

QUAESTIO DISPUTATA

RESPONSE TO ELIZABETH JOHNSON'S "DOES GOD PLAY DICE?"

JOSEPH A. BRACKEN, S.J.

Xavier University, Cincinnati

IN A RECENT ISSUE of this journal, Elizabeth A. Johnson offered a thought-provoking analysis, first, of the interplay of spontaneity and determinism within the world understood as an evolutionary process, and then of the way in which Thomism can account for the presence of spontaneity within creation without surrendering belief in divine providence.¹ While I am in complete agreement with her that creaturely spontaneity ought to be compatible with a proper understanding of divine providence, I am not convinced of the legitimacy of her defense of Thomism in this regard. To be specific, I doubt that God and the creature can concur in producing the same effect in the way she described in her article. In other words, there is within the Thomistic tradition an ambiguity in the understanding of God as Subsistent Being and in the understanding of creaturely participation in the divine act of being which is present in Johnson's article and which in my judgment renders questionable her otherwise praiseworthy conclusions about the workings of divine providence in an evolutionary context.

Furthermore, I am bold enough to think that an adroit combination of insights from Thomism and the process-relational metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, such as I have presented in a recent book-length publication, could quite possibly clear up that ambiguity and allow Johnson to present her arguments for a more dynamic God-world relationship much more persuasively.² In any event, I will briefly outline here my misgivings with the traditional Thomistic understanding of God as Subsistent Being and with creaturely participation in that same divine act of being. Then I will indicate how a somewhat revised understanding of Whiteheadian "creativity" could solve that ambiguity and open up a new understanding of the God-world relationship in terms of a logic of intersubjectivity which Johnson herself seems to propose implicitly in the latter part of her article.

¹ Elizabeth A. Johnson, C.S.J., "Does God Play Dice? Divine Providence and Chance," *TS* 57 (1996) 3-18.

² See Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 25-37, 52-69.

CRITIQUE OF CLASSICAL THOMISM

In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas argued that God is transcendent First Cause of all creation because God's essence is existence itself.³ God alone, in other words, is an uncaused cause, because God alone possesses existence by nature rather than in virtue of some antecedent cause. As I see it, what is missing from this argument is the recognition of a distinction between person and nature within God as thus conceived. That is, if the nature of God is simply to be, then the personal or entitative reality of God is to be the subject of that unlimited act of being. If, on the other hand, this distinction is not drawn, and God is simply identified with the act of being, then logically pantheism (or pancosmism) results. That is, if all finite beings exist by virtue of participation in the act of being, then God is simply the name for the collection of finite entities that here and now exist.⁴

Johnson herself seems to have anticipated my argument here when she commented, "It is not as if God and creatures stood as uncreated and created instantiations of 'being' which is held in common by both (a frequent misunderstanding). Rather, the mystery of God is the livingness of Being who freely shares being while creatures participate."⁵ My response to this comment is twofold. First, I would ask why the assumption that God and creatures share the reality of being is "a frequent misunderstanding." Granted that God is the primary instantiation of being, the only entity that possesses being by nature, why cannot creatures participate in the same act of being, albeit in a finite way? The principle of analogy, after all, requires that the entities under comparison have something in common as well as fundamental differences. Otherwise, analogy turns out to be equivocation; the same term, "being," then has totally different meanings when applied to God and creatures.⁶ Likewise, if God's being is so totally different from the being of creatures, then how can human beings (and perhaps the whole

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (hereafter cited as *ST*) 1, q. 3, a. 4 resp.

⁴ As Aquinas noted later in the *Summa theologiae*, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity there is only a rational distinction between person and nature within God (*ST* 1, q. 29, a. 4 resp). My contention, however, is that this rational distinction between person and nature within God is required to justify the notion of God's transcendence from creation even as one simultaneously maintains God's immanence within creation as its ground of being or source of existence and activity. The divine nature can be readily seen as immanent within creation as its intrinsic principle of existence and activity; God as a personal being transcends all God's creatures even as creatures in their own way "transcend" God in terms of their ontological identity as individual entities distinct from God and one another.

⁵ Johnson, "Does God Play Dice?" 11.

