Process theology operates on the one side from the perspective of Christian faith and on the other in the metaphysical context provided by process philosophy and its doctrine of God. Arguments for the existence of God are not an essential part of its work. However, in a day when so many regard belief in God’s existence as wholly irrational or view the notion of God as nonsensical, a brief comment on this question is in order.

The word “god” has partly separate histories in religion and in philosophy. In religion the gods are objects of devotion. Their ontological status is not directly in question. In this sense the tribe, the nation-state, or the power of sexuality may be deified. The question of existence arises only when the idea of god becomes conceptually more sophisticated, when religion moves toward philosophy. If that to which devotion is directed is thought to be an inclusive or unifying power, it becomes possible to doubt the existence of “God,” for there may be no such unifying power.

The philosopher is interested in some form of ontological primacy or superiority. Thus philosophical doctrines of God vary with the view of reality expressed in the system. One cannot believe in the God of one philosopher if one accepts the conflicting understanding of reality of another philosopher. Viewing the issue of God’s existence in these terms, one would question it in general if,
with positivists, one regarded all notions of ultimacy as objectionable.

The union of religious and philosophical concerns in classical theism gave the question of the existence of God an apparent definiteness. Much of the modern argument is about the existence of the God of classical theism, especially the God of Thomism. Indeed the word “theism” is often taken in this restricted sense, so that those who affirm the God of the Bible or of Hegel deny that they are theists.

Process thought calls for a freer exploration of the question of God and a looser use of the word “theism.” If the word “God” is tightly bound to any particular mode of devotion or view of reality, then in the course of events it will become clear that God does not exist. But this is not a damaging point if “God” is understood more open-endedly, for if “human being” is tightly bound to any particular definition, it eventually becomes apparent that “human beings” do not exist either. But we know that there is an actual referent for “human beings.” Likewise, the fact that all conceptualities about God prove inadequate does not show that Jewish, Christian, and Islamic devotion is wholly misplaced or that ontological gradations of primacy are philosophically meaningless. Process thought continues the effort to clarify both the object of theistic worship and the formative ontological elements in reality.

Process philosophy has not produced new arguments for the existence of God. Whitehead found himself compelled to introduce a principle of concretion or limitation to explain the ordered novelty and novel order in the world, but this necessity grew out of his metaphysical analysis of the things of the world. His reasons for affirming God are convincing within the context of his total analysis, but they lose their force if formulated outside his own system of thought.

An example to illustrate the movement of Whitehead’s thought to God can be briefly indicated. He envisages a vast congeries of events coming into being momentarily and then lapsing into the past. Each new event must take account of the many events that make up the world given for it. It must do so in some definite way, for without definiteness there is no actuality. Since it has a past different from that of any event in its world, it must have a new form of definiteness. The past cannot impose such a form upon it, since the present can derive from the past only what the past contains. This form of definiteness can be derived only from the sphere of possibility. But the sphere of possibility is purely abstract, lacking all agency to provide selectively for the need of fresh events. There must be an agency that mediates between these abstract forms or pure possibilities and the actual world. This agency is best conceived as an envisagement of the abstract forms of definiteness such as to establish their graded relevance to every new situation in the actual world. In sum, God is that factor in the universe which establishes what-is-not as relevant to what-is, and lures the world toward new forms of realization.

It has been left to Charles Hartshorne to engage in thorough analysis of the theistic arguments. It is his conviction that the chief weakness of traditional arguments for God has lain in the inadequacy of the idea of God they intended to prove. The ontological argument in particular can be cogently formulated, he believes, but unless the idea of God it seeks to prove is coherent, it serves to disprove rather than to prove it.

The major contribution of process philosophy to the doctrine of God, therefore, is its enrichment and clarification of thought about the divine nature. As a convincing notion of deity emerges that illumines human experience and coheres with our understanding of the world, the demand for an isolated and abstract proof diminishes. A theistic vision of all reality can gain adherence best by displaying its superior adequacy to other visions.

