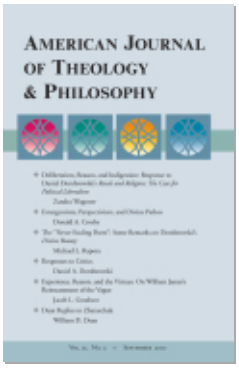
Responses to Critics

Daniel A. Dombrowski



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Responses to Critics

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It is my good fortune to have three critics to respond to who are both insightful readers of two of my books and productive dialectical partners in the (Peircian) asymptotic approach to truth.

I. Wagoner and Radical Democracy

I would like to initiate my response to Zandra Wagoner by thanking her for her clear and insightful comments and for the opportunity to clarify the relationship between the political liberalism that I defend and Wagoner's own radical democracy. My comments will be divided into two main sections, dealing respectively with: (1) the different emphases in political philosophy that she notices in her own version of radical democracy and my political liberalism; and (2) the complicated issue of religious participation in politics.

1. *Different Emphases*. (a) Although Wagoner seems at home with a broadly liberal political framework, she is concerned that political liberalism is a bit too tame. Given some uses of the term "liberalism," I understand her concern. But I claim that the sort of political philosophy that emerges not only from Rawls's later writings, but also from the decision-making procedure found in the original position, *is* a type of radical democracy.

Here I would emphasize the fact that political liberalism is opposed to the system of *unrestricted* utilitarianism that provides the theoretical basis for the capitalist society that we live in at present. On this view, as long as gross domestic product is increasing, and as long as average utility is high when the amount of overall wealth is divided by the number of citizens, the intellectual heirs of Adam Smith are generally happy. One of the major problems with this approach is that no rational person would agree to it when given the choice of other alternatives behind the veil of ignorance. In short, unrestricted or average utility is too risky and stretches to the breaking point the strains of commitment when it is considered in the original position that one might be incarnated as someone whose formal or material rights might be overridden for the sake of the aggregative reasons that are integral to utilitarianism itself.

Or again, political liberalism is also opposed to the only slightly more palatable option provided by a scheme of *restricted* utility. This view, popularly known as welfare capitalism, is in partial contrast to the laissez faire capitalism

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found in a system of unrestricted utility. The problem here is that the restrictions in a system of restricted utility are quite minimal. Once citizens have been rescued from the horrors of absolute poverty in welfare capitalism, the aggregative logic of utilitarianism operates in a largely unrestricted fashion. Once again, when reasonable people who desire to abide by fair terms of agreement enter the original position, and when they deliberate there, they simply would not choose a scheme of utility, not even a restricted one. It strikes me as a devastating criticism that, although in point of fact many people defend laissez faire or welfare capitalism, no reasonable person thinking rationally (i.e., in a fair decision-making procedure) would make these claims.

As Norman Daniels makes the point, political liberalism would lead to the most egalitarian society in the world today, even when the social welfare states are considered.[1] One of the reasons why this remarkable point is not more widely known may be due to the famous criticism of Rawls by the libertarian Robert Nozick. Because Nozick defends the *distribution* of goods found in laissez faire capitalism, and because his view is widely seen in opposition to Rawls's view, it has been widely assumed that political liberalism involves *redistributive* or welfare capitalism. This is not the case. The problem with the word "redistributive" here is that it grants too much to the initial distribution. It works on the assumption that unrestricted utility has some sort of priority in a just society, in contrast to the lexically ordered priorities that would be chosen in a fair decision-making procedure: the equality principle, the opportunity principle, and the difference principle, respectively.

It is to be hoped that just as the great political philosophers of the past have had their greatest influence in the centuries after their deaths (Locke, Smith, and Marx come to mind), that the radical democratic theory of Rawls will be better known (and, it is to be hoped, implemented) in the future.[2] We can all look forward to a time when liberal freedoms are not merely formal; when elections are strictly public goods without private funding (i.e., without bribes); when health care is universal; and when inherited wealth is subject to the regime of the difference principle, if not abolished altogether. It should be noted, however, that the sort of property-owning democracy that I defend would be quite different from any sort of command economy that prohibits altogether the rationally defensible uses of free markets.

(b) Wagoner is correct to emphasize that any political philosophy that dis-

1. Norman Daniels, "Democratic Equality: Rawls's Complex Egalitarianism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls,* ed. Samuel Freeman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 243.