⁶ As David B. Burrell points out, the way in which being is predicated of God cannot be understood from the way in which being is predicted of creatures (*Aquinas: God and Action* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1979] 62-67). He likewise points out that that which is thereby signified, namely being, applies literally to God as well as to creatures. In fact, as Aquinas noted, being and other pure perfections like wisdom and goodness pertain to God even more properly than to creatures (*ST* 1, q. 13, a. 3 resp).

of creation) be said to participate in the divine life both now and in a more intensified manner after death?⁷

My second response would be to point to Johnson's own language in the above citation (God as "the livingness of Being who freely shares") and to suggest that she too is implicitly making the distinction between person and nature within God as thus conceived. That is, she too implicitly thinks of God not simply as the act of being but as the divine or uncreated subject of the act of being. For that matter, Aquinas in referring to God as Subsistent Being is unconsciously doing the same thing; that is, he too is distinguishing between God as the uncreated subject of the act of being and that act of being itself as God's nature or essence. "Subsistent," in other words, makes implicit reference to a subject of the act of being.

Why is this distinction between person and nature, which Aquinas himself uses in his exposition of the Trinity later in the *Summa theologiae*, not more clearly operative in the discussion of the God-world relationship for Aquinas and Johnson? In my judgment, it is because the Thomistic understanding of the God-world relationship is not governed by a logic of intersubjectivity, but by a logic of objective cause-effect relationships in which the two terms (God and creation) are implicitly objects of thought rather than genuine subjects of experience. Subjectivity, in other words, is not pertinent to the understanding of God as transcendent First Cause. All that is logically demanded is that God be uncaused, that is, that God possess existence by nature and thus not require an antecedent cause to exist. Atheists and agnostics, for example, have argued that the universe as a self-sustaining evolutionary process is in this sense a transcendent First Cause; in their eyes it requires nothing but itself in order to exist.⁸

Likewise, subjectivity is not required for the creature to be an effect of God's causal activity. The creature may or may not be a living being within the Thomistic scheme. But as effect it is in any case treated as a passive reality, the simple result of the activity of another upon itself. Whether or not there are entities which are simply effects and not themselves causes of still other effects is a question that cannot be treated here.⁹ What suffices is to recognize that causes as causes and effects as effects are not necessarily agents endowed with subjectivity.

⁷ As I see it, Christian belief in personal resurrection is easier if one antecedently believes that human beings (and indeed all of creation) exist even now in virtue of the divine act of being. Resurrection then represents only an intensification of a principle of existence and activity already operative in human life (and in all of creation). Similarly, grace, while still gratuitous as is created existence in any form, is less something strictly supernatural than the intensified awareness of something quite "natural."

⁸ See Kitty Ferguson, *The Fire in the Equations: Science, Religion and the Search for God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 149–59.

⁹ For a discussion of the Buddhist notion of "dependent co-arising" and, in particular, the critique of classical cause-effect relationships mounted by the great Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, see Bracken, *The Divine Matrix* 95–102.

Nonpersonal realities such as the cosmic process can be regarded as causes of events taking place within them, and nonpersonal events and things can be the effects of those same causes. The cause-effect relationship, in other words, prescind from the possible subjectivity of its two terms and simply attends to the relation of dependence of the one term on the other.¹⁰

I shall indicate later how the explicit use of a logic of intersubjectivity for the God-world relationship would have enabled Johnson to make her claims for a risk-taking God and for creaturely spontaneity within the evolutionary process far more persuasively. But for now I wish to pursue my second misgiving with the Thomistic scheme that Johnson employed in her article, namely, her argument (in line with the Thomistic tradition) that God and the creature concur in producing one and the same finite effect. I begin by quoting Johnson on this point:

It is not the case that divine and finite agents are complementary, each contributing distinct elements to the one outcome. Instead, God acts wholly through and in the finite agents that also act wholly in the event. As a result, the one effect issues from both primary and secondary causes simultaneously, with each cause, however, standing in a fundamentally different relationship to the effect. God makes the world, in other words, in the process of things acting as themselves.¹¹

As I see it, what is operative here is once again a blurring of the distinction between person and nature within God. For reasons I explain below, I have no problem with the notion that the divine nature (which is, after all, the act of being) empowers the creature to act according to its creaturely nature and to produce an effect consonant with that creaturely nature. Hence whatever Johnson says about God in this respect I endorse, provided one realizes that one is talking about the divine nature rather than specifically about God as a personal being or entity. With reference to the latter alternative, on the other hand, I see major problems in proposing that two ontologically independent subjects of the act of being each wholly produce one and the same finite effect. My reasoning runs as follows.

