 196. Bracken, Joseph A. 2011. "Trinitarian spirit Christology: in need of a new metaphysics?." *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4: 750-767. *ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index, EBSCOhost*. 750.

from moment to moment prompts the Father to offer initial aims to all his creatures, ‘lures’ the individual occasion consciously or unconsciously to align its decision with that of the Son, and finally empowers the Son to say yes to the Father's proposal and thus to place himself and all the actual occasions in the world at that moment in reciprocal relationship with the Father.”¹⁰⁷ The difference between human persons and all other created beings is the quantitative difference in ability toprehend data, or in other words, a higher possibility of communion with other beings. Advancement in personhood means assimilating more and more knowledge of and love for others.¹⁰⁸ The emergent realities of organic life and human self-awareness correspond with the natural evolution of societies, with the qualification that God is involved in every possibility of social, as well as individual, advancement. Subjective immortality after death is the only point at which a special divine intervention is definitely required, for this is God’s own life to give.¹⁰⁹

Bracken averts from Thomistic relations of origin in preference for Whitehead’s categories of creative process. The distinction between the persons of the Trinity is in their mutually exclusive subjectivities corresponding to Whitehead’s four phases of process. The Father provides the initial aims of being as their conceptual source. The Son is the second and third phases of provisional and perfected actuality. The Holy Spirit is the movement of the superject nature back to the Father.¹¹⁰ Primal Cause, Primal Effect, and Primordial Condition. These three roles are one single Act of Being and each person is part of the roles of the others. This stays very close to the classical doctrine of “appropriation.” Thomas Regan has argued that having three subjectivities within God necessitates tritheism in Whitehead’s metaphysics because subjectivity can only occur in an actual entity and God *is* an actual entity.¹¹¹ Bracken solved this problem by modifying Whiteheadian societies to allow them ontological status as “fields.” The democratic, as opposed to hierarchal, nature of the divine society evades the assertion of a “quaternity,” or four divine societies.¹¹²

Commenting on the Spirit-Christology of Habets and Weinandy – who hold strongly its complementarity with Logos-Christology – Bracken asks whether the “*monarchia*” of the Father does not “unintentionally” compromise the mutual relatedness or *perichoresis* of the divine persons.¹¹³ Thus, Bracken proposes that God’s works *ad intra* are one, just as Aquinas said of God’s works *ad extra*. The three persons of the Trinity each give and receive the single creative self-giving act of love. The two natures of Christ consist of two “agencies” of higher and lower-orders, the divine agency being the higher and ontologically subsistent of the two.¹¹⁴ Bracken purposefully remains faithful to Nicaea and Chalcedon in this position. The inferiority of the human nature of Christ to his divine nature does not compromise the ontological reality of either society, which both exist with the broader “structured society” that is Jesus the one person. “As a result, [Jesus] was continually united with himself as the divine Son in responding to the

¹⁰⁷ *Subsistent Relation*. 198.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 201.

¹⁰⁹ *God: Three Who Are One*. 119.

¹¹⁰ *One, Many, Trinity*. 141.

¹¹¹ *The Problem of the Trinity in Whitehead*. 322.

¹¹² *Ibid.* 323.

¹¹³ Bracken, Joseph A. 2011. "Trinitarian Spirit Christology: In Need of a New Metaphysics?." *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4: 750-767. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost. 755.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 757.

initiative of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit within the divine communitarian life.”¹¹⁵

The “cosmic society” is also a part of the divine matrix of the Trinity but God is not dependent on the world in any way.¹¹⁶ The universe was created freely but, once it was created, God made himself partially contingent upon it though always the Supreme Being in relation to it. The massive, but finite, field of the universe and all its subsocieties of entities are living elements within the relational dynamism of the Trinity. At the same time, finite creatures contribute to the ongoing generation of ultimate reality.¹¹⁷ Bracken rejects the body-soul analogy of the world-God relationship, as in Hartshorne, because it makes God too dependent on the world.¹¹⁸ Instead, creation and human history is part of the everlasting dialogue between divine persons, an aspect of the expression of the love of God from all eternity. “In utilizing this formulation of a triune God who is intimately related to the world, one has sacrificed the notion of the all-powerful and immutable God of the classical trinitarian conception.”¹¹⁹