2. See Samuel Freeman, *Rawls* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 458.

courages disagreement regarding *political* questions may very well be hiding power relationships and, as a result, permitting injustice to continue. In this regard Wagoner and I share a taste for a healthy *agon,*[3] hence both of us encourage public disagreement regarding political questions when such disagreement occurs. I would like to qualify my own stance in two ways, however.

First, such public disagreement regarding political questions should be characterized by rational deliberation (from the Latin *deliberare*: to weigh in mind, as if on a scale), in contrast to bargaining or negotiation. That is, I see no way to approximate justice as long as political discourse is reduced to Thrasymachean or Hobbesian threat advantage.

Second, I admit that I do discourage debate regarding the truth or falsity of various comprehensive doctrines or conceptions of the good *in politics*. As I see things, conceptions of the good (e.g., theism, agnosticism, etc.) are likely to conflict, very often uncompromisingly so, hence we are more likely to approximate a just society if questions regarding the existence of God, the nature of personal identity, etc., are taken off the table as *political* questions. Debates regarding theodicy make perfect sense to me in philosophy classrooms and in book clubs, but in politics it seems to me that we would be better served by encouraging a common conception of democratic institutions that are fair and are seen as such by adherents of any one of a number of comprehensive doctrines that are reasonable.

There exists already a metacommunity of justice wherein societal stability is established for the right reasons (e.g., the respect due to persons), rather than as a result of fear or intimidation. Given the fact of pervasive pluralism that is nonetheless reasonable (i.e., where citizens, despite their differences regarding the comprehensive good, can nonetheless find overlapping consensus with other citizens regarding justice), we are better served by tolerating each other's reasonable differences rather than by forcibly eliminating them. As Charles Hartshorne put the point, a liberal is one who knows that he or she is not God.[4]

(c) I also think that Wagoner is correct regarding the permanence of exclusion, in that there is no social world without loss of some sort. It counts in political liberalism's favor, however, that it is the most inclusive political system that is nonetheless fair. As long as citizens are reasonable (i.e., as long as they are willing to abide by the terms of fair decision-making procedures), they can

3. See Daniel Dombrowski, *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

4. See Charles Hartshorne, *Creativity in American Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 9. I am in debt here to Jon Taylor, "Thinking about Dan Dombrowski's *Rawls and Religion*" (HIARPT Conference Paper; June 15, 2009).

subscribe to any comprehensive doctrine they wish. That is, in political liberalism the goal is exclusion only of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines.

But even here there is a strong desire to be inclusive. We should aim to tolerate even the intolerant, at least until the latter pose an imminent threat to the basic liberties of others. The hope is that our tolerance in this regard will, over the course of time, change the minds and hearts of the intolerant. Those who have been unfairly excluded historically, even in democratic societies (e.g., on the basis of sexual orientation), do not present a theoretical problem in political liberalism. As was implied in *A Theory of Justice*[5] and as was made explicit in Rawls's later writings, political exclusion on the basis of sexual orientation is, quite simply, unjust.

(d) But more needs to be said here, as Wagoner rightly urges. She is concerned that an overly rational approach to politics will leave us tepid. By (largely) excluding the passions from political discourse we will also distort what matters most to us and we will degenerate into deracinated zombies, it seems. Once again, I share Wagoner's concern, but once again I do so with a few qualifications.

As an example of the sort of passion that I find commendable in politics, I cite anger regarding injustice. If justice is the first virtue of social institutions, the way truth is the first virtue of systems of thought,[6] then we should never complacently accept injustice, even when it is supposedly harmless. Or again, *envy* at the legitimate accomplishments of others may be a vice, but *resentment* at the rewards they have received, if illegitimate, is indeed a virtue, as I see things.[7] However, I am skittish regarding the possibility that passionate commitment would be seen by some (not Wagoner) as a substitute for justificatory warrant. After all, throughout history people have been passionately committed to political causes that were quite unjust. Perhaps because of the paucity of rational political argument in our culture, dominated as it is by the attenuated rational discourse fostered by the electronic media, I am not willing to give a blank check to the cause of passionate commitment in politics.

