God's Power and Almightiness in Whitehead's Thought

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Abstract: Whitehead's position regarding God's power is rather unique in the philosophical and theological landscape. Whitehead rejects divine omnipotence (unlike Aquinas), yet he claims (unlike Hans Jonas) that God's persuasive power is required for everything to exist and occur. This intriguing position is the subject of this article. The article starts with an exploration of Aquinas's reasoning toward God's omnipotence. This will be followed by a close examination of Whitehead's own position, starting with an introduction to his philosophy of organism and its two-sided concept of God. Thereupon, an analysis of Whitehead's idiosyncratic view on God's agency will show that, according to this conception, God and the world depend upon each other, and that God's agency is a noncoercive but persuasive power. The difference between coercion and persuasion will be explained as well as the reason why God, according to Whitehead's conception, cannot possibly coerce. Finally, a discussion of the issue of divine almightiness will allow for a reinterpretation of divine almightiness from a Whiteheadian perspective, which will show how, despite Whitehead's rejection of God's omnipotence*, his concept retains essential elements of God as* pantokrator *(and thus markedly differs from Hans Jonas's concept).*

Introduction

Alfred North Whitehead is well-known for his rejection of the doctrine of divine omnipotence.[1] As such, this rejection stands in sharp contrast to the prominent way almightiness is traditionally ascribed to God. Moreover, the contrast does not just appear with respect to God's *all*-powerfulness, but with the concept of God's power itself. Yet Whitehead also claims that God is a *sine qua non* for everything that happens, and he speaks of the "patient operation of the overpowering rationality of [God]" (*PR* 346). This makes it all the more worthwhile to explore the characteristics of Whitehead's view.

In this article, I will explore the various aspects of Whitehead's view on the nature and scope of God's power, analyze and clarify his

idiosyncratic conception of God's ability to act, and attempt to show how this view offers the possibility of a reinterpretation of the doctrine of God's almightiness. In order to show the peculiarity of Whitehead's view, this concept will be presented against the background of what may be called the classical theological view of Aquinas on God's omnipotence. For that reason we begin with a short overview of Aquinas's position.

Aquinas's View on God's Power as Point of Reference

In his *Summa Theologiae*, part I, Aquinas devotes a whole *quaestio* to the issue of the nature and scope of God's power (I.25, *De divina potentia*). This *quaestio* is divided into six subquestions or articles. Among them are: whether there is potentia/power in God (art. 1), whether God's potentia/power is infinite (art. 2), and whether God is omnipotent (art. 3).

In the first of these articles, Aquinas states that God is fully actual, *actus purus*, so there is nothing in God that is not yet actual, that can be actualized. That is, there is in God no *potentia passiva*. However, so Aquinas argues, God's being *actus purus* does not contradict God's *potentia activa*, God's power to work. On the contrary, each thing, insofar as it has actuality and perfection, is an active principle of something. Therefore, it especially belongs to God as *actus purus* to be an active principle and to have active power. In the second article, Aquinas argues that God, as being fully actual, is infinite *qua* essence and has accordingly an infinite active power.

This is how the notion of omnipotence enters, and in the third article Aquinas tries to formulate an account of this divine omnipotence against objections that there are things God *cannot* do (to sin, for example). So he asks the question, what is included in "all" when we say that God is capable of all things (*cum dicitur omnia posse Deum*)? His answer is that everything that can have the nature of being is included among the things that are absolutely possible and with respect to which God is said to be omnipotent. Thus, Aquinas's position is that divine omnipotence, if rightly understood, means that God can do all things that are possible absolutely. This implies that what is *excluded* by this phrase are things that are inherently impossible, things that entail a contradiction in terms, because the predicate is incompatible with the subject. A well-known example of such an impossibility is a square circle. Or, to use Aquinas's own example: "A man is a donkey." These are self-contradictory things that therefore cannot be made. Hence, Aquinas aptly says: "It is better to say that such things cannot be made/done, than to say that God cannot

make/do them."[2] A more sophisticated exclusion of things appears in Aquinas's answer to the second objection, which argues that confessing that "God cannot sin" implies that God is not omnipotent. Aquinas replies that God's inability to sin does not at all contradict God's omnipotence. To sin is to fall short of a perfect action; hence, to be able to sin is to be able to fall short in action. Therefore, saying that God cannot sin is saying that God cannot fail, which is not a negation of God's omnipotence but a consequence of God's omnipotence.[3] Thus, here it is not the proposed object of God's doing as such that contains a contradiction in terms, but the contradiction lies in the combination of the proposed capacity (viz., being able to sin) and the supposed feature of omnipotence.[4] Aquinas's position can be summarized as: anything that can possibly be or be done (i.e., anything that does not suffer an incompatibility between predicate and subject) can be done by God.

For Aquinas, this also means, among many other things, that everything that is normally brought about by the so-called secondary causes (the worldly causes) can also be brought about by God alone, unmediatedly.[5] It is this classical concept of omnipotence that Whitehead challenges and rejects.

Whitehead's Philosophical View on God and the World

As Lewis Ford rightly observed, for Whitehead this classical idea of God's omnipotence was beset by difficulties so insuperable as to keep him from being a "theist" for as long as he did not see a possibility to dissociate the idea of God from that idea of omnipotence ("Contrasting" 90). Here Whitehead's conceptualization will be examined in order to better understand how this dissociation has taken shape. If he rejects omnipotence, what kind of power (if any) does he ascribe to God? And what is the scope of that power? But first we must consider the question of why Whitehead ever needed to introduce the notion of God in his philosophical cosmology. This requires a brief introduction to Whitehead's philosophy and to his concept of God, which is an essential part of it.

The philosophy of Whitehead is best known by the name "process philosophy." He himself called it, much more adequately, "philosophy of organism." Basically, Whitehead's metaphysical project is a search for a new system of general ideas in terms of which we can interpret all our experiences (*PR* 3). His need for such a system was born from a growing dissatisfaction, both scientifically and philosophically, with the dominant mechanistic paradigm, according to which the building blocks of

reality are assumed to be static "things" that are related to each other in a purely external way. Instead, Whitehead proposes an organismic paradigm according to which reality fundamentally consists of inherently interrelated processes of self-creation (*PR* passim; *MT* 148–74).