In regard to the end of the world, Bracken draws from Teilhard de Chardin. In the end, the entire created universe will become part of the “Body of Christ” transfigured into a new state of being as ordained by the will of God:¹²⁰

Finally, with respect to the whole of creation as the Mystical Body of Christ, it too can be understood as a Whiteheadian “structured society” within the field of activity proper to all three divine Persons but especially to Jesus as the Word incarnate. Yet, in line with the intent of the Spirit Christology of Habets and others, the Holy Spirit should be considered as the “soul” or animating principle of the Mystical Body and the Father as the originating principle, the ontological source from which divine self-giving love initially flows and to which it ultimately returns through the response to that love on the part of Christ as the head and creation as his Mystical Body. All of creation, in other words, but especially human beings through their church-related link with the risen Jesus, can in this way participate in the communitarian life of the divine Persons in their single conjoint act of self-giving love for one another and all their creatures. This happens even now, of course, but it will be fully evident only at the end of the world or at least of our current cosmic epoch.¹²¹

With Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, Bracken prefers a communal articulation of soteriology, and sees this as a crucial reason for clearer erudition of trinitarian language, which should embody community par excellence.¹²² Naming God as Trinity explains how “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Relational-ontology images the fullness of life, the life to which Christ invites man, a life of liberation from idolatry. Communion in community channels the same impetus that drives men to idolatry and self-love and redirects into the love of Love. In the neo-Whiteheadian schema relationship translates into concrescence, which for God is never-ending. God brings human persons into his “consequent nature” to recreate them in his own primordial vision, saving

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 761-62.

¹¹⁶ *God: Three Who Are One*. 80.

¹¹⁷ *One, Many, Trinity*. 144.

¹¹⁸ *God: Three Who Are One*. 79. *Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. 763.

¹¹⁹ *The Problem of the Trinity in Whitehead*. 327.

¹²⁰ *One, Many, Trinity*. 146.

¹²¹ *Trinitarian Spirit Christology*. 764.

¹²² Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. 2001. “God, Trinity, Process.” *Dialog: A Journal Of Theology* 40, no. 3: 169. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost. 173. *One, Many, Trinity*. 80.

mankind “by taking us into the divine self everlastingly, and by guiding us toward our next becoming historically.”¹²³

Juxtaposing biblical teaching on marriage (Ephesians 5:21-32) and the Eucharist (John 6) against the thesis behind Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene*, Bracken argues contra the assumption that human beings are naturally (or deterministically) selfish. Rather, “spontaneous self-giving love for others is well within the range of normal human behavior.”¹²⁴ Comparing Martin Buber’s “I-Thou” philosophy and Jesus’ teachings, it is evident that reciprocal self-giving was at the heart of Eucharistic communion between Christians in the early Church and between husbands and wives in marriage. The constitution of “I” in relation to “Thou” and “Thou” in relation to “I” comes to be through simultaneous mutual causation, and therefore, necessitates an alteration in the classical understanding of cause-effect relations between human persons and between God and the created individual.¹²⁵ Taking the Trinity as exemplar, simultaneous mutual causation and self-donation are synonymous.

Pugliese takes issue with this “problem” of “mutual ultimate causality.”¹²⁶ While conceding that “if it is possible for a cause to produce an effect while at the same time the effect produces the cause, then Bracken would have a highly plausible rejoinder to my criticism,” Pugliese goes on to lament Bracken’s lack of exposition on this theory of causality. The relevant philosophical question is whether causal chronologies are objective descriptions or merely impositions from human perception onto reality. Classically, causal chronology is relegated only to finite beings, while God is allowed mutual ultimate causality in reference to the three persons of the Trinity.¹²⁷ The concept of *perichoresis*, or subsistent relations in Aquinas, is the prime example of mutual causality in classical theism. However, Bracken’s neo-Whiteheadian metaphysics wants to extend God’s *perichoresis* into all of creation, and as a result destroy any *ontological* meaning behind the terms “cause” and “effect.”¹²⁸ Pugliese suggests that Bracken’s system may be in violation of the Fourth Lateran Council’s (AD 1215) declaration: “Between Creator and creature no similitude can be expressed without implying a greater dissimilitude.”¹²⁹ Likewise Thomas Aquinas said: “All affirmations we can make about God are not such that our minds may rest in them, nor of such sort that we may suppose God does not transcend them.”¹³⁰

It should be noted that neither Whitehead, Hartshorne, Boyd, nor Bracken has eliminated the qualitative separation between Creator and creature. God’s transcendence is preserved in the Primordial Nature, the Abstract Pole, or the Indeterminate Creative Nature of God respectively. The difference lies in the assimilation of the Trinitarian persons into the metaphysics of created beings. This fact does not necessarily imply that process thinkers are always making univocal predications of the immanent Trinity, but it does take the conclusion of Karl Rahner to heart: “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’

¹²³ *God, Trinity, Process*. 174.

