

# The Prehensibility of God's Consequent Nature

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## A. Introduction to the Problem

Nowhere in his work does Whitehead give an explicit account of the question: how can God's consequent nature, which he himself characterizes as "*incomplete*" (PR 345), influence the temporal world? "To be able to have influence" means that God's consequent nature must be prehensible for temporal (or "worldly")<sup>2</sup> occasions, but this demands the satisfaction of God's consequent nature, and this would seem antagonistic to incompleteness. None of the passages which mention the workings of God's consequent nature consider this conceptual problem (see PR 32, 87–88, 350–351). The efficacy of God's consequent nature on the world may, however, contain an aspect of Whitehead's philosophy which is important for theology. For this is the context in which the issue of God also as Moved Mover is relevant. That is why the question—"if and how God's consequent nature can be prehensible and therefore efficacious"—is especially pertinent to any attempt at finding a (more) accurate model for God's efficacy in the world. This question is the subject of the present article.<sup>3</sup> First, the problem will be examined and two different lines of interpretation will be noted [Section A]. Then a proposal for interpretation will be made [Section B], and will be discussed and elaborated [Section C], and compared to closely related alternatives [Section E]. In between, it will be necessary to briefly consider the characterization of God's own aim [Section D].

<sup>1</sup>This essay is taken from a section of my dissertation on "The Relevance of Whitehead for a Theology of God's Efficacy" (forthcoming in book form, henceforth cited as RWT).

<sup>2</sup>Whitehead uses the adjective "temporal" to indicate actual entities in the world. But because he acknowledges a temporal aspect to God as well, this adjective is, properly considered, not distinguishing enough. That is why I prefer the adjective "worldly" to indicate actual occasions. "Worldly" here thus means "in the world."

<sup>3</sup>Denis Hurtubise has argued in the preceding essay of this issue of *Process Studies* that until now there is no solution for the question of the prehensibility of God's consequent nature. Let me propose however a way in which this question probably can be resolved.

Whitehead calls the influence of an actual entity (say "a") on another actual entity ("b") the functioning of "a" in regard to "b" or the prehension of "a" by "b." In this prehension, "a" is appropriated by "b" as an (immortal) object in "b's" concrescence. That is why Whitehead uses the term "objective immortality" (of "a") to indicate the functioning of "a" with regard to other actual entities. This functioning of "a" requires that "a" itself has become completely determinate; in other words, that its concrescence has achieved satisfaction. In the satisfaction of an actual occasion the process of becoming which can be described as the transition from indeterminateness to determinateness comes to an end, and with it the subjective immediacy of the occasion perishes.<sup>4</sup> With this satisfaction the objective immortality begins, namely, the functioning in respect to other processes of becoming. For this reason, satisfaction is the juncture of immanent causality to transient causality,<sup>5</sup> and hence of subjective immediacy to objective immortality.

So, the question we are facing is: If God's consequent nature realizes itself in part out of the prehensions of all worldly actual entities (PR 345), to which new ones, however, are continually added, how then can the consequent nature of God be objectively immortal (PR 32)? Does the concrescence of the actual entity God somehow achieve satisfaction after all? Is there objective immortality for God despite God's incompleteness (PR 345)? Is it the case that God is objectively immortal without this implying that God's subjective immediacy has disappeared? Apparently so, according to Whitehead, even though he will answer to the question how God (unlike other actual entities) can provide data for other actual entities without "perishing": "This is a genuine problem. I have not attempted to solve it."<sup>6</sup> This might seem to indicate that the concept of God was not his *primary* concern (SCW 4).

Many philosophers and theologians who have been concerned with Whitehead's metaphysics have pointed out this problem of consistency. Charles Hartshorne, Ivor Leclerc and the earlier John Cobb, together with many others, see the solution to the problem of God's prehensibility in the so called "societal view of God." That is to say, they think of God in accordance with the model of a "society," and more precisely in accordance with the model of that "society" which consists of one temporal thread of successive actual entities (a "route" of actual entities). According to this view, a divine actual occasion integrates—just like every worldly occasion—the

<sup>4</sup>The question whether this is the case for God, and its negative answer, will be the subject of the following section.

<sup>5</sup>Such an undialectical demarcation, however, does not completely do justice to Whitehead's view.

<sup>6</sup>According to the report of A.H. Johnson, "Some Conversations with Whitehead Concerning God and Creativity," 10 (henceforth cited as SCW).

occasions it is given and achieves its satisfaction. This satisfaction is prehended, together with those worldly occasions which have appeared in the meantime, by the successive divine occasion, which also arrives at satisfaction in its turn. So, God is seen as a "serial society," as a route of actual divine occasions, which all successively end in satisfaction, and are therefore prehensible.<sup>7</sup>

Only a handful of process thinkers hold on to Whitehead's explicit statement that God is not a route but one actual entity (PR 18, 87, 110), the so-called "entitative view of God." One of these was A.H. Johnson who was the first to mention the possibility of a "societal view," and thereby elicited an explicitly negative reaction from Whitehead.<sup>8</sup> Others who entertain this view are, mainly,

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<sup>7</sup>John Cobb's primary concern in choosing this view was the prehensibility of God's consequent nature. For conceiving God as an actual entity would imply, according to him, that God has not yet reached satisfaction, and therefore could not be efficacious towards worldly occasions (*A Christian Natural Theology* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1965], 188; henceforth cited as CNT). Besides that, it would imply that God has not yet reached satisfaction, and therefore eternally strives for an unattainable aim. This is foolish, as well as being in contradiction with Whitehead's speaking of God's satisfaction, according to Cobb. He considers all these problems solved by the "societal view" (in which he, in contrast to Hartshorne, retains eternal objects, as well as God's satisfaction which is passed on in every new divine entity).

Hartshorne has another motivation for seeing God as a society. Initially he thought that he was simply explicating what Whitehead should have said or perhaps even wanted to say (*The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* [New Haven, CN: Yale University Press {1948; 1974}], 30-31; Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1953; 1965], 274; henceforth cited as PSG). His main argument is that the prehension (by God) of the "many" must, in God's case also, lead to an "increased by one" and, therefore, to a new entity ("Whitehead's Novel Intuition," *Alfred North Whitehead: Essays on his Philosophy*, edited by George Kline [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963], 18-26, at 23). But in the case of these transitions in God "there is no lapse of memory, no loss of immediacy, as to occasions already achieved," says Hartshorne. He points this out as a difference between the sequence of God's occasions and normal linear sequences (PSG 274).

For Leclerc, however, the loss of immediacy (which is always present in the case of a normal serial society) forms the main argument for conceiving God as a society, because Leclerc considers "perishing" to be metaphysically required for every prehensibility, including God's (Review of William Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, *Journal of Philosophy* 57 [1960], 138-143; henceforth cited as RWC). These arguments will be reviewed in the text in Section C.

<sup>8</sup>Johnson recounts his conversation with Whitehead in the following manner

JOHNSON: "Can you think of God (as consequent) as a 'society'?" Whitehead replied that he had considered the possibility, since a society is what endures, and an actual entity passes away. But, WHITEHEAD: "The answer is no." In a society

William Christian, Lewis Ford, Marjorie Suchocki, and Jorge Nobo.<sup>9</sup> Amongst these, Ford is the only one who links his holding of the "entitative view" to an emphasis on the imprehensibility of God's consequent nature<sup>10</sup> (and who later finds this so much of a problem that he starts searching in other directions, though not in that of the "societal view").<sup>11</sup> The other three—Christian, Suchocki, and Nobo—do see possibilities for a conceptually coherent account of the prehensibility of God. The interpretation I will give below moves in their direction. The points of mutual difference will be treated in Section E.

### *B. Proposal for Interpretation: God's Everlasting Concrecence as Growing Satisfaction*

Whitehead's vision of God as one actual entity does not necessarily imply problems concerning consistency if one takes into account certain characteristics which pertain only to that one special actual entity "God"—characteristics due to which God is qualitatively different from all other actual entities, without thereby making the actual entity "God" an exception to the metaphysical scheme (PR 349, 343).

