

# Apocalypse in God: On the Power of God in Process Eschatology

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See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them as their God; . . .  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away. (Rev 21:3-4)

Process theology's most consistent concern is with "power." The concern is with how to avoid and deconstruct concepts of "unilateral power" (especially regarding God).<sup>1</sup> One of the astonishing problems that remains unsolved in process theology, when it settles on a theological concept of "relational power," concerns the question, how to handle the conjunction of "eschatology" and "power" we typically refer to as a Christian position on the "end of times": God will bring about the end of the (this) world; and God will do this by God's singular power that will sweep away all of God's and his people's enemies, the bad and evil, the unrighteous.<sup>2</sup> When Truth comes and "judges and makes war" (Rev 9:11), then it is "time. . . for destroying the destroyers of the earth" (Rev 11:18), for Evil's torment is "day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10), and all unrighteousness disappears by being "thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev 20:15). God's *eschatological power* seems to be brutal, crude, and barbaric compared to what we might expect of a God of love (in Jesus' preaching), of salvation by suffering (the God "on the Cross") and God's renunciation of power (Jesus' consciously demonstrated powerlessness).<sup>3</sup>

For Whitehead, especially in *Adventures of Ideas*, an aversion to power reaches even as far as to deprive God of all attributes of coercion at all.<sup>4</sup> Now, God does not only renounce coercive power by God's will, but by God's *nature* God can no longer be thought of in categories of any kind of barbaric power, of coercive crudeness, of brutal alteration of the stream of history at God's will.<sup>5</sup> And now, *any* "power" is under suspicion—to include, to nourish or, at least, potentially to connect to some barbarism—as remnant of a barbaric notion of God needed for suppression (God as "imperial ruler"), social stabilization (God as "moral energy"), or even imaginative (but, hence, illusionary) escapism into a salvation from this barbaric world through God's strong arm (God as "apocalyptic avenger").<sup>6</sup> From Plato, Whitehead learned that "the relationship of God to the

World should lie beyond the accidents of will" (168) and that "the Ideals in God's nature, by reason of their status in his nature, are thereby persuasive elements in the creative advance" (168). In Whitehead's view, Plato discovered in theory what Jesus fulfilled in practice, namely, that "the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency" (166).<sup>7</sup>

By the measure of this process theological disposition toward the problem of "power," the Apocalypse of John combines two powerful problems, unsolved in process eschatology: First, it knows of an eschatological activity of God that will end the universe (and, for that matter, all universes) and, secondly, it proposes a persistently repulsive vision of the final time of God's fight against Evil, in which God's powerful victory will occur by coercive and even destructive force against this Evil.<sup>8</sup> Hence, a theological understanding of the Apocalypse regarding these basic matters of eschatological power and the struggle of God presents a major challenge for scholars who are trained to view power as predominantly coercive and, by the same motivation, to try to retrieve Whitehead's approach to God's lack of coerciveness as essential for a process-theological vision of God and God's relationship to the world (or God's action regarding the world).<sup>9</sup>

I will address these problems by reinterpreting the process of salvation that unfolds in the Apocalypse of John. Instead of viewing it as coercive nexus of apocalyptic events at the end of times, I interpret the apocalyptic imagery as redemptive process *in* God rather than a process *between* God and World. Hence, by inverting the view of apocalyptic revelation as instruction of *future* processes of doomsday and a new heaven, I understand the apocalypse as an *ongoing* process of healing by judging, suffering, and constructing peace in God's "conception" of the World. This basic view will unfold in *seven theses* and their exposition.

### *Thesis I: The Receptive Nature of God*

The notion of God is troubled by the paradox that God must be morally acceptable and soteriologically valuable at the same time. In order to fulfill both demands, God's essence must be of a receptive nature so that it can exercise eschatological power without either unilateral coerciveness or powerless persuasiveness.

It may not be so well known that the consequent nature of God is, indeed, the primordial notion of God in Whitehead's thought and, hence, the basic *soteriological* aspect of God. As early as with the first sign in Whitehead's work of a still very tentative notion of God (if this is already a notion of God at all), namely, in *The Concept of Nature*, Whitehead introduced a *soteriological* moment of his yet-to-come cosmology. Whitehead's notion of an "imaginary being" (67f) that might be thought of as having the whole world (as nature) in its time-extension *present at once*, conceptualized God as *receptive nature*.<sup>10</sup> From the first appearance in his thought, God was not a power of action, but of reception, not of creation, but of salvation (*Process* 346). It is known that Whitehead introduced his notion of the consequent nature of God precisely to articulate the soteriological aspect of God (Part V). Since the basic aim of

theology is transcendent satisfaction (*Adventures* 172), the theological aim of the notion of God is *salvation*.<sup>11</sup>

To test this surprising fact, we may point, first, to the “imaginary being” as the original basis for the consequent nature of God as opposed to the primordial nature of God, and, secondly, to the formal introduction of the notion of God in *Science and the Modern World* as the principle of concretization. The first fact shows that the appearance of a notion of God in the proto-concept of the “imaginary being” relates to Whitehead’s soteriological aspect of God that he later favors, and that the essence of the soteriological aspect is God’s *receptivity*.<sup>12</sup> The second fact underlines the first, because in *Science and the Modern World* God is introduced in full consciousness of the problem of theodicy (179): For Whitehead, God can only be introduced as a valuable notion if we secure God’s *soteriological eminence*, even if this means reducing God’s power in view of the evil of the world. If God could have the universal, unilateral power of correction of the evil, God could not be viewed as morally good (since God would, in fact, already have destroyed the evil) and, hence, as soteriologically valuable.<sup>13</sup>

Here, Whitehead’s basic intuition to introduce God in his work coincides with the mode by which he introduced God: the basically soteriological intuition demands a God that has no coercive power. Paradoxically—and without this basic axiom of Whitehead’s theology we will not be able to glimpse deeper into his thought—to strengthen the soteriological aim of theology, God must not be viewed in categories of “power,” except that this power does not act (coercively) but *receives* (relationally).<sup>14</sup> We know well of Whitehead’s aversion to a God viewed as external creator.<sup>15</sup> And this is why the omnipotent creator would lose the moral integrity that God needs to be seen as the soteriological aim of the universe; only a “weak God” saves God for a message of redemption.<sup>16</sup>

Obviously, the “weak categories” (a term originated by G. Vattimo) that Whitehead introduces for God revolutionize the notion of God, but they end up in a new paradox. On the one hand, God appears as a valuable notion that represents the moral aim of a cosmic process of humanity: a non-barbaric civilization. Whitehead finds the “weak notion” of God introduced by the late Plato, practically realized in Jesus and theoretically envisioned by the Alexandrian school of theology as “mutual immanence” of God and the world (*Adventures* 166-72). In his own opposition against the external creator, Whitehead believes that he can reformulate this tradition under the conditions of his times: only receptive power is soteriological power; only soteriological power fits God as a religiously valuable notion; only a religiously valuable notion of God will help to civilize society (*Adventures* 129-31, 236). On the other hand, Whitehead’s “weak God” satisfies neither the classical notion of God’s creative power nor the basic condition for a final salvation in the end of times.<sup>17</sup>

This is the soteriological paradox of Whitehead’s notion of God: in order to save the world, God’s nature must be *receptive*, not coercive at all; but in order to really save the world, God *must* exercise power that breaks the power of evil.<sup>18</sup> In

other words, Whitehead's God may be religiously valuable, socially stimulating, and intellectually more satisfying than any classical notions of God, but the crucial (and, some would say, fatal) failure of Whitehead's God seems to be the inability to reinterpret, integrate, and, finally, solve the problem of eschatological power.<sup>19</sup> God may be "morally correct" by being deprived of coercive power; but if the price is that, by the same token, God cannot be seen as eschatological power in order to overcome evil and even destroy it, or at least to save history by changing it *beyond* or even *against* its will and historicity (that which is determined for all times after it has happened), then God loses this soteriological capacity the more God becomes morally acceptable.

Nevertheless, there is a way out of the paradox: God may be seen as morally acceptable, i.e., not acting coercively in using unilateral power over against the world's actualities of creative freedom, and *at the same time* as soteriologically valuable, i.e., exercising soteriological power that really saves the world, *if* (and *only if*) the soteriological power of God is nothing but *the very nature of God*, i.e., God's concrescence as *receptivity*. Precisely this is the solution that Whitehead may be seen to *intend* by introducing the consequent nature of God (thesis II) and in viewing it as locus of the eschatological peace (thesis III).<sup>20</sup>

### *Thesis II: Transformative Power in God*

The receptive nature of God exercises transformative power in taking all actualities into God's all-relational life of wisdom: From their prehension within the consequent nature and the judgment of their fractured integrity to their integration within God's (eschatological) vision of the world (the primordial nature), all actualities are transformed by God's singular power.

The receptive nature of God is morally acceptable because it operates only *relationally*, never unilaterally, and basically by taking all that has happened (good or evil) as what it is, by accepting it, by receiving it (*Process* 31).<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the receptive nature of God is soteriologically *valuable* because it saves what it receives—its acceptance is critique and judgment (346). Hence, in Whitehead's most explicit statement on the consequent nature in *Process and Reality* it appears as God's *power of salvation and judgment* of all that God receives.

