

## NOTES

### THE TWO PROCESS THEOLOGIES

There are, as it were, two Whiteheads. Each is authentic. They belong together. They are both "right." But in terms of philosophical innovation, I think one may be "righter." There is the doggedly empirical Whitehead, rubbing our metaphysical noses in concrete experience. And there is the insistently rational Whitehead, whose intricate philosophical categories sometimes make one hanker for the merest scent of experience. Depending upon a theologian's greater fascination with the one side or the other as a theological resource, there are two corresponding schools of process theology. I would stress the empirical side of Whitehead as the deeper insight into his philosophical achievement. And this may finally be the more enduring theological resource.

In the reflections which follow I will first address the rational/empirical aspects of Whitehead's philosophical achievement. Then I will attempt to characterize the two schools of process theology.

#### WHITEHEAD'S PHILOSOPHICAL ENTERPRISE

The best place to begin is with Whitehead's philosophical metaphor: "The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight into the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation."<sup>1</sup> An examination of each of these three factors will disclose the two Whiteheads. First and last is experience: the experience upon which imaginative generalization is based, and the experience which such generalizations are intended to elucidate. Here we encounter Whitehead's empirical temper. At the center is the philosophical schema, what Whitehead calls "imaginative rationalization."<sup>2</sup> It is in the imaginative construction of his metaphysical schema that we meet the rational Whitehead. The philosophical categories of *Process and Reality* are products of this rational construct.

#### *Whitehead's Empiricism*

Whitehead's empiricism means: starting from the ground of particular observation; observing the world being experienced; generalizing from some limited area of experience; searching for generalizations from a limited area that seem able to elucidate experience beyond that limited area. Any generalizations so large in scope that they apply to any

<sup>1</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (corrected edition; New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1978) 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Process and Reality* 5.

experience whatsoever are of metaphysical proportion. "The primary method of philosophy is descriptive generalization."<sup>3</sup> The "loaded" item in those sentences is Whitehead's understanding of "experience."

Whitehead calls his philosophy "the philosophy of organism" (Charles Hartshorne recalls that Bernard Loomer coined the expression "process philosophy"; Loomer now says that if he did, it was a sin of his youth, and he feels that "process relational modes of thought" is more accurate). Whitehead says that "in the main the philosophy of organism is a recurrence to pre-Kantian modes of thought."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, his primary dialogue is with the British empiricists, especially with David Hume (Kant's foundational dialogue was with Hume as well). He wants all knowing to be derived from experience. Here he agrees with Hume. He denies in the strongest way that sense experience is primordial data, and here he is in fundamental disagreement with Hume.

Hume's emphasis upon the primordial character of sense experience led him inexorably into a skepticism from which he could not exit, a subjectivity with no doors outward. Whitehead, in keeping with the radical empiricism of William James, insists that sense experience is in fact a rather sophisticated and selective response to a welter of causal influences that account for the full reality of any entity. Whitehead's organismic presupposition is that the whole of reality is causally inter-related and interdependent: "the full universe . . . is a universe in which every detail enters into its proper relationship with the immediate occasion."<sup>5</sup> "An actual individual . . . has truck with the totality of things by reason of its sheer actuality; but it has attained its individual depth of being by a selective emphasis limited to its own purpose."<sup>6</sup> In fact, it is the very experiencing of the world that constitutes the actuality of each subject.

"Experience" is Whitehead's generalized term for the receiving of causal influx from beyond; "experience" does not mean (although it includes) either sense experience or conscious experience. "Experience" is a general term for the process of emergence that constitutes any entity's concrete actuality. This is Whitehead's reformed subjectivist principle: "that apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness."<sup>7</sup> "Words and phrases must be stretched towards a generality foreign to their ordinary usage; and . . . they remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap."<sup>8</sup> The

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xi.