God as Creative-Responsive Love

Whitehead noted that whereas in a primitive religion “you study the will of God in order that He may preserve you”; in a universal religion “you study his goodness in order to be like him.” (RM 40.) The Taoist tries to live in harmony with the Tao; the Hindu Vedantist seeks to realize the identity of Atman with Brahman; the Moslem bows to the will of Allah; the Marxist aligns with the dialectical process of history. Accordingly, the statement in Matt.
5:48, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," is a particular expression of the universal religious aspiration of humanity to participate in or be in harmony with perfection. By definition the divine reality is perfect. The question concerns the nature of this perfection.

Christian faith has held that the basic character of this divine reality is best described by the term "love." However, the meaning of the statement "God is love" is by no means self-evident. Whitehead helps us to recover much of the meaning of that phrase as it is found in the New Testament.

We are told by psychologists, and we know from our own experience, that love in the fullest sense involves a sympathetic response to the loved one. Sympathy means feeling the feelings of the other, hurting with the pains of the other, grieving with the grief, rejoicing with the joys. The "others" with whom we sympathize most immediately are the members of our own bodies. When the cells in our hands, for example, are in pain, we share in the pain; we do not view their condition impassively from without. When our bodies are healthy and well exercised, we feel good with them. But we also feel sympathy for other human beings. We would doubt that a husband truly loved his wife if his mood did not to some extent reflect hers.

Nevertheless, traditional theism said that God is completely impassive, that there was no element of sympathy in the divine love for the creatures. The fact that there was an awareness that this Greek notion of divine impassibility was in serious tension with the Biblical notion of divine love for the world is most clearly reflected in this prayer of the eleventh-century theologian Anselm:

Although it is better for thee to be... compassionate, passionless, than not to be these things; how art thou... compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this it is to be compassionate. (Anselm, Proslogiam, VI and VII, in Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix, In Behalf of the Fool, by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo, tr. by S. N. Deane [The Open Court Publishing Company, 1903, 1945], pp. 11, 13.)

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Anselm resolved the tension by saying: "Thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of thy being." (Ibid., p. 13.) In other words, God only seems to us to be compassionate; he is not really compassionate. In Anselm’s words: "When thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling." (Ibid.) Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century faced the same problem. The objection to the idea that there is love in God was stated as follows: "For in God there are no passions. Now love is a passion. Therefore love is not in God." (Summa Theologica I, Q. 20, art. 1, obj. 1.) Thomas responds by making a distinction between two elements within love, one which involves passion and one which does not. He then says, after quoting Aristotle favorably, that God "loves without passion." (Ibid., ans. 1.)

This denial of an element of sympathetic responsiveness to the divine love meant that it was entirely creative. That is, God loves us only in the sense that he does good things for us. In Anselm’s words:

Thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched, and spare those who sin against thee; and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness. (Proslogium, VII, loc. cit., pp. 13–14.)

In Thomas’ words: "To sorrow, therefore, over the misery of others belongs not to God, but it does most properly belong to Him to dispel that misery." (Summa Theologica I, Q. 21, art. 3, ans.)

Accordingly, for Anselm and Thomas the analogy is with the father who has no feeling for his children, and hence does not feel their needs, but "loves" them in that he gives good things to them. Thomas explicitly states that "love" is to be understood in this purely outgoing sense, as active goodwill: "To love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing." He points out that God does not love as we love. For our love is partly responsive, since it is moved by its object, whereas the divine love is purely creative, since it creates its object. (Summa Theologica I, Q. 20, art. 2, ans.)

This notion of love as purely creative has implications that are
in tension with the Biblical idea of God's equal love for all persons. All persons are obviously not equal in regard to the "good things of life" (however these be defined) that they enjoy (especially in the context of traditional theism, where the majority are consigned to eternal torment). And yet, if God's love is purely creative, totally creating the goodness of the beings loved, this implies that God loves some persons more than others. As Thomas said: "No one thing would be better than another if God did not will greater good for one than for another." (Summa Theologica 1, Q. 20, art. 3, ans.) This is one of the central ways in which the acceptance of the notion of divine impassibility undercuts the Biblical witness to the love of God.