In its basic setting within Whitehead's theory of the structure of actualities, the consequent nature of God represents a specific divine version of the physical pole of all actualities (88).<sup>22</sup> As in all actualities, the physical pole of God receives all history (in physical perception). But "receiving" does not mean, at least not exclusively, "repeating" (regarding the received "subjective form" of the past actualities), but includes also (at least the possibility of) a *new valuation* of the received past (regarding the "subjective form" of the new actuality).<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of God the relation of the physical pole to the mental pole is very different, namely, *conversely* "in every respect" (349). While being receptive and evaluative like every actuality's physical pole, the physical nature is *consequent* and God's mental pole is *primordial* (349).<sup>24</sup> Since God's primordial

ground is God's infinity of ideas regardless of any world (47), God's receptive nature receives all the world regarding the divine infinity of valuation, that which is called wisdom or the Logos in classical terms (246f).<sup>25</sup>

Although this receptivity is a transposition of the persuasive power—which relates God to the cosmic processes—*into* God, i.e., the eschatological reception of the world into God's nature, it may not be seen as structured as mere "persuasion," like God's action within the ongoing cosmos. Since God's receptive nature values what it receives, it receives according to a *free* reaction of God that *transforms* rather than persuades.<sup>26</sup> Such transformative power, however, may not be conceived in terms of coercion. While coercion is an *external* force that *circumvents* the vital core of every actuality's creative freedom in creating itself as what it will be when it has become—this is the so-called "principle of process"; cf. 23: Cat Expl IX)—the transformative power operates on what has already *passed away*, is a *fact* of history, has found its individual essence in its satisfaction, and has lost its subjectivity.<sup>27</sup> *Only* actualities in their subjectivity, the *becoming* of immediacy, privacy, and internal essence of actualities, can be coerced.<sup>28</sup>

Transformative power is singular, i.e., *only* God can exercise it (in the same sense that only God never perishes).<sup>29</sup> Although it acts on actualities in transforming them, it acts *in* God and *not* in the world. This transformation is really of an *eschatological* nature since it can only operate regarding *the world in God*. This *singularly* eschatological character of the conception of the transformative power of God's receptive nature renders it feasible in its irreplaceable value within the cosmos of Whitehead's philosophical notions: "transformative power," "eschatological situation," and "the receptive nature of God"—one mirrors the other regarding their "singular theological meaning" as opposed to notions realized by all actualities whatsoever belong together.<sup>30</sup> Hence, the use of notions for God to articulate the *internal nature* of God's relation of the world to God *in* God must not be mingled with the difference of persuasive and coercive power that covers only the *cosmic* relation of God and the world.<sup>31</sup> Rather the transformative power reveals an *eschatological singularity* that opens its conceivability only *beyond* the cosmic differences.<sup>32</sup> The singularity of God's transformative power becomes obvious when we view Whitehead's position on eschatological transformation in God further. In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead considers actualities that pass into God both as *objects of judgment* and as *subjects of eschatological identity*.

Regarding the perspective of objective judgment, Whitehead knows of its soteriological capacity which does not wish hell to any actuality, but salvation. Accordingly, God's transformative power acts with a "tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved" (*Process* 346). Nevertheless, Whitehead does not invoke Origin's eschatological thesis of universal *apokatastasis*: Whitehead's judgment knows of the possibility *not* to be saved ("all that *can* be saved"). Hence, Whitehead knows also of the real power of evil the judgment has to *oppose definitely* in transforming (valuing down) the "revolts of destructive evil" to "their triviality of merely individual facts" (*Process* 346). God acts by means of an "overpowering

rationality of his conceptual harmonization,” that is, God’s “wisdom which uses what is in the world mere wreckage” to *transform* it regarding “its relation to the completed whole” by the “completion of . . . [God’s] own nature” (*Process* 346).<sup>33</sup> *Salvation means transformation* in relation to the unrealized possibilities, regarding all other actualities received in God, and according to its position in the infinite primordial valuation of God’s vision of the world.<sup>34</sup> Every individual actuality, which *is* (in its cosmic becoming) already universal relative to the universe, will be saved by transformation into universal relationality.

This “relational transformation” is a *process*, although it cannot be conceived within the difference of cosmic processes as “concurrent” or “transcendent.” *This* (eschatological) “process” pictures the inconceivable action of God’s redemptive widening of any actuality *beyond itself* and its cosmic identity.<sup>35</sup> This transformative process is grace, if at all, i.e., it cannot be carried out by the activity transformed, and it cannot be completed by *any* actuality, except God in God’s singular power of transformation.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the power of transformation cannot be conceived *within* the difference of persuasion and coercion, because both terms state a relation *between* God and processes of (actual) becoming.<sup>37</sup> In God, however, God’s relation to the actualities received is mental (“conceptual harmonization”), but not persuasive, physical (“perception of actualities”), yet not coercive. This is transformation: “The wisdom perceives every actuality for what it can be in . . . [God’s] perfected system” (*Process* 346).

Regarding the subjective perspective of transformation, it is crucial to realize that the objective perspective of eschatological judgment mediates *subjective* eschatological identity.<sup>38</sup> Without explaining Marjorie Suchocki’s notion of “subjective immortality,” we will gain the right perspective if we understand God’s *eschatological perception* of every actuality as *transformation* of the actuality’s “being” of what an actuality *was* (including its perished subjectivity, lost immediacy, and objective immortality) into what it *could have been*, and into what it *is in God* in relation to all perceptions and the perfected system of God’s wisdom. Therefore, God receives an actuality regarding its subjectivity and privacy, in relation to its unrealized potentiality of intensity in relation to the universe, and, finally, in its completion within God’s unfathomable subjectivity, in which all relations gain highest intensity. Whitehead does not fail to introduce this perspective of eschatological subjectivity in each and every of those aspects. He does so, first, within eschatological identity: “immediacy is reconciled with objective immortality” (*Process* 351). What else could this “reconciliation” mean if not *perfect subjectivity*? Although an eschatological actuality in God does not mean “becoming,” it will be a “living, everlasting fact” (*Process* 350). Secondly, in relation to its cosmic wreckage, the eschatological actuality will *combine* “creative advance with the retention of mutual immediacy” (*Process* 346). What else could this “retention” mean if not *perfected mutual immanence* of immediacy of all actualities in God? Thirdly, God grounds the everlasting subjectivity of all actualities in God’s nature “by his reception of the multiple freedom of actuality



into the harmony of his own actualization" (*Process* 349). What else could this "harmony of God's own actualization" mean if not God's own subjectivity that revives all actualities in God?<sup>39</sup>

### *Thesis III: Redemptive Suffering*

The total transformation of all cosmic actualities (into and) within God aims at their soteriological defragmentation actually occurring as struggle within God's nature. Hence, it is God's redemptive suffering of the world that transforms all actualities into unconditioned openness as their new "identity" within the wisdom of God.

When God's inner transformation saves what has perished (i.e., that which has lost its subjective self, its identity), then God uses a mere wreckage in light of an actuality's original possibilities that have not been actualized as offered by God's initiation of the initial aim (i.e., its "perfected vision" of what it could have reached out for) (Whitehead, *Process* 244); and when this transformation is to be understood as a form of divine perception (Whitehead, *Process* 346) or reception (Whitehead, *Process* 349), then God's *redemptive power* is God's *suffering* of the world.<sup>40</sup> It is to be seen as the deepest meaning of "perception" and, for that matter, of "reception" that it is in its essence the *suffering of something other* (that is not the perceiving or receiving agent).<sup>41</sup> If perception/reception is God's *essence*—at least regarding God's soteriological relevance (thesis I)—God's *activity* is receptive, i.e., the *suffering* of the other (as in Levinas' concept of alterity).<sup>42</sup> In view of this revolution in the notion of God, the traditional identification of God's *actus essendi* with *actus purus* has broken down. In Whitehead's vision, God's *actus essendi* is the act of *relationality* (God's primordial relatedness to all that is not God), the act of *reception* (God's primordial synthesis or concrescence of the other), and, hence, the act of *suffering* (God's primordial respect of the other).<sup>43</sup>

Whitehead's consequent nature is introduced to state precisely this: God's *physical* nature, i.e., God's suffering of the world's actualities. The receptiveness of God's nature was Whitehead's way of proposing his genuine notion of God: from the "imaginary being" of *The Concept of Nature*, to the statement in *Process and Reality* that God is the "great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (351). And by God's receptiveness, God is love, i.e., the *redemptive passage* of the world "into the love of heaven" (Whitehead, *Process* 351). Moreover, Whitehead's "weak categories," which name God's "tenderness," underline the receptive and suffering essence of God's actuality: God's "tender care that nothing be lost"; God's "infinite patience"; God's tender patience leading by its vision of truth, beauty, and goodness" (346). This tenderness of God is not God's choice (i.e., it cannot be changed voluntarily—as in nominalism), but God's nature.<sup>44</sup>

