

PROCESS PHILOSOPHY AS A UNIFYING AND GLOBAL VISION

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Process philosophy is founded in speculative metaphysics, in a speculative metaphysics which is itself deeply paradoxical: it at once combines a passion to embrace all things so as to make the world an intelligible whole or system,¹ and it places creative activity at the very foundation of that system, thereby indicating that the world is not, and cannot be, a fully intelligible whole.² Its pursuit of the whole, its striving to bring all experience within its ken, is grounded in a love affair, an erotic adventure whose vehicle is creative intellectual imagination. Yet the creativity which it names as ultimate is not some cold abstraction, easily integrated within a system of understanding, but rather this creativity is alive in particular acts of creation; in a sense, it is the substance of everything actual. It cannot, of course, be explained. Nor can its fruits be predicted, even if those fruits be themselves philosophical. Process philosophy then is a failure, and by its own admission is fated to continue to fail.³

Thus it is incumbent on process philosophers not to claim too much for ourselves. Even without a hearing, speculative metaphysics is suspect, if only because Western civilization has been, even increasingly, committed to one kind of rationality, to a reason which honors only truth, and that understood principally as highly ordered matter of fact. Speculative metaphysics is not empirical science, at least as that is normally understood. Strangely it is not empirical science precisely because on the one hand it is more empirical and on the other is more dedicated to, is a more passionate pursuit of, *scientia* or wisdom. To be so empirical and so in love with wisdom is to be akin to what we call art. It should not be surprising that process philosophers place aesthetics higher than morality or knowledge, importance above truth and rightness.

It is frequently claimed that process philosophy, because it is metaphysical, is too ambitious, that it proposes things that cannot be known. Such complaints are, of course, quite correct--if one has as an ideal that philosophy be limited by some arbitrary test to a very limited range of knowledge, typically to the kind of knowledge claims that can be supported within the limits of particular sciences. Rigidly

adhered to, such claims bring conversation to a halt before it has hardly begun. But here is no reason why anyone should adhere to such limits, much less demand this of others. Yet, those who indulge in speculative metaphysics quite properly do so only with deep suspicion of their own activity.

Speculative metaphysics is suspect, as all art is suspect, because its imaginative flights carry us beyond what we can know, beyond what we can order, beyond what scientific culture wants to know.⁴ In any civilization, including ours, there are counter currents, often parading or masquerading as the wave of the future. In some of these interstices in "modern scientific" culture--among feminists, among those who hope unrealistically for human liberation and happiness, among some ecologically minded biologists and physicists, among poets, among various thinkers who would find depth of insight in Eastern ways, among religious people, and especially among theologians struggling to understand faith--one finds that process philosophy has considerable and growing appeal. You will note that I did not say among philosophers, philosophy having long since given itself over to varieties of semiotics, and almost unrelieved dullness.

Process philosophy is suspect because it offers not the truth but an imaginative vision, what Plato called "a likely story." Rather than the world wrapped up in a neat package, it offers only an imaginative perspective, but an imaginative perspective anchored in a wide range of human experience and knowledge.

Where it counts, process philosophy is resolutely realistic. It provides a conceptuality, however impoverished, for speaking about the non-human world, and even about God, existing independently of human perception, thought and language. The primary datum of this philosophy is a human being experiencing, but it is a human being experiencing a real world. A need, or at least a desire, for such a vision is affirmed by the incurable realism of ordinary human beings. We cannot live except as though the world exists independently of human perception. We live in a world which is given to us, no matter how much our experience of it may shape our experience of it. Thus, we assume, that science and art are valuable because they make contact with a world which transcends human experience of it.

Yet process philosophy must be doubly suspect just because its imagination is rooted not in the

flight of fancy of some great mad poet but in the ruminations of a good mathematician, Alfred North Whitehead. The system, most carefully and most fruitfully articulated in *Process and Reality*, is in part presented as though it were like a geometry, with axioms and careful definitions, and enormous effort toward rational precision and clarity. There are, some will tell you, two very different sides to process philosophy, even two different schools of process thought. On the one side, is the empirical and aesthetic, on the other the rational and logical. Strangely perhaps, the rational and logical has predominated. No philosophy has given more attention to technical detail and careful argument. So process philosophy, more often than not, presents itself as irrational aesthetic sensibility clothed in highly rationalistic garb. That ought to be suspect. After all, a perspective shouldn't attempt to have its cake and eat it too. Either the world is rational and amenable to rational categories or it is not, in which case comprehending it should be left to mystics and poets.