It seems to me that the most appropriate place for many of our passions is at the associational level. Rather than romantically hoping that everyone in society would passionately share the same likes and dislikes, coming to terms with pervasive pluralism pushes us in another direction. *Gemeinschaft,* if it is to be found at all, is to be found at the associational rather than at the political level. We should all be committed to justice, but not to the particular values

5. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 395.

6. Ibid., 3.

7. Ibid., sec. 80–81.

shared at the associational level. A realistic utopia is one that permits passionate commitment to a wide array of particular associational values *as long as* these passionate commitments are constrained by principles that all reasonable people would agree to in a fair decision-making procedure.

2. *Religious Participation in Politics*. Wagoner is surely correct that more work needs to be done to unpack the still prevalent, meat-cleaver distinction between the "public" and the "private." To situate religious organizations between these two in the realm of the "nonpublic" is a good start in that religious believers tend to cluster in communities and rituals that are not exactly private. But Wagoner's helpful examples indicate quite clearly how complicated the relationships among the public, nonpublic, and private really are, especially when religious convictions surreptitiously enter into public discourse.

Sometimes this surreptitious entry is a problem, as Wagoner rightly argues, and sometimes it merely needs to be noticed. As an instance of the latter, consider that contemporary defenses of human rights are often living off the capital of the Christian ages. They receive a great deal of insurance without paying very much premium. For example, it should strike us as odd that a reductionistic materialist, who thinks of human beings as so much protoplasmic stuff and as the strictly accidental byproducts of evolutionary history, should also belong to Amnesty International. However, religious believers who think of human beings as being made in the image of God, and who also belong to Amnesty International, can pay their membership dues with a straight face.

I am convinced that Wagoner is correct to argue against the pure exclusivist view of Richard Rorty and others, wherein religious believers ought *never* to bring their religious convictions to bear in political discourse. I think that she is right in her opposition to this view for two reasons. First, it is not as easy as Rorty thinks to "privatize" religious belief, as Wagoner ably shows. And second, although Rorty serves well the (non-) establishment clause of the first amendment to the United States Constitution, he conveniently avoids the implications of the free exercise clause. That is, if some people hold religious beliefs (and hold these beliefs passionately, on Wagoner's account), then it does not seem fair to ask them to shut up *simpliciter*.

But I am not convinced that we should run to the other extreme by defending pure inclusivism, as in the thought of (the liberal) Franklin Gamwell, (the conservative) Nicholas Wolterstorff, or (the radical democrat) Wagoner herself. Consider the contentious political issue of abortion in this regard, where passionate political discourse reaches its zenith.

The key is that citizens should generally "bracket" metaissues in politics. One of the reasons why Rawls uses the phrase "comprehensive doctrine" in *Political Liberalism* is to underscore the fact that this bracketing needs to occur

not only in religious believers, but in those who defend nonreligious comprehensive doctrines as well. That is, "comprehensive doctrine" is meant to be much more general than "religion." The hope is that *all* reasonable people, whatever their comprehensive doctrine, could discourse *together* on the topic of political justice so that there would not be entirely separate conversations among Catholics themselves, Jews themselves, atheists themselves, etc.

On the partial inclusivist (or, if one prefers, partial exclusivist) view that I defend, one can bring a religious (or nonreligious) comprehensive doctrine to bear on public discourse as long as the duty of civility is met. This duty requires us, however, to translate the way we speak at the associational level into its rough equivalent at the level of public discourse. If there is no rough equivalent, then it is best to remain silent. An example of this translation proviso is conveniently provided by Martin Luther King, who would sometimes speak of a time when all of *God's* children would walk together in a discrimination-free society and who would at other times speak in terms that would be acceptable to all reasonable citizens. But even when he used religious language, reasonable agnostics knew what he had in mind and agreed with him, hence he supported public reason even when he invoked his Christian comprehensive doctrine. Attentive listeners to King very often were willing to do the translation efforts themselves and found the task relatively easy. Opponents to abortion, however, have generally not done a good job of managing the translation proviso.

Whatever one's view of the morality of abortion, in a politically liberal society such a view must be compatible with public reason. The justification for this is that the use of the coercive power of the state in a pluralistic society must, in order to be fair, be articulated in terms that all reasonable citizens could understand and plausibly accept. That is, such a justification ought not to be in terms of a particular comprehensive doctrine that simply could not be accepted by the person coerced. Rawls isolates three major values that are at work in the abortion debate: respect for human persons, equality of women, and the reproduction over time of liberal society.[8] I will focus on the first two of these values on the assumption that the abortion debate does not figure significantly in the issues of how to produce new citizens (this is relatively easy) and how to educate them into liberal citizenship (which is a bit harder, but the effort is not hindered by legalized abortion).