Since we mold ourselves partly in terms of our image of perfect human existence, and this in turn is based upon our notion of deity, the notion of God as an Impassive Absolute whose love was purely creative could not help but have practical consequences for human existence. Love is often defined by theologians as "active goodwill." The notion of sympathetic compassion is missing. Indeed, one of the major theological treatises on the meaning of agape, or Christian love, portrays it as totally outgoing, having no element of responsiveness to the qualities of the loved one. (Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros [The Westminster Press, 1953], pp. 77-78.) This notion of love has promoted a "love" that is devoid of genuine sensitivity to the deepest needs of the "loved ones." Is this not why the word "charity," which is derived from cartius (the Latin word for agape), today has such heavily negative connotations? Also, the word "do-gooder" is a word of reproach, not because we do not want people to do good things, but because people labeled "do-gooders" go around trying to impose their own notions of the good that needs doing, without any sensitive responsiveness to the real desires and needs of those they think they are helping. This perverted view of love as purely active goodwill is due in large part to the long-standing notion that this is the kind of love which characterizes the divine reality.

This traditional notion of love as solely creative was based upon the value judgment that independence or absoluteness is unqualifiedly good, and that dependence or relativity in any sense 

dergrates from perfection. But, as suggested in Chapter 1, while perfection entails independence or absoluteness in some respects, it also entails dependence or relativity in other respects. It entails ethical independence, in the sense that one should not be deflected by one's passions from the basic commitment to seek the greatest good in all situations. But this ethical commitment, in order to be actualized in concrete situations, requires responsiveness to the actual needs and desires of others. Hence, to promote the greatest good, one must be informed by, and thus relativized by, the feelings of others. Furthermore, we do not admire someone whose enjoyment is not in part dependent upon the condition of those around them. Parents who remained in absolute bliss while their children were in agony would not be perfect—unless there are such things as perfect monsters!

In other words, while there is a type of independence or absoluteness that is admirable, there is also a type of dependence or relativity that is admirable. And, if there is an example of absolutness that is unqualifiedly admirable, this means that there is a divine absoluteness; and the same holds true of relativity. Process thought affirms that both of these are true. While traditional theism spoke only of the divine absoluteness, process theism speaks also of "the divine relativity" (this is the title of one of Hartshorne's books).

Process theism is sometimes called "dipolar theism," in contrast to traditional theism with its doctrine of divine simplicity. For Charles Hartshorne, the two "poles" or aspects of God are the abstract essence of God, on the one hand, and God's concrete actuality on the other. The abstract essence is eternal, absolute, independent, unchangeable. It includes those abstract attributes of deity which characterize the divine existence at every moment. For example, to say that God is omniscient means that in every moment of the divine life God knows everything which is knowable at that time. The concrete actuality is temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing. In each moment of God's life there are new, unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable. Hence, God's concrete knowledge is dependent upon the decisions made by the worldly actualities. God's knowl-
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persons equally, and hence desires justice, but also is directly acting in the world to create just conditions. The reason is that the basic religious drive of humanity is not only to be in harmony with deity, it is also to be in contact with this divine reality. It is because God is personally present and active in the world that contact with the sacred reality does not necessitate fleeing from history. Our activity aimed at creating good puts us in harmony and contact with God. Indeed, this activity can be understood in part as God's acting through us.

Accordingly, the loss of belief in the creative side of God's love would tend to undermine the various liberation movements that have been originally inspired by belief in divine providence, since it is largely this belief which has lent importance to these movements. Cultures in which the sacred is not understood as involved in creating better conditions for life in the world have had difficulty in generating the sustained commitments necessary to bring about significant change.