Or is it? Is not this kind of forced distinction itself a symptom of a kind of unbridled reason, one which would on *a priori* grounds dismiss the very possibility of developing an aesthetically grounded metaphysics, an imaginative vision which enlightens because it both accords well with experience and seeks as much rational rigor and clarity as can be obtained by human beings. Whitehead said that philosophy is like the flight of an aeroplane which must return to earth. Some of us fly on occasion. Mostly we walk around on the ground. And there we have to be careful.

Among the ways in which we have to be careful is in not claiming too much for what we have seen in flight. There are after all other flights and other flyers. Process philosophy is not the only metaphysical vision; there are no grounds for claiming even that it is the best one. What can be claimed and proclaimed is that process thought has been found by a very wide diversity of sensible people to be a very good one, that it is a metaphysical vision which has served well to provide a general account of experience, and shows much promise of continuing to do so.

Even this sort of claim must, however, be severely qualified. No one would claim that Whitehead's metaphysical system is complete or completely adequate. Within the family, there are controversies,

investigations of Whitehead's meanings continue to be interesting and fruitful, and explorations of the implication of his thought have hardly more than begun. As is appropriate, process philosophy is no static thing, is itself in process of becoming. This is not to say that it is merely revealing itself or working itself out in us. It really is incomplete, dependent on future research, insight, intuition, flights of imagination. Accordingly, the circle which encompasses process philosophers is extremely vague, often arbitrary, and becomes increasingly so.

Here I mean by "process philosophy" that way of thinking which has its primary intellectual grounding in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.⁵ In this history the thought of one of Whitehead's students, Charles Hartshorne,⁶ is only moderately less prominent. Many contemporaries or predecessors of Whitehead's who might quite legitimately be counted as process philosophers--William James, John Dewey, Nicholas Berdyaev, Henri Bergson, Samuel Alexander and others--I would count as kindred spirits, or even as process philosophers with that term more broadly conceived. Historically more remote precursors appear to be increasing, as compatibilities with elements of contemporary process thought are found in Thales, Plato, Socinus, Eckhart, Hegel, Schelling, and many others. Important compatibilities are also increasingly discovered in several varieties of Buddhist thought. I have no desire to repudiate efforts to enlarge the circle of what might be termed process thought, and do, indeed, applaud them. Yet a more restricted circle is proposed here, partly to reflect a fairly common usage, partly to have you understand what it is that I choose to discuss here.

That process philosophy is itself in process of becoming is important in this discussion for a more important reason. Process philosophy is a perspective, not God's perspective, but a very limited perspective which has in fact arisen out of certain historical circumstances and with assumptions rooted in Western culture and languages, Christian religious myths and sensitivities, and largely male and middle class sensibilities. Some of this has been recognized; much more, I'm sure, remains to be uncovered, and will be.⁷ Yet by recognizing its own rootedness in history and its own bias, process philosophy opens itself radically to creative development and its own transformation. For any given

philosopher at any given time there are, of course, limits to openness. But its openness in principle, combined with its giving centrality to creativity, makes process philosophy at least as potentially global as any philosophy can be.

Becoming

Process philosophy is not only a philosophy which is itself becoming but a philosophy of becoming, a philosophy which seeks to overcome a deep seated preference for static and unchanging stability. It does not claim that everything is always changing, which would be nonsense. It claims only that in the interplay between stabilities and change, between forms and dynamics, between structures and energies, between being and becoming, becoming is the more important, the more basic, the more inclusive category. Its vision is a vision of a world importantly in flux.