<sup>5</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1967) 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Process and Reality*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 167.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 4.

experiencing subject is Whitehead's starting point, and the experiencing subject's concrete actuality is constituted by the experiencing. Sense experience is the way some part of that causality registers in higher organisms. And consciousness is a still smaller and more selective registration of causal influence. The total web of causal influences at work in an individual's emergence always forms a shadowy background for the selected details that emerge more clearly as sense percepta or conscious awareness. "The task of philosophy is to recover the totality obscured by the selection."<sup>9</sup> "Consciousness flickers; and even at its brightest, there is a small focal region of clear illumination, and a large penumbral region of experience which tells of intense experience in dim apprehension. The simplicity of clear consciousness is no measure of the complexity of complete experience."<sup>10</sup>

It is the intercausal interconnectedness of all things that makes the full reality of any one thing so incredibly rich and complex, so elusive of full description. Alan Watts observed that "we can never, never describe all the features of the total situation, not only because every situation is infinitely complex, but also because the total situation is the universe."<sup>11</sup> Process theologian Bernard Meland observes similarly that since "relations [which are constitutive] extend every event indefinitely . . . the very phrase 'exact knowledge' is but a manner of speaking."<sup>12</sup> Thus the empiricism of Whitehead, tied as it is to the generalized and imaginative description of actual experience, is conditioned by a sense of "original experience" that differs in a most fundamental way from British empiricism. Original experience for Whitehead is dim, massive, rich, penumbral, adumbrative, and only partially able to be tamed by sense data and clear consciousness. This contrasts profoundly with the Humean presupposition that sense experience is original, i.e., that from which knowing proceeds.

Whitehead identifies physics and biology as limited areas of experience from which he draws metaphysical generalizations.<sup>13</sup> The Center for Process Studies in Claremont, under the direction of David Griffin, continues to explore the empirical moorings of Whitehead's metaphysics with the likes of the physicist David Bohm, chemist/physicist Ilya Prigogine, biologist Charles Birch, and others. But Whitehead says also that "the chief danger to philosophy is narrowness in the selection of evidence," and that "philosophy may not neglect the multifariousness of

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 267.

<sup>11</sup> A. Watts, *The Book* (New York: Random House Vintage, 1972) 87.

<sup>12</sup> B. Meland, *Higher Education and the Human Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953) 62.

<sup>13</sup> *Process and Reality* xii.

the world—the fairies dance and Christ is nailed to the cross.”<sup>14</sup> Thus “religion is among the data of experience which philosophy must weave into its own scheme.”<sup>15</sup>

Our sense of derivation from our past is an example of an intuition into what it means to be real that Whitehead finds not attributable to sense experience (as Hume would understand sense experience). To borrow some phraseology from both Peter Berger and Bernard Meland, Whitehead would hold that there are signals about ultimacy that are given in immediate experience. He calls immediate experience “naive experience,” saying that “the ultimate appeal is to naive experience and that is why I lay such stress on the evidence of poetry.”<sup>16</sup>

Let me summarize. All knowing begins in immediate lived experience. Experience is massive. The causal influences shaping each moment are all the world and all history, even though it is quite a small selection that enters into more intimate causal relations with any present moment of becoming. Sense experience is a partial insight into our derivation, as also are those items which make their way into consciousness. Philosophy must traffic both with categories that are clear and exact, and also with the fuller, richer causal world that escapes such clarity. Philosophy, therefore, must be like art, whose truth “lies in the eliciting of this background to haunt the object presented for clear consciousness.”<sup>17</sup> It is in this sense that Whitehead’s generalized categories “remain metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap.”<sup>18</sup> Even so, metaphysics is nothing more and nothing less than generalizations, of universal import, derived from concrete experience. “The starting point is the analytic observation of the components of . . . experience . . . Our datum is the actual world, including ourselves; and the actual world spreads itself for observation in the guise of the topic of our immediate experience.”<sup>19</sup> Metaphysics is irreducibly inductive. Heidegger’s question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?”, does not haunt Whitehead. The something that’s there is the starting point. He may exhibit wonder and awe at the fact that there is a world. But his starting point is “that it is.”

I would understand that, for Whitehead, this sense of what it means to be an experiencing subject and what that means for human knowing are not negotiable. That’s how it is! But now we must move from Whitehead’s empirical side to his rational side.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 337, 338.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 15–16.

<sup>16</sup> *Science and the Modern World* 85.

<sup>17</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1967) 270.