A worldly actual entity begins with a set of data, its actual world, which must come together into one complex feeling. This process of synthesis or becoming, this concrecence, concerns itself with the transition from indeterminateness to determinateness (PR 45, 29, 212) or, as Whitehead once said, from "incoherence" to "coherence" (PR 25). This process of becoming has temporal duration. Until the process of synthesis is finished, the actual entity which is becoming cannot be prehended because it is not yet fully determinate; that is, it has not yet achieved its satisfaction.

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the past is lost. One ordinary actual entity fades away and only some of its data are passed on to another actual entity. But in God, his past is not lost" (SCW 9).

<sup>9</sup>William Christian, *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics*, especially 294-301 (henceforth cited as IWM); Lewis Ford, "Boethius and Whitehead on Time and Eternity," *International Philosophical Quarterly* (1968), 38-67 (henceforth cited as BW); Lewis S. Ford, "Is Process Theism Compatible with Relativity Theory?" *Journal of Religion* 48 (1968), 124-135; Marjorie Suchocki, "The Metaphysical Ground of the Whiteheadian God" (henceforth cited as MGWG); Marjorie Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context*, especially 135-155 (henceforth cited as EE); Jorge Luis Nobo, "God as Essentially Immutable, Imperishable, and Objectifiable: A Response to Ford" (henceforth cited as GEI).

<sup>10</sup>See the quotations of Lewis Ford in note 16.

<sup>11</sup>See Lewis S. Ford, "The Non-temporality of Whitehead's God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1973), 347-376, at 370 (henceforth cited as NTWG 370); and, for example, Lewis S. Ford, "Contrasting Conceptions of Creation," *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (1991), 89-109, and "The Divine Activity of the Future," *Process Studies* 11 (1981), 169-179; and "Contrasting Conceptions of Creation," *Review of Metaphysics* 45 (1991), 89-109.

Now, according to Whitehead, God too is in a process of concrescence. However, despite what Whitehead once said of God<sup>12</sup>—the “always in concrescence”—this does not mean that God is enveloped in an ordinary process of concrescence and therefore has not integrated the given data (and then could nevertheless be prehended). Rather, Whitehead says God always has “objective immortality” (PR 32), implying that God is always fully determinate; that is, that God has always integrated all the available data. But God nevertheless is still in growth or concrescence because new data are continually added. God is, so to speak, continually done integrating, but continually there is something new to integrate—just like “the past” is always the completely determinate set of events which have passed but grows nonetheless. And just like every occasion which has passed immediately belongs to the past, without any temporal delay or transitional state, so too every past occasion is immediately integrated in God’s consequent nature.<sup>13</sup> So, all God’s prehensions always are integrated in God, and that is precisely why God is “satisfied” and prehensible at every moment. But this satisfaction differs from that of worldly entities in that it is not static but dynamic, as there is constant addition to it.<sup>14</sup> It must be understood as a “growing satisfaction.” Hence, God’s consequent nature can be characterized as being determinate (cf. PR 32) as well as incomplete (PR 345).

The possibility of a growing satisfaction is linked to the fact that the aim of God’s “concrescence” (greatly simplified) can be formulated as “retaining all past actual entities and integrating them.”<sup>15</sup> This means that it is possible to think both that the aim has been attained at every moment and that the aim changes with the creative advance of the world. In this manner, Whitehead’s conceptualization can be thought to hold that God’s consequent nature can be prehended because it is always fully determinate, although it is never complete and therefore “always in concrescence.”<sup>16</sup> This “always in concrescence” of God’s consequent nature, hence, does not

<sup>12</sup>See note 17.

<sup>13</sup>See Section C for direct argumentation.

<sup>14</sup>This is in contrast to what is expressed in the passage: “[The] doctrine, that the final ‘satisfaction’ of an actual entity is intolerant of any addition, expresses the fact that every actual entity—since it is what it is—is finally its own reason for what it omits” (PR 45), which, considering the context, clearly seems to refer to “actual occasions.”

<sup>15</sup>See Section C for further argumentation, and Section D for a more comprehensive treatment of God’s aim.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis Ford, too, once attempted such a solution, but arrives at a completely different conclusion. He writes:

That is not to say, however, that God never attains satisfaction. Satisfaction means the complete unity and integration of all available prehensions. Now

mean “still not concrete,” but refers to an ever-growing satisfaction. God as fully actual is therefore both always becoming as well as always being.

When Whitehead uses the term “concrescence” in regard to God, then this is not concrescence in the usual sense of the word; in other words, not concrescence as the transition from indeterminateness to determinateness, but “concrescence” as continually growing satisfaction. In any case Whitehead at best only once speaks of the “concrescence” of God’s consequent nature,<sup>17</sup> while

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God achieves unity of feeling by conceptual supplementation exclusively, not by physical elimination. Since these supplementary pure conceptual feelings only acquire temporality through their integration with physical feelings, no time elapses between the simple [divine] physical feeling of a particular actual occasion and its integration within the divine satisfaction. Each occasion prehended is instantaneously absorbed into this conceptual unity, and thus there is no time at which God’s feelings are unintegrated. Thus the divine experience is completely satisfied at all times and in all places. But this divine satisfaction cannot take place all at once, at a single time, whether momentarily or instantaneously. In order to include every temporal occasion as it comes into being, the divine satisfaction must be everlasting. (NTWG 370)

Ford, however, continues as follows: “Precisely because it is everlasting and never perishes, it is never completely determinate. Thus God, insofar as he is temporal, is never completely actual, and hence [never] prehensible. His temporal becoming never yields to being” (NTWG 370). In accord to the main text this is, in my opinion, an incorrect conclusion based on a basically correct analysis. Ford’s conclusion is based on the absence of perishing in God’s case. See the main text, Section C, for why this argument is not conclusive.

Ford also has expressed recently the same conclusion: “[O]nly when all subjectivity has perished in the attainment of objective being can any feeling be prehended. For hybrid prehension to work, therefore, the conceptual feeling it objectifies must belong to the satisfaction. Yet the divine everlasting concrescence never reaches satisfaction in the sense that it attains a final unified being which precludes any further becoming” (“God at Work: The Way God is Effective in a Process Perspective,” *Encounter* 57 [1996], 327–340). Here too the satisfaction of God, if understood in a certain manner, is not precluded, but nevertheless Ford concludes imprehensibility, again argued through the absence of perishing of subjectivity in God’s case.

<sup>17</sup>The often quoted “always in concrescence” comes from the following passage:

The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation is at once a creature of creativity and a condition of creativity. It shares this double character with all creatures. By reason of its character as a creature, always in concrescence and never in the past, it receives a reaction from the world; this reaction is its consequent nature. It is here termed “God”; because the contemplation of our natures, as enjoying real feelings derived from the timeless source of all order, acquires that “subjective form” of refreshment and companionship at which religions aim” (PR 31–32).

usually speaking of God's consequent nature in terms of "evolving" ("the 'consequent nature' of God, which evolves in its relationship to the evolving world" [PR 12]) or "growth" ("this operative growth of God's nature" [PR 346]). Also in Johnson's account of his conversations with Whitehead, Whitehead says that God is temporal in the sense that God "grows."<sup>18</sup>

### C. Discussion and Elaboration

As Whitehead also applies the term "growth" to worldly macro-organisms (PR 188), i.e., to "societies," the question arises if, and to what extent, he is covertly presenting a "societal view." This will prove not to be the case. Actually, Whitehead's view clashes with the model of an ordinary (worldly) actual entity for the same reason as it clashes with the view of a "serial society," but it has graver repercussions for the society-model as will become clear in the following.