It is precisely this notion of divine creative activity in the world which has been most problematic in recent centuries, both within theological circles and in the culture at large. In traditional popular Christian thought, God was understood as intervening here and there in the course of the world. The notion of "acts of God" referred to events which did not have natural causes, but were directly caused by God. In traditional theological thought, all events were understood to be totally caused by God, so all events were "acts of God." However, most events were understood to be caused by God through the mediation of worldly or natural causes. God was the "primary cause" of these events, while the natural antecedents were called "secondary causes." However, a few events were thought to be caused directly by God, without the use of secondary causes. These events were "miracles." Accordingly, while all events were in one sense acts of God, these miracles were acts of God in a special sense. Thus, both in popular and theological circles, there was meaning to be given to the idea that God was creatively active in the world.

However, there are two major problems with this notion. First, it raises serious doubt that the creative activity of God can be
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understood as love, since it creates an enormous problem of evil by implying that every event in the world is totally caused by God, with or without the use of natural causes. Second, since the Renaissance and Enlightenment, the belief has grown that there are no events which happen without natural causes. Accordingly, the notion of “acts of God” has lost all unambiguous referents. Every event termed an act of God was said also, from another perspective, to be totally explainable in terms of natural causation. This rendered the notion of “act of God” of doubtful meaning. If an event can be totally explained in terms of natural forces, i.e., if these provide a “sufficient cause” for it, what justification is there for introducing the idea of “another perspective”? This seems like special pleading in order to retain a vacuous idea.

Deism was a manifestation of the felt difficulty of speaking of divine activity in the world. God’s causation was put totally at the beginning of the world process. Once created, the world was said to run autonomously, without any additional divine input. Insofar as some form of this idea has become pervasive in the culture (not to mention complete atheism), the idea that one’s activity in the world could put one in harmony and contact with deity has faded.

Twentieth-century theology has reaffirmed the centrality of the idea of God’s activity in history. But it has generally lacked the conceptuality for consistently explicating this belief. To a great extent, there has been a return to the idea of the double perspective. Karl Barth had only one complaint regarding the traditional understanding of God’s relation to the world: it was not clearly affirmed that the God causing all things is a completely gracious God. (Church Dogmatics III/3, pp. 31, 118, 146–147.) Formally, Barth said the scheme of primary and secondary causation was correct. (Ibid., pp. 99–100.) Hence, the problem of intelligibility remains. Also, in the light of the tremendous evil unleashed in the twentieth century, the assertion that the God who is in control of the whole process is loving or gracious seems just that—a bare assertion.

Rudolf Bultmann’s double perspective presupposes an epistemology in the Kantian tradition. From the objectifying perspective of science and ordinary life, all events are linked together in a chain of cause and effect, which means that “there remains no room for God’s working.” (Jesus Christ and Mythology [Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1958], p. 65.) In fact, the essence of myth, and what makes it objectionable, is that it affirms the interruption of the natural course of affairs by attributing a natural effect to a supernatural cause. (Kerygma and Myth, ed. by Hans Werner Barisch, tr. by Reginald H. Fuller [London: SPCK, 1953], p. 197.) But from the perspective of faith, the believer can in the moment confess that an event is “nevertheless” an act of God. (Ibid.) The believer affirms a paradoxical identity between a divine act and a fully natural event. The problem of evil is raised less clearly by Bultmann’s position, but the problem of intelligibility remains, at least for all those who cannot accept an irreducibly dual perspective.

Bonhoeffer’s negation of the “God of the gaps” is a protest against the idea of God as intervening here and there in the world, especially to solve human problems. In this respect Bonhoeffer makes the same negative point as Bultmann. But Bonhoeffer (in the brief period he had as a theologian) provided no positive alternative way of understanding the divine creative presence in the world, beyond the suggestion that we view it as in the midst rather than at the periphery of life. Paul Tillich’s theology, in which God is “being-itself” and not “a being” interacting with others, involves a denial that God is a causal influence in the world, even though much of Tillich’s language illegitimately gives the impression that creative influence is being exerted by God.

In Western culture generally, the problem of evil, and the widespread belief that the nexus of natural cause and effect excludes divine “intervention,” have combined to render the notion of divine creative love problematic. When the leading secular thinkers then see that the leading theologians have provided no intelligible means for speaking of God’s activity in the world, they are confirmed in their suspicion that this belief belongs to the myths of the past. Process theology provides a way of recovering the conviction that God acts creatively in the world and of understanding this creative activity as the expression of divine love for the world. The notion that there is a creative power of love behind and within the worldly process is no longer one which can only be
confessed in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Instead it illuminates our experience.