An important choice is reflected here. To opt of the primacy of being, as has been characteristic of most prior philosophy, is finally to render becoming, and all that is implied by it, non-existent or epiphenomenal. Philosophies of being finally have to say that freedom, creativity, change, chance, novelty, time, evolution, transformation, etc. are illusions, that from the divine perspective at least all of this is ultimately unreal. Philosophies of becoming, on the other hand, do not simply reverse this evaluation. They are not forced into claiming that all order, determination, stability, permanence, etc. is unreal or epiphenomenal or illusory. A simple logical consideration comes to the fore here. An unchanging whole cannot include changing parts or aspects and remain unchanged as a whole. To change a part of a thing is to some degree to change the whole thing. But the opposite is not the case. That is, a changing whole can include unchanging parts or aspects without violating its character as a whole of undergoing change. In this way, rather than completely repudiating them, process philosophy incorporates much that is valuable in philosophies of being.

At the center of Whitehead's metaphysics is the notion of actual entities or actual occasions as the fundamental realities. Fundamental realities are microscopic units of becoming, acts of prehending or

feeling the past environment which in their turn contribute to subsequent events. They are active experiences or feelings which in turn contribute to subsequent feelings and experiences.

In process thought, all actual occasions are to some degree creative. Though each inherits massively from its past and is thereby determined by efficient causation, each is also, to some degree, perhaps trivial, also a decision, a self-determination, a shaper of the present and future. That is, they create themselves out of the past that is given to them and they contribute to future, partially creating it. Thus process philosophy makes creativity fundamental in the sense that it cannot be explained by something else.⁸ But the creativity that is fundamental here is not an hypothesized abstraction; it is the creativity ingredient in actual occasions. Accordingly, the world is seen as shot through with emergent novelty or chance.

This is not to say that there are uncaused events. Rather, it is a doctrine of process philosophy that all events are to some degree uncaused by prior conditions. Or, to put the matter another way, a full account of any actual occasion requires both efficient causation and teleological causation. Creativity, so conceived, is freedom. And it is this freedom to be creative which makes it possible for process philosophy to give a more satisfactory account of evolution than can be achieved within a strictly deterministic framework. But it also make possible a more satisfactory account of our ordinary sense of decision making and responsibility.

No thoroughgoing determinism can be even potentially unifying. To the extent that human beings hope to see humanity unified in some sense, they assume that the future is to some degree open, that we are not simply fated to be the way we are. The very pursuit of a global philosophy, a philosophy which might contribute to overcoming the war-creating divisions among human beings, the tribal, national, racial, ideological, economic and religious divisions which continually plague the human race, is founded on the conviction that people have, or at least might have, some degree of influence on future events.

On the other hand, it is unlikely in the extreme that any philosophy or intellectual vision which ignores the enormous intellectual and practical power of modern science could find widespread acceptance.

A philosophy adequate to the task before us must be able to account for the full range of human knowledge and experience, without trivializing either the determinism which is important to science or the freedom which is important to ethics. Process philosophy does this by articulating a relative determinism, a view in which all events are largely determined by antecedent causes but none are completely determined by the past.

History is not the running down of an original plenitude, but always the creation of something more, the creation of worlds previously unimagined and unimaginable. Instead of seeking to find the reality of historical movements and institutions in threads of permanent, enduring essences, one looks to actual historical developments. In process thought, while the past is dead, settled, matter of fact, the future is genuinely open, not in the sense that anything is possible, but in the sense that there are real alternative possibilities, such that our lives, what we decide and do, makes a real difference, some lasting difference to the future universe.

Fatalisms abound--scientific, astrological, philosophical, theological. Any number of theories assert or imply an absolute or complete determinism according to which the future is entirely determined by the past. Accordingly, responsibility, purpose, choice, liberty, possibility, even time, are mere illusions. Still, hope, the power of the future, of possibilities known and unknown, is a common human experience. Despite fatalistic theories, despite calamity, even in the most desperate of circumstances, human beings hope. Process philosophy does not guarantee that hope will be realistic, but it does assure us that hope is warranted, that no matter how grim or bleak our circumstances, there are possibilities whose realization will make a real difference.

A key issue, or problem, for the possibility of a global philosophy, apart from some resolution of which there can be little meeting of minds in conversation between religious and cultural traditions, is the essentialist perspective found in both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. It is behind what Wilfred Cantwell Smith has called "the 'big-bang' theory of origins," according to which the true form and nature of Christian or Muslim life and thought is to be found at the historical beginnings, as though a

religion is "a kind of additive to history, something that has been injected into the temporal world from the outside and that remains there as a more or less stable extra, available to men and women in more or less purity depending on how close to its original form they are able to get hold of it."⁹

In this view the original is the true. Thus, to understand true Christianity one must go back to the teachings of Jesus, to understand Buddhism back to the teachings of Gautama, to understand Islam to the origins of the Qur'an. Subsequent historical developments, the experience and creations of the traditions are dismissed as impure, unimportant accretions.