The first and foremost idea of this organismic paradigm is that every elementary event (Whitehead speaks of "actual occasion," "actual entity," or sometimes more loosely "occurrence") creates *itself* from the world given to it: every elementary event is a process in which the many influences that are given by and appropriated from its past are unified. As in a living organism, this unification is conceived as a "concrescence," literally a growing together or synthesizing process of these appropriations that results in a complex unity. But, since those many influences are not simply compatible, such unification may occur in many different ways: it may occur trivially (by weeding out a number of the influences) or in a more difficult and complex way that results in a "richer" synthesis. The richer the synthesis, the better it is. Hence, the "best" synthesis is that in which the greatest possible number of influences are combined in a harmonious way.

This is the point where Whitehead's concept of God comes in. As Whitehead sees it, each new event derives the urge to its "best" possible synthesis from some atemporal principle that he describes as a relative valuation of all possibilities (*PR* 344)—not unlike a kind of optimization function in mathematics—which distinguishes better from worse solutions for each and every possible initial situation. Whitehead often calls this principle "God" or, more precisely, the "primordial nature of God."[6] Thus, "God" as this universal and atemporal principle makes the new event "feel" what is the most preferable possibility of synthesis relative to the particular situation of that new event. In this way, God functions as "object of desire" and thereby gives to the novel event its subjectively felt initial aim. Or better yet: there *is* no event unless such aim be felt! The new event *originates* by feeling this "best" possibility as its aim. Without God, there would be no orientated desire and, therefore, no event, no world.

Thus far, this description has shown two influential factors in the becoming of a new event: its particular worldly situation (i.e., the data provided by its past) from which it must form itself as well as the divine primordial relative valuation of all possibilities, which results in a specific initial aim for that situation. But Whitehead's perspective requires yet another factor, namely, the new occurrence itself that freely realizes itself

both in relation to the possibilities provided by its past and the desire derived from God. Thus, by providing an initial aim, God gives direction to the worldly events as an attractive possibility—they originate by feeling that aim as their subjective aim—but it is up to the worldly processes themselves to realize that possibility (or not, or more or less) (*PR* 244). That is *the* most basic characteristic of his antimechanistic, organismic philosophy.[7]

The primordial nature of God is seen by the later Whitehead as only the conceptual side of the fully concrete God, which he calls "God's consequent nature." God, as concrete, absorbs the particularities of the actual world and in that sense follows upon the actual world—which explains the expression "consequent." And in virtue of this, God as concrete may be thought to have consciousness, affection, and knowledge (*PR* 345).[8] The primordial aspect of God is the togetherness *of all possibilities in their relative attractiveness* (by the feeling of which wordly events can come to be and can occur), whereas in God's consequent concreteness, God is also *the totality of all actuality*, embracing all particular occasions: in God, everything real, every event of the ongoing history, is absorbed and known, and forever treasured.

On the Nature of God's Power

Whitehead's conception of God and of God's power is idiosyncratic when compared with the theological tradition (represented here by Aquinas). This makes it a lively debated and heavily criticized subject of discussion. All the more reason why his view of the nature and scope of God's capacity to act needs to be scrutinized more extensively.

The Idiosyncrasy of God's Agency: The Opposition between God and World

In Whitehead's view, God provides the initial aim to each new event. This provision of an aim makes the new event arise and exist and constitutes it as an autonomous subject (*PR* 244). In this sense, every occurrence may *to some degree* be said to have been "created" by God. Just "to some degree," for the initial aim (provided by God) is *not* the actual outcome of the new event—it is only the initial point "from which its self-causation starts" (*PR* 244). That is to say, it is only in virtue of the new autonomous occurrence *itself* (by its "occurring") that the initial aim is transformed from a mere possibility into some actuality. In other words, the "physical production" belongs to the domain of the world, whereas "God's rôle is

not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; [rather] it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization" (*PR* 346).

Thus, as Whitehead sees it, God's agency is of a completely different order from the agency of the worldly events, which may be expressed as follows. Worldly entities act by transforming possibility into actuality (the world's "physical realization"; *PR* 341). God's agency goes in the opposite direction: given a particular actual situation, God provides the appetition to the relatively best possibility (God's "conceptual operation"; *PR* 345). Or, to put it in a simplified way, God's conceptual operation goes from actuality to possibility, whereas the world's realization goes from possibility to actuality. This converse movement (*PR* 349) is crucial in Whitehead and has many implications. Here I restrict myself to mention only the following one.[9] Precisely because of this opposite directionality, the activities of God and world form together a never-ending movement—"Neither God, nor the World, reaches static completion" (*PR* 349)—an ongoing movement in which the complementarity of the activities of God and the world means that "[e]ither of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other" (*PR* 349).

By way of comparison, this opposition of roles shows some—*only* some—similarity with the opposite roles of, respectively, an orchestra conductor and the members of that orchestra. The conductor leads the musicians by making them feel the best possibilities, but the factual actualization thereof is done by the members of the orchestra (with a better or worse result). Likewise, as Whitehead sees it, God's primordial role is to lure the actual entities into feeling the relatively best possibility, whereas the role of the worldly events is to actualize that possibility by making their own decisions (with a better or worse result). But the similarity falls short because of this crucial dissimilarity: even though God's lure does not bring about the end result of the occasion, it does originate the occasion *qua* occasion, whereas the orchestra conductor's lure does not originate the musicians.[10]

At this point, a first comparison can be made between Aquinas and Whitehead regarding their views on God's power. In *accordance* with Aquinas, Whitehead maintains that the worldly entities would not exist and would not be able to form a course of events without God, but in complete *discordance* with Aquinas, Whitehead argues that nothing of what can be made or done by the worldly entities can as such be made or realized by God!

God Can Persuade, but God Cannot Coerce: Why? What Is the Difference?

In providing the initial aim as a "lure for feeling" (to use Whitehead's expression), God's primordial nature works in a persuasive way. However, persuasive as it may be, this influence is also to be understood as efficient cause: "It is God's conceptual realization *performing an efficacious rôle* in the multiple unifications of the universe" (*PR* 349; emphasis added). This means that not only "coercive power" but "persuasive power" too can be a form of efficient causality.