Let's start with the idea of God as an actual entity. A normal actual entity has phases of concrescence which are not yet completely determinate, namely, all those phases prior to satisfaction. Now, such phases of indeterminateness or incoherence are absent in God's case. This has to do with the reversal of polarity in God as compared to the polarity of the worldly actual entities (PR 345). God starts at the conceptual pole, of which Whitehead says: "God is primordially one, namely, he is the primordial unity of relevance of the many potential forms" (PR 349). The physical prehensions which are added to this primordial nature, do not as yet have to be brought to unity, but are prehended in terms of God's conceptual unity, and

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(note 17 continued)

The "always in concrescence" in this passage probably does refer to God's consequent nature in the text—and that would be the one time that Whitehead speaks in this fashion of God's consequent nature, but linguistically speaking it refers to "The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation [i.e., God's primordial nature]" in this passage. This passage is somewhat contorted anyway, because the sentence "By reason ... consequent nature" does not fit well with either the previous sentence or the one after it.

Also worthy of note is that in the exposition in *Process and Reality* 87–88 of God's threefold nature Whitehead speaks of concrescence with regard to God's primordial nature but not with regard to God's consequent nature.

<sup>18</sup>In the report of Johnson's conversations with Whitehead in 1936 which have already been mentioned, Johnson asks Whitehead: "You refer to the everlasting nature of God, which is, in a sense, non-temporal, and in another sense temporal .... In what sense is God 'temporal'?" He recounts Whitehead's opinion in the following manner: "Whitehead replied that by 'temporal' he here means '[exhibiting] growth,' not coming to be and passing away. He stated that God grows, and thus in a sense is historical. God is everywhere (in time). God is not historical in the sense of having a definite 'whereness' or existing as a merely 'present' being who fades" (SCW 7).

are thereby instantaneously absorbed into that unity: "in the process he [God] acquires a consequent multiplicity, which the primordial character absorbs into its own unity" (PR 349).<sup>19</sup> The completely determinate final unity which Whitehead terms "satisfaction," which is the culmination in a normal concrescence, and which is reached through phases of indeterminateness of the mutual relations of the elements which partake in the concrescence (PR 25–26, 211–212)—this completely determinate unity is not a finishing point for God, but a permanent characteristic of God. This is why God is always satisfied and therefore prehensible. However, because physical prehensions are constantly added, this divine satisfaction grows, rather than remaining constant.

If, on the other hand, we start with the idea of God as a "serial society," leaving out the phases of indeterminateness in every link (so that it would become a continuous chain of satisfactions only), it might appear that we had arrived at the same view as above. This is, however, not the case. Despite there being certain points of agreement—and this is why Whitehead can in both cases speak of "growth" and even explicitly remarks upon their similitude as to "endurance"<sup>20</sup>—there are crucial differences. First of all, a chain of satisfactions concerns itself, metaphysically speaking, with satisfactions of different subjects, and as we try to place greater emphasis on the mutual identity regarding the subjects, we also emphasize the completeness of the mutual inheritance, and therefore also the priority of physical prehensions! For God's prehension of a previous divine satisfaction should also be conceived as a physical prehension. But, with the priority of the physical pole in every divine link, the reversal of God's polarity has disappeared, and with it the plausibility of the non-existence of phases of indeterminateness. In other words, to start from the idea of God as society and then to leave out all phases of indeterminateness, is a *contradictio in terminis*. If one wishes to retain the "societal view," one must also retain the non-reversed polarity of God, and therefore also the existence of phases of indeterminateness in God. Hence the societal view has two consequences. First, on this view, the conceptual pole would, for God just as for any

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<sup>19</sup>The same argumentation can be found in the following quotation from Lewis Ford which was also used in note 16:

Satisfaction means the complete unity and integration of all available prehensions. Now God achieves unity of feeling by conceptual supplementation exclusively, not by physical elimination. Since these supplementary pure conceptual feelings only acquire temporality through their integration with physical feelings, no time elapses between the simple physical feeling of a particular actual occasion and its integration within the divine satisfaction. *Each occasion prehended is instantaneously absorbed into this conceptual unity, and thus there is no time at which God's feelings are unintegrated*" (NTWG 370, italics added.)

<sup>20</sup>See Johnson, SCW 9, cited in note 8.

actual entity, be secondary (and not primordial). This in turn implies that the aim of every divine concrescence must be adapted to the situation it has been given. But then, where is this aim derived from, now that God as *primordial* valuation is no longer in the picture to be available as an answer? Further, the second consequence of the societal view is this: according to that view, God is time and time again briefly indeterminate. This implies that God is continually briefly prehensible. One might try to escape this by conceiving of these periods as infinitely short, but this does not principally invalidate the fact that they do have duration. The societal view therefore creates a prehensibility problem while trying to solve one.

But aren't there intrinsic problems with the entitative view as presented here (i.e., God as one actual entity with a reversed polarity, due to which none of its phases are indeterminate) as well? For instance, (1) how can it be that new data are continually added to God during God's concrescence, while every other actual entity is "closed" during its concrescence? And (2) doesn't this model of growing satisfaction signal a return to a persisting substance with variable characteristics? And (3) isn't perishing of subjective immediacy a categorial necessity for God's efficacy too, in other words, for God's objective immortality?

The answer to these questions, it will turn out, has in each case to do with the reversed polarity of God.

To (1): In the case of a worldly actual entity, the conceptual pole is not primordial but consequent. This means, among other things, that its subjective aim is related to its actual world. That is why the actual world of an actual entity must be "closed," if it is to have a definite aim and if there is to be any individuality. God's aim, however, is not dependent on God's actual world, but is primordial. This is why God's subjective unity or individuality does not require that actual world being closed. So, the addition of new data during God's concrescence raises no difficulties.

To (2): At first sight Whitehead's view that God can grow, that is, change and still remain the same subject, seems to clash fundamentally with his view of inner relatedness and thereby to signal a relapse into the "substantivism" Whitehead had rejected.<sup>21</sup> Here, too, the reversed polarity of God is of crucial importance, because God's own aim being independent of God's actual world implies that the concept of God's ability to grow does not signal a return to substantivism. To explicate: The unity of a subject is constituted by its subjective aim. Now, in the case of a normal worldly subject that aim is constituted in regard to its given actual world, but for God that is *not* the case, as we have seen. God's aim is derived from God's primordial nature without any reference to a

<sup>21</sup>See, for example, the complaint of Griffin in this direction, in his review of Marjorie Suchocki, *The End of Evil*, *Process Studies* 18 (1989), 57-62.

given actual world (PR 345). This cannot mean that God has a definite aim which has nothing to do with real actual entities, because then there would be no internal relatedness of God at all. Furthermore, that aim either *would not be achieved* by God (in which case God could not yet be prehended), or it *would be*, but then there would be nothing to grow. No, "God's aim" must be an indexical, or a token reflexive term, resembling terms such as "actual world," "yesterday" or "here," in other words a term which changes in material meaning as the standpoint changes. The approach mentioned in Section B of God's aim as "retaining all past actual entities and integrating them" satisfies this. In this way it can be understood that God's aim remains formally the same, which guarantees the unity of the subject, but "shifts" materially, and this according to the particular relations in which God is involved. However, this does not mean that relations are accidental for God. According to Whitehead's view, God would not be fully actual without physical prehensions, and hence without the consequent nature. In other words, despite the particular relations being accidental the relatedness as such is not, because relatedness is essential, for God too. So, there is no relapse into substantivism in Whitehead's conception of God.