DIVINE CREATIVE LOVE AS PERSUASIVE

As indicated in the Foreword, traditional theism portrayed God as the Controlling Power. The doctrine of divine omnipotence finally meant that God controlled every detail of the world process. Some traditional theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas, muted this implication of their thought as much as possible (in order to protect the doctrine of human freedom). Others, such as Luther and Calvin, proclaimed the doctrine from the housetops (in order to guard against both pride and anxiety). But, in either case, the doctrine followed logically from other doctrines that were affirmed. The notion that God knows the world, and that this knowledge is unchanging, suggests that God must in fact determine every detail of the world, lest something happen which was not immutably known. The doctrine that God is completely independent of the world implies that the divine knowledge of it cannot be dependent upon it, and this can only be if the world does nothing which was not totally determined by God. The doctrine of divine simplicity involves the assertion that all the divine attributes are identical; hence God’s knowing the world is identical with God’s causing it. The Biblical record is quite amenable on the question of whether God is in complete control of the world. There is much in the Bible which implies that divine providence is not all-determining. But the interpretation of the Biblical God in terms of valuations about perfection derived from Greek philosophy ruled out this side of the Biblical witness, thereby making creaturely freedom vis-à-vis God merely apparent.

Process thought, with its different understanding of perfection, sees the divine creative activity as based upon responsiveness to the world. Since the very meaning of actuality involves internal relatedness, God as an actuality is essentially related to the world. Since actuality as such is partially self-creative, future events are not yet determinate, so that even perfect knowledge cannot know the future, and God does not wholly control the world. Any divine creative influence must be persuasive, not coercive.

Whitehead’s fundamentally new conception of divine creativity in the world centers around the notion that God provides each worldly actuality with an “initial aim.” This is an impulse, initially felt conformally by the occasion, to actualize the best possibility open to it, given its concrete situation. But this initial aim does not automatically become the subject’s own aim. Rather, this “subjective aim” is a product of its own decision. The subject may choose to actualize the initial aim; but it may also choose from among the other real possibilities open to it, given its context. In other words, God seeks to persuade each occasion toward that possibility for its own existence which would be best for it; but God cannot control the finite occasion’s self-actualization. Accordingly, the divine creative activity involves risk. The obvious point is that, since God is not in complete control of the events of the world, the occurrence of genuine evil is not incompatible with God’s beneficence toward all his creatures.

A less obvious but equally important consequence is that, since persuasion and not control is the divine way of doing things, this is the way we should seek to accomplish our ends. Much of the tragedy in the course of human affairs can be attributed to the feeling that to control others, and the course of events, is to share in divinity. Although traditional theism said that God was essentially love, the divine love was subordinated to the divine power. Although the result of Jesus’ message, life, and death should have been to redefine divine power in terms of the divine love, this did not happen. Power, in the sense of controlling domination, remained the essential definition of deity. Accordingly, the control of things, events, and other persons, which is to some extent a “natural” human tendency, took on that added sense of satisfaction which comes from participating in an attribute understood (more or less consciously) to be divine.

Process theology’s understanding of divine love is in harmony with the insight, which we can gain both from psychologists and from our own experience, that if we truly love others we do not seek to control them. We do not seek to pressure them with promises
and threats involving extrinsic rewards and punishments. Instead we try to persuade them to actualize those possibilities which they themselves will find intrinsically rewarding. We do this by providing ourselves as an environment that helps open up new, intrinsically attractive possibilities.

Insofar as the notion that divine love is persuasive is accepted, the exercise of persuasive influence becomes intrinsically rewarding. It takes on that aura of extra importance that has too often been associated with the feeling of controlling others. This change has implications in all our relations, from one-to-one I-thou encounters to international relations. It does not mean that coercive control could be eliminated, but it does mean that such control is exercised as a last resort and with a sense of regret rather than with the thrill that comes from the sense of imitating deity.