In view of this, it ought to be pointed out that the idea of an inherent link between the distinction between efficient and final causation, on the one hand, and the distinction between coercive and persuasive agency, on the other, is incorrect. Unfortunately, this idea is often found in process literature (e.g., Lewis Ford or Elisabeth Kraus[11]) and remains widespread in spite of the explicit refutation thereof by Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb, David Griffin, and others.[12]

This being said, the question remains: where lies the difference between coercive and persuasive power if it cannot be reduced to the difference between efficient and final causality? Strictly speaking, a cause may be said to be "*coercive*" only if it restricts the receiver's possibilities of acting to one single possible result, which therefore necessarily follows. Whitehead argues that such an absolute form of coercion is impossible: no cause *A* completely determines the result of *B*, because the decisions of the becoming subject itself (*B*) also play a decisive role in the game, even though they may be individually negligible (*PR* 47). Thus, complete coercion is inconceivable here. Nevertheless, coercion as drastic limitation of possibilities is very much conceivable. For instance, if I see someone being nearly run over by a tramway car, and, in order to prevent him from dying, I pull him backward, my action is coercive because I drastically limit the many spatial possibilities so as to exclude "under the tramway," even though many other possibilities remain. Coercion is also characterized by the fact that the limitation in question happens independently from the consent of the person involved. Coercion is often even defined more strictly as "opposing the nature of the person or thing involved." But in the present context, there is no need to go that far. The less restrictive or weaker definition of coercion as *serious limitation of possibilities by A for another entity B, which happens without consent or cooperation of that other entity B* suffices.[13] Conceived in this way, my action of pulling back

someone from an approaching tramway car is "coercive," even if the person involved might afterward be very happy with it.

"*Persuasive power*" is an altogether different matter. Here the factual possibilities are not limited—indeed, their number may very well be increased—but *the desirable possibilities are limited. Moreover, the other's subjective acceptance and cooperation are required*. For instance, a school counselor, when confronted with one of her pupils who wants to drop out from school without knowing what he wants to do, may point out to him that there is another possible line of education and show him the attractiveness thereof. Here the counselor increases the number of possibilities for her pupil but at the same time she narrows the possibilities felt to be desirable. Moreover, this only works if the boy himself feels the proposal to be attractive.

This persuasive form of efficient causality is what Whitehead ascribes to God. But this raises the questions: Why only this persuasive form? Why not allow for the coercive form as well? The tendency in "process thought" is to defend Whitehead's position by arguing that persuasive power is morally superior to coercive power and that therefore only persuasive power is compatible with divine perfection (Ford), or that it is the only power capable of any worthwhile result (Cobb).[14] This position would imply that even if God were able to coerce, God would always persuade for the sake of goodness and efficacy, a claim that resembles very strongly the model of "God's self-limitation," with all the inadequacy it involves.[15] However, obviously, this reference to morality and/or efficacy is nonconclusive. There are many situations (one of them illustrated by the example of the man and the tramway) in which coercion is morally superior or more effective than persuasion. In these cases, whoever would be able to coerce but who fails to do so would be morally reprehensible. For that reason, Whitehead's view that God does not coerce but lures and therefore depends on the worldly actors for the realization of what is desired cannot be based on the argument that persuasion would be morally superior or more effective (even though in many cases both claims may be true). What then is the basis for Whitehead's view?

David Basinger, one of the important critics of Whitehead's view of God's power, argued in the 1980s that no process thinker had ever been able to show why God could not occasionally be acting in a coercive way.[16] I accept this challenge from Basinger by explaining why God, from the perspective of Whitehead, *cannot possibly act in a coercive way* (not even occasionally), and in a similar vein why God *cannot* solely ("immediately") *actualize* this or that possibility.

The reasoning follows directly from Whitehead's metaphysical conception itself. Coercion implies cutting off possibilities and so imposing a serious limitation on what is physically realizable. Now, God's primordial nature is the conceptual realization of *all* possibilities and thus infinite (*PR* 345). Therefore, due to God's very nature, God cannot possibly limit the factual possibilities for another entity (somewhat in the way that white light, which contains all colors, cannot limit the color spectrum of the light reflected by an object). Therefore, coercion is incompatible with God's infinite conceptual nature. The reasoning why God alone (i.e., without the cooperation of a worldly entity) cannot accomplish any actualization follows a similar path. Actualization, the transformation of possibility into actuality, requires a selective restriction or limitation with respect to the indefinite plurality of possibilities ("every actual occasion is a limitation imposed on possibility"; *SMW* 174). But here again, due to God's very nature (i.e., God's infinity qua conceptual nature), God cannot solely impose such limitation on possibility and therefore cannot possibly on his own accomplish any actualization. Thus, God can neither possibly coerce nor without the cooperation of a wordly entity transform possibility into actuality, in both cases because of the infinity of God's conceptual nature, which is incompatible with a divine limitation on possibility.

That is not to say, however, that God cannot limit at all. God limits, however, on a different level, which is the level of the *valuation* of possibilities and not the level of the number of possibilities (which God can only increase). The outcome of God's valuation of all possibilities in relation to all possible situations is that, in a given peculiar situation, from the many available possibilities only one possibility of synthesis is felt as "the best for that impasse" (*PR* 244) and thus constitutes the initial aim for the new occurrence. And this limitation *qua* attractiveness is clearly related to the persuasive form of efficient causality.

From the perspective of a comparison between Aquinas and Whitehead, it is important to emphasize that the formal structure of Whitehead's argument against God as capable of coercion corresponds to the formal structure of Aquinas's argument against God as capable of lying. God cannot lie (Aquinas) or coerce (Whitehead) because the capability to lie or to coerce, respectively, is incompatible with a supposed feature of God, namely, God's omnipotence (based on God's infinity) in Aquinas and God's conceptual infinity in Whitehead. However, notwithstanding this formal accordance, the fact remains of a material discordance between these thinkers with respect to their specific arguments from infinity. In Aquinas, the infinity of God's essence, and hence the infinity of God's active power, leads

to his affirmation of God's omnipotence: that God can make/do everything possible. In Whitehead, the infinity of God's conceptual nature is a key element in his affirmation that God *cannot* solely provide any limitation on possibility and therefore can neither possibly coerce nor accomplish any physical realization. And this material difference is decisive in the huge difference of perspective on God's power as understood by these two thinkers.

Not Only God Is Persuasive

As we have seen, Whitehead conceives God's efficient causality as an inspiring, persuasive, or luring influence and, therefore, as influencing the aim that the novel occasion proposes to itself. But God is not the only persuasive efficient cause. For, in a way, all efficient causes, and therefore all data from the past, have a luring aspect.[17] This is what Whitehead means when he speaks of the "objective lure" (*PR* 185). God's lure, however, differs in two ways from the remainder of the "objective lure." As a conceptual realization of *all* possibilities, God's primordial nature ensures that the possibilities that are *not* realized in the temporal actual world of a particular entity may nevertheless also be desirable. Novelty is thereby made possible. Moreover, the lure arising from God's primordial nature is on a different level from the lures arising from the remainder of the actual world. Indeed, God's lure indicates in what way the given multitude of luring elements may best be synthesized into unity so that the becoming subject can achieve a maximum intensity of experience. Thus, it represents a meta-aspect with regard to the many possibilities and their respective lures. But even though this difference in level is of crucial importance, the fact remains that, apart from God, the temporal actual world too may be said to be luring inasmuch as it passes on its appreciations to the new occurrence. The tension that is likely to result from these different lures will be the subject matter of the next section.