The problem is deeper and more general than a fixation on origins. It stems from the idealistic view that everything is to be understood in terms of essences and accidents, where the unchanging essence of a thing is its 'true,' that is, its most real and most valuable being, all else being mere accidental, superficial corruption. Thus we hanker after 'true' selves, seek the essence of Buddhism, distinguish the permanent (i.e., the good) from the transient (i.e., the ephemeral) in Christianity, contend that a word, such as "God," can only mean what it has meant, and search out the essential nature of religion itself. Behind this whole conceptuality stands the metaphysical assumption that an ideal world is more real and more valuable than the actual world of concrete, historical individuals and events. Such a presupposition is utterly unempirical and anti-historical. Anyone willing to look with open eyes can readily see that what it means to be Christian or Buddhist has been different at different times and in different places. Similarly neither Christ nor Nirvana are unchanging realities, but ways in which different human beings in different times and places have experienced and expressed their faith. The history, the temporal extension and life of a religious tradition, is not the corruption of some ideal world, but the enrichment of that tradition, sometimes, to be sure, in perverse ways, sometimes in ways we judge to be salutary, but always enriching that tradition.

Philosophy evokes conversation or it is nothing. Global philosophy requires global conversation. But so long as it is assumed that religious and cultural traditions are essentially unchanging, or that the meaning of terms such as 'God' or 'faith' is inscribed on eternal tablets, real conversation, that is,

transforming conversation, between people of diverse traditions is made impossible.

Interdependence

A second important emphasis of process philosophy, somewhat in tension with the emphasis on individual acts of creative becoming, is the importance of inter-relatedness and interdependence. The Western intellectual tradition, in keeping with the idea that perfection consists in completeness, has placed a high value on independence and on a kind of power which is unidirectional. Accordingly, it is better to be a cause than to be an effect, to influence than to be influenced, to give than to receive. In contrast, without eliminating efficient causation, and without neglecting the importance of individuality, the vision of process philosophy is fundamentally a vision of individuals in interdependent relations. Accordingly, receptivity, sensitivity responsiveness to one's environment, are given due recognition and importance.

Perhaps most important, in process thought there is no absolute difference between self and others. Process philosophy agrees with the ancient Buddhist insight that we are largely products of the influences of all kinds of others, including past states of ourselves. We, in turn, are real ingredients in the lives of others. Our bodies are extensions of ourselves; tools can be extensions of our bodies; and through sympathetic feelings another human being can be a real part of one's life.

In contrast with the tradition of individualism, rooted in an absolute distinction between self and others, process thought is a philosophy of interdependence. Such a vision of interdependence has enormous practical application in ethics and politics. Instead of justifying authoritarianism and patriarchy through the glorification of non-relational power, process thought provides a way of understanding the intrinsic value of each member of society and the concomitant importance of sensitivity, responsiveness, and mutual caring.

Inordinate individualism is rooted philosophically in notions of independent substances and in the absolute distinction between self and others. But of traditional dualisms there is no end--mind and

matter, history and nature, self and other, reason and emotion, good and bad, right and wrong, the saved and the damned. Typically such dualisms are absolutistic, assuming that the world can pretty much be divided without remainder into two categories. Such dualisms have provided justification for killing, war, slavery, colonialism, racism, sexism, careless destruction of nature, and massive suffering everywhere. Against traditional dualistic habits of Western thought, process philosophy sees continuities and relative differences within unities. Where others have often seen such dualities and divisions, process thinkers, by attending to the aesthetic character of fundamental experience, have emphasized the relational character of existence. Here one finds better and worse rather than good and bad, reason as always more or less emotional, mind or spirit always embodied, matter always infused with some degree of subjectivity, nature alive, and a kind of universal salvation.

Process philosophy is fundamentally a philosophy of love, holding love to be a basic condition of all life. This is not some romantic failure to appreciate the very real presence of suffering and evil in the world, but simply the recognition that life is nothing but enjoyment of relations with others. Thus, healthy self-interest is always other-regarding, always reaching out to some others in sympathetic love.