By reason of God's essentially receptive activity, the process of *soteriological defragmentation* of all actualities in their transformation into eschatological wholeness, i.e., eschatological peace, happens as *struggle* with the poisoned elements of evil in every actuality's failure to fulfill its potentiality regarding itself and in

relation to the universe. This struggle is, of course, of an *eschatological* nature, i.e., it happens *within* God, not within the cosmic process; it defines the character of God's transformative power *beyond* the difference of coercion/persuasion as *power of suffering*. Suffering is God's soteriological power—nothing else.<sup>45</sup>

Here, we have to be cautious not to relapse into the *mythology* of the suffering God that Plato in his famous *typoi tes theologias* already had demythologized with his axiom of *apatheia*.<sup>46</sup> In Whitehead, rather, the suffering of God rests on the concept of the receptive nature of God (thesis I), which is already a demythologized version of the metaphysical misconception of God's activity as *actus purus*.<sup>47</sup> Although the re-conception of God as "perfected act" answered the anthropomorphism of the Greek Pantheon, it has not gone far enough in deconstructing the mythological potentials of metaphysical language.<sup>48</sup> In Whitehead's eyes, the failure of metaphysics (as its was imported into theology regarding an ineligible notion of God) to read the relation of God and the world as "mutual immanence" distorted the perception of the soteriological activity of God. While the metaphysics of the *actus purus* avoided understanding God as "object" of the world's (evil) action, thereby allowing only God's *activity* but not *receptivity* to take place as perfection of God, it could *not* live up to the deep implications of God's incarnational, kenotic, and sympathetic love for the world.<sup>49</sup> In Whitehead's re-conception of activity *as* receptivity (conrescence), however, God's *perfection* allows for an engaged relation of God to the world. This "essential suffering" of God, however, does not re-anthromorphize God, but transforms God's *perfection* of activity into a *relational power*. Precisely, therefore, this suffering is not coercive suffering (that the world inflicts on God), or mythological suffering (of a God in need of the world), but purely *redemptive* suffering.<sup>50</sup>

In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead describes the eschatological transformation of cosmic actualities in God's nature as a process of gaining *eschatological peace*.<sup>51</sup> The judgment of an actuality's deficit, the confrontation with its unrealized potentiality (which it had in the state of becoming), the contrasting of its fragmented history with the unfathomable intensity of God's wisdom—this all appears as a *process of self-transcendence* of self-interest in the width of God's wisdom (295 f). In the "width where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to the coordination wider than personality" (285), God appears as "understanding of tragedy, and at the same time as its preservation" (286). This soteriological defragmentation as widening into total self-transcendence happens *in* God's suffering of the actualities *as they are* (have been) and by transforming them into the self-transcendence of God's receptive nature at its widest.<sup>52</sup> In this process of "purification" (286), the transformational power of God's suffering struggles for a physical harmony of the world in God, realizing its tragedy, preserving it, and transforming it into "tragic Beauty" (296). In the Eschaton—the eschatological God as "final Fact"—God's "suffering attains its end in a Harmony of Harmonies" (296).<sup>53</sup>



#### *Thesis IV: The Oppressive Power of Construction*

God suffers with all actualities, but not in abstraction from their cosmic setting within nexūs. On the contrary, God prehends all activities within their concrete nexūs (societies, events, open nexūs). Hence, God suffers actualities precisely regarding their specifically uniting character or form that creates “identity” by its own oppressive power of construction.

In the struggle for judgment, self-transcendence, and widening to universal identity in God, actualities are involved in painful processes (at least for God’s receptive activity, if not for the actualities in their regained immediacy) because of their *ontological relationality*. Actualities spring from relations they synthesized.<sup>54</sup> Relations bind actualities to a multitude of settings within nexūs, societies, histories, personalities, and epochs, all of which both create an environment for their becoming and the identity at which they aim.<sup>55</sup> Not recognizing this ontological relationality is the essence of sin—and it creates pain (even when identity has perished). Hence, salvation is the painful process of widening that we have identified as eschatological transformation.<sup>56</sup>

Let us begin with the eschatological action of the “widening” (*Adventures* 285) in God of both environment and identity of actualities in their nexūs and societies: Why is it so important for Whitehead to define “peace” as “self-transcendence beyond personality” (285-89)? It is important because any setting of actualities within, for example, their personal nexūs (if not also other nexūs of their environment that also create at least partly their existence) *defines* their history, their (real) potentiality, their projected future, and even their identity.<sup>57</sup> Self-transcendence, on the other hand, *releases the energy bound up in this identity*, the unfulfilled and even repressed and definitely selfishly restricted relationality of each and every actuality. Hence, Whitehead defines this “widening” as an act of *eschatological liberation*, because it relieves from the “stress” of “self-occupation” (285): “Peace is the removal of inhibition”; it “enlarges the field of attention” because “interests have been transferred” beyond “self-control” (285). This process of divine transformation, which—paradoxical as it is—aims at “self-control” without “self” (285): it *breaks the limits* of personal society (or another form of society), it *loosens the formative bondage* of society, and it allows *the oppressed energies* enshrined within the (historical) fact of identity inherited within a society to burst out.

The ontological basis for this eschatological transformation must be sought in the cosmological organization to which Whitehead devoted so much energy in exploring its “mechanics.”<sup>58</sup> One of the major aspects of this organization reveals especially the basis for the aspect of oppression involved in the creation of cosmic identity, an oppression which ordinarily is not recognized at all: In forming nexūs (obviously, at least, all kinds of societies), the actualities accept a *character* that *defines* societies in their “definiteness” (*Process* 34). The “definition” of a nexūs as a certain society includes a character that is *per se* a “form,”

a “complex eternal object” (34), an “idea”; it is an *abstraction* from the nexus providing for its *identity* throughout its history.<sup>59</sup>

In interpreting this notion, we may be inclined to understand this “common element of form” (Whitehead, *Process* 34) as *passive*, because it is an abstraction. And we may feel confident that this is what Whitehead wants us to believe when he states that the “defining characteristic” happens by “reproduction by reason of . . . [its] inclusion of positive feelings of that common form” (*Process* 34) within every actuality of this society.<sup>60</sup> Then we would wish to hold that the “form of definiteness”—which Whitehead so viciously identifies with “the Aristotelian notion of ‘substantial form’” (*Process* 34)—lasts only upon the *active agreement* of the members of this society to accept a certain form as their condition for social identity. Whitehead seems to confirm this belief because, in a society, the “mere fact of the common form exhibited by all of its members” is due to the “generic relations of the members of the nexus among each other” (*Process* 34).<sup>61</sup>

However, I propose a different reading of the abstraction that forms a society, namely, that the defining form of a nexus, although it is an abstraction (i.e., not a concrete element of the universe, like actualities) and, hence, without internal power to act, but it *still imposes* a character on its nexus (that sustains them), thereby *constructing* societies in their definiteness regarding all of their members and their difference to other societies (and their members).<sup>62</sup> In other words, the unifying character of a society (or an “event”) forms an abstraction that *effects* the actualities included in this society as well as other actualities and their abstract constructions, i.e., societies that are in contact with one another. This “power of construction,” which reproduces forms by imposing characters on actualities, may be overlooked easily because “forms” cannot act *in se*. But still, this “(quasi)activity,” i.e., this “power of formation” and its capacity for “perpetual renewal” (of the society to which it is related) *impose a condition of reproduction inherent in the activity of actualities forming a society*. Whitehead, accordingly, articulates the idea that for an actuality to be a member of a society, it must accept “conditions *imposed* upon it by its prehensions of some other member of the society.”<sup>63</sup> By way of these “prehensions [that] *impose* that condition of reproduction,” “defining forms”—in a certain sense (but not, of course, *like* actualities)—*act*, i.e., they *form* a society by *imposing definiteness*. Hence, Whitehead knows of an inheritance of forms by “feelings of the common form” throughout the nexus (*Process* 34).<sup>64</sup>

The *power of imposition* of this “social order” is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it allows for complex organizations of actualities because it facilitates the fact that a society is “self-sustaining, that is its own reason” (Whitehead, *Adventures* 203).<sup>65</sup> Hence, it stands for (more than mathematical) “order,” i.e., for a society’s *internal* “integrity” and its *external* “difference” to other societies, and for “reproduction” of a *structural identity* of generations of actualities by the power of inheritance.<sup>66</sup> Without this power, we cannot think of a cosmos that evolves complex structures, deeper forms of intensity—at which actualities aim

naturally—and higher ways of organizing mentality.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, by its essence, the power of formation of abstract forms by *imposing* order, reproduction, and inheritance on ever new generations of actualities thereby not only *defines* societies but *confines* them to a certain definiteness. Under certain conditions—and we may be very inclined to call them conditions of the origination of “evil”—the confinement of formation turns into a power of oppression over the actualities restricted in the process of perpetual reproduction of the formation.<sup>68</sup> When constructive abstractions oppress actualities, we may even speak of a *condition* for concrete creativity (and freedom) of actualities: oppressive forms impose evil conditions on actualities, “canalizing” them into its reproduction of the evil condition for new generations of actualities. Hence, “character” has two faces: it allows for personality, but—by the same token—also for oppression of creativity.<sup>69</sup>

### *Thesis V: The Divine Power of Deconstruction*

God’s struggle for eschatological peace consists in the deconstruction of the oppressive abstractions that form the evil sides of the corporative constructions of nexūs. The divine power of deconstruction inflicts on the oppressive nexūs a painful process of opening up all actualities beyond any restrictions into a wideness that is as infinite as God’s all-relative nature.