In my judgment, two agents can each wholly produce the same effect only if one of them is strictly instrumental to the purpose of the other. What I have in mind here is the classic example of the artisan who uses a hammer rather than his or her fist to pound a nail into a wooden board. The hammer is specifically designed to allow the artisan to perform that task. It has no subjectivity whereby it can say yes or no to the intent of the artisan and thereby freely contribute (or refuse to

¹⁰ On this point, see Burrell, *Aquinas: God and Action* 134: "When Aquinas insists that the act whereby the agent is agent becomes the act of the thing moved, he effectively shifts the stage of the discussion from *actus* to *relatio*. Causality itself becomes 'simply the relation of dependence in the effect with respect to the cause'" (citing Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1971] 65).

¹¹ Johnson, "Does God Play Dice?" 12.

contribute) its mode of being as a hammer to the success of the total operation. Where we are dealing with two ontologically independent subjects of experience, however, in which the one agent has to persuade the other agent to cooperate in their joint venture, then the carrying out of the project is not wholly done by both agents as Johnson suggested. Either it is done in equal measure by both as a shared venture, or, as in the God-creature relationship, it is primarily done by the secondary cause (the creature), albeit under the direction and with the inspiration of the primary cause, God.¹² In either case, however, it is an instance of the complementarity of divine and human agency with "each contributing distinct elements to the one outcome."

In my view, Johnson explicitly rejected this possibility because she and other Thomists do not properly distinguish between person and nature when applying to God the term *Ipsium Esse Subsistens*. As the principle of existence for creation as a whole and for every creature as an individual entity, the divine nature is necessarily ingredient in every created reality in such a way as to be wholly responsible, ontologically speaking, for what happens. The created effect simply could not happen without the concurrence of the divine nature, as the act of being, in the activity of the creature in question. On the other hand, God as a personal being does not have to concur in what happens. On the contrary, God may resist what the creature intends to do and vainly offer alternative possibilities of action for the creature to consider. But in the end the creature, as an ontologically independent subject of the act of being, can choose to do what it wants. Hence, the creature, not God as a personal being, is morally responsible for the choices which it makes.¹³

¹² Here is where Whitehead's notion of divine initial aims for the self-constitution of finite actual occasions represents a real breakthrough in understanding how God can be participant in human activity without controlling it and thereby depriving the human being of his or her freedom of action.

¹³ Johnson stated, "The power of creaturely forces and agents to act and cause change in the world is a created participation in the uncreated power of the One who is pure act" ("Does God Play Dice?" 12). Properly qualified, this statement expresses my judgment also: namely, that the divine nature as the act of being empowers human beings and all other creatures "to act and cause change in world." But her statement does not make clear how God's action and the action of creatures are distinct, especially in those cases when the creature chooses to do something God does not want. Johnson appeals here to Etienne Gilson, "The Corporeal World and the Efficacy of Secondary Causes," in *God's Activity in the World: the Contemporary Problem*, ed. Owen C. Thomas (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1983) 213-30. My reading of Gilson's article discovers the same ambiguity in the relationship between the divine nature and God as a personal being. What the divine nature empowers the creature to do is not necessarily what God as a personal being would want the creature to do. Significantly, in his "Summary Analysis," Owen Thomas, the volume's editor, concedes that "the artisan-instrument analogy for the concept of primary cause is not very illuminating," and he notes further that the classical understanding of divine-human interaction lags behind the process explanation in terms of divine initial aims, because the latter offers a "fully elaborated metaphysical theory" as well as a basic analogy for divine-human interaction (ibid. 234).

AN ALTERNATIVE COSMOLOGY

At this point, I wish to formulate my own position on the God-world relationship, which is a conscious blend of elements from classical Thomism and Whitehead's process-relational metaphysics. I call attention first of all to the remarkable similarities and yet the significant differences between the Thomistic act of being and Whiteheadian creativity. Neither is in itself an entity. Each exists only in its instantiations.¹⁴ Both can be regarded as principles of existence and activity for the entities in which they are embodied or instantiated. Both, finally, are a combination of potentiality and actuality, although here the differences between the two concepts begin to emerge. For the act of being was evidently conceived by Aquinas as primarily an actuality and only secondarily as a potentiality insofar as it empowers finite entities to exist in line with their essences or substantial forms. Creativity is envisioned by Whitehead, on the other hand, as primarily potentiality and only secondarily actuality. In *Process and Reality*, for example, Whitehead likens creativity to Aristotelian prime matter and what he calls the "neutral stuff" of modern science.¹⁵ At the same time, he indicates that it is active rather than passive, the principle of process rather than, as with Aristotle, the principle of pure receptivity for a form that is active.

