Jeanine Diller
Asa Kasher   *Editors*

Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities

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Editors

Jeanine Diller
Department of Philosophy
    and Religious Studies
University of Toledo
Toledo, OH
USA

Asa Kasher
Department of Philosophy
Tel Aviv University
Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv
Israel

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Introduction to Process Theology

Roland Faber

This section of the book collects four articles that have taken their inspiration for contemporary models of God and ultimate reality from process theology. A good choice! I know of no other elaborate theological pattern of thought—historically or currently—that would allow us not only to express a distinct group of models of God *and* ultimate reality *at once*, but even more to harbor such a *variety* of models of both the divine and the ultimate. On the basis of its declared variability of construction and differentiation of possibly employed methods, but mostly because of its ability to consistently generate new conceptions in varying contexts, process theology may be one of the very few contemporary alternatives in (philosophical) theology that escapes the threat of being ossified by any particular dogmatic tradition within any given religion with which it might engage.

The four articles that will follow—Weidenbaum's "William James' Argument for a Finite Theism"; Viney's "Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism and the Mystery of God"; Coleman's "From Models of God to a Model of Gods"; and Long's "Ultimate Complexity: A Hindu Process Theology"—attest to this creative transgression of traditional limits of thought. As they engage with process theology in their own particular way, they also demonstrate nothing less than the breadth and depth of ways to mediate their intentions with very different filters of process theology's own history. In other words: While they reflect the current exciting global complexity of theological thought in an interreligious context, they also rest their findings on different facets of process theology's complex inner diversification. In raising questions of how to situate dimensions of communication of modes of God and ultimate reality *between* different philosophical traditions—from Aristotelian ontology and Jamesean cosmology to Hinduism's mystical non-dualism—and *between* different religious traditions—from Christianity and Hinduism to African indigenous

R. Faber (✉)
Kilsby Family/John B. Cobb, Jr. Chair of Process Studies, Claremont School of Theology, and School of Religion, Claremont Graduate University, CA, USA

traditions—they also draw on some of the major, but different directions *within* process thought—their various Whiteheadian and Hartshornean strains—to make their respective cases.

If we seek for a common tenor in these papers, it may be fair to say that these articles offer a perspective on the universe and our philosophical and theological categories of thought that is permeated by *a search for complexity* instead of simplification. In the recognition of a plurality of cultural and religious traditions, which no longer requires justification, they stress the inherent multiplicity these traditions enshrine and offer their best theoretical attention, that is, with their respective *modes* of process thought. Such a constitutive multiplicity, then, is reflected in the proposed models of God and ultimate reality insofar as process theology offers the means to express an *inherent* essential multiplicity and, nevertheless, a *coherent*, but complex openness in its approach to the divine and ultimate. Moreover, such "multiplicity in process" becomes the very presuppositions of any form of contemporary sensitivity for cultural and religious difference.

Process theology is itself the paradox of such a processual complexity. It is a known term and yet, while its inception lies about a century in the past, it remains still somewhat obscure. It is already in its complex birth-process that the above mentioned characteristics are inscribed. Born of the ignition of the encounter between the Chicago-based social gospel movement and Alfred N. Whitehead's philosophy of process and organism created in the 1920s, process theology branched—right from the beginning—into different strains of thought. Each strain, representing several emphases in Whitehead's text, developed into broad streams offering complex answers to cultural, social, political, religious, or intellectual questions and problems.

While some more closely followed Whitehead's own investigations into religion, theology, God, and ultimate reality, especially as developed in his book *Religion in the Making* (1926) and Part V of *Process and Reality* (1927–9), others emphasized the ethical impulses with a more pantheistic or nontheistic outlook (such as Henry Nelson Wieman and Bernard Loomer). Still others sought a more neo-classical theistic approach (such as Charles Hartshorne and his followers). Needless to say that various other directions took their inspiration from Whitehead's initial thought as reactions to different philosophical and theological schools (phenomenology, existentialism, holism, poststructuralism) and religious traditions of all kinds of shades (theistic, pantheistic, nontheistic, panentheistic). I have laid out this development of process theology in detail in Part I of my book *God as Poet of the World* (2008).

