

I see only confusion in Whitehead's talk of the different "natures" of God—"primordial," "consequent," "superjective"—and, especially, in the not uncommon supposition that they are only verbally different from Hartshorne's "aspects" or "poles" of God—*A* (absolute, abstract) and *R* (relative, concrete). Whereas the first are more appropriately thought of as distinguishable ways in which God's unbegun and unending process of self-creation functions in, or makes a difference to, the world, the second are best thought of as the abstract constant and the abstract variable respectively, which are required to think and speak correctly about God's nature or essence, as distinct from any concrete actual state in which God's essence is actualized.

* * * * *

That God has a primordial as well as a consequent function in or with respect to the world—and in that sense may be said, misleadingly, to have a primordial and a consequent nature—is one thing. But the primordial function of God is precisely a function of *God*, the concrete, fully actual God, not of anything as utterly abstract as what Whitehead means by "the primordial *nature* of God" (italics added). And yet Whitehead speaks—again and again, from *Science and the Modern World* on—of some such thing as "the decision of God's *nature*," instead of the decision of God (italics added). (He uses this particular phrase, in fact, in the formulation, "the decision of God's nature and the decisions [not of the *nature(s)* of all occasions, but] of all occasions" [*PRc*: 47].)

It's true, of course, that it is of the nature of God as actual ever and again to make *some* such decision. But any such decision simply illustrates at the divine level the principle that—as Whitehead puts it—"however far the sphere of efficient causation be pushed in the determination of components of a concrescence, . . . beyond the determination of these components, there always remains the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe" (47). So if the primordial function of God is, as Whitehead says, a function of God's "primordial appetite," it is so only indirectly—God's primordial nature being, in fact, twice removed. Directly it is a function of the actual concrete God as constitutive of the actual world of each emerging concrescence, even as God's consequent function is the identical divine act

vis-à-vis the past rather than the future. Precisely in ever and again creating Godself as concrete actuality—thus illustrating on the divine level "the final reaction of the self-creative unity of the universe"—God functions consequently in relation to the past only precisely thereby to function primordially in relation to the future. But in both cases, it is precisely and only God, the actual concrete God, who performs the function, not some merely abstract "nature" of God. (This presupposes, of course, that God's consequent nature, although inclusive of God's primordial nature in the way in which an abstract variable is inclusive of an abstract constant, is itself abstract. Thus, relative to the actual, concrete decision of God, God's abstract consequent nature is, as it were, once removed, while God's abstract primordial nature, being included in the abstract variable of the consequent nature as an abstract constant, is twice removed.)

* * * * *

One and the same divine act of concrescence or self-creation accounts *ad intra* for the trinity and *ad extra* for the creation/emancipation and consummation/redemption of the world, as well as for the salvation of human beings and any other rational beings in need of it.

15 July 2005