<sup>18</sup> *Process and Reality* 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

*Whitehead's Rationalism*

"Speculative philosophy is the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."<sup>20</sup> The largest generalization that Whitehead makes is that to be concretely actual is to be a process in which multiple data are finally integrated into a singular individual entity. Creativity is the name for that integrating process. The basic story line is that "the many become one and are increased by one."<sup>21</sup> "'Creativity,' 'many,' 'one' are the ultimate notions involved in the meaning of the synonymous terms 'thing,' 'being,' 'entity.' These three notions complete the Category of the Ultimate and are presupposed in all the more special categories."<sup>22</sup>

All the philosophical categories of *Process and Reality* reflect the rational commitment of Whitehead. Notwithstanding the tentativeness and reserve to which I shall refer a little later, Whitehead is doggedly convinced that we can fashion philosophical categories reflecting metaphysical insight that are coherent, are logical, and are necessary in that no instance of anything real can be found to which the categories do not apply (if such an instance should be found, it's back to the metaphysical drawing board). Although admitting that every thinker undoubtedly feels his or her system is coherent, he finds that "the requirement of coherence is the great preservative of rationalistic sanity."<sup>23</sup> Coherence must be a rational philosophical goal.

If Whitehead's philosophical method is best seen in contrast with David Hume's sensationalist doctrine, the content of his metaphysics contrasts in a fundamental way with that of Aristotle: "the simple notion of an enduring substance sustaining persistent qualities, either essentially or accidentally, expresses a useful abstract for many purposes of life. But when we try to use it as a fundamental statement of the nature of things, it proves itself mistaken."<sup>24</sup> "... the 'substance-quality' concept ... is replaced by a description of dynamic process."<sup>25</sup> For Aristotle, a substance/being exists and then has its adventures (cf. the scholastic dictum *agere sequitur esse*). For Whitehead, the adventures are the reality. Relations are not an accidental for Whitehead; they are constitutive. It is a Whiteheadian presupposition that reality is essentially social or relational. Because God is real, God too is essentially relational. Again, here is a marked contrast with Aristotelian thought. It is not my intention to recount either in the large or the small the details of Whitehead's

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 3.<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 21.<sup>22</sup> Ibid.<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 6.<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 79.<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 7.

metaphysic. I simply want to indicate that it is here, in the metaphysical categories, that we find the rational side of Whitehead functioning full diligently. The categories are to be trusted as elucidators of experience, so long as they meet the rational criteria of coherence, logic, and necessity.

I said before that I believe Whitehead would consider his philosophical method to be nonnegotiable. But he clearly does not attribute that kind of finality to his speculative philosophical system. "Metaphysical categories . . . are tentative formulations of the ultimate generalities."<sup>26</sup> ". . . the older generalities, like the older hills, are worn down and diminished in height, surpassed by younger rivals."<sup>27</sup> "In its turn every philosophy will suffer a deposition."<sup>28</sup> "Rationalism never shakes off its status of an experimental adventure . . . Rationalism is an adventure in the clarification of thought, progressive and never final."<sup>29</sup> ". . . how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly."<sup>30</sup> These few reflections—and there are many more of this ilk—make it clear that there can be no such thing as a "perennial philosophy" (implication: nor a perennial theology).

Doing metaphysics is describing experience, generalizing experience, fashioning generalizations of universal import, and then systematizing them into a coherent scheme. And why do this in the first place? "The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought."<sup>31</sup> Metaphysics begins in experience and exists for the enrichment of experience. A metaphysical schema must always be adjudicated by the experience it intends to elucidate. "The ultimate test is always widespread, recurrent experience; and the more general the rationalistic scheme, the more important is the final appeal."<sup>32</sup>

Since my discussion thus far has dealt exclusively with the philosophy of Whitehead (and that is my principal concern here), I must say something briefly about the work of Charles Hartshorne, also an important resource for theological reflection. The influence of Hartshorne upon process theology is twofold. His own philosophical construction has had a large influence. This is especially true of his natural theology, e.g., *The Divine Relativity*.<sup>33</sup> It is far more accurate to say of Hartshorne than of Whitehead that classical theism or substance philosophy is his major dialogic partner. He calls himself a neoclassical metaphysician. There

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. xiv.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>33</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1949).

are a rational urgency and rational purity that attend his work consistently. Methodologically (unlike Whitehead), Hartshorne proceeds deductively. He will argue from *The Logic of Perfection*, the title of one of his key works,<sup>34</sup> to the nature of God. He has resurrected Anselm's ontological proof for the existence of God, a thoroughly rational argument, except that Hartshorne has substituted a panrelational version of deity (as required by the very logic of perfection) for the classical theistic version of deity which Anselm presumes.

Further, Hartshorne argues that positive assertions about deity can be made; we are not limited to a *via negationis*. Schubert Ogden felt that Bultmann did not completely succeed in his project of demythologizing, for he did not find a nonmythical way of saying that "God acts." Ogden uses Hartshorne's work to suggest a *Christ without Myth*.<sup>35</sup>

The second manner of Hartshorne's influence is through the many students-now-theologians who read and interpreted Whitehead under his tutelage. Indeed, not all of those whom I consider the more rational process theologians studied directly under Hartshorne. But his influence, stemming from his years of teaching in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, is very large.