Recognition of the relational nature of existence has led process thinkers to stress the importance of community and social responsibility and the quest for public good. But the public of process thought is finally very inclusive, extending not only to all people but in Buddhist fashion to all creatures. Long before the natural environment became a popular concern, process philosophy was animated by an ecological vision, a vision in which the welfare and happiness of any individual cannot be separated from the welfare of the individual's environment, a vision which stresses not only the kinship of all people, but the kinship and unity and interdependence which crosses species as well as national borders. In this light, process philosophy may be seen as a secular version of the mystical vision which holds all things in a unity of mutual love within God.

There is an important sense in which process philosophy is radically anthropomorphic in order to avoid undue anthropocentrism. Because it is a goal of speculative philosophy to elucidate the

relationships and mutual dependencies of things, generalization by analogy is its methodological core. The terms "panpsychism" and more recently "psychicalism," though not used by Whitehead, have sometimes been employed, especially by Hartshorne, to convey the idea that process philosophy is an attempt to take human experience, that which we know most intimately, as the fundamental clue to the nature of the non-human world. In a sense, process thought begins with human experience and generalizes it into a metaphysics. In the vision of process philosophy there are important ways in which we are related to everything else, and in addition there are important respects in which humans are like all other individuals in that feeling or sentience is characteristic of all actual entities.

Such a view stands in sharp contrast, of course, with views which make radical divisions between the human and the non-human, between spirit and matter, between values and facts, between the natural and the human sciences. The process vision is a vision of kinship, and this in a double sense. On the one hand it is important to recognize that we are related by inheritance to all others. On the other hand, we are also like all others in being centers of value enjoyment.

Depth

A third emphasis of process thought to which I wish to call attention here is the identification of feeling as the basis of experience. Against traditions which have encouraged us to value only clear and distinct ideas, indubitable truths, objective knowledge, and cognitive certainty; against a tradition that has taught us that we should believe only what can be proved or established beyond doubt; against a tradition of successive absolute authorities--Bible, Pope, tradition, reason, science; against all of this, process thought teaches respect for unconscious and inarticulate experience and learning. Life is much deeper, richer and more amorphous--more aesthetic-- than can be captured by rationality in thought in language. We know much more than we can tell.

A beginning point, a basic reference, for process philosophy, is immediate experience in all its vagueness and complexity. It is the ground to which all visions must be firmly tied.¹⁰ But immediate

experience does not analyze itself, and it is not philosophy's purpose to celebrate the vagueness of experience. What is required is clarification of experience which leads to rational understanding. Yet by emphasizing that reality is basically feelings, process thought leads to understanding that the very dichotomizing of thought and emotion is misleading, that experience is always emotionally felt and thought always tinged with emotion. Consequently the dichotomizing of empiricism and rationalism is misleading. Both are needed and there is no reason to choose one over the other, and especially not to choose one to the exclusion of the other.

Along with the myth of absolute determinism, process philosophy represents the rejection of another myth often associated with science, the myth of objective detachment. It has sometimes been supposed that objective methods of the physical sciences would in time take over the human sciences and that their supposed objectivity would replace reliance on personal faith and judgment. Today, most know better, recognizing that even the physical sciences cannot reasonably be conceived to be as free from value judgments, presuppositions and even human passion as once thought. The very idea of purely objective, detached knowledge has been unmasked as a pretentious faith claim, albeit a very powerful and important one. Thus, Western secular humanism is something to which people give their loyalty, some ultimately, some only more provisionally. It has constituted a living system by which people have found life meaningful. It is a faith.

By attending to the pre-reflective depths of experience, process philosophy makes it at least potentially possible to talk about common human experience. By "common human experience," I mean to point to some aspects of human existence which are relatively prior to understanding, which are pre-thematized and pre-reflective. I have no illusion that it is possible to get behind experience to the raw data of experience, much less to talk about that. All thought and language involves elements of interpretation. It is not as though we have experience, then think about it, and then speak about it. From the onset experiencing involves its interpretation, interpretation which is shaped by inherited traditions of language, speculative thought, cultural symbols and values, racial, sexual and class bias, and much

else. Despite all of these realities, it is useful to attempt to distinguish consciously held beliefs from relatively pre-reflective and pre-articulate beliefs.