To (3): Because God's aim can in a vastly simplified manner be presented as "retaining all past actual entities and integrating them," we can see, as is indicated in Section B, that this aim is fulfilled at every moment and that it shifts materially with the advance of the world. According to this view, God's consequent nature can be prehended, because it is continually fully determinate, even if never complete and therefore, to be understood in a certain manner, "always in concrescence." "Always in concrescence and never in the past" should be read as "always subject, never merely object." God's *becoming* and God's *being a subject*, therefore, have not perished with God's *being* and God's *being a superject*. But isn't their perishing a metaphysical necessity, as Ivor Leclerc claimed (which formed an argument in favor of the societal view for him) and which was also asserted later by Lewis Ford?<sup>22</sup> The answer is: No, Whitehead has no category in his metaphysics which requires "perishing" for "objective immortality." But then, what does Whitehead do say in this context? After the presentation of his categorial

<sup>22</sup>See Leclerc, RWC 141-143. While Lewis Ford initially posits, with the aid of the same passage from William Christian (IWM 298), that Whitehead's categorial scheme doesn't require perishing for objectification, but only "something determinate" in God (BW 64-65), later he, too, says exactly the opposite (without further explanation): "Yet a concrescence that never perishes cannot be objectified and hence cannot be prehended. How would God then influence the world temporally?" ("Temporality and Transcendence," *Hartshorne, Process Philosophy, and Theology*, edited by Robert Kane and Steven Phillips, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press [1989], 151-167, at 155). He says something similar in the quotations given in note 16.

scheme, and before he begins the discussion which leads up to, or is explanatory of, the categories of that scheme, he states as one of his preliminary notes: "Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity [i.e., objective immortality], while it loses subjective immediacy" (PR 29). He also says: "In the organic philosophy an actual entity has 'perished' when it is complete" (PR 81-82; cf. 85). The only reference to perishing within his categorial scheme is (although with the use of a different terminology): "Thus 'becoming' is the transformation of incoherence into coherence, and in each particular instance *ceases with this attainment*" (Category of Explanation xxii [PR 25], italics added). This last sentence cannot, however, refer to God, because as was explained above, the sense in which one can speak of "becoming" in God's case is *not* that of "becoming" as a transformation from incoherence to coherence.<sup>23</sup> So the only two passages that remain to be analyzed are those of *Process and Reality* 29 and 81-82. The quotation from *Process and Reality* 29 can be represented by two propositions in the following manner:

[1] "If perishing then objective immortality" (for short:  $p \rightarrow oi$ ), and

[2] "If perishing then loss of subjective immediacy" ( $p \rightarrow lsi$ ).

The quotation from *Process and Reality* 81-82 can be represented as follows:

[3] "If the actual entity is complete then perishing" ( $c \rightarrow p$ ).

Now, by *modus tollens*, it is correct to derive from [2]: "If there is no loss of subjective immediacy, then there is no perishing" ( $\neg lsi \rightarrow \neg p$ ).

But it is *not* correct to derive from [1]: "If there is no perishing then there is no objective immortality." For ( $\neg p \rightarrow \neg oi$ ) cannot be derived from [1]! In the case of negation the direction of the implication is, after all, reversed.

In accordance with the propositions Whitehead gives, the retention of subjective immediacy does not imply the impossibility of objective immortality! What then is the reason for the misunderstanding? Well, in the case of a worldly actual entity satisfaction implies determinateness as well as completeness. Therefore, for those entities, satisfaction implies on account of the determinateness the beginning of objective immortality, and also, on account of the completeness the perishing of subjective immediacy (from 3) (PR 292-293).<sup>24</sup> But God's satisfaction is, for the above mentioned reasons, the only one that does not combine determinateness with

<sup>23</sup>William Christian, however, does consider this passage in his deliberations, because he does not account for the fact that the becoming being discussed (and therefore also the ceasing of that becoming) cannot be applied to God (to the contrary, he says explicitly: "Thus 'becoming' applies to God and to actual occasions"). He gives two alternative interpretations, both of which would be consistent with Whitehead's conception of God, though I as yet find unconvincing (IWM 298).

<sup>24</sup>This text reads: "But with the attainment of the 'satisfaction,' the immediacy of final causation is lost, and the [actual] occasion passes into its objective immortality, in virtue of which efficient causation is constituted." Note that this remark is about occasions, so not about God.

completeness, but with *incompleteness*, which is why—categorially correct—it is only in this case that the implication of "perishing" is not applicable.

In conclusion, none of the objections which have been made here can be raised against the entitative view of God, as long as this is understood as the view that God has a reversed polar structure due to which no phase is indeterminate. This view clarifies the fact that God, also with regard to the consequent nature, is continually prehensible and so can be continually efficacious (this, quite unexpectedly, in contradistinction to the societal view), even if God's consequent satisfaction is never complete and hence God's subjective immediacy never perishes. The whole argument hinges on Whitehead's perspective of God as actual entity having a *primordial* conceptual pole, by which the actual entity "God"—within the confines of the proposed metaphysical model—differs to such an extent from other actual entities that concrescence is possible for God without phases of indeterminateness, and satisfaction is possible without (temporal) completeness.

This unique aspect of God's nature also implies that the two forms of process mentioned by Whitehead do not apply to God. The process in God cannot be conceived of as a process *between occasions* (which is a transition or "external supersession"), nor can it be conceived of as that type of process which occurs *within an occasion* as an "internal supersession" of phases of indeterminateness finishing in a final satisfaction ("concrescence" in the usual sense of the word). So, God's process does not fit in the usual model of change, nor in the usual model of becoming.<sup>25</sup> Whitehead preferably considers the process in God in terms of growth, which, to be sure, may be viewed as a form of internal supersession, that is, as a succession in which the previous phases are retained without loss, however in this special case as a succession of satisfaction-phases. So there is, albeit in a manner which easily leads to misunderstandings, also in Whitehead some sort of "immutability" of God, because change pertains to a nexus (e.g., a society), and God remains one actual entity. But this is an "immutability" which does *not* exclude temporal growth.

### D. God's Aim

In the above discussion, God's own subjective aim has been mentioned several times, and I have mentioned its special nature, which is the result of God's conceptual pole being primordial. It is well to pay a little more attention to the special nature of God's aim now.

In Section C, God's aim has been presented in simplified fashion several times as "retaining all past occasions and integrating them." Actually this is a simplified representation of only half of God's aim, namely, that half which corresponds to

<sup>25</sup>See for those two forms of process, PR 214.

the concrescence of God's consequent nature. Besides that, however, Whitehead also calls God's primordial nature a concrescence (which should be taken to be a concrescence without indeterminate phases as well), and with regard to this primordial concrescence Whitehead speaks of a divine aim too (PR 87-88).

Of this aim of the primordial concrescence, Whitehead says: "The concrescence [of the primordial nature of God] is directed by the subjective aim, *that the subjective forms of the feelings [i.e., God's conceptual feelings] shall be such as to constitute the eternal objects into relevant lures of feeling severally appropriate for all realizable basic conditions*" (PR 88, italics added); and elsewhere: "Thus God's purpose in the creative advance is the evocation of intensities" (PR 105). The aim of God's primordial concrescence therefore has a strongly "superjective" aspect (see below).

About the subjective aim of God's consequent nature Whitehead says: "His primordial nature directs such perspectives of objectification [in his consequent nature] *that each novel actuality in the temporal world contributes such elements as it can to a realization in God free from inhibitions of intensity by reason of discordance*" (PR 88, italics added). And in the final chapter Whitehead says of it: "The wisdom of subjective aim prehends every actuality for what it can be in such a perfected system ... woven by rightness of feeling into the harmony of the universal feeling, which is always immediate, always many, always one, always with novel advance, moving onward and never perishing" (PR 346).<sup>26</sup> And several lines further:

The image—and it is but an image—the image under which this operative growth of God's nature is best conceived, is that of a tender care that nothing be lost. The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also the judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage. (PR 346)<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup>I have presented this "universal feeling" in the above as "growing satisfaction."

<sup>27</sup>Noteworthy is that different authors seem only to speak of the aim of God's primordial concrescence, that is to say of God's aim *qua* its superjective aspect, when they consider God's aim. See, for example, Christian ("God aims not at some finite objective but at the realization of all possibilities whatever" [IWM 297]); Ford ("Whitehead's Conception of Divine Spatiality, *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 6 [1968], 10, and BW 66); and Nobo (GEI 179). Suchocki does remark upon the duality of God's aim ("the aim in its direction toward the world, and ... a return movement, from the world to God" [MGWG 243-244]), but she considers the aim of God's *consequent* concrescence as nothing but superjective: "This double movement of process, with its essential unity, provides the relevance of primordial envisagement for the world's individual occasions" (MGWG 244), more on this in Section E.