In political liberalism there is a transfer of the burden of proof in the political debate regarding abortion. To outlaw abortion *simpliciter* would clearly restrict in a dramatic way the freedom of women who wish to have abortions,

8. See John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 243–44.

hence from the start there is a presumption against restrictive abortion laws in that these laws militate against the equality of women. The question is: can abortion opponents meet the burden of proof that is on their shoulders by justifying restrictive abortion laws in terms of public reason?

Granted, respect for human persons is a value that is on a par with the equality of women with men. (Indeed, the latter can be seen as a species of the former, which can be seen as the more generic value.) And all reasonable parties agree that pregnant women are human persons. But there is reasonable disagreement as to whether fetuses in the early stages of pregnancy are human persons. For example, Saints Augustine and Thomas Aquinas were delayed (rather than immediate) hominization theorists,[9] and many contemporary individuals follow these thinkers in being skeptical regarding the personhood status of the early fetus. Although the *metaphysical* status of the early fetus is not a political question, the fact that there is significant disagreement regarding the metaphysical status of the early fetus among otherwise reasonable citizens *does* have political consequences. One of these is the aforementioned injustice of having one's own comprehensive doctrine run roughshod over others in a condition of reasonable pluralism when one's comprehensive doctrine has implications for (or is seen, perhaps mistakenly, to have implications for) the political debate regarding abortion.

Because the denial of abortion rights puts a severe restriction on certain women's freedom, and because the early fetus cannot be seen by many citizens as a political patient with sentiency, or even with the proximate potential to develop sentiency (even a sperm cell all by itself has some remote potential to develop sentiency), abortion should be permitted in the early stages of pregnancy. There must be some compelling case for the political status of the early fetus in order to severely restrict a woman's freedom to have an abortion. And this case has not been forthcoming, even if Rawls himself seemed to commend Joseph Bernadin, who was the Catholic cardinal of Chicago, for trying to provide such a case (however inadequately) in terms that were within the bounds of public reason.[10] Many reasonable people are just not convinced that the (amazing) genetic makeup of a fertilized egg, for example, makes it a political patient.

However, it would be correct to insist that due to the functioning of a central

9. See Daniel Dombrowski, *A Brief, Liberal, Catholic Defense of Abortion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

10. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, paperback ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), lvi. Also see Daniel Dombrowski, *Rawls and Religion: The Case for Political Liberalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). Cf., Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Richard Rorty, "Religion as Conversation-Stopper," *Common Knowledge* 3, no. 1 (1994): 1–6.

nervous *system* in the third trimester (in contrast to unconnected nerve cells that develop earlier in pregnancy), restrictions on late abortions are politically defensible. That is, reasonable citizens are in universal agreement that sentiency makes one a political patient of *some* sort, although there may be disagreements regarding the extent of political protection that ought to be afforded sentient beings. (Wagoner and I are in strong agreement that the extent of this protection should be much more significant than it is at present.) But if a mere aggregate being is not sentient (i.e., if it has not yet had experiences of its own), it is hard to see how it could be the subject of political concern. The important question to keep in mind is whether there are sufficient public reasons for overriding the political value of women's equality. And the pro-choice argument is that there is no acceptable case within public reason for the personhood of the early fetus, hence the burden of proof on the pro-life side is not met.

Perhaps I have been unfair to Wagoner here in that she has not tried to defend restrictive abortion laws. My point, however, is to argue that whereas it makes sense for a conservative like Wolterstorff to defend pure inclusivism (on the grounds of his own theory), it does not make sense for Gamwell and Wagoner and other liberals to follow conservatives into a defense of this position. To do so is to invite indefensible results not only regarding the abortion debate, but also regarding debates surrounding the sexual freedom of reasonable citizens, where some conservatives are more than willing to force the terms of their own comprehensive doctrine on those who do not share them.

3. *Nonhuman Animals*. I would like to end by reinforcing Wagoner's idea that no approximation to a just society can fail to take into consideration the unnecessary infliction of intense pain and/or premature death on nonhuman animals. There is (unfortunately) too much that needs to be said in this regard,[11] but it is uplifting to come into intellectual contact with a kindred (i.e., nonanthropocentric) spirit.