¹²⁴ Bracken, Joseph A. 2013. “The Challenge of Self-Giving Love.” *Theological Studies* 74, no. 4: 856-871. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, EBSCOhost. 857.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 861.

¹²⁶ *One, Many, Trinity*. 165.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 208, 226.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 207.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 225.

¹³⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De divinis nominibus* 1.2. As quoted in *One, Many, Trinity*. 227.

Trinity.¹³¹ Bracken garners several analogies, some more univocal than others, in support of simultaneous mutual causality. Buber's description of the I-Thou-Between dynamic of interpersonal relations (best exemplified in marriage) is one example of many social analogies that he and other process thinkers have used to show the Trinity in creation. But there is too much disparity between subjective human experience and objective forces of nature to take social analogies univocally. Like Whitehead, Bracken draws his major inspiration from the scientific worldview:

For example, as philosopher of science Ervin Laszlo points out, something like simultaneous mutual causation works at the quantum level in the mutual entanglement of subatomic particles separated from one another at a distance greater than the speed of light. Likewise, this mutual entanglement of subatomic particles accounts for the way living things are organisms, unified totalities of dynamically interrelated parts or members, rather than finely tuned machines.¹³²

Bracken uses other analogical predications from science such as the theory of "supervenience," which is mutual causality between consciousness and the body, and also "the web-of-belief" epistemological model, which supports the view that causes and effects are interdependent and mutually condition one another inasmuch as beliefs affecting other beliefs can be construed in terms of causality."¹³³ Other examples of non-temporal mutual intimations in human experience are being studied in the rising field of verifiable experiments deemed "noetic science." Mathematical experiments with self-generating diversity also exhibit Bracken's trinitarian logic.¹³⁴ Astrophysics knows that most galaxies in the universe are held together by a paradoxical anomaly called a "black hole" at their center. Beyond the event horizon of such an event is a genuine enigma where gravity becomes infinite and space-time disappears. Perhaps one of the most important mysteries to which mutual causation might offer a hint of explanation is the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist (and sacraments in general). What is meant by "sacramental presence" that is neither the same as omnipresence nor "natural presence?"¹³⁵ What meaning should be abstracted from the idea of a substance without consistent accidents?¹³⁶ Surely, one could benefit from the temporal-eternal interconnectivity of open-theism and mutual causality here.¹³⁷

As a final consideration it is worth reflecting on Thomas Weinandy's piercing criticisms of Process Christology in *Does God Change?* Acknowledging that many process theologians

¹³¹ Rahner, Karl. 1997. *The Trinity / Karl Rahner ; translated by Joseph Donceel ; introduction, index, and glossary by Catherine Mowry LaCugna*. n.p.: New York : Crossroad Pub., 1997., 1997. 22. Emphasis is Rahner's.

¹³² *Self-Giving Love*. 861.

¹³³ *One, Many, Trinity*. 200.

¹³⁴ See Wolfram, Stephen. 2002. *A new kind of science / Stephen Wolfram*. n.p.: Champaign, IL : Wolfram Media.

¹³⁵ Nutt, Roger. 2010. "The Application of Christ's One Oblation: Charles Journet on the Mass, the Real Presence, and the Sacrifice of the Cross." *Nova Et Vetera (English Edition)* 8, no. 3: 665-681. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost. 672. Morrill, Bruce T. 2011. "Christ's sacramental presence in the Eucharist: a biblical-pneumatological approach to the mystery of faith." *American Theological Inquiry (Online)* 4, no. 2: ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost. 21.