Persuasive Power Is Not Per Se Pleasant

The fact that God's influence is considered as a lure or persuasion and not as coercion is often perceived as something "pleasant" and therefore morally good, or as too "soft" and therefore incongruent with God. Process theologians most often stress the moral primacy of persuasion: it nicely allows for free reaction. In reply to the criticism that process tradition is "too warm and too easy-going," Nancy Frankenberry, herself a representative of the process tradition, observes: "The cogency of these reservations is apparent when one notes the very vocabulary favored by

most Whiteheadians. Unlike the terms of existentialism, for instance, those of process theology resonate with a positive glow" (181). I share Frankenberry's observation and her displeasure thereabout, all the more so because Whitehead's philosophical concept itself does not at all encourage such one-sided "positive glow." In the first place, the aim provided by God is called "the best for that impasse" (*PR* 244), but "the best in view of the circumstances" does not imply that this "best" is itself to be qualified as "good." Whitehead says explicitly: "The initial aim is the best for that impasse. But *if the best be bad*, then the ruthlessness of God can be personified as *Atè*, the goddess of mischief" (*PR* 244; emphasis added). Much attention is given by process literature to the former sentence, but unfortunately very little to the latter!

"Persuasion" does not at all need to be interpreted as "soft, warm, and easy." To see this, we must remind ourselves that God's lure is a lure among other lures. The fact that it is the lure that, if followed, yields the most intensity does not mean that it is the most agreeable or easiest one (as any smoker knows, if a cigarette is ready at hand, the fact that heeding the call to quit smoking may very well be acknowledged as being "the best" does not in any way make quitting the easiest thing to do).

To involve God's consequent nature in the story only reinforces the insight that God's luring is not at all synonymous with "obvious happiness or obvious pleasure" (*RM* 80). God's consequent nature too is a luring element in the "objective lure." This divine lure arises from God's all-encompassing nature and plays in some respect a role that may be compared with the inner source of conscience,[18] which enables human consciousness to reach out beyond the individual self: "[I]nterest has been transferred to coördinations wider than personality" (*AI* 285). The initial aim mediated by God's primordial nature is related to a maximum intensity of experience of the becoming subject itself. However, the glimpse we at times perceive of God's consequent nature (an experience Whitehead sometimes refers to as the "experience of Peace"; *AI* 285) is the awareness that there is *more* than one's own particular event, that there is *more* than oneself. Though this may be called a "lure," it is far from easy or simply comfortable. No wonder Whitehead speaks here of suffering, sorrow, and pain (*PR* 350). And, to take just a few out of so many examples, Jesus's prayer, "Father, . . . remove this cup from me; Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22, 42), or Jonah's flight when he hears God's calling (Jon. 1, 1–3) testify in a similar vein to the burden of following God's persuasive calling.

On the Scope of God's Power: God's Almightiness?

One aspect of the issue of God's almightiness concerns God's capacity to act. To act may be defined as intentionally bringing about something. Thus, raising the question of God's capacity to act refers to the issue of God's ability to *realize* something on purpose. However, as we have pointed out above, Whitehead sees God's functioning as a luring influence. Indeed, this luring influence as such originates the new occasion immediately. But when it comes to the actual realization of what God is luring toward, God must rely on the self-creation of that becoming occasion. Thus, as Whitehead sees it, the realization of what God wants essentially depends upon the world. Needless to say, this view, due to its idiosyncratic concept of God's agency, strongly departs from the classical view of *almightiness as omnipotence*. To many theologians, Whitehead's view so utterly violates the idea of God's omnipotence that it becomes theologically unacceptable. This evaluation will now be called into question.

Differences between "Pantokrator" and "Omnipotence"

The specification "almightiness *as omnipotence*" is added here for a reason. For there are several concepts of almightiness. An examination of the conceptual history of "almightiness" shows that each of the three classical languages in which the concept was expressed—successively, Hebrew: *sebaoth* and *shaddai*; Greek: *pantokrator*; and Latin: *omnipotens*—respectively involved a shift in meaning, though not always immediately so. Those shifts were painstakingly described by Gijsbert Van den Brink in his monograph on divine almightiness. What follows is a condensed summary of the very complex processes of translations and shifts in meaning.

The Greek term *pantokrator*, chosen in the Septuagint (250–50 BCE) as translation of the Hebrew words *sebaoth* and *shaddai*, presents in this Old Testament context primarily God's power as sovereign ruler/creator/lord/authority/governor/the one who is in control of all that happens in nature and history.[19] It denotes God as universal power over all things. Later on, as used in the early Christian literature, the term *pantokrator* increasingly also describes God as preserver and sustainer of all things: God who by loving care holds the whole universe in existence.[20]

When in the Vulgate (400 CE) the term is translated into the Latin *omnipotens*, a new shift in meaning occurs. Next to the old meanings for which it is used as the Latin equivalent, the word *omnipotens* (with the Latin *posse* meaning "to be able") favors an emphasis on God's ability: God's ability to create and to preserve. Along the way, however, the

meaning of *omnipotentia* hardens into the concept of God's ability to do anything possible, with all the philosophical puzzles this elicits.