What have we gained up to this point? We may state that God’s soteriological action—paradoxically—takes place within God’s receptive nature (thesis I) by a power of transformation (thesis II) that, although it is *purely* God’s action (grace), does not coerce but suffer to heal (thesis III). If, however, God’s soteriological power wants to heal from the very key issue at stake here, namely, the evil in the world, God’s suffering must transform the *concrete mechanism* of evil: the oppressive character of societies, the restrictive power of abstraction—that is, the dark side of construction (thesis IV).<sup>70</sup> In other words: In God’s soteriological *defragmentation*, paradoxically again, God must suffer *these abstractions* whereby nexūs reach their identity both as intensity *and* as oppression—i.e., *constructions* that allow for *and* restrict actualities’ potentiality to realize their possibilities, their relation to other actualities (of its own or other societies, of all societies and nexūs), God’s primordial vision of it (initial aim) and the relation of it to all actualities of the world (harmony)—by *deconstructing* them. Hence, divine defragmentation, i.e., transformation into unconditioned wholeness and harmony (cf. *Adventures* 296), happens through the *de*-construction of evil constructions.<sup>71</sup> Thereby, every actuality is *freed to universal relationality*, i.e., non-obstructive immanence within each other or unrestricted interpenetration (*shi-shi-wu-ai*).<sup>72</sup>

In seeking examples in Whitehead’s cosmology wherein processes of deconstruction could be observed (at least to get a glance of what divine deconstruction may be), we might think of “personal societies,” especially human persons and their strange, double-edged face of construction. In exploring the Aristotelian notion of “soul” that describes the “defining characteristic” of living (not neces-

sarily human) personal societies, Whitehead realizes the Janus-character of the formative power of abstractions and gives a hint of how possibly to understand a process of healing the oppressive character of constructions that poison a person's identity.

In *Process and Reality*, the "soul" stands for precisely what allows a person to gain self-identity through inheritance, reproduction, forming a character, accumulating similar ways of acting and reacting to the environment, and finally by channeling strains of behavior as opposed to other forms of neglected or rejected modes, that which we may name "ways of life" of persons.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, living persons (and the notion of the "soul" wants to understand the identity of *live*) need mentality, originality and freedom.<sup>74</sup> In light of their true aim, i.e., intensity, however, the definition of the "identity" of a person as "enduring entity with its one personal order" (104) actually *restricts* living persons to what *hinders* them from finding their genuine identity. True personal identity, sought by the term "soul" wants to secure life and, hence, must *not* be found in an "enduring soul with its permanent characteristics" (104). On the contrary, in explaining why a soul is "more original than a stone," any defining character must be left behind for life, freedom and novelty. Since "[l]ife is a bid for freedom" and "means novelty" (104), the "unity" of a living person reaches beyond the "soul" toward the overcoming of its restriction to abstract constructions.<sup>75</sup>

Although life needs order, canalization, and teleology to proliferate, it never aims at order, but reaches for freedom, originality, and mentality.<sup>76</sup> On the other side, Whitehead does not want us to believe in a Manichean freedom that reaches *beyond* the universe (beyond matter, order, embodiment) where the soul is thought to be free. He knows that mentality originates higher organization of (physical) societies, which in turn originates higher mentality, freedom and novelty. In *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead formulates very cautiously in order not to *substantiate* the single actuality as image of pure life that would only need to be freed of any order, organization, abstraction, and construction; instead, he *relativizes* life as process of order, i.e., "coordination of mental spontaneities throughout the occasions of a society" (207).<sup>77</sup>

In God, however, order and novelty reach unfathomable interpenetration and (nothing less than) *infinite indistinctness*.<sup>78</sup> Since God's primordial mentality is infinite and living in the highest sense, it does not form a (dead) character of God (against Hartshorne), but has living originality beyond all measure (Whitehead, *Process* 32).<sup>79</sup> In other words, it cannot be represented by *any abstraction* (eternal object) and, hence, not by any *construction* that would originate restrictions and impose measures on God's nature.<sup>80</sup> Hence—since God's unfathomable mentality is unrestricted—God's consequent nature, although it can be named a "society" because of its receptive character (350), is *not* to be conceptualized as a *defined order* with which all occasions must comply in order to live. *Therefore*, the "living order" in God, i.e., the (physical) body of God that is the "kingdom of heaven" for all defragmentized actualities, leads to *total life* of all occasions

(350), which lies *beyond* any restriction of “dead order.” This “living community” in God, Whitehead calls “peace” (thesis III). Based on the life of the receptive nature of God, it is the divine paradigm of what Whitehead calls a “total living nexus,” which, in turn, is the divine paradigm of what any “living person” may be in the state of cosmic fragmentation: “not properly a society at all, since ‘life’ cannot be a defining characteristic” (104).<sup>81</sup>

In this approach, eschatological peace is the “total living nexus” of all actualities in God beyond the simple, cosmic difference of order and originality, inheritance and freedom, structure and activity. It is the *aim* of soteriological defragmentation to transform cosmic actualities into a *total living, eschatological reality* in God. The *way* to reach this aim of highest intensity of life, however, must be seen to be reached by the struggle against *evil constructions* that hinder eschatological peace (thesis IV). In contrast to the eschatological peace (as paradigm of total living nexūs), evil constructions arise and oppress life when a defining character *overarches* originality, freedom, and mentality by *restricting* it to repetition, inheritance, and definition. Since God’s “total living nexus” cannot be defined by *any* defining character, God’s suffering of the *evil* “defining characteristics,” which impose restrictions on nexūs, societies, and persons, leads to their *transformation into* a “total living nexus” beyond *any* abstract construction.<sup>82</sup> Hence, God’s eschatological transformation is *concretization* (conrescence in the highest sense), i.e., becoming-concrete by deconstructing abstractions that oppress the living synthesis in God.<sup>83</sup>

### *Thesis VI: Apocalyptic Revelation*

Apocalyptic revelation is not concerned with information about what will happen to the world in the future—and still more, at the end of the world—but it offers a glance into God’s suffering of the past, i.e., the passed world, as God’s struggle for salvation that takes places “in” God’s nature.

The eschatological elements explored in theses I to V may now be found in the eschatology of the *Apocalypse of John* in a way that allows us to reinterpret its apocalyptic story regarding the diagnosis of a certain incompatibility between Christian eschatology and process theology.<sup>84</sup> On the one hand, the theses plead for a new compatibility with process theology’s concern to abandon unilateral power and, on the other hand, they intend to provoke a transformation of just such a long-standing position of process theology, the rejection of God’s possibility to act as *actively powerful*.<sup>85</sup> Two elements shall explain this: first, a new understanding of “apocalyptic vision” of the eschatological struggle between good and evil, namely, as revelation of God’s *suffering* of oppressive constructions and their deconstruction (theses III to V) and, second, a new understanding of “apocalyptic revelation” as revelation of God’s eschatological concern not with future, but with *past* world (theses I to II).<sup>86</sup>

First, *apocalyptic revelation reveals God’s eschatological struggle with evil as God’s suffering of oppressive constructions and their deconstruction*. The major part of the

*Apocalypse of John* is concerned with the “end of time” in which the forces of evil arise and a dramatic war takes place, a war which God will finally win by forcing the evil powers to abate, to vanish, or albeit to suffer eternal anguish.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, as we read chapters 6-20, an abundance of violence, horror, war, and brutality take place on all sides. So, the issue is how to justify these excesses of brutality without either playing it down as “product of the author’s personal situation and psychology”<sup>88</sup> or fixate it as evidence of the brutality of God’s coercive power (with all the consequences process theology wants to avoid)?<sup>89</sup>

To begin with, we have to take into account three facts about the “cruelty of the Apocalypse.” First, the Apocalypse takes place within the *brackets of salvation* in chapters 4-5 and 21-22: the Lamb wants to unify the whole cosmos in the worship of God (5:1-14) and the aim of the whole end-time-war is nothing less than the new creation that centers around the Lamb as New Jerusalem’s lamp (21:1, 23-27). The aim of the whole story is *universal salvation*.<sup>90</sup> Secondly, the whole scene of the Apocalypse is to be understood against the *social background* to which it speaks, the crisis of state-enforced persecution of the churches of Asia from which the author had already been forced into exile (1:9). Moreover, the crisis was even more insidious, facing the problem of social assimilation or the rejection of any accommodation.<sup>91</sup> In this situation, the invocation of God’s power as finally victorious is life-saving, hope-granting, and a strengthening of the will to stand up against both the physical repression and social crisis into which the churches were drawn into by Roman politics and internal strains.<sup>92</sup> In the face of the crisis, the cruelty of John’s language knows God as protest against the evil powers unfolding in the prosecution and social assimilation.<sup>93</sup> Thirdly, the seemingly coercive—although basically healing—power of God is situated within the *suffering* of force against the churches: the judge will be the *slaughtered* Lamb, and it “judges and makes war” (19:11) by the sword of what it is, the Word of God (1:16; 19:15).<sup>94</sup> Within this situation of God’s war against evil, the symbolism of the *actors* of this war has to be looked at carefully: they are named persistently by names that identify the forces of evil as “abstractions—Babylon, the beast, the dragon—and that equally violent language is used today about Fascism, Communism and other -isms.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, even the victims, like the churches of Asia, are abstractions (1:4; 2-3). The whole apocalyptic scenery appears with a super-individual symbolism: the four apocalyptic horses (6:2-8), the four angles (7:1), or the seven apocalyptic plagues and their seven angles (8-11), the Lady (12:1). And even God appears disguised under constructions like the “Lamb” (5:1-14; 21: 23-27) or the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5).<sup>96</sup> The apocalyptic struggle unfolds into a *structure of abstractions and constructions*. Obviously these abstractions exercise powers of evil or—in their deconstruction—the power of salvation. Hence, the apocalyptic symbols reveal both the *oppressive character of constructions*, i.e., they function as *corporative personalities of structural sin* and, as in the Lamb, a glance into the *power of deconstruction* of



the evil constructions that effects *all* actualities and nexūs *in God* in a radical process of transformation (5-21).