While Whitehead's interest in theology was somewhat ambiguous, he recognized the importance of both religious experiences and their theological explications, on the one hand, as well as the importance of a concept of the divine and ultimate reality in his *philosophical* endeavor to formulate a comprehensive cosmology, on the other. If we do not forget that Whitehead was a physical mathematician throughout his whole professional life who, only at the age of 63, became a philosopher at Harvard University, we will understand why he thought that any future development of an intelligent civilization must follow the scientific revolution as it unfolded at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet as a philosopher he also insisted that

we must exchange its underlying reductionist philosophical scheme, that is, its materialism and positivism, and instead seek out all worlds of experience, be they physical, mental, or spiritual, cosmic or social, private or political, human or ecological. Striving for such newly negotiated harmonies of alleged opposites, he thought, makes all the difference between war and peace, annihilation or conversation, anesthesia or aesthetic enjoyment as aims of existence.

What process theology *is*—is another question. Its basis is experience. Whitehead, with William James, insists on the genuine integrity of experience as source of knowledge, and, even more, existence. In order to construct a cosmology or a comprehensive philosophical understanding of the world as a whole (with everything in it) we must not only take into account the uniqueness of the multiplicity of possible and actual and mutually irreducible kinds of experiences. In order to guarantee this constitutional diversity we must rather, Whitehead explains, reorient the framework for our understanding of experience. Instead of experience being something on the basis of anything *else*—be it any material or any substance of which it would appear as an accident—experience is that which *actually exists*. The world is a complex of experiences and a complex rendering of their structural and creative movements of integration, of processes of forming organisms, societies, and patterns of repetition and change that, in fact, generate the diversity of forms and processes of the cosmos on all of its levels as well as its deep structures of space and time.

Hence, Whitehead's engagement with religion and theology can be comprised by referring to three existential, that is, indispensible and deeply motivating, moments generated by his understanding of experience. First, since experience expresses the most "fundamental" level of analysis, not only must we take seriously that there *are* religious experiences, that is, experiences of the divine and of ultimate reality, but we will, moreover, find the *roots* of divinity and ultimacy within the very fabric of experience as it is the "stuff" of which existence is made. Second, because of the irreducible multiplicity of such experiences of divinity and ultimacy, reality itself cannot consist in anything else but the complexity, relativity, relationality, and mutuality of experiences of which the *different* "instantiations" of divinity and ultimacy are their very expression. Third, since every experience is somehow in all others—although allowing for different structures of societies, cultures and religions to grow out of the process of their mutual engagement—any theological claim must consist in a *criticism of power*. It is to be determined in what sense a unique strain of lived experience—as it forms a religious tradition, philosophical school, social community, or cultural identity—occupies a place of imperialist universalism, emptied of all other strains of existence. Whitehead's engagement with divinity and ultimate reality is radically democratic, valuing the plurality and complexity of *different forms* of life with divinity and ultimacy as well as a plurality and complexity of divinity and ultimate reality *themselves*.

Process theology is the expression of this Whiteheadian impulse as it wanders through such different strands of experiences as they form patterns of integrity, sufficiently distinguished from another so as to be identified in their diversity, but sufficiently related so as to be found mutually enriching and, in fact, immanent in one another. This makes process theology an ideal candidate for a sufficiently

diverse and complex conceptual framework within which to analyze different religious and cultural traditions regarding their mutual relevance. Exceptional examples can be found in Hartshorne's *Divine Relativity* (1948) and Bernard Loomer's *The Size of God* (1987) regarding the radical criticism of philosophical simplicity within theology; John Cobb's *Christ in a Pluralistic Age* (1999) regarding Christianity and postmodernity and *Beyond Dialogue* (1982) regarding Buddhism and interreligious discourse as well as David Griffin's *Deep Religious Pluralism* (2005) in its engagement with the complexity of ultimate reality based on Whitehead and Hartshorne and different Eastern and Middle Eastern religious traditions; or Catherine Keller's *Face of the Deep* (2003) with its emphasis on the intertextuality of diverse mystical traditions and poststructuralist philosophy.