In line with the emphasis on actuality rather than potentiality, Aquinas, as I have indicated, identified the act of being with God as the Supreme Being. God then becomes pure Actuality with no admixture of potentiality. Yet the negative consequence of this line of thought is to think of God in purely objective terms as a supreme object of thought, that than which nothing greater can be conceived, to use Anselm's celebrated definition. By implication, then, God is not a living subject

¹⁴ In distinguishing between essence and existence (a rational distinction within God, a real distinction within creatures), Aquinas implicitly concedes that existence is a perfection, indeed, the supreme perfection or *forma formarum* (see *ST* 1, q. 4, a. 1 ad 3). Hence, it is not itself an entity but a principle of existence and activity for entities. Whitehead's position is equally nuanced: "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 [Whitehead's own metaphysics] this ultimate is termed 'creativity'; and God is its primordial, non-temporal accident" (*Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne [New York: Free Press, 1978] 7). One is tempted to overlook Whitehead's initial statement that creativity is actual only in virtue of its "accidents" or instantiations, and to think of creativity as somehow existing prior to God because God is its "primordial, non-temporal accident" or instantiation. Careful reading of the text, however, makes clear that in Whitehead's view God and creativity co-exist, that neither exists prior to the other. At the same time, in not specifying more precisely the relationship between God and creativity, Whitehead appears to embrace the notion of two ultimates, God and creativity. Whitehead could profit from the distinction between person and nature in God that I have described.

¹⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality* 31.

of experience but an ideal of reason, e.g. Subsistent Being, Supreme Goodness, Truth itself, or Subsistent Beauty. This is not to say that Thomists and others who think along these lines do not implicitly add subjectivity to their image of God as Subsistent Being, Supreme Goodness, etc. My point is only that the concept of God as Subsistent Being, Supreme Goodness, etc., does not have to include subjectivity in order to function as the ideal of perfection for human beings in their search for fullness of life, goodness, and beauty. Presumably for this same reason, Ludwig Feuerbach and other atheists critiqued the traditional Western concept of God as wish-fulfillment, the idealized image of what human beings themselves want to be and to have.

Whitehead, on the other hand, thought of creativity more in terms of potentiality or process rather than of actuality or fact.¹⁶ Presumably for that same reason, he referred to God and other entities as "accidents" or "creatures" of creativity.¹⁷ Thereby, however, he implicitly reified creativity, gave it quasi-entitative status against his own principles. For, as Ivor Leclerc commented, to reify creativity is to commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.¹⁸ What Whitehead should have done was to explore more carefully what he himself meant by saying that God is "the aboriginal instance of this creativity, and is therefore the aboriginal condition which qualified its action."¹⁹ In other words, creativity in Whitehead's own conception does not exist, does not become actual, except in its instantiations. Hence if God is its "aboriginal instance," then creativity exists in the first place in God as the divine principle of existence and activity. Furthermore, from that "location" it becomes operative in the existence and activity of creatures.²⁰ Thus understood, creativity in process-relational metaphysics is very much akin to the act of being in Thomistic metaphysics with one all-important qualification. Unlike the act of being, it remains primarily a principle of potentiality or process rather than a principle of actuality or fact, even in God. Hence, it sharpens what we mean by the nature of God, namely, that it is a principle of potentiality more than a principle of actuality. Accordingly, it allows us for the first time to begin thinking of God as a living subject of experience rather than as an inert object of thought.

Why do I make that claim? As I see it, subjectivity is much more closely linked with potentiality than with actuality. To be a subject, in other words, is to be a subsistent potentiality, possessing some actuality here and now, to be sure, but in principle in process of further actualization. What one is at present is invariably less than what one eventually will be. Applied to God understood as a subject of experience, this means that even God must be in process of further actual-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See n. 14 above.

¹⁸ Ivor Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958) 83-84.

¹⁹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality* 225. ²⁰ Bracken, *The Divine Matrix* 57-59.

ization. If God is fully actualized, then God ceases to be a subject of experience and becomes merely an object of thought, the term of a process of logical inference from created effects to uncreated cause. What I am dealing with here is not how people concretely image God in their worship and prayer life but what a given concept of God logically demands.