**DIVINE CREATIVE LOVE AS PROMOTING ENJOYMENT**

In traditional Christianity, God has been understood as a Cosmic Moralist, in the sense of being primarily concerned with the development of moral behavior and attitudes in human beings. Negatively, this meant that the promotion of creaturely enjoyment was not God’s first concern. In fact, in most Christian circles enjoyment has been understood as something that God at best tolerated, and often as something that he opposed. Thus the pleasure of sexual relations is tolerated, as long as it is only a concomitant of the primary function of sex, which is the morally sound intention to have children. The use of contraceptives has been frowned upon, since their use would mean the explicit admission that sexual intercourse was being engaged in solely for the enjoyment it brings.

This attitude toward sex is only the extreme example of the church’s traditional attitude toward enjoyment in general, which has been taken to be a reflection of God’s attitude. The result has been a stern, lifeless Christianity, being in tension with rather than supportive of the natural drive to enjoy life. The man whom Christians have called the Christ was called by some a “gutton and a drunkard” (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34) and could be quoted by one of the Evangelists as saying, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). But the Christian church has been perceived, not as the community that encourages the enjoyment of the abundant life, but as the institution that discourages most forms of enjoyment in the name of “being good.” To put it crudely, one does not attend church to have a good time, but to atone for the good time one had the night before! God has been understood as commanding us to suppress our desire for most of those experiences which we find intrinsically good in favor of being morally good. And moral goodness has primarily been understood negatively, that is, as involving the suppression of many of the natural forms of enjoyment.

This notion of God as Cosmic Moralist is not unrelated to the idea of God as Controlling Power. The problem of evil would too evidently disprove the existence of God, if God be understood not only as controlling all events but also as willing the maximum enjoyment of his creatures. If the primary focus is on the creatures’ enjoyment of existence, the great amount and variety of suffering and the great inequalities involved would easily suggest that God was either malevolent or incompetent, if not both. Hence, the notion that God is competently in control of all things can be saved by saying that creaturely enjoyment is not a high priority. In fact, the sufferings of life, and even the inequalities in this regard, can be regarded as divinely intended means to promote the desired moral and religious attitudes.

Hence, the notion of God as Cosmic Moralist supports the notion of God as Controlling Power. A development in this regard in the history of Christian thought can be detected. In the earlier centuries, and especially in the thought of Augustine, there was a heavy stress on the intrinsic goodness of being actual. This stress was supported by the goodness of the creation as declared by God in Gen., ch. 1, and the Platonic equation of being and goodness. This position was maintained throughout the Middle Ages—it is still dominant in Thomas Aquinas, for example—in spite of the added difficulty it creates for the problem of evil. This was possible partly because the Biblical and rational proofs for the existence of
God (as conceived by traditional theists) were thought to be so strong that the problem of evil could be dismissed. However, in modern times, especially in Protestant thought, the idea of the intrinsic goodness of existence has faded, and Christian theology has become increasingly moralistic. This is no doubt due to several factors. The ontological dualism of the modern age, especially in its Cartesian variety, made it difficult to think of existence as such as intrinsically good, since humans were the only created beings with any intrinsic (experiential) reality. Also, the loss of confidence in the rational and then the Biblical evidences for God's existence made the problem of evil more desperate. Accordingly, and especially in modern Protestant thought, the dominant trend in theodicy has been to explain the great sufferings of the world by declaring that God did not intend the world as a "hedonistic paradise,” but as a "vale of soul-making." (Cf. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* [Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1966], pp. 291-297; and A. C. Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* [Abingdon Press, 1933], p. 215.)

Process theology sees God's fundamental aim to be the promotion of the creatures' own enjoyment. God's creative influence upon them is loving, because it aims at promoting that which the creatures experience as intrinsically good. Since God is not in complete control, the divine love is not contradicted by the great amount of intrinsic evil, or "disenjoyment," in the world. The creatures in part create both themselves and their successors.