Two of the maybe most creative moves by which Whitehead initiated a distinct process theological approach may precede the discussion of the four articles of this section as they draw on their potential. The first move concerns Whitehead's understanding of ultimate reality as *composition*, which for him comprises three aspects: infinite potential, infinite creativity, and divinity. In fact, this irreducible, but interdependent complex of Reality comprises two contracts of opposites at once: that of *potentiality and actuality*—both of which he thought to be *abstractions* from the concrete integration on events of experiences—and of *divinity and ultimacy*—which only in their *differentiation* hinder religious claims of imperialistic power. It is precisely this complexity of Reality that allows process theology to develop ever new models of interreligious conversations on God and ultimate reality without overpowering any position with dogmatic fixations of any participating tradition. Since none of its aspects are independent, the analysis and theological reconceptualization of diverse traditions with process theology allows to avoid any monopolization of any model of God and ultimacy. Even more, it offers a mode of discovery of the internal complexities in these traditions, which often have been and remain subject to oppression in the name of a prevalent orthodoxy to which process theology often appears as threat.

The second distinguishing feature of Whitehead's understanding of Reality is even more important. As the primordial *expression* of ultimate reality (as creative activity) and as primordial *evocation* of ultimate reality (as potentiality), Whitehead's God is, in principle, *devoid* of any power, except that of evocation and receptivity, or in more classical terms, of eros and responsiveness, rather than decreed order and immutable omnipotence. As God's nature is the supreme *effect* of ultimate reality, God is *creatively evoking novelty* in all events of experiences (in all of existence) and is *creatively suffering all actualizations* of such potentiality in experiences. This duality in God's nature, which Whitehead names the "primordial" and "consequent" natures of God, not only makes God a non-coercive agent of ultimacy, always seeking surprise over oppression and hope over destruction, but makes *us* ethical agents in the search for harmonious intensities of contrasts that are instruments of religious diversity and peace.

In "William James' Argument for a Finite Theism," Jonathan Weidenbaum argues against the monopolizations of the One with the help of William James' *A Pluralistic*

Universe ([2005](#)). As part of his polemic against monism and idealism, James advocates a God, or a multitude of gods, as both limited in influence and set off against other forces in the cosmos. By championing a deity amenable to a pluralistic and open-ended universe, James sought not only to promote the morally vigorous life, but to do justice to the full texture of human experience. While critically analyzing James's "finite theism," Weidenbaum introduces Whitehead's elaborate concept of divinity and ultimate reality.

Since William James "taught us that metaphysical positions are not merely abstract ideas," but that "they have a tremendous bearing on how we live" by having "a pre-rational hold on things, a root intuition" (2) and feeling, it is a condition for the morally active life that we affirm freedom rather than determinism. Hence, as James explains in his book on *Pragmatism*, a merely transcendent One as envisioned by many mystics and idealists relegates the everyday world of struggle to a mere appearance, a move which invalidates rather than promotes the need for personal initiative and moral exertion. Instead, he promotes an *intimacy* that "connotes the continuity of the self with the cosmos as found within the immediacy of our perceptual life" and "ontologies" (5) that encourages active participation with the world instead of passive resignation. Hence, he advocates a pluralistic divinity over against dualistic ontologies or merely impersonal materialism.