This can be expressed in another way. If one rightly claims that God is infinite, then from my perspective the infinity of God should lie in the divine potentiality rather than the divine actuality as Thomists claim. God has unlimited potentiality because God's nature or essence is the act of being which in principle is capable of further instantiation *ad infinitum* both within God and within creatures. God's actuality, on the other hand, like that of any other entity, is here and now "finite" because it is fully determinate and distinct from other entities.²¹ To be an infinite actuality, as Aristotle pointed out in the *Physics*,²² is a logical contradiction since the same entity would be both determinate and indeterminate, limited and unlimited, at the same time and in the same respect. Christian theologians, in my judgment, have historically evaded the logical implications of that contradiction because of their antecedent belief in God as both an entity and as necessarily infinite. Hence, an actual infinity must be a possibility; otherwise, God does not exist.²³

²¹ This same point is even more evident when one takes into account Christian belief in God as triune. The three divine persons, "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are each fully God and yet distinct from one another. Accordingly, they render one another "finite" in that each is what the other two are not. To be truly infinite, each of the divine persons would have to be the reality of all three persons simultaneously. Within a classical philosophy of being like that of Aquinas, of course, to be "finite" is to be imperfect because one is incomplete. Only what possesses its being completely can be considered perfect. Within a modern philosophy of becoming like that of Whitehead, on the other hand, to be "finite" here and now is no imperfection but a necessary stage in one's ongoing process of development. Everything depends, accordingly, on whether one values being over becoming or vice-versa. See n. 23 below where, relying on the research of Leo Sweeney, I indicate how medieval thinkers turned around the relationship between matter and form prevalent among Greek philosophers so as to accommodate their antecedent belief in God as actually infinite.

²² Aristotle, *Physics* 204a20–28, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

²³ See, however, Leo Sweeney, S. J., *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992) 319–36. Sweeney notes that for Aristotle and other Greek philosophers prime matter is infinite because it lacks specification and/or determination through form, whereas for Aquinas and other medieval thinkers "form or act which is without matter and potency is also without their determination and limitation and is, thereby, both infinite and perfect" (ibid. 336). After the middle of the twelfth century, therefore, Aquinas and others attributed infinity not simply to God's power or potentiality (as Peter Lombard had done) but to the entitative reality of God. Sweeney evidently regards this as an advance in the theological reflection on the nature of God, but he concedes that many of Aquinas's contemporaries for various reasons were opposed to this move (ibid. 337–63). As is evident from this article I too consider it to be a mistake. I find more attractive the Aristotelian interpretation of infinity, with the qualification that the in-

THE LOGIC OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The net effect of that inference is to conceive God simply as an object of thought rather than as a living subject of experience. Moreover, it does not allow us to apply the logic of intersubjectivity to the God-world relationship. I now turn to this matter so as to engage Elizabeth Johnson in her description of God as a risk-taker and of creatures as possessing genuine spontaneity within the world process. I agree with Johnson when she argues that God "takes chances" with creation because of the spontaneity inherent within creatures. Where I disagree is with her contention that classical Thomism can logically allow for these statements. For if God is pure actuality without any admixture of potentiality, it is difficult to understand how God can experience any sense of risk in dealing with creatures. In other words, God knows and wills the whole of the world order in the same act in which God knows and wills the divine being. Even granted that God could have willed other world orders, the world order that God *de facto* wills is unalterable because it is part of one and the same act of knowing and willing by which God wills Godself.²⁴

To be sure, Aquinas argued that God knows and wills creatures in their presentiality, i.e., as they occur.²⁵ Thus God does not predetermine what creatures choose to do. But this ignores the fact that God thus wills the entire world order in its presentiality; everything is occurring at once. Hence, even though the creature in question is making what it considers to be a free decision, that free decision is incorporated into a world order which is not free because it is known and willed by God in its entirety without any possibility of alteration. That is, the act by which God knows and wills this world order is one and the same with the act by which God knows and wills Godself. A change in the world order would imply a change in the divine being (which is by definition immutable).

On the other hand, a logic of intersubjectivity between God and creatures (at least, those creatures capable of subjectivity) would allow both God and creatures to interact and effect changes in one another's behavior. What do I mean by a logic of intersubjectivity? I rely here upon the insights not only of Whitehead but also of Martin Buber in his classic work *I and Thou*. In Buber's words, I truly become a person only when I am ready to say Thou to you, to acknowledge your personhood even as I claim my own personhood with this act of interpersonal address. You, in turn, rise to the level of personhood by responding

finity of matter is not really an imperfection but rather the unexpected source of its fertility and creativity. Because it is indeterminate in and of itself, matter has the innate potentiality to produce an entire series of interconnected forms or determinations. In this sense, as a process-oriented thinker, I give priority to becoming over being (understood as a here-and-now fully determinate reality).