An example may help. We all know at a pre-reflective level that the present is not only preceded by the past but causally influenced by it. Some philosophers have convinced themselves and others that there is no such causation, that behind the appearance of causal influence there is only "constant conjunction." But no matter how strongly a philosopher is convinced at the conscious level that there is no causation, his own pre-reflective experience of causation remains. He too experiences emotions such as anger or guilt, he too has attitudes about responsibility, and he too acts as though there are real influences upon him and as though his actions have consequences. Thus, whether we believe at a reflective level in causal influence or not, our lives, our attitudes, assumptions, emotions and decisions reveal a pre-reflective belief in causal influence.

When such beliefs are reflected upon and brought into consciousness, it may be desirable to attempt to justify them through argument. We may, for example, want to assure ourselves that they are consistent with other convictions. But our basic acceptance of them is a matter of self-evidence. "Mothers," Whitehead said, "can ponder many things in their hearts which their lips cannot express. These many things, which are thus known, constitute the ultimate religious evidence, beyond which there is no appeal."¹¹

To say that such beliefs are self-evident is not to say that they are equally obvious to everyone. On the contrary, ability to conceive previously unrecognized elements of experience is rare. Once someone has recognized them and brought them to a level of verbal expression, they can be recognized by others. The verbal expression elicits a believing response because the matter is obvious; that is, self-evident.

In this sense, philosophy should not be primarily a matter of argument. First of all, it should be an attempt to reflect on common human experience so as to elicit in others a responsive recognition of their own experience. In a sense, it is to try to make sense of the obvious, to make the obvious more obvious.

By giving a certain kind of priority to pre-reflective experience, process philosophy does not thereby endorse an anti-intellectualism which holds that articulation, conscious belief, rational argument and the quest for clarity are unimportant. This might follow if conscious beliefs had no bearing on felt experience, emotions, attitudes and actions. But all kinds of evidence suggests just the opposite: that conscious beliefs have serious consequences in the development of who we are and what we do.

This is one reason why it is vitally important that the conversation which is philosophy be very broad in its composition. A certain richness of experience is required to insure that the conceptions and symbols emergent in a particular tradition or stream of history are not mistakenly assumed to be the only way to comprehend human experience. The location of philosophical conversation in global perspective leads to a richer, fuller conversation in which the experience of Africans and Asians and of many different religious traditions is blended with traditions of the West.

Basic to all human life and experience is what can be termed common human faith, the pre-reflective, often inarticulate, deeply felt conviction that my life--what I make of it, what I respond to, what I do--makes a difference, is important. However much I may be restricted or oppressed by circumstances beyond my control, I know that I contribute my bit to the struggles and joys of life. Such faith is saving faith because it sustains us from ultimate despair, from feeling that nothing could possibly make any difference. Such faith is universal, one of the common human elements underlying all religious traditions. It is this assurance that religious traditions re-present in an enormously rich variety of myths, stories, symbols and theologies.

To say that such faith is universal is not to say that it is inevitable. Certainly there are times when each of us has doubts, when we wonder or think that it's all for nothing and hardly worth the living. Some will be led by experience to feel that their lives are without significance or meaning, that nothing they do could possibly have any significance.

And we know that ultimate meaninglessness and despair is possible. The North Korean prisoner-of-war experience is instructive. The captors set up a system through which every source of

faith and trust was systematically eroded. Lectures and testimonies were used to discredit faith in country. Careful censorship of mail and other news from home served to discredit loved ones at home. A carefully contrived system of camp informants and arbitrary rewards and punishments made it impossible to trust anyone in the camp itself. Almost no prisoners sought to escape. They had nowhere and no one to escape to. Few committed suicide; that would be a meaningful act of lashing out or getting back at someone. What did happen, in a syndrome not unknown in American hospitals, is that prisoners would become radically withdrawn, closed in upon themselves without resources for relating to anyone or anything. And in some cases, otherwise healthy, reasonably well fed, physically unabused men would crawl into a corner and die, die simply by ceasing to live.