However, in the context of a discussion of the topic of almightiness, one must also pay attention to the shift in meaning of the *prefix "all"* (Greek: *panto*; Latin: *omni*) and to the effect this shift has on the composite concept "almighty." In combination with the verb *kratein* (to govern, to control or to sustain), "all" refers to everything that factually exists or happens in the past, present, and future, so that *pantokrator* then expresses the idea that all that exists in the past, present, and future falls under God's governance and sustenance, that it owes its existence and its conservation to God. However, in combination with "to be able to" (*posse*), "all" refers primarily to everything possible, so that *omnipotence* accordingly expresses that God is able to do everything possible.[21] Thus, with the translation from *pantokrator* into *omnipotence*, not only the power component of the word shifts (from governance and sustenance to ability or capacity) but also the object of God's power shifts, viz., from "all things existing" to "all things possible."[22] There is no doubt therefore that, historically, *pantokrator* and *omnipotence* evolved into two quite different concepts, although both are signified in English by the same term "almightiness."[23]

And so it came to be that the Latin *omnipotence* stood predominantly for "the power to do everything possible," including the capacity to unilaterally bring about what normally occurs through worldly causes. This meaning is rendered by the German expression *absolute Alleinmacht* (absolute sole power) chosen by Hans Jonas, which in the end means that all power would belong to God exclusively (i.e., that nothing except God would have power).[24] The Greek term *pantokrator*, on the other hand, expresses indeed that everything falls under the dominion of God's governance and sustenance but without the connotation of *absolute Alleinmacht*. Even a sovereign ruler must rely on others for the realization of a plan.[25]

Whitehead's Objections to Divine Omnipotence

It is to the idea of God as "the one who all alone can do everything" that Whitehead objects, and today many theologians agree. Thus, the fact that God in Whitehead's view is not omnipotent, is not something that "unfortunately" follows from his conception. On the contrary, Whitehead wanted it that way. Whitehead's rejection of God's omnipotence has to a large extent its reason in the problem of evil:[26] "If this conception be adhered to [in which metaphysical compliments such as omnipotence are paid to God], there can be no alternative except to discern in Him the

origin of all evil as well as of all good. He is then the supreme author of the play, and to Him must therefore be ascribed its shortcomings as well as its success" (*SMW* 179; see *AI* 169).

It is important to notice here that Whitehead disavows God's omnipotence and coercion, not because the latter is always morally worse or less effective than persuasion, for that is evidently not true, but because the implication of a divine omnipotence would be that in the end all suffering and evil must be ascribed to God. The only acceptable solution therefore is that God *cannot* coerce, that God as sole agent cannot realize a factual state of affairs, and therefore, in that sense, cannot be said to be omnipotent.[27]

Here we have to make again reference to David Basinger's critique. Basinger argues that if "persuasion" cannot be said to always be better or more effective than "coercion," there is no longer any reason for deeming the process view (God has only persuasive power) to be the better model when compared to the traditional view (which also grants coercive power to God) ("Divine Power" 212). However, this inference cannot be justified, for it is based on the wrong assumption. The advantage of the process view of God's power is not based on persuasion being better than coercion, but on the fact that a conception in which God *cannot* immediately realize what God desires is a better one than a conception in which God *can* do so. For, if God were able to coerce, the immeasurable suffering in the world would thereby become one huge indictment of God, which no "self-limitation" concept or "free-will defense" could possibly undo.

In theology, the problem of suffering in relation to the question of God's omnipotence has led sometimes to the concept of "God's self-limitation," according to which God by God's freely and lovingly self-withdrawal or self-emptying (*kenosis*) permits and provides room for the existence and autonomy of the world. However, as Hans Jonas, the Jewish philosopher of religion, convincingly has argued, the idea of God's self-limitation, seen as a voluntary limitation that God is free to revoke at will, is inadequate for a "concept of God after Auschwitz": "Not because he chose not to, but because he *could* not intervene did he fail to intervene" ("The Concept" 10). In his radical version of the kabbalistic *Tzimtzum* story, Jonas offers the "speculative myth" in which he entertains "the idea of a God who for a time—the time of the ongoing world process—has divested himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things" ("The Concept" 10).[28] Thus, so Jonas tells us, creation requires an act of total withdrawal by God,[29] in which "the Infinite ceded his power to the finite and thereby wholly delivered his cause into its hands"

(11–12), and having done so, God has not retained any power, and "has no more to give" (12). As Jonas sees it, a theological reflection on Auschwitz is possible only if one actually accepts the impotence of God concerning the physical realm as *irrevocably* flowing forth from God's creation from nothing (10–11).[30]

Whitehead would agree with Jonas as far as the inadequateness of the idea of God's self-limitation is concerned, but he would disagree with Jonas's own radicalized form of it. For, even though Whitehead too rejects the notion of God's omnipotence, he does not at all end up with Jonas's impotent God, as will be shown in the following section.

Essential Elements of the Almightiness Concept in Whitehead's Concept of God

As mentioned before, both Whitehead's view of God's power and his explicit rejection of God's omnipotence have elicited many critical reactions. An examination of these reactions shows that many theologians deem Whitehead's view inadequate because, as they see it, only an omnipotent God can guarantee a victory over evil.[31] And indeed, such guarantee seems to be an advantage of the omnipotence view. But that advantage turns into a disadvantage as soon as the model is confronted with real-life experience which tells us that victory fails to occur. It is precisely on account of the universal presence of suffering that God, if omnipotent, should be accused of failing to interfere at least occasionally. Thus, what seems to be an advantage of the traditional "omnipotence" concept turns into a disadvantage so important as to seriously favor an atheist option. In fact, this existentially religious disadvantage is what prompts Whitehead to reject the idea of God as omnipotent, half a century before Hans Jonas's radical rejection of that same idea.

This makes it all the more important to point out that it would be a *mistake* to think that Whitehead discarded *everything* that is related to the traditional idea of "God as almighty." On the contrary, Whitehead's philosophy retains essential elements of the *pantokrator* concept, though without using its terminology. There are three such elements that should be mentioned here.

The first element is that, by arousing the desire to the relatively best possible as the novel occasion's initial aim, God in fact originates that occasion as occasion. In this way, "[God] is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness" (*PR* 346). Thus, Whitehead sees God's primordial nature as directing,

creating, and inspiring with regard to all occasions in all places and at all times. In this sense, it depicts God as all-governor.

The second element is that Whitehead's concept of God also describes God as all-preserver. His concept of God's consequent or receptive nature presents the idea that God preserves and so rescues from meaninglessness all that can be saved.[32] It depicts God as the indestructible "treasuring" of realized value (see "Immortality" 688), and therefore as all-preserver, operating by "a tender care that nothing be lost" (*PR* 346).