It is useful to pause here in order to consider the general structure of a subjective aim as Whitehead expounds it in his Categorical Scheme. There he says concerning the subjective aim of a concrescence: "The subjective aim, whereby there is origination of conceptual feeling, is at intensity of feeling ( $\alpha$ ) in the immediate subject, and ( $\beta$ ) in the relevant future" (Cat. Obl. viii, PR 27). That "relevant future" Whitehead further explains: "The relevant future consists of those elements in the anticipated future which are felt with effective intensity by the present subject by reason of the potentiality for them to be derived from itself" (PR 27). The  $\alpha$ -aspect and the  $\beta$ -aspect can therefore, respectively, be indicated as the "immediate" and the "superjective" aspects.

The actual entity "God" seeks, like every actual entity, in accordance with this Categorical Obligation, the maximum intensity of experience for itself and also for the future on which it anticipates its superjective influence. But in contrast to normal actual entities, God has *two ways* to do this. One way is to integrate all available elements as best as possible (for Godself and for the relevant future) by means of God's everlasting concrescence (with "as best as possible" meaning "with as great an intensity of experience as possible"). This way is in correspondence to the two aspects  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  of the subjective aim of worldly entities mentioned above. But the additional way available for God is antecedently persuading those elements themselves to become as intensive as possible. This extra primordial way is open only to God. For God is the only actual entity that has prior influence on the elements it thereafter integrates in itself. This is why the depth of satisfaction of worldly entities which God seeks through the primordial valuation, may be viewed as an intermediate stage towards the fulfilment of God's own being: "His aim for it [i.e., an immediate occasion] is depth of satisfaction as an intermediate step towards the fulfilment of his own being" (PR 105). Because Whitehead, however, does not stop the creative advance at God's consequent nature, but extends it to the superjective aspect of this "specific satisfaction," this "fulfilment of God's own being" also happens to some extent for the relevant future. So God aims, according to Whitehead and in complete accord with his categorical scheme, at a maximum intensity of experience for the world, and this in order to be able to derive from it a maximum intensity of experience for "himself," and this again thereby to contribute to the intensity of experience of the world. Here we see a clear example of the rhythmicity which can be said to be a characteristic of Whitehead's philosophy.

### E. Discussion of Three Related Proposals

Earlier I mentioned three renowned Whiteheadian scholars who are explicitly in favour of the entitative view and consider it not to imply a problem regarding God's prehensibility. It is because of the general relevance of this problem for

Whiteheadian theology that it is important to compare the above discussed proposal with its proposed interpretations.

For chronological reasons a natural starting point would be to compare my proposed interpretation with the interpretation of William Christian, published in 1959.<sup>28</sup> My interpretation shows great similarity to Christian's, despite having been developed independently of his. The latter can be seen in the difference between his line of argumentation and mine. As to the resemblance, this comes out manifestly on three points: (a) that God has, according to Christian, a "continuous though changing satisfaction," which is comparable to my "growing satisfaction" (IWM 409); (b) that God does not lose his subjective immediacy, and that such a perishing is not categorially obliged; and (c) that the finality of God should be seen as *telos* and not as *end*. (IWM 294-301). All these are points with which I can agree wholeheartedly. This applies less to his argumentation. His line of argumentation hinges strongly on God's everlastingness. In my opinion, however, the line of argumentation should be the other way around. To repeat briefly: because of God's aim (due to the reversal of poles) being independent of any concrete actual world and so being formally characterizable (in greatly simplified form) as "retaining and integrating all past occasions," this aim "shifts" with the advance of the world; that is why God's process is everlasting. That is why also that the addition of new physical prehensions during the process does not form a problem. That is why also that God's aim formally speaking is continually attained (God can be called "determinate"), while materially speaking its extension increases without end (hence the "incomplete"). Because of this incompleteness God's subjective immediacy does not end, despite God's always having a specific satisfaction, and that is why there is, only in God's case, no perishing. With respect to all these points my argumentation rests on the reversal of poles in God (by which an aim is possible for God which is formally independent of any concrete actual world), while Christian does not use God's reversed polar structure but uses God's everlastingness as his main argument. But then this divine everlastingness cannot be easily accounted for.<sup>29</sup> So, my interpretation in particular adds something to Christian's by way of the grounding of argumentation.

<sup>28</sup>The useful and much appreciated *An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics* (IWM).

<sup>29</sup>Though it is also the case that Christian says that God is everlasting due to the fundamental difference between God and worldly occasions with regard to polarity ("From this fundamental difference between God and actual occasions ... [i]t follows also that God is everlasting"), this point is very weakly argued. The only reason he gives is: "He [God] does not perish, as all other actual entities do. For primordial means 'not before all creation, but with all creation' (PR 521)" (IWM 288). However, the passage Christian quotes refers, in Whitehead's text, explicitly to God's primordial nature, which according to Whitehead is precisely not "everlasting" but "eternal" in the sense of atemporal (PR 345).

The second author I wish to consider is Jorge Luis Nobo. In the collection of articles based on lectures in honor of Hartshorne's ninetieth birthday, Nobo unfolds, in reaction to Lewis Ford, how in his opinion God is essentially immutable, imperishable and objectifiable.<sup>30</sup> In doing this he agrees with Ford's criticism that Hartshorne's societal view of God does not offer an adequate Whiteheadian solution to the problem of God's objectifiability or prehensibility, but in contrast to Ford he is of the opinion that such a Whiteheadian solution is possible, and that it is even reasonably simple. In order to show this, Nobo (conceiving God as one actual entity) uses the model of internal supersession as a starting point. To be precise, he uses the normal form of internal supersession, that is, supersession as the succession of phases within the process of concrescence in which the individual "is becoming more definite, but is not changing," and in which a previous phase does not perish for the sake of the following, but is absorbed into it without loss or alteration.

On the basis of this model, God's immutability and everlastingness can easily be conceived, but how does Nobo account for God's prehensibility, that is, for God's being a superject? Well, according to Nobo, it is sufficient for any actual entity to be "any complete synthesis of all the existential data available for the creative activity of an experiencing subject" in order to be a superject (GEI 178). Therefore, every time God has synthesized the data which are available at the beginning of that stage of divine development, God is prehensible. The difference with my proposal is subtle, yet profound. Nobo makes very clear that he thinks that God recurrently has a stage of still being occupied with integrating the data which were available at the beginning of that stage.<sup>31</sup> Apparently that process has a certain duration according to Nobo, and it can be seen, like in a normal process

<sup>30</sup>Nobo, GEI.

<sup>31</sup>As is evinced by the following quotations from Nobo: "Moreover, each completed stage in the supersessional development of God's consequent nature is causally objectifiable because it constitutes a complete physical synthesis produced by the consequent creative activity out of all the attained actualities *already in existence relative to the beginning of that stage of the divine development* (PR 523-524)"; its continuation: "In this account, the primordial nature and *each already completed stage* of the consequent nature represent each a specific, or relative, satisfaction of the divine concrescence. They represent God as fully made, or fully determinate, in respect to any set of determinate existents objectively available for his experience—*any set, that is, other than the set he is currently prehending into the fullness of his experience*," and: "Given the proposed definition of 'superject,' however, the everlastingness of God's subjectivity is no impediment to the superjective functioning of those aspects of God in which he constitutes the complete synthesis of all available determinate beings—*excepting those determinate beings currently synthesized into the fullness of God's next specific satisfaction*" (GEI 179, italics added).

of concrescence, as the transition from indeterminateness to determinateness. As soon as determinateness is achieved, another new process of integration starts with respect to the available data which have arrived in the meantime, because although at that moment all the data which were available have been synthesized, in God's case, in contrast to a normal actual entity, the subjective aim has not thereby been fully actualized.