Such depth of alienation is extreme, uncommon. The fact that it is possible, however, tells us that human faith is not inevitable. The possible loss of faith into ultimate meaninglessness, the threat of meaninglessness, is what makes religions necessary. They provide assurance that life can be trusted, not necessarily to turn out all right, but trusted to be meaningful, to count. They do this by re-presenting in myriad ways what we already know in our hearts--that you and I are somebody.

Process philosophy is a pattern of organized thought which makes this common human faith intelligible and rational. The importance of this lies in the possibility that such a philosophy provide grounding for the cultural and religious nourishment of faith. It provides rational grounds for what must be fostered primarily in non-rational ways, especially by myth and ritual. In process philosophy, the essentially emotional appeal of particular religious traditions is given rational support. In this way, religions are encouraged toward a kind of world consciousness which seeks a universal applicability.¹² Especially in the face of modern scepticism, such rational grounding may be required to enable cultures and cultural institutions to justify the nourishment of faith. More importantly, perhaps, it provides some grounding for the growth of a global culture without dismissing the importance of particular religious and cultural traditions.

God

Though God is not "the ultimate" in Whitehead's philosophy, the process vision is unreservedly theistic. The term "God" is used almost without embarrassment. But process philosophy has been very careful about what it means by "God." Few if any philosophers have given more attention to rational articulation of the theistic idea than Charles Hartshorne.

Against traditions which have taught us to understand God as the Absolute, as immutable, passionless, controlling power and ground of the status quo, process theology names God as the objective ground of common human faith and hope. In this vision, God is conceived to be the one whose interests is all interests, whose love encompasses all, who struggles with us to create a richer, fuller life for all, who suffers with us the pain and misery and evil of the world, who receives into herself all that we create of our world and of ourselves.

By insisting that the primary appropriate function or use of the term "God" is to refer to that in reality itself which grounds our assurance of the worth of our existence, we can make genuinely intelligible how it is that our common faith and hope are compatible with the inclusive creative process. Because God is understood as affected by all that we are and do, the future to which we contribute is understood to be neither merely our own nor merely that of others as limited as ourselves, but also the everlasting future of God's creative becoming. It is God's life that ultimately is enhanced or diminished by all of our finite purposes and acts. It is enhancement of divine life that finally inspires people to maximize the richness of life and joy in the world. Even our sufferings and struggles, because they occur only within God's all-encompassing love, cannot amount to naught.

Thus can faith and hope be grounded and rendered intelligible by a secular, philosophical understanding of sacred reality. Our lives as human beings are meaningful, our hope is legitimated, and our love is justified by grace, by the reality that nothing can wholly or ultimately separate anyone from the love of God.

Such an understanding, without demanding assent to itself by others, enables process thinkers to

develop a deeper and richer appreciation for the diversity of particular religious and cultural traditions which in some togetherness constitute human culture. Philosophy would not and should not seek to replace the diversity of particular religious and cultural traditions. It is only in them that it can hope to find warrant for its generalizations. But in providing those generalizations it suggests a way in which particular traditions can gain understanding and justification for themselves.

Process thought helps us to see that ultimate good is neither sheer order nor mere change or novelty, but enjoyed experience. "God's purpose in the creative advance," Whitehead writes, "is the evocation of intensities."¹³ For this, both order and novelty are instrumental.¹⁴ The actual world is partly orderly, partly chaotic.¹⁵ "The immanence of God gives reason for the belief that pure chaos is intrinsically impossible. At the other end of the scale, the immensity of the world negates the belief that any state of order can be so established that beyond it there can be no progress."¹⁶ What is to be desired and sought, then, is a balance of harmony and intensity, order and chaos, routine and novelty, such as to produce experience of beauty.

The God of process philosophy is neither the Absolute of Christian theology nor the ultimate of Buddhist meditation. But that is no reason to despair of the ideal of philosophy or vision which incorporates the experience and insight of many traditions. The aim is not for some forced identity of belief systems or styles of life, but some imaginative pattern of thought which exemplifies in itself the scope of divine experience.¹⁷ If there is creativity and novelty in historical processes, we do not know that the future will bring. But it is at least conceivable that a philosophic vision of universal scope, an adequate metaphysics, will play a role in enabling religious and cultural traditions to so transform themselves, through opening themselves to a wider range of influences, as to create a religious reformation which is at once both deeply aesthetic, by being sympathetic to the diversity of human experience, and profoundly unifying, by attending to the general features of reality most intimately familiar to us in human experience.¹⁸ The eros of process philosophy is such that it embraces chaos so as to more adequately elucidate the order of the world. To the degree that it achieves a measure of

success, it facilitates the development of more global and more unifying perspectives on the concrete realities of human art and politics.