The *slaughtered* Lamb, however, represents God in two ways (5:12). First, the Lamb represents the highest symbol of the *power* of deconstruction of abstraction *in God*. It is itself “deconstructed”: the slaughtered body is deprived of abstractions. Secondly, *in* the “world of oppressive nexūs” (that has to be constructed in God but is *in se* godless), the Lamb stands as a powerful symbol of suffering for salvation that can overcome evil by deconstructing oppressive nexūs. The Lamb is the “personal symbol” of *God’s suffering and deconstructing power* that situates God in God’s own process of deconstruction of the oppressive nexūs.<sup>97</sup>

Second, *apocalyptic revelation is the revelation of God’s eschatological concern regarding the past world*. The struggle that the Apocalypse *seems* to offer as cinematic pre-information of what will happen at the “end of times” when God will fight evil forces *actually* offers a look into God’s suffering of the world’s oppressive constructions. Seen from the world, this deconstruction happens *at all times* in God’s permanent reception of the world into God as it passes into the past.<sup>98</sup> While we may have thought that “eschatology” is concerned primarily with the *future*, or, for that matter, the end of future time, in a process theological reversal, eschatology is concerned with the *past* of the world. It is about the past world as it disappears into God’s consequent nature to be collected, synthesized, judged, and healed.<sup>99</sup>

If the “apocalyptic vision” offers a view of what happens to the past world in God, it does so by revealing the *present* of God as apocalyptic struggle. The war of deconstruction and transformation offers an ultimate glance into God’s actual ongoing reception of the undeconstructed world; it allows us to read the open heart of God, namely, God’s salvation process, God’s redemptive suffering, God’s transformative power. The apocalyptic view is the specific theological approximation to God’s *presence*: It is eschatological presence, i.e., *in* our present, but not *as* present, rather as the future of the past (against Derrida’s presumption against theology).<sup>100</sup>

### *Thesis VII: The Eschatological Nature of God*

The revelation of an apocalyptic riot in God (that takes place at all times) has the eschatological power of the “presence” of God within the process of the cosmos for its present transformation. At once, apocalyptic revelation reveals God’s “eschatological nature,” its ultimate concern not just with (eschatological) peace but with this world of becoming, and the ultimate aim of the world process: creative adventure.

Although the “apocalyptic vision” is concerned with the “future of the past” of the world *in God* (eschatological peace: thesis VII), the fact of “apocalyptic revelation” of this process in the *world*, reveals God’s concern with the *future of the ongoing* world. Moreover, *because* apocalyptic revelation is concerned with the *past*, not with the future, it nevertheless occurs as revelation of the

process of deconstruction of the past by appearing as revelation *for* the *future* of the cosmos.<sup>101</sup> To understand the complexity of this theological time-distortion (and its necessity), we may ask this question: If God's eschatological activity is concerned with the past, then why is it revealed at all? As long as we were future-oriented, apocalyptic revelation made sense as offering "information" about the end of times that facilitates hope and strength for the present struggle in the situation of persecution and crisis.<sup>102</sup> If all ends, all makes sense.<sup>103</sup> If, on the other hand, eschatology is concerned with the past, then the future may not be brought to a final halt (*the* Eschaton) at all.<sup>104</sup> Why, then, in turn, be concerned with the past?<sup>105</sup> And why, for that matter, does God offer a view into God's present struggle for salvation regarding the (ever new) past of the world?

In process theological terms, we may restate these questions by asking how God *affects* the world.<sup>106</sup> Although Whitehead holds that both aspects of God's nature, the primordial and the Consequent, affect the world through objective immortality (*Process* 32), we may understand this statement only by adding that objective immortality is the "effectiveness" of an actuality *beyond itself* and—at least for cosmic actualities, beyond subjective privacy, beyond becoming—in its *superjective activity*.<sup>107</sup> God's superjective activity, however, although it is effective in imposing its "character" on creativity—even *primordially*—does not lose its subjectivity (God does not pass away).<sup>108</sup> The "primordial superject of creativity" (32) or God's "subjective nature" (88f) is Whitehead's way of securing effectivity in order to circumvent two flaws: that the primordial Nature is blind because it knows all about possibility but nothing about actuality, and that the consequent nature knows the world's activities concretely, but ineffectively.<sup>109</sup> The Superjective Nature of God, however, *affects* the world in a *sensitive* way for it knows (in its consequent aspect) already what actually happens in the *concrete* world before God acts (in opposition to the general arrangement of possibilities and their general valuation in the primordial nature) *but* it is *effectively* concerned with the *future* of the world (in opposition to the consequent nature that, in God but not in the world, saves the past receptively).

The *reason* for the specific effectiveness of God's superjective nature may be obvious when connected with the *fourth phase of the creative process* at the very end of *Process and Reality* (350f); and here it relates to the *love of God*.<sup>110</sup> The "fourth phase" is God's effective concern with the world: it is concrete, knowing, suffering, and creative love that pours back from the kingdom of heaven (the Eschaton of the past) to effect the word for its all the more creative, more loving, more intense future in the cosmos. In this sense, the effectiveness of God's love serves the highest aim of the universe: to be a *creative adventure* (*Adventures* 295 f).<sup>111</sup>

If all this is consistent, all eschatology has to be reversed; all eschatological *topoi* will appear in another light.<sup>112</sup> Eschaton, judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, resurrection may be regained in a new originality as *processes*, not as facts (Whitehead, *Process* 7). Ultimately, we may reconstruct eschatology.<sup>113</sup> Now,

it gains new ground prepared by the sense of apocalyptic revelation and God's purpose for the world in light of it: God offers a view into God's struggle with the world—because God is concerned not only with the past world and its transformation into the “kingdom of heaven” in God. Eschatological peace, paradoxically, is *not* the aim of God's revelation and, for that matter, God's relation to the world. In the order of creative phases, eschatological peace only ranks second, so to say; “only” the third phase aims at the goal of the everlastingness of the world in God. The importance that God assigns to the *future of the world in its creative process*, in its present, in its becoming, in its free creation of novelty, in its actuality, however, cannot be suspended either by possibility (of the primordial Nature), i.e., the Platonic heaven of Ideas, or by immortality (of the consequent nature), i.e., religion's heaven of salvation. If creative *Adventure* is God's ultimate aim—not God's concern with any “other” (Platonic, religious) world beyond this world—the eschatological statement of “apocalyptic revelation” shifts immensely to the importance of *this* world: *This* world is God's ultimate concern. Thus it has ultimate relevance.

### Notes

1. This is a commonplace (if one wants to avoid the word “dogma” here) of process theology and it influences all statements of process theology and most of its theories: cf., for example, the recognition of this fact by one of its critics: Basinger 27-40.
2. Cf. process eschatology as structured under the “dogma” of “relational power” and its consequences for Christian eschatology: Suchocki, *God* 1-13, 28-38.
3. Lawrence 14-15 differentiates between two kinds of Christianity in the New Testament. While one is the Christianity of love, persuasion, and tenderness, tends the other (as in the Apocalypse of John) to violence, envy, and revenge.
4. Cf. *Whitehead's Philosophy*, 11-19, 75-77.
5. Cf. Mesle 13-16, 25-40.
6. Cf. Cobb and Griffin 8-10: cf. Whitehead, *Process* 342f.
7. Cf. for the approximation of Platonic theory and Jesus' practice mirroring the lack of coercive power and the solution of “mutual immanence”: Wilmot 97-104.
8. Cf. Lawrence 51 reads John's Apocalypse as “revelation of power pure and simple, and of the raw lust of power.”
9. Cf. the strong and sharp difference between the two kind of power—coercive and persuasive—in Ford, “Divine Persuasion” 287-304.
10. Indeed, the “imaginary being” in *The Concept of Nature* 67f is Whitehead's proto-concept of God in his opus: cf. Meagher 1977. The “imaginary being” was an experimental notion of a divine view of the world that holds its time-extension within one duration, i.e., one present moment, one “event” (in the of early sense of Whitehead's thought). This being would be—godlike or as God—the

event of holding the whole world as one together in one moment of present. The condition of such a notion of God is nothing less of the *reception* of the world as *one* in God's actuality.