These motives lead James, toward the end of *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* to depict "our awareness as continuous with a wider sea of consciousness, a transpersonal Mind whose concrete effects on our personal life are noted by all of the world's faiths." By suggesting a *panpsychism* "wherein all of nature is understood as possessing a degree of consciousness," our "spiritual intuition—the sense of our immersion within an immanent and spiritual reality"—can "preserve the integrity of lived experience and moral purpose." This "superhuman consciousness" however, is neither the whole of reality nor its commander, but rather has a world as its "external environment, and consequently is finite." (7)

Yet, as Richard Gale argues, since James is committed to both a passive, mystical self, seeking sacred union, and an active, moral self, struggling against evil, he faces the metaphysical problem of how a *finite* God who as "one force among many" would *itself* be "involved in a struggle for the good," could also be "an aim toward which morally awakened human beings are also directed." Therefore, "the superhuman consciousness of James's religious philosophy is merely an object of *relative* concern" (9) as it is an instrument towards the ethical struggle against evil. As the "ethical self seeks not God, but what God seeks," how can this finite God be of value in this formation of the ethical subject?

This is the point at which Weidenbaum introduces Whitehead whose God is a persuasive as opposed to coercive power, that is, who cannot force divine will upon any living events that constitute reality. Instead, any event of experience co-operates with the divine in order to enhance the aesthetic intensity and harmonious satisfaction of the universe. While our moral efforts are with God's "primordial" aspect as it grounds the possibilities for moral action as well as the structure of the universe, God's "consequent" aspect inherits each and every stage of this development, including and preserving the memory of every event and its decisions everlastingly

within God, thereby contributing to James' twofold sensibility toward the moral and the mystical vocation and "aim" of human existence. (9–10)

Weidenbaum demonstrates how a "process panentheism" is resonant with a family of philosophical and theological positions that, in taking experience of both morality and mysticism seriously, must make a case for a philosophical and theological pluralism that is set against monisms of *all* kinds as they necessitate an ontology that would place power in the hands of a single principle. Instead, James and Whitehead utilize one effective way to maintain a spiritual worldview while avoiding such a hegemonic and centralized cosmology, namely, by arguing for a God limited in scope and influence. Yet, while James' God seems to be more interested in the *moral* freedom of humanity over against an all-encompassing God, Whitehead is more interested in the *aesthetic* initiation and completion of this freedom in God's twofold nature. While James' universe defines wholeness by incompleteness in which always something *escapes,* Whitehead's universe is initiated by a God who releases it from its ossifications by *initiating* this escape. While for James this escape is the condition for morality, for Whitehead it is the condition for an intensity that enriches *mystical* union with God.

In Donald Wayne Viney's "Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism and the Mystery of God," we encounter another philosophical discussion around power and the nature of a mysticism that avoids the implications of a world subsumed into an omnipotent One, as sometimes expounded by negative theologies. The discussion partners in this paper are not Whitehead, but his assistant Hartshorne, and not monisms or dualisms in general, but the Thomistic God of "classical theism," against which Hartshorne sets his own version of a Whiteheadian "neo-classic dipolar theism."

Viney, as does Hartshorne, recourses to Anselm's two famous propositions, namely that, on the one hand, God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived (which becomes the basis of his ontological argument), but that, on the other hand, God is always greater than can be conceived. The second formula—essential to sound theology—points to the mystery of God, which usually is preserved by the *via negativa* as one finds in Aquinas. Viney now explores Hartshorne's argument *against* negative theology but, since an "adequate concept of God must point beyond itself to a mystery not wholly available to our conceptuality," we must "somewhat paradoxically" assume that, "within the tradition of faith seeking understanding, God may be conceived as calling us from beyond the understanding to understand the God that lies beyond." (3) In the end, Viney defends mysticism by demonstrating how Hartshorne preserves the mystery of God in situating it not in the essence, but the actuality of God.

For Viney, Hartshorne offers an alternative to Descartes' God as mystery and Aquinas' unchanging, non-contingent, and non-relational God by claiming that God, to be conceived as perfect, must be immutable in some respects, but mutable in others. He draws the classical three-fold distinction among essence (what a thing is), existence (that a thing is), and actuality (the particular state in which a thing is). Yet, since Hartshorne agrees with Aquinas that essence and existence in God are the same, this comparison ends with the abbreviation of God's existence versus God's actuality. If existence and essence in God are the same, and if God's existence is

immutable, then God's essence (or character) can remain immutable (as in classical theism), but this necessary existent and perfect God (in power, knowledge, and goodness) does not preclude that God's actuality remains a mystery that is always greater than any conceptualization.