Those who read Whitehead with Hartshorne standing over their shoulders are more apt to have a major fascination with the systematic, rational elements of Whitehead's metaphysical construction, and with a concern for logic and coherence.<sup>36</sup> Those who read Whitehead with William James standing over their shoulders are likely to be more fascinated by Whitehead's empirical method, and with his experiential concern for adequacy and applicability.<sup>37</sup> The empirical reading of Whitehead also got its major impulse out of the University of Chicago Divinity School. It was there that people like Henry Nelson Wieman (large influence of John Dewey), Bernard Meland, and Bernard Loomer developed a process theological tradition in the empirical mode.

#### PROCESS THEOLOGY

I hope it is obvious that Whitehead's method is empirical/rational and that his philosophical work is the product of these two approaches in essential tandem. Some process theologians have dwelt more upon Whitehead's metaphysical system: his description of the becoming of experience, his discussion of how creative transformation occurs, and especially his natural theology. They are fascinated by the more rational side of

<sup>34</sup> C. Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1962).

<sup>35</sup> S. Ogden, *Christ without Myth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) 151 ff.

<sup>36</sup> *Process and Reality*, 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

Whitehead's work. They are, of course, aware of and committed to the empirical moorings of Whitehead's metaphysical system. Other process theologians have been guided more by Whitehead's empiricism. By and large, they are also quite comfortable with the basic metaphysical vision but deal with it in broad strokes rather than in the detail of Whitehead's technical categories. Their preoccupation is with meticulous fidelity to the deliverances of experience: nothing is allowed at the level of abstraction that is not derived at some point from concrete experience.

I will try to characterize these two schools of process theology: the rational process theologians and the empirical process theologians. These are generalizations, and no single rational or empirical process theologian perfectly exemplifies all the characteristics I will indicate.

### *The Rational School*

With some provisos in each case, I would indicate some of the following as process theologians whose larger theological fascination is with the rational side of Whitehead's achievement: William Beardslee, Delwin Brown, John Cobb, Lewis Ford, David Griffin, Schubert Ogden (in some of his work), and Norman Pittenger. I propose the following as characteristics of the rational school:

1) There is a kind of driving passion for the structural elements of Whitehead's thought, and a theological use of those elements, e.g., William Beardslee's Christological use of the category of "proposition"<sup>38</sup> and John Cobb's development of *A Christian Natural Theology*.<sup>39</sup>

2) There is a certain optimism that there is a reasonable possibility of conceptualizing the ontological structure of things.

3) There is a passion for clarity.

4) Spirituality seems geared to a quest for perfection. Cobb differs here in insisting that spirituality aims at relentless openness to creative transformation.<sup>40</sup>

5) There is more attention to the processes of becoming, to an analysis of how an entity becomes, reaches satisfaction, becomes a datum for future becoming, e.g., Cobb's "A Whiteheadian Christology."<sup>41</sup>

6) Given the philosophical bent of Western theology, there is a certain confidence that the structural elements of Whitehead's thought provide

<sup>38</sup> W. Beardslee, *A House for Hope* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) chap. 8.

<sup>39</sup> J. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) chaps. 4 and 5.

<sup>40</sup> J. Cobb, Jr., *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) esp. chap. 3.

<sup>41</sup> J. Cobb, Jr., "A Whiteheadian Christology," in *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. D. Brown, R. James, and G. Reeves (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971) 382-98.



an easier transition from traditional philosophy and theology into the contemporary world view, e.g., Cobb's reflections upon the credal tradition.<sup>42</sup>

7) The ultimate character of things is more apt to be a focal concern than would a more ethical concern for ultimate commitment: e.g., in Griffin's *Christology* Jesus is the "supreme expression of God's character, purpose, mode of agency . . . ."<sup>43</sup>

I doubt that all of my colleagues whom I have placed in the rational wing would be comfortable with this judgment. I am not entirely comfortable. There is a many-sidedness to each of them. That is just as true of those whom I place among the empirical process theologians.