¹³⁶ For more discussion on Eucharistic dynamics see Toner, Patrick. 2011. "Transubstantiation, Essentialism, and Substance." *Religious Studies: An International Journal For The Philosophy Of Religion* 47, no. 2: 217-231. *Philosopher's Index*, EBSCOhost. Hemming, Laurence Paul. 2000. "After Heidegger: Transubstantiation." *Heythrop Journal* 41, no. 2: 170. *Humanities International Complete*, EBSCOhost.

¹³⁷ See Rice, Richard. 2007. "Trinity, Temporality, and Open Theism." *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly Of Israel* 35, no. 3-4: 321-328. *Philosopher's Index*, EBSCOhost.

have deviated from scholastic theism via the motivation to build a more logically-consistent, sometimes meaning more secularly-consistent, worldview, Weinandy responds: “to presume, unlike the believers of previous generations, that secular man’s worldview is correct is to beg the question.”¹³⁸ No fair evaluation of history could deny that the Church has often filled the necessary role of correcting errors in her peers, rather than fearfully making concessions, yet the worldview in question here, namely Joseph Bracken’s neo-Whiteheadian trinitarian metaphysics, seems almost unquestionably compatible with the rigorous mathematical proofs of modern physics. The integrity of this particular worldview is probably the greatest within the plethora of process systems. Aristotle’s substance-ontology was developed from a simplistic (from the scientific perspective) observation of the world, though its genius is more than evident. Aristotle’s was a metaphysics that imitated common human experience, but what is needed is a complementary system that imitates natural processes.

Aquinas, on the other hand, did not understand God and substance in the same way as Aristotle: “The word substance signifies not only what exists of itself but it also signifies an essence that has the property of existing in this way; this existence, however, is not its essence. Thus it is clear that God is not in the genus of substance” since God’s essence is existence.¹³⁹ This confusion extends into process thinkers’ criticisms of immutability. “God is unchangeable not because he is inert or static like a rock, but for just the opposite reason. He is so dynamic, so active that no change can make him more active. He is act pure and simple.”¹⁴⁰ In this respect, classical theism is not as unaccommodating to process in God as is often thought; God is not below the ability to change, He is super-changing, so to speak. Likewise, the traditional understanding of creation never needed to imply change at all because creation is from nothing, the whole consequence is in the existence of the creature.¹⁴¹ But no act other than Pure Act could create from nothing; since God is the totality of possible action He does not have do anything more than Be.¹⁴²

According to this conception of creation, God is closer to the creature than any other relation could be because the creature is always receiving its very being from God’s being. As was mentioned earlier, this is almost identical to the relationship between Creativity and actual entities in Bracken’s system. The mixed-relations between Creator and creature in Aquinas’ metaphysics attempt to convey this same truth of faith: God’s relationship to human persons is not less interactive than human to human relations, just interactive on a qualitatively superior level. “God’s logical relation to the world means that he is in a real sense more intimately related to the world and man than a man is related to the world and other men.”¹⁴³ Other examples of mixed-relations include the knower to the known and the divine nature of Christ to His human nature.¹⁴⁴ Mixed-relations in classical theism are like the instances of simultaneous mutual causality in Bracken’s trinitarian system: both systems employ paradox to emphasize important truths of Christian faith: *hierarchy* is stressed in the classic model and *equality* is

¹³⁸ Weinandy, Thomas G. 1985. *Does God change? : the Word's becoming in the Incarnation / Thomas G. Weinandy*. n.p.: Still River, Mass. : St. Bede's Publications, c1985., 1985. 126.

¹³⁹ S.T. I, 3, 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ *Does God Change?* 79.

¹⁴¹ S.C.G. II, 18, 2.

¹⁴² *Does God Change?* 91.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 129.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 96-97.

stressed in the process model – yet these two metaphysical prototypes *can be* interpreted in ways open to each other’s strengths.

Conclusion

In classical trinitarianism as well as open process trinitarianism, creation *ex nihilo* prognosticates the Incarnation and sacramental-theosis by connecting God and the world according to a logic of subsistence or *perichoresis*. God’s immanence is predicated in the classic system through Aquinas’ concept of “super-activity.” God’s immanence is predicated in the process system through a concept of “super-relationality.” In either case, the hermeneutic of faith is the same; the meaning of words “activity” and “relationality” are obscured and the rejoinder of Lateran IV comes to mind. The primary issue with the version of process theology discussed above (which is in need a novel designation) is its minimalist interpretation of God’s non-categorical being. As will always be the case, the zeal for understanding risks trespassing on the unique and unfathomable kenosis of God. Process theology confuses the separation between God and man and world no more than classical theology confuses the intimacy between God and man and world.