Moreover, though it is true that Whitehead's notion does *not* entail the guarantee that whatever God is luring toward will also happen, it *does* entail the guarantee that no particular counterforce can overcome God forever. Because God is the only everlasting entity, God is the only entity whose influence is everlasting, and that is the reason why Whitehead can say that *God has more causal influence than other actual entities*.[33] Here, for the sake of clarity, God's influence may to some extent be compared with the influence of gravity on earthly affairs: in the long run, the persistent influence of the gravitational force is decisive, if never in an absolute sense. Consider dancing snowflakes. Some may go up under the influence of air turbulence, but because of gravity, they all fall to the ground at some time or other. This need not be their definite endpoint. A child may come by and use them to make a snowball, which she throws up into the air, but eventually the snow will always end up on the ground. Or consider a robust object standing upstairs in a house. We do not immediately perceive any force that moves it downward (even though that force is there permanently). Centuries later the house will have perished and the object will lie on the ground. Again this need not be its endpoint. Someone may pick it up and put it on top of a shelf in a museum. Thus, the force of gravity is constantly opposed by counterforces, particular counterforces that may be temporarily victorious. But, on the whole, the force of gravity is the most influential, due to its persistence. In Whitehead's view of God, there is something akin to this image of an influence that, though it can never call the shots all by itself alone or with absolute definiteness, is in the end "superior" because of its incessancy. Whitehead expresses this by speaking of the patience of God by which God leads or persuades the world, and he describes this patience as "the patient operation of the *overpowering* rationality of his conceptual harmonization" (*PR* 346; emphasis added).

Thus, in Whitehead's view, God's operation is creative, overpowering, all-governing, and all-preserving. This operation comprehends all times and places, it never gives up, it never ceases. All these elements are essential and classical aspects of God as *pantokrator*.

All this shows a fundamental difference between Jonas and Whitehead (despite so much kinship between them). In Whitehead, there is not the slightest suggestion that God's withdrawal is a precondition for creation. On the contrary, where Jonas offers a "contrastive" picture of God and creation in which worldly agents can act only when God does not act, Whitehead holds the opposite idea that for creatures to be able to exist and to act, God's persistent agency (as luring power) is a precondition.

Moreover, when Jonas says that "[h]aving given himself whole to the becoming world, God has no more to give," he fundamentally contradicts Whitehead's conception according to which God has always something to give and to every event, namely, Godself as lure (a lure which is different for each peculiar situation; *PR* 84). And the whole world, including the physical realm, exists and occurs *in virtue of this offer*. This leads to the observation that with regard to this fundamental theological issue, Whitehead is in line with Aquinas (despite all their differences), and much more so than with Hans Jonas. Whitehead agrees with Aquinas in seeing God as active in all events, not accidentally but at all places and all times, not as a competing agent among others, but operative on a different level. For Whitehead and Aquinas alike, God is the necessary condition whose permanent agency (or "act of existence," to use a Thomistic phrase) enables the worldly events to exist. Yet, for Whitehead, with the essential twist that God never can act as an *absolute Alleinmacht*, because the realization of God's lure always depends on the actualizing response of the world (for better or worse).

Conclusion

In this article, the distinctive position of Whitehead concerning God and God's power is the main subject of exploration. Whitehead rejects the notion of divine omnipotence, which dominates the entire theological tradition (exemplified here by Thomas Aquinas) yet is haunted by difficult dilemmas. The relevant question therefore is whether Whitehead's concept provides a good opportunity for a reinterpretation of God's power and almightiness.

The main characteristic of Whitehead's "philosophy of organism" is that every elementary event creates *itself* from the world given to it and that this self-creation requires the divine relative valuation of all possibilities (God's primordial or conceptual nature). As Whitehead sees it, God makes the new event "feel" what is the most preferable possibility relative to its particular situation and in this way lures the nascent event into realizing that "best" possibility. Thus, in its primary phase, the event

as such is constituted by the aim it receives from God, but its completion and realization depends on its subsequent self-causation (*PR* 244). So, to put it simply, God's conceptual operation goes from actuality to possibility, whereas the world's realization goes from possibility to actuality. This converse relationship between God and worldly events, as illustrated by the analogon of the orchestra, forms the basis for Whitehead's approach to the problem of the power of God in relationship to the world. Without God's primordial nature, there is no world, but without the world, no aim offered by God can be realized.

If translated into terms of power, God's role is to lure and therefore to persuade the event to realize the best of all possibilities, but the lure is never coercive. And in that sense, and contrary to the traditional view, God is not omnipotent. In Aquinas, the infinity of God's essence, and hence the infinity of God's active power, leads to his affirmation of God's omnipotence: that God can make/do everything possible. In Whitehead, so it is argued, the infinity of God's conceptual nature is the key element in his assertion that God cannot provide any limitation on possibilities and therefore can neither possibly coerce nor accomplish alone any physical realization. And this material difference is decisive in the huge difference of perspective regarding God's power as understood by these two thinkers.

A correct appreciation of that difference, so it is argued, asks for a correction in the arguments in favor of God's omnipotence (e.g., that "luring" does not efficiently cause something and is too "soft"). The distinction between efficient and final causality and the distinction between coercive and persuasive agency are all too easily but mistakenly seen as respectively correlative. Indeed, persuasive power may be efficacious. Conversely, all efficient causes, and therefore all data from the past, have a luring aspect ("objective lure"). God's lure (the "initial aim") differs from the remainder of the objective lure in that it makes novelty possible and moreover that it represents the meta-aspect of indicating in what way the given multitude of luring elements may best be synthesized into the new event. The tension between those different lures and levels of lures may very well be uncomfortable. Therefore, God's lure, despite its persuasive character, is not easy. Indeed, as Whitehead explicitly indicates, the initial aim provided by God as "best" for the given situation may be experienced as "bad" and God therefore as "ruthless" (*PR* 244). So, contrary to the widespread opinion, Whitehead's concept of God's operation, persuasive though it may be, gives to theology the opportunity to express and consider that following God's call may very well result in suffering, pain,

or even the cross. Thus, a theology based on Whitehead's thought is not easygoing.

Against this background, Whitehead deliberately takes distance from the classical view of divine omnipotence. However, as the present analysis has shown, Whitehead nonetheless retains essential elements of the *pantokrator* concept and puts them in a new light. Three of such elements are mentioned: First, God('s primordial or conceptual nature) creates every worldly occasion by making it feel the relatively best possible as an initial aim that originates the new occasion as occasion. In this way, God leads the whole world "by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness" (*PR* 346). Second, God's consequent or receptive nature preserves and so rescues from meaninglessness all actuality, from a care that nothing be lost. Third, the power of God's vision is characterized as a patient operation, which has an overpowering influence, derived from God's persistent presence. Therefore, it may be concluded that, despite Whitehead's rejection of the idea of God's omnipotence, his view on God's operation shows essential features of God as *pantokrator*.

Thus, it turns out that Whitehead, though in line with Hans Jonas's radical rejection of God's omnipotence, ends up with a fundamentally different view of the relationship between God and world. Whereas Jonas claims that God had to totally withdraw, so that in and from the "Nothing" that resulted God could create the world to which God then has no more to give, Whitehead just affirms that the whole world exists and occurs in virtue of God's continuous offer of Godself as lure for every event.