11. I am convinced that Whitehead's introduction of God cannot be understood by philosophical interests alone, but it motivated by a soteriological motive. I have substantiated this opinion in my *Prozess* 225-57.

12. Cf. B. Clarke 169-88. Clarke collects the evidence that Whitehead's first notion of God was not a proto-concept of what later got well-known as primordial nature (God in relation to possibility, Platonic connection), but God a proto-concept of God as consequent nature (God in relation to soteriology, religious connection). While the primordial nature appears as late as *Science and the Modern World*—its "principle of concretion"—the "imaginary being" of *The Concept of Nature* lifts the *soteriological* moment of God in Whitehead's thought *primordial* (180-83). And the essence of this notion of God is indeed *receptivity*.

13. This is the basis for the kind of "process theodicy" that David Griffin initiated: cf. God 251-310; cf. critically, Faber, "Ambiguität" 3-6.

14. It was Lewis Ford's merit to have worked out most clearly that Whitehead's notion of activity (and action) is not that on which the classical Aristotelian notion is based (and the classical theological notion of divine activity since then) but is that of a intersection of activity and passivity, of act and passion, namely, concrescence as act of receptivity; cf his "Whitehead's Transformation" 381-99.

15. Whitehead seems to have even stopped studying theology because he could not solve this problem of God as (external, i.e., active but not receptive) creator; cf. the suggestion of Ford, "An Alternative" 205-13.

16. Cf. Whitehead's conscious use of the "weak category" of "the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love" (*Process* 343) for God. It was one of the major agendas of Hartshorne's theological transformation of Whitehead from his first writings on Whitehead to his last to built on these "tender elements" in order to regain God as valuable for worship, the true sign of Divine. We can follow this development of Hartshorne's thought from his first major article on Whitehead's notion of God in 1948—"Whitehead's Idea" 513-60—and his first prominent book on the supprime relativity of God—*The Divine Relativity*—to his last major work, *The Zero Fallacy*. For the basic interest in a God who can be worshipped, and the consequences for a "weak" God, cf. Dalferth 484-506.

17. Cf. the critique Whitehead's concept of God has in its non-process theological reception, e.g., in Kueng 247-57, which has influenced much of the early European understanding of Whitehead and process theology as unable to solve the problems at stake here.

18. Cf. the discussion between Hartshorne and Johnson on how to understand this reception of past entities into God: If they are received by the consequent nature of God, are they retained in their entirety (immediacy)? And if so, are they changed after they have been completed their becoming? And in what

*power* does that changes happen if persuasion cannot be invoked? (Johnson, *Whitehead* 85-105).

19. Cf. Beardslee 96-113. He is, more than most others, well aware of the problem that if we do not solve the issue of “eschatological power,” we have failed to connect to Christian theology.

20. Although these notions introduce the soteriological aspect into Whitehead’s understanding of God, receptivity as God’s *nature* reaches even deeper: the *whole* divine activity, which is God’s nature, is receptivity—obviously the consequent nature, but also the primordial nature, or even better, the concrescence of God which is always *receptive synthesis* (also in God’s case revered to the worlds processes of concrescence). For the receptive nature of the primordial nature, cf. Ford, “Neville” 79-84. For the reverse nature of God’s concrescence, cf. Suchocki, “The Metaphysical Ground” 237-46.

21. Cf. Mellert 51-63.

22. Cf., for example, (but nobody really challenges this fact of bipolarity) Mays 130-32.

23. Whitehead’s doctrine of the transference of “subjective form” as both repetition and valuation in a “conformation of feeling” in *Adventures* 183 and his doctrine of “conceptual reversion” in *Process* 26 (Cat. Oblg. V) confluence to his doctrine of valuation (241, *Adventures* 210) that arranges physical perception regarding the values of the subject perceiving based on the grade of freedom of the occasion (from repeating its past) and within the range of *new* possibilities offered to it by God.

24. Cf. the elaborated doctrine of reversion of poles in God in Suchocki, *End* 135-55. The consequences are crucial for the concept of God: cf. Faber, *Process* 452-64.

25. One could be inclined to take Whitehead’s doctrine of “wisdom” to mean the primordial nature, as in Schulte 343. Whitehead, however, understood the wisdom as the specific relation of the consequent to the primordial nature in its final evaluation of the received world: Cobb 70-77, who (regarding the incarnation) news well that the wisdom needs both of God’s polar natures to be understood.

26. Felt 252-62 underlines sharply the *free* character of God’s reception of actualities into the consequent nature. Since God’s primordial pole is infinite, the reaction of God is not bound to any “past,” “tradition,” “inheritance,” or “history.” Hence, the basis for a transformation *beyond* pure reception is laid.

27. Cf. Suchocki’s use of the category of “transformation” in this context: *End* 205.

28. Cf. Loomer 5-32. Power means always to be present on another actuality, unilateral or relational. The past, since it is past, has no power other than that of immortality, which, of course, can take on coercive character (i.e., regarding physical bodies); in its pastness, however, past actualities are historically “untouchable” by coercion. Cf. Ford, “Divine Persuasion” 268-73.

29. I side here with Whitehead, who held that God cannot perish as opposed to Hartshorne's view that God as a society of occasions must be understood in a personal order of perishing God-occasions. For Whitehead's view cf. Johnson, "Some Conversations," 3-13; regarding the problems of Hartshorne's view, cf. Ford, "God" 41-52.

30. The reason is that a confusion of this kind would misinterpret the *difference* between categories useful to describe the relations *between* God and world and other categories useful to understand relations *within* God. Since all processes regarding God and world develop *conversely*, they are totally different from each other, although relationally bound together (cf. Whitehead, *Process* 350f): cf. Faber, "Unique Origin" 195-211. It is the specific interest of theology to come to unique notions that cannot be used for all actualities; this non-metaphysical character of the unique events originating religious experience and reflection do not necessarily contradict a Whiteheadian understanding of the relation of metaphysics and theology.

31. Cf. for the discussion of the ordinary distinction between coercion and persuasion within process theological terms: Griffin, *Evil* 96-143.

32. Cf. Faber, "De-Ontologizing." Several of Whitehead's notions can be understood in terms of an in/difference that transcends the sense of the difference (e.g., of coercion and persuasion) and originates it at the same time.

33. Although Whitehead seems to be inclined to hold a notion of universal salvation that is not exclusive at all, he differentiates in the sense that this does not belittle the destructive incomprehensibility of evil. The "minimizing" of evil in God reveals that there may be events that are not able to be saved. Nevertheless, although occasions may be lost, at no place we must believe that persons will be lost to an eternal hell.

34. For the whole scenery of this eschatological transformation in God cf. Suchocki, *God* 199-216; *End* 81-114.

35. In a very complex sense, cosmic identity has been won and lost at the same time, when a becoming actuality perishes into subjectivity: it loses immediacy, but it wins identity as importance beyond itself.

36. In this sense, Whitehead's notion of "grace" is, indeed, a notion of "imposition" (*Adventures* 130). Nevertheless, since this grace of transformation happens not within the word and regarding becoming actualities, it cannot be conceived within the difference of coercion and persuasion.

37. Here, again, God's inconceivable, singular, eschatological action of salvation must be understood beyond the differences that God's differentiation creates: salvation is always in-different to the terms valid for cosmic description. Cf. Faber, "Infinite Movement" 171-99.

38. Cf. the very persuasive arguments of Marjorie Suchocki for the notion of a "subjective immortality" of the past actuality in God: Ford and Suchocki 1-13.



39. Cf. for the interpretation of this eschatological process: Faber, *Process* 574-85.

40. That God suffers the word in the reception of it by the consequent nature is a commonplace of process theology, but also in the center of the theologies of Soelle, Moltmann, Juengel, Pannenberg, von Balthasar and others. For the “power of the suffering God” in all of these theologies, cf. Fiddes 144-73; for a critique of the idea of a suffering God, although in favor of the metaphor of “suffering” beyond mythological distortion, cf. Faber, *Selbsteinsatz*, *passim*.

41. Every actuality is concreting, is receiving others (physically and mentally), is standing in relation (togetherness of relations as process), is suffering of the other. This is the immanent inclusion following from Whitehead’s anti-Aristotelian axiom to seek how a someone can be present ion another (*Process* 50).

42. Cf. Davis, *Levinas* 34-92. For the relation of Levinas to Whitehead, cf. Faber, *Prozess* 344-56 and “De-Ontologizing.”

43. Cf. Ford, “Transformation” 381-99.

44. This is one of the meanings of Whitehead’s proposal of *Adventures of Ideas* 168, namely, that God must be related to the world by *nature* and not by will—as in Plato. In the natural relation of God to the word we gain a glance of God’s receptive relationship to the word, which grounds in God’s suffering essence.