II. Crosby and Two Types of Emergentism

Donald Crosby's detailed and probing comments deserve a response in at least three areas: first his proposal to have emergentism considered as a fourth option in the attempt to respond adequately to the mind-body problem; second regarding the issue of how a divine being could respond to individuals; and third regarding my Hartshornian theodicy. Despite the fact that Crosby's views

11. See Daniel Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); *Hartshorne and the Metaphysics of Animal Rights* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); and *Babies and Beasts: The Argument from Marginal Cases* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

are in several respects quite different from my own, I am confident that some degree of rapprochement can be reached in all three areas.

1. *Emergentism*. One plausible interpretation of Whitehead's career suggests that whereas in earlier works[12] he tried and failed to explain nature without experience, in his magnum opus[13] he made what has come to be known as the mind-body problem his focus and responded to this problem through what is now often called panexperientialism. Indeed, it is widely held that the mind-body problem has been the key intellectual issue since the time of Descartes. It is also widely held that the two most viable options in response to this problem are dualism and some sort of materialism, with panexperientialism (or panpsychism) a distant third option. Crosby tries to introduce emergentism as a fourth.

Much depends on what is meant by "emergentism." One sense of the term refers to the view that complex life forms emerge out of simple life forms. Here I have no disagreement with Crosby in that I share with him a broadly evolutionary view of natural history. Indeed, I have learned a great deal from him in this regard.[14] But a second sense of the term seems to be in operation in Crosby's desire to have emergentism function as a fourth option in the mind-body debate. Here the term refers to the emergence of experience out of nonexperience. I wonder how this could occur.

Consider the widely acknowledged problems with dualism: its inability to adequately explain the interaction of mind and body and its violation of the principle of continuity in nature. These are just as severe as the problems widely acknowledged with materialism: it largely leaves consciousness out of the picture and hence fails to explain the (most important mental) phenomena. *Both* sets of problems stem from a common source: the Cartesian intuitions that mind indicates a strictly "inside" realm that is temporal but not spatial, whereas matter indicates a strictly "outside" realm that is spatial but not really temporal. In both dualism and materialism, mind is viewed as "the great exception," as David Ray Griffin has forcefully and persuasively argued.[15]

The above problems affect the viability of emergentism as a fourth option, especially if emergentism in this sense is really a temporalized version of dualism: first no experience and then experience. Griffin helpfully gathers the

12. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920).

13. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, corrected ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978 [1929]).

14. See Donald Crosby, *Novelty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), chaps. 5–6.

15. See David Ray Griffin, *Unsnarling the World Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

arguments from several prominent figures in the mind-body debate (e.g., Colin McGinn, William Seager, Jaegwon Kim, Thomas Nagel, and Sewell Wright). Their collective objection goes something like this: emergentism is unintelligible in principle because one cannot makes sense of how pulpy, insentient matter could yield sentience; it seems to be a dead end because of the logically unbridgeable gap (assuming the absence of an external injection of experience) between a pure outside being to one that has an inside; that is, the emergence of experience out of nonexperience seems like sheer magic.

I would like to make it clear that I am not necessarily endorsing these criticisms of emergentism, but I think that they do call into question whether emergentism will provide a better option to the dualism-materialism debate than panexperientialism, especially when it is considered that in the past few years panexperientialism has picked up some notable support from Galen Strawson, William Seager, and David Chalmers. In Crosby's defense it might be said that with the emergence of replicators that have an "interest" in self-duplication, eventually a "point of view" could arise in a natural world in which previously there were no interests or points of view. Perhaps if lightning struck some primeval soup (see the language above regarding "sheer magic") certain parts of matter would start to catalyze not only their own reproduction but their own experiences of such reproduction.

In short, consciousness arising out of microscopic sentiency seems intelligible, but consciousness arising out of utterly insentient matter seems unintelligible. If there is no internal becoming to matter (no memory of the past, no anticipation of the future, no self-determination) and if there is no spontaneity to matter (no Platonic self-motion), then the origin of spontaneity could understandably strike some interpreters as magical. Once again, the root difficulty here, from my point of view, is the Cartesian assumption that matter is strictly "outside" and strictly spatial. Whitehead was prescient in describing this conception of matter, devoid of subjective immediacy, as "vacuous actuality."

