

Is it, or is it not, correct to say that God is a "creature," or an "accident," of "creativity"?

I hold that it is not correct to say this, because "God," correctly understood, refers to the one strictly universal and therefore necessarily existent individual; and the necessarily existent individual as such cannot be reasonably said to be a "creature," or an "accident." Why? Because a creature, or an accident, cannot exist necessarily, but only contingently, and therefore, if it is existent at all, is only contingently existent.

This is not to deny, however, that there is—indeed, *must be*—something in, or about, God, as distinct from God as such, that is not necessary but only contingent and therefore quite properly said to be a creature, or an accident. To say that something exists is always, in all cases, to say that the essence of the thing is somehow actualized, i.e., instantiated in at least some actuality. But it lies in the very meaning of "actuality" that anything actual can never be necessary but must always be contingent. Therefore, even if the essence of a thing is such that it is and must be somehow actualized, any actuality in which it is instantiated must itself be contingent. Consequently, although the essence of God, correctly understood, is that of the one strictly universal individual who can exist only necessarily, any of the unbegun and unending sequence of actualities in which this universal individual is instantiated is not necessary but contingent, and so is, in the exact sense, a creature, or an accident.

Unless I am wrong, the mistake Whitehead makes in speaking of God as a creature, or an accident, of creativity closely parallels the other mistake he makes when he says that God's existence is "the ultimate irrationality." "No reason can be given for just that limitation which it stands in His [*sc.* God's] nature to impose. . . . No reason can be given for the nature of God, because that nature is the ground of rationality. . . . There is a metaphysical need for a principle of determination, but there can be no metaphysical reason for what is determined" (*Science and the Modern World*: 257). Whitehead's mistake is to speak of God's abstract "existence" and "nature," which in his view *are*

metaphysical and necessary, instead of God's concrete *actuality*, which being contingent and accidental, is, in the sense intended, "irrational."

21 October 1998