²⁴ Aquinas, *ST* 1, q. 19, a. 2 resp. and ad 2.

²⁵ *ST* 1, q. 14, a. 13, resp.

favorably to my address to you as Thou and addressing me as likewise Thou.²⁶ There is a reciprocal causality at work here in the intentional order which consciously or unconsciously bypasses the unidirectional causality of the traditional cause-effect relationship in the physical order.

Here one could object that this logic of intersubjectivity might possibly govern the relations between God and the human being once the human being comes into existence through the creative action of God. But in the very beginning of its existence the human being necessarily comes into being through the unilateral action of God as Creator. The proper response to this objection would seem to be that even in its initial moment of existence the human being is already a subject of experience and thus, in some rudimentary way, must respond to God's offer of existence and activity. The human being is never simply an inert thing brought into existence by the unilateral activity of a Creator God. It come into existence partly through the gracious offer of a loving God and partly through its own incipient response to that offer of creaturely existence and activity.

One thinks immediately of Whitehead's notion of a divine initial aim which guides the concrescence or progressive self-constitution of an actual occasion of experience.²⁷ I would differ from Whitehead only in the proposal that the divine initial aim is not only the communication of a sense of direction for the actual occasion in its self-constitution, but is also the communication of the power to exist in the first place. I can make that claim because, as noted above, I insist that creativity is not simply a metaphysical "given" as in Whitehead's scheme, but rather the divine nature in which creatures (read "actual occasions") participate by reason of the triune God's free gift.

Thus within this scheme God and the creature endowed with subjectivity mutually condition and affect one another. In that sense, God does indeed take risks with creatures since God cannot predetermine how the creature will respond to the divine initial aim. But, on the other hand, the creature is clearly endowed with spontaneity. There is no question about its "free" decision being incorporated into a world order which is already chosen in its entirety by God. The world order within this scheme is still unfolding even for God. That is, even God cannot know with certitude what the creature will choose until after the creature chooses it. God, in other words, must adjust to what creatures decide and thus inevitably takes risks in dealing with creatures.

Does this imply that God is in some sense temporal and subject to change?²⁸ It would seem that this is the price to be paid for claiming

²⁶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribner's, 1970) 54, 62.

²⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality* 244.

²⁸ I am not suggesting that God is in every sense temporal and subject to change. If, in line with orthodox Christian belief, one holds that God is tripersonal, then the rela-

that God is a genuine subject of experience in interaction with creatures rather than an abstract object of thought, the term of a logical inference from contingent effect to transcendent first cause. As I see it, this is where the logic of Elizabeth Johnson's argument seems implicitly to lead her. My quarrel is not with her conclusions but with the metaphysical conceptuality she uses to get there. But I would argue that classical Thomism does not allow her logically to draw those conclusions. Only a somewhat modified version of Whitehead's metaphysics such as I have sketched here and elsewhere can substantiate those conclusions. Obviously, with my response to Johnson's thought-provoking article, the debate about an appropriate God-world relationship for the modern era has not ended but only just begun. What is important is that the discussion continue, not in a finger-pointing, accusatory manner, but with mutual respect and with recognition that any model or conceptual scheme for understanding the God-world relationship is inevitably limited.

tions among the three divine persons can be said to be eternal and, as far as we human beings know, unchanging. Only the relations of those same divine persons with their creatures are in the temporal order and thus subject to change. What I am presupposing here is that time and eternity are not entities in themselves but forms of duration (as Aristotle noted in the *Physics* [219a22–25] with respect to time, the "measure" of entities in motion). The duration characteristic of the three divine persons in their innertrinitarian relations is called eternity and it is quite different from time, the duration of entities in motion within the created order. Thus the three divine persons can be said to exist both in time and in eternity since they participate in two interrelated but nevertheless quite distinct forms of duration or cosmic processes. The liability of Whitehead's own understanding of the God-world relationship is that God is conceived as unipersonal and as totally involved in the world process. As a result, as I understand his writings, Whitehead had no proper concept of eternity but only of "everlastingness," or of permanence within ongoing change (see *Process and Reality* 346–49).