Nobo, too, argues that God's process continues despite achieving satisfaction. Where I say: God's aim (that of God's consequent nature) is achieved, and remains open, because it is an aim which continually "shifts" (and can be such because God's aim is formally independent of any actual world whatsoever, but materially consequent on the evolving world), Nobo says: the aim of God's primordial nature is never achieved, but the data available at the beginning of every stage are synthesized every time, and this is sufficient for prehensibility—not the same argumentation, as can be seen, but a closely related one, indeed. Yet Nobo's interpretation differs from my interpretation on two crucial points. First of all, no account is taken of the fact that God as an actual entity has a reversed polar structure and thereby does not have any phases of indeterminateness, while it is exactly because of that reversal of poles that God's aim "shifts" and hence is infinite. Furthermore, Nobo is forced by the stages of indeterminateness to view the development of God's consequent nature as a succession of recurrent new becomings of determination, instead of as a continuous succession of specific satisfactions (a growing satisfaction) as in my view. Precisely these two points of difference cause his model to have more characteristics of the societal view than he realizes and wants, and with that his model shares in the aforementioned shortcomings of that view.<sup>32</sup>

Somebody who—in marked contrast to Christian as well as Nobo—*does* argue explicitly for God's prehensibility on the basis of the reversal of God's poles is Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. She refers to it steadily in several publications.<sup>33</sup> Yet, and this is at first sight surprising, her view differs from the interpretation proposed by me. Since God starts at the conceptual pole, and this conceptual pole is complete and therefore satisfied (according to Whitehead), Suchocki claims that God starts where other entities end—at satisfaction—and that in God's case this satisfaction follows what in other actual entities precedes—the concrescence (EE 139–140). So, she does not have the model of a growing divine satisfaction which "changes" in respect to its content, but she has the model of an unchanging primordial satisfaction followed by

the concrescence of God's consequent nature:<sup>34</sup> "Thus the satisfaction of God lies in this conceptual atemporality; it is primordial, underlying and pervading the reality of God. This being the case, the concrescence of God cannot move *toward* satisfaction; it can only move *from* satisfaction" (EE 139).

Where in my interpretation there is a constant and growing satisfaction on God's part, there is in her view a movement of God in the direction of multiplicity (despite her trying to retain the unity of God nevertheless): "If an entity originates in a reversal of poles, then it must move from one to many in an increasingly complex unity" (MGWG 246). In my opinion the phrase "to many in an increasingly complex unity" is somewhat paradoxical. This is less so in an earlier and a bit lengthier passage, in which she seems to picture the process in God as threefold (one-many-one): the "reverse entity [God] would move not from multiplicity toward a simplified though complex unity, as do the occasions, but from a complex unity toward an ever greater multiplicity. This concrescent multiplicity, in conformity with the essential unity of an actual entity, would be absorbed into the primordial unity" (MGWG 241). But here too her choice of words remains somewhat ambiguous, and difficult to combine with the "move *from* satisfaction" cited above. This ambiguity has to do with the fact that for Suchocki the third phase in the "one-many-one"—if it is named at all—does not mean a new unity; in other words, it does not refer to an altered satisfaction. For she claims explicitly that God's satisfaction cannot alter or grow, implying that there is no difference of extension between God's primordial satisfaction and God's total or consequent satisfaction. Her argument for this is that since the primordial satisfaction already contains all possibilities, there simply are no new possibilities which could alter the satisfaction (MGWG 243; EE 141, 142). I will discuss this view shortly. But first we must consider what purpose God's consequent nature serves according to Suchocki. Isn't it superfluous?

For Suchocki, God's consequent concrescence, i.e., God's concrescence on the basis of God's physical prehensions, serves for expressing, manifesting, realizing, or making concrete that primordial satisfaction: "The integrating process whereby God interweaves the prehended world with his primordial satisfaction is the *concretization of this satisfaction*, the brilliantly moving experience of its reality" (MGWG 244–245, italics added).<sup>35</sup> In contrast to worldly actual entities God's own subjective aim, in Suchocki's opinion, does not precede God's satisfaction, but

<sup>32</sup>See Section C.

<sup>33</sup>Suchocki, MGWG, EE, and "Evil, Eschatology, and God: Response to David Griffin," *Process Studies* 18 (1989), 63–69 (henceforth cited as EEG); and Suchocki and Lewis S. Ford, "A Whiteheadian Reflection on Subjective Immortality" (henceforth cited as WR).

<sup>34</sup>Suchocki, therefore, also speaks only of the "primordial satisfaction." Only once, as far I know, does she use the term "consequent satisfaction," and it is probably not a coincidence that this is in an article she co-authored (WR 11).

<sup>35</sup>For examples of other texts which contain the terms expression, manifestation, realization, and concretization, see Suchocki, MGWG 245, 246; EE 139, 140; EEG 65.

follows on it: "this satisfaction is translated into subjective aim" (MGWG 244). Where Whitehead says in *Categorical Obligation* viii, "The subjective aim, whereby there is origination of conceptual feeling, is at intensity of feeling ( $\alpha$ ) in the immediate subject, and ( $\beta$ ) in the relevant future" (PR 27), it appears to be Suchocki's reasoning that in God's case, since satisfaction is already given, the  $\alpha$ -aspect is no longer applicable, and therefore only the  $\beta$ -aspect remains. Thus she describes God's subjective aim as a "superjective aim" (MGWG 244). In this view God's consequent nature does not contribute something to God, for God is already primordially satisfied, but makes the superjectivity of God's primordial satisfaction possible. Therefore, God's consequent concrescence is directed solely towards that "superjective aim." In other words, Suchocki's reasoning goes as follows: if God's primordial nature is to be effective for an actual situation, then a detection of that actual situation is necessary as well as a connection between God's conceptual valuation and that particular situation. Suchocki views God's consequent nature as God's prehensions of the actual world and the connections of these prehensions with God's primordial conceptual feelings, such that the relevance of those conceptual feelings for that concrete situation can become manifest. In this manner, God's primordial satisfaction can achieve a concrete determination for that situation, and this is a different determination for every situation: "God's satisfaction is primordially definite; in his process of concrescence, that definiteness simply manifests itself as a continuously moving determinateness" (MGWG 246). So in her opinion, God's consequent nature changes the efficacy of the immutable (primordial or atemporal) satisfaction towards the world, or better yet, makes it manifest and possible. As has been said, God's aim is at this efficacy or superjectivity, and for this the everlasting consequent concrescence which is guided by that aim is needed.

Let us, in order to come to an evaluation of this original and intriguing interpretation, put the differences between her view and Whitehead's in sharper focus (differences which do not arise in my interpretation), keeping in mind, to be sure, that differences as such are not necessarily for the worse.

For Suchocki, God's consequent nature serves only the superjectivity of God's primordial satisfaction. However, within Whitehead's conceptuality the participation of God's consequent nature is not needed simply for God's primordial nature to be efficacious. In this manner, Suchocki gives God's consequent nature a role as medium, a role which the consequent nature of God does not have in Whitehead.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Many process thinkers attribute this intermediary role to God's consequent nature, because otherwise, in their opinion, no envisagement and/or no provision of specific initial aims would be possible (e.g., Christian, IWM 306-308; John Lansing, "The 'Natures' of Whitehead's God," *Process Studies* 3 [1973], 143-152, at 147-148; Suchocki, MGWG 243-245;

That God "begins" with a purely conceptual satisfaction is in accord with Whitehead; however, that this satisfaction is such that no supplement to it is possible, differs from Whitehead's view. As has been said, Suchocki consistently speaks of "the primordial satisfaction" while Whitehead also refers to God's "specific satisfaction" (PR 88), and he also speaks of the contribution of every new temporal actuality to a realization *in* God (PR 88, 345). According to Suchocki, a supplement to God's primordial satisfaction would be impossible because that satisfaction already contains all possibilities.<sup>37</sup> It is indeed the case that all eternal objects are envisaged in God's primordial nature according to Whitehead and, by this, that all pure potentials are accounted for. However, this does not imply that there already are propositions, i.e., impure potentials, contained within it, according to Whitehead. These impure potentials are emergent (PR 188, 259). This makes supplementation to the primordial nature logically possible, and hence a specific consequent satisfaction is possible (cf. PR 88).