45. Again, since God’s suffering is God’s nature, the process of transformation as suffering of a kind of struggle against evil identity must not be within the categories of persuasion and coercion. It is more than persuasion, but not coercion, either.

46. Cf. Plato (Politics 378d-79a). For the demythologized meaning of “apatheia” in the Platonic tradition (which has been wrongly identified with an unloving, indifferent, and just observing God) that process theology rejects rightly, cf. Seckler 184.

47. Even the ancient Christian tradition knew of theologies that accepted the “suffering” of God, if it was understood as active suffering that does not draw *passive* categories into God. As long as God’s suffering was God’s free decision and not a natural necessity, at least some of the Fathers could speak of God’s suffering, cf. Faber, *Selbsteinsatz* 219-36.

48. For a demythologized version of Plato’s axiom that even has had to demythologize “*apatheia*” and to restate the “suffering” of God in today’s context of theology, cf. Faber, *Selbsteinsatz*, 144-92. Whitehead, however, turns over the whole concept of activity that grounds this difference and defines activity as suffering. For God, nevertheless, Whitehead secures somehow a primordial freedom (although not of “will,” but of “nature”), because God’s process is *not* seeking anything that God “needs” (due to the perfection of God’s primordial nature and, hence, God’s infinite concrescence); cf. the “primordial satisfaction” of God as proposed by Suchocki, *End* 140-48.

49. Hence, even the decision of the First Oecomenical Council of Nikaia 325 has not realized that to believe Christ to be the Logos of God and, for that matter,

God, has the implication of elevating the history of Christ into God's nature; cf. Faber, *Selbsteinsatz* 41-42.

50. It is important to realize that God's suffering does not aim at anything, but is pure love that has no other agenda than love. This makes love redemptive—its aimlessness, its *diffusivum sui*.

51. For the theological understanding of Whitehead's notion of "peace" in *Adventures of Ideas*, cf. Suchocki, *End* 110-11.

52. For the eschatology as process of self-transcendence of even personality, cf. Faber, *Prozess* 578-85.

53. It is a totally different story to ask if this "harmony of harmonies" may be understood as definitive transition of this world, and for that matter, all becoming worlds, into a final world without lost (cf. *Process* 340). A first answer will be given in thesis VII, although the discussion may go on from there as to whether we can determine a singular "end" in Whitehead's cosmology. It could well be that we find several different strains of propositions that may direct us in different directions regarding the character of the eschatological "end."

54. Cf. Lachmann 45-48.

55. For the connection of both the theory of *nexūs* and the theory of concrescence, cf. Hosinski 128-54.

56. This is obvious, for example, in Suchocki's concern with the process of transformation in God (beyond the cosmic becoming): God's widening of actualities *beyond* their private (and personal) concerns is—when evil, fault, guilt, and fragmentation is involved—somehow painful: cf. Suchocki, *God* 14-27.

57. We may speak of a *milieu of becoming* of which Whitehead was very conscious when conceptualizing his philosophy as one of "organism": An actuality's milieu defines its existence as to whether or not it may exist at all (in difference to other milieus where it might or might not prosper more or less or not at all). Cf. *Science and the Modern World* 103-08 on organisms. Cf. also Hampe 168-202.

58. For the "mechanics" of concrescence and transition cf. Hosinski 46-127.

59. Cf. Fetz 142-45.

60. This is common sense for process thinkers. In distinction to Aristotle (and his followers), who identified "actuality" and "form," Whitehead deprived "ideas" or "forms" of their actuality; they reincarnate as possibilities, not as actualities that alone can exercise causality. Since "forms" are not causally active, they are not acting. Forms remain passive. Hence, forms cannot act. Cf. Fetz 101-05, 223-26; Hampe 104f.

61. Because of this specific Whiteheadian way of deconstructing macro-cosmic identity, for example, of persons, as social identity that rests on the activity of its member-actualities, a widespread discussion on the *genuine*

*unity* of connections of actualities especially within societies that exhibit a common “substantial form” rose. Solutions range from radical deconstruction of higher-than-actuality-like unity (Buddhist connotation, dharma and anatta-theory) to circumvention of the problem by stating higher unities *as* actualities (F. B. Wallack), from introducing “inclusive occasions” (L. Ford) to “energy-fields” (J. Bracken) as forms higher unity of societies that cannot be simply reduced to the concrete unity of actualities, hence, has somehow genuine concreteness. Cf. Wallack 7-46; Ford, “Inclusive Occasions” 107-36; J. Bracken, “Energy-Events” 153-65.

62. Although, I am very inclined to Bracken’s concept, but widening it to a “non-causal field of presence”—cf. Faber, “The Two Times Theorem”—here I wish to focus on the relevance of the “substantial form” or “defining characteristic” of a social unity itself. Its power is not non-existent or irrelevant in generating genuine unity of a society because it is *per se* an “abstraction”; this is what I am arguing for here: although the “form” is an abstraction, it creates identity, i.e., genuine unity that has its own power.

63. Italics added. This “imposition” of a “quasi-activity” of forms is indeed mediated by prehensions, i.e., the activity of actualities, this “mediation” implies that a factor acts that may not be seen as acting without mediation.

64. Italics added. Although Whitehead is very anxious to avoid any clear statement of an “activity” of the “form” itself, he cannot totally circumvent this activity. Since, prehensions are the activities that impose the “form,” the kind of imposition is based on the activity of the concrete actualities involved; however, the unity that the “form” presents is *what is mediated* by these prehensions.

65. I do not wish to exclude the field-character of social relations in their adding essentially to this self-sustaining unity of societies—cf. Bracken, *Society* 57-73—but I want to argue for the importance of the structure for creating social identity inherent in and mediated by the matrix of field-relations between the mutual prehensions of the actualities within a society.

66. G. Henry symbolizes this structural identity with a *program* that allows for every actuality of a society to feel not just the feelings of other actualities of the society, but also to feel the society as such: cf. *Forms* 70-73.

67. The “aim” of nature to built “order” is intensity of feeling. Hence, the feeling of a nexus as such imposes an order that allows for ever more intensive structures sustaining higher mentality of the actualities involved in societies of such a higher structure: cf. Busch 85f. Hence, all phases of concrescence other than the first, initial, purely physically receptive phase—what Whitehead calls responsive, integrative and supplemental phases—consists in the explosion of mentality in the becoming of actualities: cf. Hosinski 73-127.

68. *Per se*, the definition as confinement is neither bad nor evil but the reason for the proliferation of order, intensity, mentality, because confinement means also difference, and difference means plurality and richness.

But it may reach beyond enrichment and turn into the reason for reduction, simplification, oppression. Here, nothing else happens that Whitehead considered the relation of Beauty and Evil in *Adventures* 259. They arise from the *same* metaphysical principles, but in a different *proportion* in their conjoint action.

69. This axiom also instantiates the same problem of a two-sided blade. The same element that leads to concrete creativity in actualities also—under certain conditions—leads to confinement of creativity. This element is the *characterization* of unconditioned creativity by actualities. This “characterization” may lead to higher creativity but also to its perpetual vanishing within an evil “tradition” that is energized by the ongoing characterization.

70. The mechanism of evil is of *social* character. Since ethical problems do not arise regarding singular actualities (cf. Lachmann 60-74) and there are of course no isolated actualities, ontological relationality includes the problem of evil as problem of relations. Hence, societies are the genuine place of arising, mediating, perpetuating and growing of evil. Therefore, all forms of evil, described by Whitehead, actualize a specific deficit in the social structure of relations of actualities within societies; e.g., dissonance, anaesthesia, inhibition, destruction (cf. *Adventures* 256-64).

71. Since evil essentially consist in the actuality’s repulsive rejection to reach beyond its past toward the horizon of its possibilities (cf. Hauskeller 150f) evil constructions bind the unfulfilled freedom so that to release this freedom, the abstraction has to be broken down.

72. Odin’s differentiation of Whitehead’s “cumulative penetration” from Hua Yen-Buddhism’s “unrestricted interpenetration” is valid regarding the cosmic process, but must be corrected regarding the eschatological process in God. In its difference from cosmic processes, the soteriological transformation of the Cosmos in God aims at and always fulfills unrestricted interpenetration. This is just another formulation of God’s transformative and suffering power in theses II-III (16-26, 135-58). More than by others, M. Suchocki has realized this crucial difference between cosmic and divine processes of salvation in her analysis of the consequent nature of God in relation to the Buddhist notions of soteriological all-relationality: cf. Suchocki, “Anatman.”

73. For the problem of personal societies, their relation to human persons, and the relation to what, in tradition, has been called “soul”: cf. Fetz 156-60.

74. Cf. Hosinski 51-56, 64-67, 133-48.

75. Here, Whitehead’s notion of the eschatological peace opens up to an “identity” beyond the “self-occupation” of the “soul” (*Adventures* 285) although that does not mean the certain strain that was the person in the cosmos is lost. It will become a “complete living fact” (*Process* 350). Moreover, Whitehead allows for a “peculiarly intense relation of mutual immanence” (*Adventures* 208) between God and a living person that seems to be an eschatological aim in its own right.