### *The Empirical School*

The empirical process theologians (at least as I shall denominate them) are as different among themselves as are those whom I have located in the rational school. I would include among them: William Dean, Bernard Loomer, Bernard Meland, Henry Nelson Wieman, and Daniel Day Williams. In the characterization of empirical process theology which follows I have not tried to contrast this school point by point with the characteristics of the rational school that I offered above. But many of the contrasts will be obvious.

1) There is a keen sense of the limitations of both reason and language, reflected, e.g., in the very title of Bernard Meland's book on theological method, *Fallible Forms and Symbols*.<sup>44</sup> The adumbrative and penumbral regions of experience receive more attention, requiring "a more subtle and indirect use of language. Theology under this aspect should be conceived of as being midway between art and philosophy."<sup>45</sup>

2) There is less of a focus upon the sure and the certain, and more upon the probable and the ambiguous. The experience of ambiguity is not just a result of the limitations of the finite knower in a universe that is of itself intelligible without remainder; rather, reality itself is ambiguous. Ambiguity is a characteristic of finite existence.

3) There is an affinity for the temporal, perhaps even for the temporary. Events are the basic units of reality, and events are temporal. "Transformation can occur only in the form of events. The empirical method is the only possible way to distinguish events and to know what transformation results from them. Therefore, if the religious problem be

<sup>42</sup> *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, esp. chaps. 9, "The Christ of the Creeds," and 10, "Christ and the Creeds."

<sup>43</sup> D. Griffin, *A Process Christology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973) 232.

<sup>44</sup> B. Meland, *Fallible Forms and Symbols* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

<sup>45</sup> B. Meland, *Faith and Culture* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1953) 96.

as stated [what power transforms us as we cannot transform ourselves], theology must be empirical."<sup>46</sup>

4) There is a strong sensitivity to the processes of resistance, to sin and evil, e.g., in Wieman's work.<sup>47</sup>

5) There is an abiding suspicion of abstraction whenever its derivation cannot be located somewhere in concrete experience. This is especially thematic in the work and teaching of Bernard Loomer.

6) Spirituality has more kinship with John Dewey's "meliorism" than with a "quest for perfection." The struggle of the human spirit is seen more as a struggle for an increase in spiritual stature than for perfection, e.g., Loomer's "S-I-Z-E Is the Measure."<sup>48</sup>

7) The theme of relationality is far more to the fore than that of becoming. The world is addressed more in terms of "the web of life" or simply "the relational web." Individual identity is an emergent from relationality (including elements of self-creativity). The gospel not only accosts individuals, it accosts the very structures of relationality that bind historical individuals into a web.

8) Finally, in addressing questions of the human vocation, one is more apt to hear about ultimate commitment rather than about ultimate concern. How, in the face of ambiguity and the surds of history, does one nonetheless forge ultimate commitment, Wieman asks.<sup>49</sup>

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

I want to conclude these characterizations here and say that it is probably "moods" and "modes" that account for differences between rational and empirical process theologians, rather than crystal-clear methodological and presuppositional distinctions. But the differences are real, and they are significant. I think there is a real danger that the more rational approaches will spawn a new scholastique. Catholics trafficking with process modes of thought are probably more liable to this because of such a long-standing liaison between systematic philosophy and systematic theology in the Catholic tradition. Whitehead's methodological commitment discounts the possibility of a perennial philosophy, and I would say as well, of a perennial theology.

When David Burrell asked "Does Process Theology Rest on a Mis-

<sup>46</sup> R. Bretall, ed., *The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1963) 3.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. H. Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1946) esp. chaps. 4, "Good and Evil," and 5, "Kinds of Evil."

<sup>48</sup> B. Loomer, "S-I-Z-E Is the Measure," in *Religious Experience and Process Theology*, ed. B. Lee and H. Cargas (New York: Paulist, 1976) 70.

<sup>49</sup> H. Wieman, *Man's Ultimate Commitment* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1958).

take?" (his answer is "yes"), he suggests that its founding polemic is with classical theism.<sup>50</sup> He is right when speaking of the influence of Hartshorne's thought. And he is right in thinking about how many process theologians have used Whitehead's thought, e.g., Pittenger's *God in Process*<sup>51</sup> or Ford's *The Lure of God*.<sup>52</sup> And while it is indeed legitimate to make theological use of Whitehead's philosophy of God, Whitehead's own founding polemic is certainly not with classical theism or with "substance philosophy" (and here Burrell has missed the point), even though there are marked contrasts in this vein. Whitehead's polemic is with Hume. It would profit process theology to attend better to this situation.