Therefore, it may be concluded that, despite his radical rejection of Aquinas's conception of omnipotence, Whitehead agrees with Aquinas on the theologically fundamental point of view that God's permanent agency (or "act of existence") is the necessary condition for the worldly events to exist and to occur. With Aquinas, Whitehead sees God as active in all events, not occasionally but at all places and all times, not as a competing agent among others, but operative on a different level, and indispensable for the being of the world. Furthermore, another important conclusion has to be drawn, viz., that this agreement with Aquinas in no way compromises Whitehead's claim that God never can act as an *absolute Alleinmacht*, because the realization of God's vision intrinsically depends on the self-creation of the worldly events.

Taken together, these two observations show that for Whitehead, the self-causality of the world and the all-pervasiveness of God's agency are compatible and interrelated, instead of mutually exclusive. Since most

if not all of the problems raised by the traditional conception of God's omnipotence have their roots in an one-sided conception of God, of the world, and of the relation between God and the world, this distinctive feature of Whitehead's view allows one to reconsider many of these stubborn problems. Thus, Whitehead's thought is definitely a challenging, yet beneficial opportunity for the theologically much-needed reinterpretation of God's power and almightiness.

Notes

1. A previous version of the present article appeared in *Open Theology*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 277–92.

2. "Unde convenientius dicitur quod non possunt fieri, quam quod Deus non potest ea facere" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.25.3 c). For the translations used, see Works Cited.

3. In this answer to the second objection (I.25.3 ad 2m), God's omnipotence functions as an argument: God's omnipotence is incompatible with fallibility. In the treatment of this third article, which addresses the question of whether God is omnipotent, Aquinas seems to answer that question less than the question of what it means to say that God is omnipotent. The first sentence of the reply ("All confess that God is omnipotent, but it seems difficult to explain in what His omnipotence precisely consists.") confirms this observation.

4. For a more elaborate discussion of Aquinas's position with regard to God's inability to sin, see McInerny as well as the discussion thereof in Brock.

5. "Ad tertium dicendum quod hoc ipsum quod causae secundae ordinantur ad determinatos effectus est illis a Deo. Unde Deus, quia alias causas ordinat ad determinatos effectus, potest etiam determinatos effectus producere per seipsum" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.105.1 ad 3m).

6. In *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead characterizes this principle as "principle of concretion" or "principle of limitation" and calls it simply "God." In *Process and Reality*, God is seen by Whitehead as an actual entity, of which the "primordial" (i.e., only conceptual) side functions as the above-mentioned principle. For a much more detailed description and discussion, see Oomen, "No Concretion."

7. The three factors mentioned play different metaphysical roles: provision of possibilities, valuation of possibilities, and realization of possibilities. Each of them is in itself insufficient but necessary for the becoming of the new event. This implies that a course of things can never be reduced to one of those three factors. One of the consequences thereof is that God's will or desire never can be inferred directly from how wordly events have occurred or want to occur.

8. Contrary to the primordial side, which is abstracted from God's commerce with particulars and is atemporal (*PR* 34, 345), God as concrete and

fully actual has some temporality—not in the sense of coming to be and passing away, but in the sense of enduring growth: all God's prehensions of the temporal world remain everlastingly present in God, woven upon God's primordial concepts (*PR* 345). See Johnson, 7. For more on God's consequent nature and God's primordial nature, see Oomen, "Prehensibility" and "Consequences," respectively.

9. See Oomen, "Prehensibility" for an extensive discussion of another implication of the converse polarity of God and worldly events (*PR* 36, 87–88, 348–49), namely, the prehensibility of God's consequent nature. This reversal of poles also plays an important role in the subtleties regarding the use of language about God. See Oomen, "Language."

10. If seen from the perspective of the realization of what God presents as desirable, God's luring influence is mediate—its realization depends on the collaboration of the worldly entities—but God's luring influence is efficacious in the immediate sense as well: God creates or originates the events as such.

11. The following references to Lewis Ford may illustrate this observation: "The model of divine coercive power persisted so long primarily because God's activity is usually conceived in terms of efficient causality. . . . Yet Aristotle's insight that God influences the world by final causation is more insightful" ("Divine . . . Good" 291). The same links are to be found in Ford's "Power," where the efficient causes are presented separately from the lures, possibilities, and ideals (88). In a later publication, Ford rightly observes that "[s]ometimes . . . it is all too easily assumed that the efficient causation is coercive, while final causation is persuasive" ("Divine . . . Coercion" 271). He then goes on to claim that the efficient causes not only are "coercive" but also may be considered as "enabling conditions," however, without asserting that efficient causality too can be "persuasive." That is why he does not consider God's providing an initial aim as an efficient cause (271). Aside from Ford, Elizabeth Kraus should be mentioned. She considers all influence of an actual entity on subsequent actual entities (i.e., all efficient causality) as "coercion."

12. John Cobb speaks of God's luring efficacy as "causal efficacy," whereas he also sees a luring aspect in worldly efficient causality (*A Christian* 183–85), and David Griffin sees "persuasion" as one of the forms of "transitive/causal power" ("Creation 'Ex Nihilo'" 96). Similarly, Charles Hartshorne writes:

> Is God an efficient or a final cause? He is an efficient cause because he is a final cause, and vice versa. He furnishes their subjective aims to the creatures. . . . This furnishing is effected by the hybrid prehensions which the creatures have of God's conceptual prehensions. . . . Now prehensions, whether physical or hybrid, are the bridge over which efficient causality is transmitted. But what is transmitted in the hybrid prehensions which we have of God is an aim, that is, a final cause. (552–53)

However, when Nancy Frankenberry observes that "[e]ntirely absent from the literature of process theology is any discussion of the possibility that God's power might be conceived as causally efficacious without its being completely determinative" (182), we can see how dominant the view of Ford has been on this point, a view that fails to do justice to, for instance, Hartshorne or Cobb.

13. The given definition of "coercion" suffices because here no distinction is made between coercion and determination, only between coercion and persuasion.

14. Lewis Ford writes: "Whether limited or unlimited, such [coercive] power is incompatible with divine perfection" ("Divine . . . Good" 289). John Cobb states: "The only power capable of any worthwhile result is the power of persuasion" (*God* 90).