NOTES

1. "Speculative Philosophy is the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. By this notion of 'interpretation' I mean that everything of which we are conscious, as enjoyed, perceived, willed, or thought, shall have the character of a particular instance of the general scheme." Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality Corrected Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 3.

2. "Philosophers can never hope finally to formulate these metaphysical first principles. Weakness of insight and deficiencies of language stand in the way inexorably." Process and Reality, p. 4.

3. "If we consider any scheme of philosophic categories as one complex assertion, and apply to it the logician's alternative, true or false, the answer must be that the scheme is false." Process and Reality, p. 8.

4. "The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation." Process and Reality, p. 5.

5. The major philosophical books of Alfred North Whitehead are: The Aims of Education (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1929); Adventures of Ideas (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1933); The Concept of Nature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920); Essays in Science and Philosophy (N.Y.: The Philosophical Library, 1947); The Function of Reason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1929); Modes of Thought (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1938); Process and Reality (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1929, Corrected Edition, The Free Press, 1978); Religion in the Making (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1926); Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect (N.Y.:

Macmillan, 1927); Science and the Modern World (N.Y.: Macmillan, second edition, 1926).

6. The major philosophical books of Charles Hartshorne are: The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934); Beyond Humanism (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937); Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1941, Hamden, Conn., Archon Books, 1964); The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948); Reality as Social Process (with William L. Reese) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953); Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics (LaSalle: Open Court, 1962); Anselm's Discovery (LaSalle: Open Court, 1965); A Natural Theology for Our Time (LaSalle: Open Court, 1967); Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method (LaSalle: Open Court, 1970); Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935-1970 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972); Aquinas to Whitehead (Milwaukee: Marquette University Publications, 1976); Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983); Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984); Creativity in American Philosophy (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984).

7. "Philosophy is the self-correction by consciousness of its own initial excess of subjectivity." Process and Reality, p. 15.

8. "In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed 'creativity'. . . ." Process and Reality, p. 7.

9. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Towards a World Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 154-55.

10. "The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of this experience." Process and Reality, p. 4.

11. "It is a characteristic of the learned mind to exalt words. Yet mothers can ponder many things in their hearts which their lips cannot express. These many things, which are thus known, constitute the ultimate religious evidence, beyond which there is no appeal." Whitehead, Religion in the Making, p. 67.

12. Whitehead's sentence, "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness," (Religion in the Making, p. 16) is often quoted by those who favor a privatistic view of religion, neglecting Whitehead's emphasis on what the individual does with the solitariness. "Religion," he also said, "is world-loyalty." Religion in the Making, p. 60.

13. Process and Reality, p. 105.

14. "'Order' and 'novelty' are but the instruments of [God's] subjective aim which is the intensification of 'formal immediacy'." Process and Reality, p. 88.

15. "In proportion to the chaos there is triviality. There are different types of order; and it is not true that in proportion to the orderliness there is depth. There are various types of order, and some of them provide more trivial satisfaction than do others. Thus, if there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture along the borders of chaos in its substitution

of higher for lower types of order." Process and Reality, pp. 110-111.

16. Process and Reality, p. 111.

17. I do not hold it to be possible, or even desirable, that identity of detailed belief can be attained. But it is possible that amid diversities of belief, arising from differences of stress exhibited in metaphysical insight and from differences of sympathetic intuition respecting historical events,--that it is possible, amid these differences, to reach a general agreement as to those elements, in intimate human experience and in general history, which we select to exemplify that ultimate theme of the divine immanence, as a completion required by our cosmological outlook. In other words, we may agree as to the qualitative aspects of religious facts, and as to their general way of coordination in metaphysical theory, while disagreeing in various explanatory formulations." Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 206.

18. "The peculiar position of religion is that it stands between abstract metaphysics and the particular principles applying to only some among the experiences of life." Religion in the Making, p. 31.