76. For the problem of canalization of novelty in living persons and, thereby, the intensifying of their mentality, cf. *Adventures* 205-08.

77. If order were just hindering freedom, we would end up in a Manichean or Gnostic universe that is evil because of restrictions of freedom. Whitehead, on the other hand, never endorsed this view. On the contrary, he was anxious to avoid bringing mentality and physicality into opposition. Moreover, freedom and organization cling together and raise at the same time.

78. Cf. Faber, "Evanescence" 192f.

79. For Hartshorne's concept of God's primordial nature as "character," cf. Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity* 142-47; Cobb 188-92; for its evaluation in light of the conversion of the processes of God and the world, Faber, *Process* 526-35. For the living character of God's primordial nature if viewed as actuality, cf. W. N. Clarke 161-64.

80. Although Whitehead conceptualized the primordial nature of God as valuation of the complete reign of eternal objects (cf. *Process* 32) and, hence, as complete (22: Cat. Expl. III), in *Adventures* 257, Whitehead realizes that the "completeness" of all eternal objects must be *incomplete*, because no eternal object can represent the whole reign of all eternal objects (cf. also *Process* 46). Hence, the unity of this reign is living": cf. Maassen 146.

81. These identifications of "total living nexus" and "living person" with God's "receptive nature" is seen to be a *necessary* outcome of the confluence of these I to V, as proposed here.

82. Since a "total living nexus" cannot be conceptualized by any character, it is concrete beyond any abstraction. It even seems to be capable of being understood as the paradigm of *concreteness*, because in its realization the actualities of the nexus do not mediate by abstractions (like concepts) but by concrete feelings *alone*, i.e., beyond universals. Note the difference Whitehead draws between conceiving universals and feeling concrete actualities in *Process* 230. This difference is important to reach at a concept of the universality of singularities that cannot be mediated by universals. Here, Whitehead connects with G. Deleuze: cf. Faber, "Unique Origin" 197f.

83. For understanding "concrecence" as process of concretization, cf. Kline 145-61. Further, in the eschatology proposed here, concretization is unrestricted interpenetration *because* abstraction is deconstructed totally.

84. For a profound interpretation of the Apocalypse in a systematic-theological context, cf. Keller 36-83.

85. For the problem in understanding the *Apocalypse of John* within the parameters of process theology, cf. Farmer, *Beyond*, 163-93. The *Apocalypse of John* may be seen, here, as the paradigm of solving paradoxes between process theology and Christian eschatology.

86. Both parts of thesis VI are just a consequence of the theses I to V. God suffers the past world and God reveals this suffering. This is the apocalyptic process realized in the *Apocalypse of John*. Both parts of thesis VI belong

together and function as conditions of the other, respectively. Hence, they could be read in reverse order.

87. For an evaluation of these elements of apocalypse, cruelty, future, and finality of the world in view of new theological interpretations, cf. Giesen, "Offenbarung" 50-81.

88. J. Sweet 49.

89. Cf. Lawrence 51.

90. Cf. Boring 229.

91. Cf. Farmer, *Beyond* 142-44.

92. New investigations into the political situation suggest that the Christians were not yet under systematic prosecution. The crisis John is answering refers more to internal conflict than external cruelty: cf. Giesen, "Offenbarung" 51-57.

93. We may be cautious to think that the meaning of John's apocalyptic scenario to comfort prosecution; the motive is to be found in strengthening Christian beliefs within the crisis: cf. Giesen, "Offenbarung" 57-59.

94. Cf. Farmer, "Christology" 19.

95. Farmer, *Beyond* 3. However, according to thesis IV, the abstractions that are subject of the apocalyptic struggle in the Apocalypse of John, are not to be interpreted as "an effort to downplay the horrors of the Apocalypse" (3), but as center of the struggle against the structure of evil *in se*.

96. For the symbolism of the *Apocalypse of John*, cf. Barr 46.

97. We may find the oppressive nexus "in God" as feeling itself to have still the power of abstraction. This is the illusionary pressure of oppressive nexus that God has to deconstruct the illusion of the oppressor still to have power.

98. This is Whitehead's new eschatological solution for the "end of the world" in *Process* 350: a process "permanent ending" of the world. Interestingly, a similar solution was reached by G. Greshake's idea of a "resurrection *in death*": cf. Greshake and Lohfink.

99. This can be analyzed as "reversal of times" in which God's "time" runs conversely to the time of the world.

100. The view of Derrida's *différance* that deconstructs all metaphysics as theory of *satisfied presence* in the present into a lack of presence in the present may be applied here. God's eschatological presence is, at the same time, God's emptying of a "satisfied presence in the present" as presence of oppressive nexus. For a theological understanding of Derrida's *différance*: cf. Amond 329-44. Indeed, deconstruction is always a deconstruction of the present and has an eschatological tone.



101. Otherwise it would not be easy to understand why the struggle in God was revealed at all. In other words, what difference does it make whether or not God offers a view into what will happen to all actualities and societies in God, if there is no relevance of this view in God's open heart for the ongoing world?

102. Cf. Giesen, *Offenbarung* 15-19.

103. Cf. Giesen, *Offenbarung* 74 f.

104. If the Eschaton is concerned with the past and, therefore, lies in the past from the perspective of the ongoing world, and not in its future or as the end of its future—and we may read Whitehead's eschatology this way—future is an open process, not because the Eschaton “will not happen,” but precisely because the Eschaton *has* already happened in the past of the world: cf. Faber, “Zeitumkehr” 202-05.

105. The Apocalypse wants to avoid the conclusion that the struggle never ends. But if this is the new position, why be concerned with the past at all? We will solve this problem when we gain a new view that integrates the reversed eschatological view, presented by thesis VI, into a new horizon where eschatological peace is not the final aim, but a *moment* (even if the decisive) of a process aiming at something else: adventure. Here thesis VI needs thesis VII.

106. This is one of the most difficult question in process theology, because “effectiveness” “rest on” receptivity. Hence, God's primordial nature does not effect the world, but only present possibilities; the consequent nature, again, may not be felt by an actuality (in its becoming) at all. For the new discussion, cf. Oomen 108-33; Ford, “Consequences” 134-46; and their discussion in *Process Studies* (1998): 329-44. I am not inclined to hold either of their theses of the prehensibility of the consequent nature of God. Instead, I would (basically, not in detail, however) side with Suchocki, *End* 135-52 and Bracken, *Society* 57-73, i.e., with their suggestions regarding the primordial superjectivity of God and the field-character of the mutual immanence of actualities: cf. Faber, *Prozess* 264-75, 497-502, 562-70.

107. Cf. the discussion of the superjective nature of God in Johnson, *Whitehead's Theory* 68-69.

108. This is one of the consequences of a theory of a radical “reversal of processes” that I have proposed since Faber, “Trinity” 147-72. Although the “reversal of processes” includes a “reversal of poles” (Suchocki), it does really mean a radical reversal of the whole structure of process in applying it to any world-actuality, on the one hand, and to God, on the other. The immediate consequence regarding the effectivity of God is that the subtractive nature is never in the state of the loss of subjectivity; while in any activity the subjective nature represents not self-creativity but *other*-creativity beyond the becoming of an actuality, in God, it means God's immanent (self-)activity by which God also acts (other-)creatively. For a full explanation, cf. Faber, *Prozess* 452-64.

109. These problems cannot be solved by investigating “Whitehead’s will” deeper and deeper, as for example, Oomen has tried—cf. her comment on Suchocki’s daring strategy to find a solution different from what she thinks Whitehead must say (126)—but in realizing that Whitehead never instantiated a closed system, cf. Faber, *Prozess* 407-37. Then we may also realize that the concept of “natures in God” has to be interpreted as a *conceptual abstraction* that cannot be brought into rationality beyond any mysticism—which always will remain, and for the sake of creativity must remain, cf. Whitehead, *Modes*, 174, and the ontological principle applied to theories. Instead, as Lansing has explained in his exceptional article (Lansing 143-52), the natures of God are an abstraction Whitehead has conceptualized so as to allow for each “nature” to be understood only *under the condition* of all other “natures.” Then the problems of the global status of the primordial nature and the ineffectiveness of the consequent nature will not arise. Further, a sensitive and in this sense “effective” relation to the world may be reached satisfactory only by a field-theory of the relation of actualities: cf. Bracken, “Prehending” 5-15; Faber, “Two Times Theorem” *passim*; and for the “field” as “field of nothingness,” cf. Faber, “Toward.”

110. Cf. Faber, *Prozess* 497-502.

111. The effectiveness of the Superjective Nature in the fourth phase of the universal creative process, which intertwines God and the world in mutual immanence, is obviously conditioned by Whitehead’s view of the ultimate aim of creativity: the creative process itself (*Process* 351). Only within this horizon it becomes clear that God has to be seen as concrete actuality *before* God’s structure can be tested by compartmentalize it to “three natures” (or, as others would prefer, only “two natures”). *In* the process, the “fourth phase” is always the (unconditioned, i.e., all-conditioned) *condition* of all other phases, natures, and aspects.

112. Cf. Faber, “Zeitumkehr” 201-05.

113. Cf. Faber, “De-Ontologizing” *passim*.

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