God's creative love extends to all the creatures, since all actualities, as experiential, have some degree of enjoyment. The promotion of enjoyment is God's primary concern throughout the whole process of creative evolution. The contrary doctrine, which sees God's primary concern to be the development of moral attitudes, is in the uncomfortable position of maintaining that over 99 percent of the history of our planet was spent in merely preparing the way for beings who are capable of the only kind of experience that really interests God.

Enjoyment is God's primary concern even with those beings who are capable of developing moral attitudes. But this is not in conflict with an emphasis on morality. God wants us to enjoy, true.

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But he wants us *all* to enjoy. Accordingly, he wants us to enjoy in ways that do not unnecessarily inhibit enjoyment on the part of others. That puts it negatively. Positively stated, God wants our enjoyment to be such as to increase the enjoyments of others. To be moral is to actualize oneself in such a way as to maximize the enjoyments of future actualities, insofar as these future enjoyments can be conditioned by one's present decision. Hence, although the development of moral attitudes is of extreme importance, it is a derivative concern, secondary to the primary value, which is enjoyment itself.

In traditional Christianity, morality and enjoyment were often seen as in fundamental opposition. In process thought, morality stands in the service of enjoyment. However, the question still arises of the possible tension between them. There is the possible tension between enjoying the present moment to the hilt, and forgoing some of this possible enjoyment in order to prepare for increased enjoyment in the future. Also there is the tension, in regard to the future, between my own future occasions of experience, and the future experiences of other enduring individuals. This tension, and its ideal resolution, will be discussed in Chapter 5. Suffice it here to say that the creative love of God is also relevant to this problem. The divine initial aim for our human experiences is such as to transform into immediate enjoyment the intention to contribute to future good.

**DIVINE CREATIVE LOVE AS ADVENTUROUS**

One respect in which God's creative love is adventurous has already been discussed: since God's creative activity is persuasive, not controlling, it is a love that takes risks. Hence, each divine creative impulse into the world is adventurous, in that God does not know what the result will be.

However, there is another dimension to the divine adventurousness. Traditional theology tended to portray God as the Sanctioner of the Status Quo. The notions of “God” and “order” were closely associated. In the political realm, the connection between obedi-
ence to God and submission to the political status quo was supported by the notorious appeal to Rom., ch. 13, where Paul says that we should “be subject to the governing authorities” because they “have been instituted by God,” so that “he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed.”

This notion of God is also closely connected with the notion of God as Controlling Power. Paul’s statement is one of those Biblical statements which presuppose that God is in control at least of the major features of the world process. The development of traditional theism, in which God was more consistently said to be in complete control of every detail, further strengthened the conviction that the political status quo should be affirmed. For if God had not wanted those rulers in power, they would not be in power. It is largely due to this notion that those who have been in opposition to despotic rulers have also found themselves in opposition to the church, and have found it useful to espouse atheism.

In the realm of morality in general, belief in God has been closely associated with the idea of moral absolutes, especially of a negative nature. Certain kinds of actions have been said to be wrong in themselves, whether or not in a particular context they served to promote abundant life. This has focused moral attention on rules or fixed principles and distracted from consideration of what would increase the quality of life in the future. Hence the notion that Christian morality consists primarily in abstaining from certain kinds of acts that God has prohibited serves doubly to sanction the status quo. It does so directly, simply by virtue of the notion of immutable moral absolutes. It does so indirectly by diverting attention from the primary moral question of how we should act so as to increase enjoyment of life now and in the future.

The notion of God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo is closely connected with that of God as Cosmic Moralist. The focus on the development of moral attitudes, understood as being in opposition to the growth of enjoyment, distracted attention from the question of what kinds of conditions are needed in order to maximize the possibilities for enjoying existence. This question was not of ultimate importance, since moral attitudes can be developed in any situation. In fact, as some theologians have argued, the more diffi-

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God as Creative-Responsive Love

cult the circumstances, the greater the opportunity for developing moral qualities such as patience!