In Christian history thus far, if one looked for an epistemological watershed, it would certainly be the scientific revolution, with its untellable consequences for our sense of how we learn, how we know, and how we live. That is where an incredible breach began between religious/theological assertions and the deliverances of secular learning.

If I am repetitive about Whitehead's empiricism, it is because I feel that the issues he addresses are among the more critical philosophical concerns of our day. Who does not feel in some quite basic way that we have no choice but to start from our experience? But how often is it that "empiricism" or "lived experience" refers to that which is measurable or quantifiable? Does not sense experience tend to mean what Hume understood by sense experience? Do we not tend, in fact, instinctively to equate sense experience with concrete experience, and the word "concrete" with material? Whitehead holds that sense experience is in fact highly abstract and quite selective, and that concrete experience is so full and rich and complex that sense experience belies it even as it accurately reports upon it. Meland stresses that the intimations of Ultimacy are to be found in the dim, penumbral, adumbrative regions of experience, at the point of profoundest interconnectedness with all that is real, i.e., at the level of the pre-eminently concrete. "Thus our existing as immediate occurrence takes place with but marginal awareness, and often with relative indifference, to the penumbral occurrences that carry and give intimation of the Ultimate Efficacy attending all existence."<sup>53</sup> Such approaches release theological inquiry, in its commitment to being empirical, from bondage to the clear and distinct, to the measurable and quantifiable, without in the least discrediting these incredible reports upon reality, or demeaning systematic, empirical inquiry in the narrower scientific sense.

<sup>50</sup> D. Burrell, "Does Process Theology Rest on a Mistake?" *TS* 43 (1982) 125-35.

<sup>51</sup> N. Pittenger, *God in Process* (London: SCM, 1967).

<sup>52</sup> L. Ford, *The Lure of Good* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

<sup>53</sup> *Fallible Forms and Symbols* 45.

The CTSA study on *Human Sexuality* might offer a case in point. One of the most poignant questions raised by the study is the role of empirical data in the generation of ethical/moral norms.<sup>54</sup> I would not attempt a brief Whiteheadian empirical response, but I would suggest that widespread evidence as to a human "sense of things" has the potential for generating metaphysical insight if it can be adequately generalized. Wieman made some fledgling attempts to do this sort of thing with sexual experience.<sup>55</sup> When human experience can be generalized so as to be an insight into the nature of reality, it can then become a theological resource in a profounder way than as original raw data. I want to suggest that Whitehead's philosophical empiricism might provide a critical and enabling way for theology to have easier access to the report upon experience from the social psychological sciences, i.e., through philosophy as well as directly in the form of raw data. (Whitehead does, in fact, have some initial generalizations of the function of eros.)

Further, the Whiteheadian sense of concrete experience demands that the clear and distinct be corrected by and supplemented by the poetic, by the evocativeness of image and metaphor, by art and poetry, by religious feeling. "The best rendering of integral experience, expressing its general form divested of irrelevant details, is often to be found in the utterances of religious aspiration. One of the reasons for the thinness of so much modern metaphysics is its neglect of this wealth of expression of ultimate feeling."<sup>56</sup> I have been stressing Whitehead's willingness to accept data from religion and poetry as part of philosophy's openness to *all data*. It is the co-ordination of such data with that from physics, mathematics, and biology, and with readings from "the adventures of ideas" along history's paths, that promotes the comprehensiveness of the metaphysical *essai* of Alfred North Whitehead. The actual schematic content of that formulation is endlessly open to critique and revision.

I recognize clearly that much theological work needs to be done in order to appropriate Whitehead's philosophical empiricism into a theological empiricism. I am convinced that this is where process theology can make the most enduring contribution to theology (yet I do not want to underestimate at all the technical, systematic work of *Process and Reality* as a theological resource). Theological instincts must be pummeled in insistent and *methodologically essential* ways by the deliverances of the empirical natural sciences and the empirical social sciences. Equally, they must as well be formed by art and literature, and by naive

<sup>54</sup> A. Kosnik, ed., *Human Sexuality* (New York: Paulist, 1977).

<sup>55</sup> *The Source of Human Good*, chap. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Process and Reality* 208.

religious experience. And they must be open to the introduction of images, metaphors, and cultural motifs into the imaginative construction of the warp and woof of theological formulation.

Let me conclude by suggesting once again that the process theology that resonates with the deeper instincts of Whitehead is in dialogue with John Locke and David Hume, not with Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas.

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