Whitehead introduces God's consequent nature for a number of reasons, one of them being that this integration of God's conceptual feelings with physical feelings makes propositions and consciousness as subjective form possible, and this makes it conceivable that God possesses consciousness. In other words, Whitehead expressly conceptualizes an integration of God's physical feelings and God's conceptual feelings from which an intrinsic enrichment compared with God's primordial satisfaction ensues.<sup>38</sup>

Another point of difference is that Suchocki leaves it almost out of consideration that Whitehead views the aims which God offers to the worldly occasions as directed towards the depth of intensity of those occasions "as an intermediate

Lewis S. Ford, "When Did Whitehead Conceive God to be Personal?" *Anglican Theological Review* 72 [1990], 280-291, at 289-291. Cobb denies the first argument but accepts the second (CNT 155-156, 184). I deviate from the standard opinion, and in my dissertation I defend not only the possibility but also the desirability of Whitehead's implicit conception that a (not completely) specific initial aim can be envisaged and can be provided by God's primordial nature without the help of God's consequent nature (RWT).

<sup>37</sup>Suchocki explicitly says: "In this case the satisfaction of God can be a component of his concrescent nature without requiring any deviation from the satisfaction or consequent change in its essential character. *There simply are no new possibilities which could alter the satisfaction*" (MGWG 243, italics added; reiterated in EE 142).

<sup>38</sup>Whitehead explicitly speaks of God's consequent nature as a process of completion: "God is to be conceived as originated by conceptual experience with his process of completion motivated by consequent, physical experience, initially derived from the temporal world" (PR 345); and in the same vein: "In this way God is completed by the individual, fluent satisfactions of finite fact ..." (PR 347).

step towards the fulfilment of his own being" (PR 105). So in contrast to Whitehead, Suchocki views the aim of God's concrescence merely as superjective.<sup>39</sup>

And last but not least, Suchocki expressly states that God's consequent nature is not prehended, while Whitehead not only claims in the last page of *Process and Reality* that "the perfected actuality passes back into the temporal world, and qualifies this world so that each temporal actuality includes it as an immediate fact of relevant experience" (PR 351), but also speaks in more exact language of "[t]he objective immortality of his [God's] consequent nature" (PR 32).

Here it is useful to interrupt the exposition for a moment, in order to point out that there are many passages in Suchocki which suggest far less of a difference between her interpretation and mine (the latter being closer to Whitehead's view, if only in wording). So the question arises: Is the difference truly that great, or is it a question of phrasing and emphasis?

Is, for example, a primordial satisfaction which manifests itself concretely in different contexts as a "moving determinateness" (MGWG 246) something other than God's absorbing physical prehensions in God's primordial unity? I place more emphasis on God's growth, and Suchocki emphasizes the primordial completeness which always manifests itself differently. Yet she too says: "God's satisfaction is a dynamic enjoyment of ever deepening intensity, always complete, and always in the process of completion" (EE 147). In other words, she too mentions fulfilment of God's own being, albeit not as an aspect of God's aim. And where she speaks of a moving determinateness in different contexts (cf. MGWG 246), this may be more than would appear at first sight like the emergent propositions I mentioned above.

And, though reluctantly, Suchocki too speaks of a contribution of an occasion to God:

The occasion's value to God cannot consist only in its togetherness of eternal objects, important though this is. Such togetherness has been known and valued by God eternally in the primordial vision. Rather, the peculiar contribution of the occasion is its vividness of actual embodiment of just those possibilities which it selects to the exclusion of all others. Its intensity of attainment is its valuation in the immediacy of itself. This alone can be the contribution of the occasion to God, but this is everything. (EE 93)

Despite her explicit position that there are no new possibilities which can alter God's satisfaction (MGWG 243; EE 142), she says: "The quality of God's satisfaction does not change since it is always harmony, always adventure, zest, and peace. But *the components of this satisfaction are continuously increasing*, and each *addition to the pattern* qualifies the superjectivity of the satisfaction relative to the becoming world" (EE 145, italics added). Also, earlier in the same book, she says: "The unity of God

is the integration of the primordial and consequent natures in what we will suggest is a continually dynamic satisfaction" (EE 84). These and other quotes resemble my interpretation more closely than was suggested above.

Yet it still appears to me that Suchocki does *not* refer to a "continuous though changing satisfaction" (Christian) or to a "growing satisfaction" as is contended in this article. The following quote may serve as an indication:

God "begins" with a definiteness which is constantly moving. The pattern of definiteness by its very nature is kaleidoscopic, manifesting one bright beauty following another, in ever self-surpassing intensity. The constancy is that the pattern always manifests the harmony of adventure, zest, peace, truth, and beauty; but *what* is manifesting the qualities, and *how*, is consequent upon God's prehension of the world. *The definiteness, however, depends upon the primordial satisfaction and is mediated through the mutuality of subjective form by which God feels every prehended occasion in light of all others and in light of the primordial vision.*" (EE 147, italics in the latter sentence added)

Suchocki seems to consider (here) God's consequent nature merely as an intermediary for the efficacy of God's primordial nature. This is in line with her explicit contention that God's consequent nature is not, itself, prehended (WR 9) and with the fact that she bases the prehensibility of God purely on God's primordial satisfaction.<sup>40</sup>

So, despite there being texts of Suchocki in which God's third phase (the last "one" of the one-many-one) resembles a growing satisfaction, it appears to me that her interpretation contains a fundamentally different suggestion; namely, that there is no intrinsic enrichment of God on the basis of prehensions of the world, and that these prehensions above all play a mediating role for God's unchanging conceptual satisfaction. However, the fact that Suchocki's opinion is not fully lucid with regard to this point encumbers its assessment.<sup>41</sup> Yet a number of evaluative remarks can be made.

First of all, the ambiguity noted has to do with the fact that Suchocki does not make it fully clear what God's final unity is other than God's initial unity (and to which degree it is a unity<sup>42</sup>). In one way or another, the fact that Suchocki sees concrescence chiefly as a synthesis of eternal objects has a part in this

<sup>40</sup>"[T]he definiteness that is required for the world's prehension of God is provided by the primordial satisfaction" (EEG 65).

<sup>41</sup>This ambiguity is also revealed by the following remark: "In my words, they [i.e. God's physical feelings woven into the harmony] bring the primordial vision to expression," which she continues without further explanation: "These feelings are then hardly accidental to God, but are in fact such that without them, God could not exist" (EEG 65).

<sup>42</sup>In Suchocki's view, God's final unity is evidently not a unity to such a degree that it provides a basis for the prehensibility of the consequent nature. See quote in note 40.

<sup>39</sup>See what has been mentioned earlier in Section D and note 27.

(see, for example, MGWG 242). If it would be the case that a concrescence is merely the synthesis of eternal objects, then actual occasions, naturally, have nothing to offer to God. Then it even becomes wholly unclear what the world would be for. Even though Suchocki makes an attempt to see the contribution of an actual entity as more than the "togetherness of eternal objects" (EE 93), she gives little weight, it seems to me, to the affirmation repeatedly made by Whitehead "that the process, or the concrescence, of any one actual entity involves the other *actual entities* among its components" (PR 7, italics added).

Secondly, according to Suchocki, God's consequent nature plays a necessary role in every offer of an initial aim by God (which, by the way, accords with the standard interpretation). I think, however, that this has undesirable consequences for the problem of theodicy. For, if God would give the initial aim on the basis of concrete detailed knowledge of the actual situation, knowledge the new occasion does not have by itself in such completeness, then it would be possible that "captains piloting vessels like the Titanic would be warned when icebergs invaded sealanes."<sup>43</sup> And God would be responsible for the absence of such a

<sup>43</sup>Donald Sherburne, "Decentering Whitehead," *Process Studies* 15 (1986), 83-94, at 89. Only John Cobb has recently paid attention to this problem of theodicy connected (although in his view not necessarily so) with the provision of the initial aim by God's primordial and consequent natures together (Cobb, "Sherburne on Providence," *Process Studies* 23 [1994], 25-29).