Viney's article shows how a *creative reversal* of the location of the mystery of God needs not to give up on rationality (which Hartshorne was most interested in), but must relocate the divine mystery within the unexpected. While classical theism identifies mystery with the omnipotent God by *precluding* any *real* relationship to the world—that is, the divine receptivity Whitehead refers to as the "consequent nature" and Hartshorne as divine "states of activity"—Hartshorne identifies this *presumed* "mystery" as the mere abstract character of a God of which the very *events* of actuality are the *real* mystery beyond any rational necessity. God's mystery is in God's *becoming*, which is sovereign, but supremely responsive, such that *this* divine process is, if at all, the mystery of divinity. Although Hartshorne's alteration of Whitehead's dipolarity of God's nature has conceded to classical theism an abstract nature of God that is necessary and fixed—something Whitehead's "primordial nature" as living complex of the integration of a multiplicity of potentialities has avoided—it has made the concrete events of the living actuality of God supreme. Their very *multiplicity* is a mystery of *life* for which the character of God is only a guarantee that God's identity *as* God is not lost in the mystery, but that the mystery we seek is always the *divine* mystery.

Monica A. Coleman's article "From Models of God to a Model of Gods" changes direction and ventures from the Eurocentric discussions to that of African tribal religion, which we better avoid to interrogate with the measures of monotheism or polytheism—categories set to retain supremacy over non-western, non-Christian realms of thought, religiosity and cultural alterity. In order to achieve this aim, Coleman proposes "a Whiteheadian process model that describes a community of gods that has active interaction with the temporal world" not only as a model that "broadens conversations of religious pluralism for Western-trained religious scholars, but also acknowledges the Western context in which many practitioners of African traditional religions live." Thereby, Coleman wants to test whether "process theism can offer a model of God that can work with a non-Christian religion." Since "African traditional religions, and other religions…complicate the issue of religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue" as "their understanding of the divine is so radically different from the God of Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions," this may be seen as a test case to the transformative power of process theology's matrix in relation to traditions where we need a "model of Gods" because they hold "a belief in a plurality of divinities."

With Laurel Schneider, Coleman wants to show how it is *multiplicity* that "always rears its head of reality in the face of the logic of the One," even as we too often remain enmeshed in "a drive towards Oneness that usually devalues multiplicity." (330) In process theology, the world's events always respond to God's "initial aim" (God's erotic presence that initiates any event as potential of its own becoming) such that God is quite literally a part of who we are and what we do. Yet while, in

every moment, we can become an incarnation of God's self, can process theism also imagine divine multiplicity?

Coleman chooses the Yoruba-based religion to show the challenge to monotheism and polytheism, which, as in other African religions, doesn't fit, but only "distorts the rich diversity of African religious experience by oversimplification." The traditional Yoruba religion has "multiple figures that are eternal and active within the finite human world" and "also maintains that the end of life within the finite world does not necessitate the end of life within a divine or ancestral world," Rather, "there is constant, continuous, embodied (sometimes malevolent, sometimes benevolent) contact between that which is divine, eternal and ancestral, and that which is human, animal and planetary." (333)

In light of these complications, Coleman suggests that a creative alternative would think in terms of "a community of gods" under a term of "communotheism," indicating "that the Divine is a community of gods who are fundamentally related to one another and ontologically equal while at the same time distinct from one another by their personhood and functions." Their "immanence" expresses a "radical relationality among the members of the divine community and between the divine community and the world," while "transcendence" (334) remains because of geographic distance and death that cannot destroy radical relationality.