15. David Basinger extensively shows how process thinkers are lacking in clarity when they hold the above position while criticizing the model of God's self-limitation ("Human Coercion" 165). The inadequacy of the model of God's self-limitation—and therefore also of that process view that claims that only "persuasive power" befits God—lies in the fact that it is not *always* better to lure than to use coercion. For a criticism of Hans Jonas from Whitehead's perspective on the model of divine self-limitation, see below.

16. Basinger, *Divine Power* 20. Before Basinger, Peter Hare and Edward Madden had made the same criticism (44).

17. John Cobb has formulated a more or less similar view (*A Christian* 183–85). Yet he seems not to make use of the possibility offered by this view to clarify the existence of different levels of the will and the tensions between those levels.

18. The influence of the lure ensuing from God's consequent nature is significant only in complex organisms, such as human beings. And even then, it happens only occasionally, as a gift (*AI* 285). See especially the last paragraph of *Process and Reality* (351) and the chapter "Peace" in *Adventures of Ideas* (284–96).

19. The important distinction in the Roman Empire between *potestas* and *auctoritas* (the former is linked to jurisdiction and seen as coercive, whereas the latter always demands obedience and needs the recognition of those who are asked to obey) has been emphasized and worked out in modern political philosophy by Max Weber and later Hannah Arendt. Important as this distinction may be for our modern political theories, the old biblical writers and most of the early Christian writers seemed not to distinguish sharply between authority and power (Van den Brink 48, with reference to Evans 172).

20. In the Old Testament meaning of *pantokrator* (universal dominion, all-ruler, all-sovereign, creator, etc.), the term refers to the Greek verb *kratein* followed by a genitive case, basically meaning "to rule over, to reign." In the

later meaning of *pantokrator* (all-preservation, all-sustenance, etc.), the term goes back to the verb *kratein* with an accusative case, basically meaning "to sustain, to preserve, to hold" (Van den Brink 48ff.).

21. This is how the shift in meaning has actually occurred in the course of history, but the verbal phrase "to be able to" (the Latin *posse*) does not need to refer so onesidedly to a capacity or ability. For instance, if we call someone a "potentate," we mean far more his actual exercise of power than a mere capacity thereof. Or, by way of a more positive example, when we say of someone that "he is a jack of all trades, he can do anything," we intend to express how this "doing anything" has actually been demonstrated, and we do not only refer to a capacity that might never be expressed. Against this background, the translation of *pantokrator* into *omnipotens* is less bizarre than it may seem, and problems arise only when *omnipotens* begins to refer less to God's actual efficacy and God's ability and more and primarily to the formal capacity to realize "everything."

22. Peter Geach's distinction between almightiness and omnipotence agrees rather well with this. He circumscribes almightiness as "power *over* all things" and omnipotence as "being able *to do* all things" (Geach 3). However, unlike Geach, I use the term "almightiness" not exclusively for the *pantokrator* concept but as the generic term encompassing both specific interpretations.

23. Starting from the fact that governing (creating, conserving) also presupposes a capacity to do so, Van den Brink too easily concludes, with others, that *pantokrator* includes *pantodynamos*/*omnipotens*. Of course, as Van den Brink points out, *pantokrator* does imply that God "must have the capacity to do all that is implied in governing the universe," but this is not equivalent to "the capacity to do all things." His reasoning contains a nonargued leap from "all that is implied in governing the universe" to "all possible things" (see Van den Brink 66).

24. Jonas argues that such absolute, exclusive power is empty power, for "power meeting no resistance . . . is no power at all." So "omnipotence is a self-contradictory, self-destructive, indeed, senseless concept" (Jonas, "The Concept" 8–9).

25. By way of comparison, here is what Johnson notes in his account of a conversation with Whitehead: "Whitehead contested that the proper notion of 'power' is like that found in the British constitution. Neither the King, the Prime Minister, nor the electorate has absolute power. At best each can only be vividly persuasive" (8).

26. Another important objection raised by Whitehead against God's omnipotence is based on the idea that the "doctrine of a transcendent imposing Deity" is the correlate of the view (rejected by Whitehead) that the laws of nature are imposed in a completely external way, instead of being immanent (*AI* 113). This objection and Whitehead's alternative view regarding the

laws of nature in relation to God have amply been explained and discussed in Oomen, "Immanence."

27. For the reason *why* God, in Whitehead's metaphysics, is incapable of coercion and cannot immediately transform possibility into actuality, see the main text on pages 90–92.

28. Here Jonas leaves some leeway for "God's speaking to human *minds*, even if debarred from intervening in physical *things*" ("The Concept" 11). However, he makes the proviso that God may intervene in this way only occasionally, and only to human souls (Jonas, "Is Faith" 160, 161). See Lubarsky for a comparison of Jonas and Whitehead on this matter.

29. Jonas explains: "To make room for the world, the *En-Sof* [God] of the beginning had to contract himself so that, vacated by him, empty space could expand outside of him: the 'Nothing' in which and from which God could then create the world. Without this retreat into himself, there could be no 'other' outside God" (Jonas, "The Concept" 12). This quote illustrates very well the "contrastive" or "either/or" character of this view, according to which there is room for God at the expense of room for the world, and vice versa. See Tracy for a critical discussion of such a "zero-sum" picture of divine and created agency (253–55), with references to Tanner (ch. 2) and Peters (21–22). Here Tracy also shows that the Thomistic distinction between primary and secondary causes is one of the models that fundamentally differs from such an "either/or" model.

30. A Christian theological discussion of Jonas may be found in Jüngel as well as in Henrix.

31. Here consider the criticisms of Ely, Madden and Hare, Henry, and Peterson, as well as the critiques by Roth, Hick, Sontag, and Davis of the theodicy of Griffin ("Creation out of Chaos"), all in the volume edited by Davis (*Encountering Evil* 119–28). For reactions to this criticism, see, for instance, Ford ("Divine . . . Good") and the interesting last chapter, "Redemption and Process Theism," in Cooper, *The Idea of God*.

32. In process literature, there has been a great deal of reflection regarding the fact that "all that can be saved" seems to be less than "everything." But, in my opinion, Whitehead's phrasing does not express a restriction any more than Aquinas's analogous phrasing does when he says that God's omnipotence means that God can do or make everything that can be done or made (*Summa Theologiae* I.25.3).

33. Johnson asked Whitehead the following question: "Is it correct to say that God exerts only as much causal influence on the world as any other actual entity, by providing data for other actual entities, but not forcing data on them?" He reports: "Whitehead replied that God does not force data of any sort on other actual entities. However, *God has more causal influence than*

other actual entities in the sense that he continues to exist, while others pass away" (Johnson 8; emphasis added).

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