<sup>44</sup>As this is outside the scope of this article, the following very short exposition will have to suffice. In Whitehead's conceptuality this problem of theodicy seems to be avoided by the fact that it is God's primordial nature only that provides the initial aim. This implies that the "basic conditions" for which the initial aim indicates the best possibility of synthesis are themselves involved only as imagined, and so with "abruptness" and not with the complete concreteness of their realences (SMW 170-171). Therefore, the initial aim hasn't such a situational specificity as to raise the problem of theodicy. Moreover, the initial aim indicates the possibility of synthesis which gives a maximum intensity of experience for the immediate subject *itself* (and its anticipated future), and not the best for some "whole."

But isn't the problem still at play in (the interpretation proposed here of) Whitehead through the efficacy of God's consequent nature, which appears to be implied by the prehensibility of God's consequent nature? For two reasons I don't think that this is the case. First, even though God's consequent nature is such as to be prehensible (that is what this article is about), the nature of by far the most worldly occasions is such that their prehension of God's consequent nature is *negligible*, because they miss the complexity required for that. Moreover, even with respect to those highly complex organisms (like human beings) which can, now and again, catch a glimpse of God's consequent nature, the problem of theodicy doesn't return. For, even if we suppose that the prehension of God's consequent nature also includes an aspect of "paranormal" transmission of information (which I hold was *not* the idea Whitehead had in mind, however), would God then be to

warning. So we would be back to the problem of God's responsibility for evil, which Whitehead wanted to avoid.<sup>44</sup>

Besides this, the preservation of the world in God can hardly be conceived within the scope of Suchocki's interpretation,<sup>45</sup> and she explicitly bars any possibility that such a preserved world could influence worldly entities: "I experience God only in terms of his primordial satisfaction, not in terms of his consequent experience, and hence not in terms of my past self as conscious in God" (WR 9). Apart from the aspect of consciousness, this sentence seems to me to contradict the difficult final paragraph of *Process and Reality* (PR 351). Surely, in principle there is nothing wrong with a modification of Whitehead if it can be viewed as an improvement, but I see no reason to evaluate this as such, because Whitehead's own (implicit) conception seems to me very rich in possibilities when it comes to the interpretation of theological issues like "conscience" and "grace," for example.<sup>46</sup>

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blame when this information is not received? I don't think so, because it would be a *shortcoming on the part of the receiver* rather than on the side of God, whereas God would indeed be to blame if the information were to play a role in God's selection of the initial aim, like the standard interpretation has it.

<sup>45</sup>This observation, of course, appears to be incongruous with her exposition with regard to the "subjective immortality" of the entities which have been received in God's consequent nature. Cf. Ford and Suchocki, WR.

<sup>46</sup>To elucidate: Whitehead's concept of God's consequent nature as preserved and transformed World makes it conceivable that a human being by prehending that consequent nature—when it happens—"sees" his or her own previous history, unified and transformed after God's wisdom (PR 347, 351). This implies a number of things. First of all that in this way the experience of one's own personal identity can be accounted for more completely (PR 107, note 17). But also, that prehending God's consequent nature conceptually resembles looking in a mirror, only a mirror in which you see yourself at your best (cf. *Religion in the Making* [1926]. New York: Fordham University Press [1996], 155), and by which you are allured to become in fact as beautiful as you see yourself there. Theologically, the concept of "conscience" suggests itself here, though Whitehead doesn't explicitly mention this. He does speak of "inner judge" (who can take the shape of "goddess of mischief" and of "redeemer") (PR 351). Whitehead emphasizes in this context in *Process and Reality* also the aspect of love: it is, as it were, seeing yourself back through the eyes of someone who loves you, and with that a knowing yourself accepted. This makes theological notions, not only of conscience and judgment, but also for example of "grace" or "forgiveness which sets free" conceivable in terms of Whitehead's philosophy.

<sup>47</sup>Here we can mention some of the things Whitehead brings up in his treatment of Peace: the sensitiveness to tragedy as disclosure of an ideal (*Adventures of Ideas*. New York, Free Press [1933] (1967), 286); the intuition of lasting importance ("Immortality, in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*," edited by P.A. Schilpp. Library of Living Philosophers (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1951), 698); the awareness of self-transcending interest

Finally this: this essay deals with the problem of the prehensibility of God's consequent nature. With respect to that it must after all be said that Suchocki's writings do not so much solve this problem, but rather do not address it. For in her interpretation, God's consequent nature is not prehended. Because of this, her interpretation falls in a certain sense outside the scope of this article. That, in itself, is no problem. But giving no place to the notion of prehending God's consequent nature means, I think, leaving unused good opportunities offered by Whitehead's system, not only for understanding the personal experiences mentioned above, but also expressly for the understanding of certain crucial experiences which transcend personality.<sup>47</sup>

### F. Conclusion

In this essay, I hope to have shown that the entitative view, when combined with the reversed polarity of God, does not run into difficulties concerning the prehensibility of God's consequent nature.

The entitative interpretation of God's prehensibility as I have presented it in this essay, however, differs from the entitative interpretations of Jorge Nobo and of Marjorie Suchocki, and does not lead to the complications their readings, to a lesser or greater extent, entail. The difference with the interpretation of William Christian is much less fundamental, and lies mainly in the manner of argumentation. Where his argumentation is based on God's everlastingness, which however—in the absence of the reversal of poles as an argument—remains ill-founded, my argumentation is based on the reversal of God's poles, which is well-founded in Whitehead's metaphysics.

The emphasis on the polar reversal is essential to my interpretation. This emphasis it shares with Suchocki's, while it is hardly present in Nobo and Christian.

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(AI 285). Moreover, Whitehead's concept gives the opportunity to understand the tension between the "self" [constituted by the aim provided by God's primordial nature] and "self-forgetfulness" [brought on by prehension of God's consequent nature, that is, by "the immanence of the Great Fact"] (AI 295-296). Whitehead even connects the concept of truth to God's consequent nature (PR 12-13). These points may serve as an indication of what can be at issue when the prehending of God's consequent nature is not taken into account.

By the way, within Whitehead's metaphysics the prehending of God's consequent nature can be conceived of as an experience of *God* as well as—entirely secular—as an experience of *the World in its unity and everlastingness*. Hence, the experiences which can be interpreted with the aid of the concept of prehending God's consequent nature certainly need not be construed religiously, as is obvious from Whitehead's writings after *Process and Reality* (though that construal suggests itself with more force in the experience of being loved mentioned in the foregoing note). This might offer interesting possibilities to a theology that seeks intelligibility in a secularized context.

In contrast to Suchocki, however, I conclude from the reversal of poles, that God is always in concrescence and always in satisfaction not only primordially, but also consequentially, and so is always becoming and always being, always subject and always superject. This resembles Christian's view of God's "continuous though changing satisfaction," but differs from the views of Nobo and Suchocki. For Nobo, God isn't always in satisfaction and Suchocki accounts only for the primordial satisfaction.

My interpretation, though developed independently, may be seen as a reassertion of Christian's proposal, partly through a stronger argumentation based on the reversal of poles, and mainly by a refutation of the objection made by Leclerc and Ford. Their objection to Christian's view is that for prehensibility (or objective immortality) of God, the perishing of God's subjective immediacy is required. I think I have shown that this objection fails because of the reversal of poles. For the reversal of poles entails that satisfaction for God doesn't mean determinateness and completeness, but determinateness and *incompleteness*. Because of this incompleteness the requirement of perishing is dropped. So, God as fully actual, is always in concrescence and always in satisfaction, and therefore always prehensible.

In this way, I think, it has been shown with some force that Whitehead's view of God as one always concrescing actual entity does not pose any difficulties for the prehensibility of God, provided we take account of the unique nature of that one actual entity "God." And thereby that the conception of God as one actual entity offers the possibility (and more so than the societal view) to conceive of God as efficacious with regard to worldly entities, even with respect to the consequent nature. This offers attractive perspectives for a theological reflection on God's involvement in the world.

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