Coleman situates this conceptual novelty within a Whiteheadian context by referring to "a place" in Whitehead's theology "where there is everlastingness or immortality, and multiplicity is held together and affirmed," namely the "consequent nature" of Whitehead's God. "In the consequent nature, all actual entities live on and participate in God eternally, to the ordering of what has been received (God's concrescing), to the primordial nature where the vision is returned to the world. This 'heaven' or the 'community of God' is both something that is apart from the world—in God—and yet in the world." This community of God also "describes a kind of multiplicity—the manyness of the world that finds immortality within God." But why, asks Coleman "must it be just the manyness of the world? Why not the manyness of the divine?" (336)

For Coleman, affirming divine multiplicity—a model of *Gods*—is a "radical theological act" that, like Sally McFague's description of her models of God, lies not so much in the activation itself than in the "changes of consciousness" it instigates though a "new imaginative picture of the relationship between God and the world" that always must precede radical action. In "an act of decentering, a rejection of ontological Oneness, and a refusal to accept the position of 'Other' as other," this becomes "a postmodern, feminist, African-centered theological act." (339–340)

Last but not least, Jeffery D. Long's "Ultimate Complexity: A Hindu Process Theology" ventures into Asia and stages a communication of process theology's differentiation between the divine and the ultimate with Hinduism's Vedanta traditions and their various non-dualist understandings of ultimate reality. Interestingly, Long avoids the oft-observed preference of Advaita Vedanta in Western reception and, instead, relates his "Hindu process theology" to the neo-Vedantan strain of the

Bengali sage Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple Swami Vivekananda, who brought Hindu thought to the West at the end of the nineteenth century.

By engaging this tradition, Long also creatively argues with (and against) a line of process thought that, with John Cobb and David Griffin, presents Whitehead as holding a *plurality* of ultimates (Creativity, the World, God). Instead, Long wants to demonstrate, with the resources of the neo-Vedanta tradition, that Whitehead can be understood as attaining a *single complex* ultimate. Like Cobb and Griffin's plurality model, Long wants to avoid a "debilitating relativism" (Alan Race) as is allegedly inherent in John Hick's ultimately unknowable Real, but, at the same time, strives to affirm the "distinctiveness of the world's religions." (5) Long seeks a solution by using Whitehead's observation "that metaphysics either makes process ultimate or fact ultimate." (7) This is confirmed in Hindu thought by the opposition of Advaita Vedanta, which makes Brahman ultimate, to Dvaita Vedanta's extreme dualism, which rejects this. Long, instead, suggests "intermediate" systems of Vedanta, such as the well known qualified non-dualism, or Visistadvaiata of Ramanuja, which give emphasis to a *unity* "that underlies plurality, and that connects diverse entities as elements in an *internally* pluralistic, yet ultimately singular, system." (7)

In reading Cobb's and Griffin's "three *types* of ultimate reality" not as corresponding to three *types* of religion—Theistic Religions, Acosmic Religions, Cosmic religions—but to *aspects* of *any* religion, they avoid being interpreted as competitors and, rather, become "three mutually necessary parts or aspects of what is ultimately a unified and internally coherent picture of the universe." (6) Thereby, Long tries to establish a synthesis of, rather than a middle way between, dual aspects of the ultimate such as personal divinity (*bhakti* tradition) and impersonal ultimate (*advaita* mysticism) with a difference comprised in Whitehead's dual nature of God: the primordial nature of potentials (as represented by Sri Ramakrishna's "inactive Brahman") and the full actuality of God that synthesizes both natures (the active Brahman). In a sense, then, Long achieves a synthesis between Whitehead's and Hartshorne's duality in God that reflects Griffin's "Doubly Dipolar Theism." (Griffin 2001: 148)

Many more models could be explored and nuanced from Whitehead's innovation of ultimate multiplicity and unity, all of them different regarding the emphasis they lay on irreducible elements as they come together in a synthesis by different valuations (up and down) that is evoked not only by the fluency of the mutual immanence of these aspects, but even more by the *event* of their togetherness in the diverse religious, theological, and philosophical contexts in which such a synthesis is uniquely situated. As the four articles on process models of God and ultimacy presented in this section, arouse more than satisfy the depth of process theology's ability to venture into different cultural, religious, theological, and philosophical realms they also should evoke further research into, and creative events of, syntheses of ultimate multiplicity and unity. And much more thought could be given to the *mutuality* of the chosen ultimates, be they divine or not, theistic or nontheistic, all-comprising or unique, ethical or mystical, aesthetic or rational.