I would like to make it clear that I agree very much with Crosby's desire to naturalize the mind. That is, I share his concern with the implicit supernaturalism found in dualism. But I am equally fearful of reductionism, hence my attraction to panexperientialism as a third alternative in that it avoids supernaturalism (even if it is nonetheless compatible with theism) as well as reductionism. My approach is to begin with experience (in that *we* are natural beings, after all) and then seek a unified view of nature. Our experience is fully natural; it is nature as known from the inside. Once one realizes that experience is not an exception to nature, one can then have genuine hope that the mind-body problem can be adequately resolved.

One last point should be made regarding why Crosby offers emergentism

as a fourth option. He thinks that panexperientialists stretch the meaning of "feeling" too far. In this regard he is very much like L. Bryant Keeling, to whom I have responded in detail.[16] In brief, I think that it is not a stretch to refer to microscopic feelings because we *do* experience microscopic feelings in localized pleasure and pain. We might not be able to identify the microindividuals as such, but we can approximate this goal by pointing exactly to where it hurts when we burn our finger, for example.

In any event, I suspect that the appeal of emergentism largely lies in the transfer of its legitimate use in the first sense of the term to its questionable use in the second sense of the term, as distinguished above.

2. *Divine Experience of Individuals*. Crosby's objection here is that if there were a God, we should not assume, as theists do, that this being could experience individuals. One can never fully or adequately feel another being's feelings due to the radical particularity of feeling. Here Crosby echoes Edgar Brightman's criticisms of Hartshorne's views.[17] Brightman thought that participation in another's life would mean that it would no longer really be another life but would be one's own. Crosby analogously claims that participation in the life of another inevitably leads to Spinozistic monism and to a usurping, police-state God!

Crosby's usual moderation is not in evidence here, but I have to admit that the claim that the process God is like a totalitarian dictator leads to exciting reading and a lively dialectical exchange. Here is how I would reply.

Rather than claiming that one can never feel another's feelings, I would claim the opposite: every subject feels other subjects, especially previous stages of itself, which are, in a sense, partially other selves on the process view of identity built on an asymmetrical view of time. This incorporation of previous stages of oneself and of the outside world is what the process doctrine of prehension is all about. Subjects feel other subjects.

As I see things, Crosby's (and Brightman's) view is dangerously close to violating Plato's prohibition against absolute oneness in the second half of the *Parmenides*. That is, each one is in relation with other ones rather than in complete isolation from others. We could not even say that an absolute, nonrelational one exists in that such a claim would be putting this one in relation with other ones that exist. On the Hartshornian view of organic inclusiveness,

16. See L. Bryant Keeling, "Feeling as a Metaphysical Category: Hartshorne from an Analytic View," *Process Studies* 6 (1976): 51–66; also see Daniel Dombrowski, *Divine Beauty: The Aesthetics of Charles Hartshorne* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004).

17. See Randall Auxier and Mark Davies, eds., *Hartshorne and Brightman on God, Process, and Persons: The Correspondence, 1922–1945* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2001).

this point is driven home in dramatic fashion in that we clearly have feeling of other feelings, say in our cells. There is no temptation to *identify* the second feeling of the individual as a whole with the first feeling of the microscopic (e.g., cellular) individual. The first feeling *is* particular, as Crosby rightly implies, but it is not radically particular. It has a subjective form of its own that is not completely severed from our experience, once again as is evidenced in localized pleasure and pain. In a way, both Crosby and I are trying to work out a defensible use of pronouns. On my account, *its* feeling (when talking about cellular experience) affects *my* feeling. Crosby may be correct that I may not be able to *fully* experience the feelings that my cells have, but I would be quite surprised to learn that I was totally in the dark about them.