Process theology understands God precisely as the basic source of unrest in the universe. In Whitehead’s words, “The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe.” (A.I. 354) When he speaks of the essence of the universe, Whitehead primarily has in mind the notion that actuality is process, and that at the root of process there is the Primordial Nature of God, which he sometimes calls the Divine Eros. This is conceived as “the active entertainment of all ideals; with the urge to their finite realization, each in its due season.” (A.I. 357) Not all ideal possibilities can be realized simultaneously. This is why there is process. (MT 53) But also no ideal can be repeated indefinitely without its freshness being lost. The Primordial Nature of God is the goal toward novelty in the universe (PR 135), stimulating us to realize new possibilities after the old ones no longer are sufficient to give zest to our enjoyment of being actual.

Order is an essential ingredient in the maximization of enjoyment. For example, the richness of human experience could emerge only on the basis of the order of the body. “It is by reason of the body, with its miracle of order, that the treasures of the past environment are poured into the living occasion.” (PR 516) On the other hand, excessive order can inhibit enjoyment. Hence, Whitehead speaks of “the contrast between order as the condition for excellence, and order as stifling the freshness of living.” (PR 514) Hence, order must not be lost, but it also must not be dominant. “The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order.” (PR 515)

God is the source of order. But two important qualifications must be made: Order represents dominance of an ideal possibility which was at one time a novel element in the world. Hence God is the source of order by virtue of first being the source of novelty. Second, neither order nor novelty is understood as intrinsically good, but only as instrumental to the one intrinsic good, which is the enjoyment of intense experience, “God’s purpose in the creative advance is the evocation of intensities. The evocation of societies is purely subsidiary to this absolute end.” (PR 161) "Order" and
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The traditional concept of God is in many respects stereotypically masculine. God was conceived to be active, unresponsive, impassive, inflexible, impatient, and moralistic. This being had none of the stereotypically feminine traits—it was not at all passive, responsive, emotional, flexible, patient, and it did not balance moral concern with an appreciation of beauty. This has led to a one-sided and hence unhealthy Christianity.

An overreaction resulting in a concept of God devoid of the stereotypically masculine attributes would also be destructive of authentic Christian existence. Losing the active or creative side of the divine love would undercut much of the good that Biblical faiths have brought into history, as we have already suggested. The same is true of the strong element of moral concern that has been attributed to God in the cultures decisively influenced by the Biblical faiths. Likewise, the loss of the notion of a divine purpose that at its most general level is inflexible would lead to a complete relativism. The positive aspects of these “masculine” attributes can be retained, without their destructive implications, if they are incorporated into a revolutionized concept of God into which the
stereotypically feminine traits are integrated. For, in the integrated result, the former traits are changed qualitatively.

Unfortunately, in some passages Whitehead does not describe the two “natures” of God as if they were truly integrated. Sometimes the Primordial Nature is described as if it were static order of the eternal possibilities, and the “initial aim” for each worldly actuality is said to be derived from this Primordial Nature. This would mean that the creative input of God into the world in each moment would be based upon a completely inflexible vision; it would not be based upon a sympathetic response to the previous state of affairs. However, in other passages Whitehead makes it clear that the ideals toward which the world is called by God in one moment are based upon God’s loving response to the facts of the previous moments. (RM 148–149, 151, 152.) The world does not really have to do with two “natures” or “poles” of God that stand externally related to each other, the one influencing the world and the other being influenced by it. Rather, the Primordial Nature is abstract, while the Consequent Nature is God as fully actual. (PR 524, 532.) It is finally to God as a whole that we are related. The creative activity of God is based upon sympathetic responsiveness; and the responsiveness of God is an active receptiveness made in the light of an intended creative influence upon the future.

The process dipolar notion of deity has some affinity with the Taoist notion of the Tao, in which the “feminine” and “masculine” (yin and yang) dimensions of reality are perfectly integrated. The Tao is spoken of as a power that works slowly and undramatically, but is finally the most effective agency in reality. Whereas there are aspects of the notion of the Tao which have unfortunate implications, the Taoist vision of deity does contain an important element which should all along have been part of the Christian vision.