In the end, I think that Whitehead's theopoetics is not meant to press any charges against existing or still-to-be invented models based on such a mutuality of ultimate aspects of Reality (whether they are right or wrong), but asks us to further explore the *methodologies* of the four articles: To seek that which *escapes* our imperial comprehension of the Whole and that which furthers the *nonviolent self-contraction* of the divine (Nicolas of Cusa)—as Weidenbaum suggests with James and Whitehead. To seek the mystery of ultimacy not in any allegedly fixed nature of a "perfect" God in opposition to an "imperfect" world, but in the supremacy of *relationality* within ultimate reality and the *events* of God—as Viney suggests with Hartshorne. To seek the valuation of *becoming ultimate* as that which makes the ultimate ultimate—as Coleman suggests with the divine *receptivity into complexity* in the context of African tribal religions in resonance with the multiplicity that Whitehead's God synthesizes in all of God's aspects. Finally, to seek ways to express the complexity of ultimate reality in its very beauty of releasing us from single-minded dogmatic expressions that can only understand multiplicity as a loss of divine perfection—as suggested by Long with Sri Ramnakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in a variation of Cobb's and Griffin's "deep religious pluralism" and the oscillations between Whitehead and Hartshorne.

If I am, from my own research, to suggest aspects for future investigations of models of God and ultimate reality inspired or initiated by process theology that need further elaboration or are not used as resources in this volume, I would name five. First, rather than finding resonances between process theology and religious, theological, or philosophical models, it would be mandatory to find the *depth-structure* from which they communicate. What is the *relationship* between the different multiplicities that Whitehead's metaphysical engagement with ultimacy raises—the multiplicity of the "natures" of God and the multiplicity of non-divine aspects of ultimacy (for instance, creativity, *khora*, extensive continuum, divine or non-divine matrix, potentiality, novelty, cosmic epochs or the infinity of cosmic cycles)? Second, how does Whitehead's differentiation of these multiplicities and their respective "unities" (for instance, the unity of creativity as activity, of God as event, of the Receptacle as place of communication) generate different understandings of the *process* of their mutual relation that *speaks* to the variability of religious, theological, and philosophical traditions? Third, much more thought has to be given to the contrast between the difference and non-difference of divinity and ultimacy and how this "duality" (of duality and non-duality) itself is related. I suggest that a discussion of the still-mostly-absent thought patterns of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and Nicolas of Cusa, as they appear not only in a Western and Christian context but, for instance, in the Islamic, Sufi, Hindu, and Buddhist contexts, may fruitfully further such reflection. Fourth, much more thought should be given to what seems to me to be *the* ultimate in Whitehead beyond the different multiplicities of ultimacy already named and their respective multiple "unities," namely the *mutual immanence* of all such multiplicities *itself* as Whitehead explores in *Adventures of Ideas*. Fifth, any discussion of ultimacy must not forget that such a mutual immanence has a *cosmological* width and, hence, harbors an *ecological imperative* to seek the *solidarity* of ultimacy not beyond the world, but *with* the world in its diversity of irreducible events of experience.

In any case, if the potentials of process theology for future discussions of models of God and ultimate reality will be taken up, it should be in the spirit in which they are incepted and that the four papers of this section so eloquently express, namely as models of multi-religious *understanding,* in addressing the root causes of religious strife and fanaticism, and by gently suggesting ways to embrace an atmosphere of religious peace that is longed for by many within many religious traditions and nonreligious persuasions. If it helps us to re-situate humanity in an infinite cosmos with its mysterious rhythms, if it makes us feel at home and activates us to universal solidarity, this "unity" will be more heralded by future generations to come than the insistence on the details of its different accents.

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