The point to my response is not to dispute Crosby's agnosticism, but I would like to suggest that there is nothing in principle that is unintelligible about analogizing from our experience of our cells' experiences to God experiencing our experiences (i.e., the Platonic-Hartshornian concept of God as the World Soul[18]). On this analogy, the denial of strict divine externality to the world does not have to result in its Spinozistic form in that panentheism is conceptually distinct from pantheism. Further, if creaturely differences are not melted into an undifferentiated whole amenable to enslavement by a divine tyrant, then we need not share Crosby's fear about the cosmos as a police state. In this regard I would cite a neutral witness. Richard Rorty was a lifelong agnostic who was, by his own admission, tone deaf to religion and to St. Paul's claim that *fides ex auditu* (hearing is believing). But *if* he were to believe in God, it would be belief in the process God who was, as he understood things, the fellow sufferer who understands.[19] In effect, it is not only those who are sympathetic to Hartshornian theism who understand it to be pointing toward a greatest conceivable being who is pacific rather than bellicose and who exerts persuasive rather than coercive power.

Crosby is surely correct that both intrinsic and instrumental value are limit concepts, hence Hartshorne's label for his position, "contributionism," is somewhat misleading in that it could easily give rise to the idea that we do not have any intrinsic value at all and are valuable only in an instrumental sense. This is not what I intend to convey, hence it might be more fruitful to return to Whitehead's language in *Modes of Thought*. All value has three components: value for

18. See Daniel Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion: A Process Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

19. See Herman Saatkamp, ed., *Rorty and Pragmatism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995), 29–36.

itself, value for others, value for the whole—for God, if one is a panentheist.[20] It should be noted that by intrinsic value I mean noninstrumental value, not the sort of value, *per impossible,* to be found in a Parmenidean absolute one. That is, although intrinsic value is noninstrumental, it is nonetheless relational. In fact, the whole point to aesthetic detachment is to learn to appreciate, or to better appreciate, the value of things-in-themselves, albeit as they are related to other things-in-themselves.

In sum, I do not think that we need to share Crosby's worry that divine experience of individuals is either impossible or, if possible, threatening.

3. *Theodicy*. Concerning this topic there is much on which Crosby and I agree. No defensible theodicy should either trivialize intense suffering or try to forget it. As the Wordsworth line from the immortality ode has it, what having been, must ever be. That is, as long as there are conscious beings with memory around, egregious evil is real and tragedy is ineradicable.

It is my fault that I have several times used the word "enjoy" to refer to God's experience of the world without distinguishing between two different senses of the term: to experience, in general, and to experience joyfully, in particular. It was the former sense that I had in mind when referring to God's enjoyment of the world. The latter use of the term, as Crosby rightly notices, runs the risk of trivializing intense suffering. Crosby is to be thanked for forcing me to make this distinction explicitly.

But I do not think that an aesthetic model for theodicy runs the same risk. On this model there are at least two impediments to beauty that have to be considered. First, there is what Whitehead called anaesthesia, where one settles for lesser achievements of beauty (with "beauty" defined as integrated diversity and intensity of positive experience) when greater achievements were easily possible. In this regard there is a similarity between process theodicy and the Augustinian view of evil as privation, although Augustine's defense of divine omnipotence and a version of divine omniscience with respect to what are from a human perspective future contingencies means that my similarities to Augustine on this issue remain limited. Second, there is the severe impediment to beauty provided by unnecessary destruction of sentient life, say at the abattoir or on the battlefield.

I do not detect any complacency regarding evil in the theodicy I have defended in *Divine Beauty: The Aesthetics of Charles Hartshorne*. This theod-

20. See Brian Henning, *The Ethics of Creativity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005). Also see Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1938).

icy involves the obligation to bring about the greatest possible beauty by (to speak negatively) avoiding both anaesthesia and the unnecessary destruction of sentient life as well as by (to speak positively) facilitating the harmonies and intensities of our own experiences, those of others, and that of the whole.

It must be admitted, however, that the concept of tragedy I have defended involves a conflict of positive values. An implication of this view is that discord and ugliness are partial constituents of beauty, as the symphonies of Mahler and the dark chords of Ornette Coleman illustrate. Our aesthetic sensibilities are trivialized, I think, if beauty is equated with mere prettiness. Even suffering can be compatible with an overall beauty. I think this is what leads Crosby to suspect that I run the risk of glossing over evil. But I am more than willing to admit that an infant born with severe defects is at odds with belief in God if such a deity is omnipotent. But because I reject belief in divine omnipotence in that it is at odds with the logic of perfection itself, I can affirm with a straight face that life (even divine life) *is* tragic. In this regard my view is thoroughly Greek[21] and, I suspect, closer to Crosby's than he realizes.