What if orthodox theology made the move from holding together contrary ideas, like it did with the Greek categories of “three persons” and “one nature,” to holding together the contrary metaphysical systems of neo-scholasticism and process-relational-trinitarianism, in which God is uniquely immutably One in three Persons, yet, at the same time, intersubjectively and dependently related to man and creation by His own free-choice? If the process metaphysical system be taken analogically, as the classical system must as well, then a marriage of the two systems may be possible in the philosophical discourse about God. Depending on the emphasis one wishes to make, the language of the relevant system could be invoked while still holding to the truths of the complementary system. This is merely another example of subsistent relation on a macro level, *perichoresis* between whole metaphysical models. Such an idea might succeed in refreshing the theological understanding of the cosmos, ingeniously assimilating modern physics, biology, and psychology, while simultaneously uniting Christian intellectuals of diverse camps into a charismatic unity.

The guardianship of the faith, entrusted to the Catholic Church, might be summarized as the preservation of the single logical paradox of incarnation. Simply speaking, the Son’s Incarnation is the “fitting” of the divine into a finite space and the “pulling” of the finite into the eternal. The entire Christian life might be encapsulated as trying to find this “divine space” and live in it. The faith of Catholicism is a faith in physically manifest divine realities, and its mysteries act as a bridge in the human soul to the divine, a real bridge to God’s actual essence, a bridge in reason as well as in life. That which seems incomprehensible or unreachable comes into human grasp by the power of “word” and “sacrament.” God fits Godself into Revelation, into Christ, and by temporal extension, into the doctrine and liturgy of the Catholic Church. This is the only “a priori” that promises salvation.

If they will accept this paradox, process theologians will already have won the battle for God’s dynamism. Prayer exhibits this sacramental bridge between qualitative differences, as man is empowered to commune with the God in His essence through a free-gift of God’s

personal presence in his or her soul, again perpetuating the logic of incarnation. The faith that the Second Person of the Trinity is fully human and fully divine, with two wills and two intellects, in the single person Jesus Christ – *must be* a break in any metaphysical framework, but it need be the only break, the only faith. It is the consistent interpretive key for paradox. This is what makes Catholicism valuable and salvation accessible, and it is encompassed in the concept variously named *perichoresis*, subsistent relation, and simultaneous mutual causality. This faith alone makes sense of spiritual-persons, sacrament, sanctifying-grace, free-wills, the beatific vision, the Immaculate Conception, and the bodily resurrection in a rational continuum witnessed to by five hundred generations of relative theological agreement and faithful accent.

The Pagans took their analogies for God from natural hierophanies, such as weather, planets, and crop-fertility. The Jews received their main analogy from the tabernacle and temple, which was the “pattern” of God shown to Moses on the mountain (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5). The early Christians used the analogies of Greek philosophy, of essence and form. Church fathers developed the idea of mutual-indwelling, a predication revealed by the procession of the Incarnation. Medieval theologians continued to use analogies grounded in Greek substance-ontology, and compatible with a geocentric worldview. *But the displacement of man from the locus of the universe and the stripping away of his biological uniqueness, both in conjunction with the laws of quantum-mechanics, this is the unique crisis for human identity today.*

Whatever is going on at the most fundamental level of universe, it does not fit the model of scholastic substances. Energy and mass are interchangeable and space has more than three dimensions. What constitutes an individual material entity and where his or her or its boundaries begin and end is in constant fluxuation.¹⁴⁵ Alfred North Whitehead was himself a mathematician and physicist. The metaphysical analogy for the Trinity may be in need of further update (development of doctrine) to match these radical changes in scientific worldview. Nevertheless, of utmost importance is to heed the words of Pope Pius XII: “Let no Christian therefore, whether philosopher or theologian, embrace eagerly and lightly whatever novelty happens to be thought up from day to day, but rather let him weigh it with painstaking care and a balanced judgment, lest he lose or corrupt the truth he already has, with grave danger and damage to his faith.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *God: Three Who Are One*. 114.

¹⁴⁶ Pope Pius XII. Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine (1950). *Humani Generis*. 30.

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