III. Raposa and the Slightly Schizophrenic

Process or neoclassical theists are familiar with the situation I am in at present: sandwiched between a religious skeptic like Donald Crosby and a classical theist like Michael Raposa. Luckily for me these two interlocutors are friendly and intelligent. I will respond to Raposa's comments in four areas: aesthetic matters, the difficulties I have with classical theism, my approach to apophatic theology, and, as a supplement to my comments on Crosby, my view of theodicy.

1. *Aesthetic Matters*. Both classical theists like Raposa and neoclassical theists like myself can defend the idea that beauty is coextensive with being (although we might differ in what is meant by "being"). Further, we can agree that there ought to be no rigid separation between thoughts and feelings in that, as Raposa rightly notes, feelings are vague thoughts. Raposa's familiarity with Peirce encourages the helpful view of feelings as responses to signs. Indeed, how we feel in response to signs in part constitutes our interpretation of them. And if feeling goes "all the way down" on the panexperientialist view that I defend, then Raposa is correct to alert us to the fact that semiosis also goes "all the way down."[22] For all of these points Raposa is to be thanked.

2. *Classical Theism*. In *The Divine Relativity* Charles Hartshorne indicates

21. Once again see Dombrowski, *A Platonic Philosophy of Religion*.

22. See Michael Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

that he learned almost as much from St. Thomas Aquinas as he did from Whitehead.[23] The task for neoclassical theists is to acknowledge the great achievement of classical theism while also arguing for why neoclassical theism is a more defensible position. Here I will very briefly indicate what some of the problems are, as I see them, with Raposa's classical theism.

First, if God is eternal in the sense of existing in a Boethian *totum simul* realm outside of time and history, as Raposa implies, then a question arises as to whether this God could be omnibenevolent. For example, how could such a timeless God "re-spond" to creaturely suffering? It seems that the best that such a God could do would be to "inde-spond" from all eternity to such suffering, such that a creature who previously did not suffer, but who now suffers, already would have received the divine "sponse."

Second, although one cannot help but be impressed with Raposa's sense of humor (indeed, he embodies the Aristotelian virtue of ready-wit), I am not convinced by his claim that the dipolar God of neoclassical theism is schizophrenic, albeit only slightly so! To say that God *changes* from moment to moment, as new realities constantly come into existence to be known and loved for the first time, is consistent with the claim that God *permanently* remains all-knowing and all-loving. The *abstract* property that God knows everything knowable and exhibits preeminent love that is not distorted by envy or bias does not get in the way of the claim that the *concrete* beings known and loved constantly change, hence leading to divine change. As Hartshorne puts the point: "There is no law of logic against attributing contrasting predicates to the same individual, provided they apply to diverse aspects of this individual. . . . God is neither being as contrasted to becoming nor becoming as contrasted with being; but categorically supreme becoming in which there is a factor of categorically supreme being, as contrasted to [our] inferior becoming, in which there is inferior being."[24] An example of the latter is the fact that the concrete, changing events of my life are abstractly gathered together as "Dan."

A related point regarding divine dipolarity is that I actually agree with Raposa that we cannot add anything to God's (abstract) being, to God's everlasting identity as the greatest conceivable existence. But this is not equivalent, as Raposa seems to think, to saying that we cannot concretely enrich by joy or

23. See Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), xii. Also see Daniel Dombrowski, *Rethinking the Ontological Argument: A Neoclassical Theistic Response* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

24. Charles Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 14–15.

diminish by sadness the divine life. The great figures in the history of Christian mysticism (including St. John of the Cross[25]) attest to the fact, contradicted by the God of the (classical theistic) philosophers who hold that God is an *unmoved* mover, that such enrichment occurs in contemplative union. In this regard neoclassical theism does a better job than classical theism of preserving the best in the tradition, hence in at least this sense neoclassical theism is more conservative than classical theism. That is, classical theism does not save the phenomena of religious experience.

3. *Negative Theology*. Although I share Raposa's concern regarding the danger of domesticating the divine mystery, I wonder if the proper response to this danger is to say that all talk about God is necessarily vague, as Raposa contends. Two extremes are to be avoided: that we could capture deity in some precise verbal formula, on the one hand, and that we are totally in the dark regarding what we say about God, on the other. Raposa's view leans too far in the latter direction.[26]

I have developed a Hartshornian scheme of literal, analogical, and symbolic (or metaphorical) language about God wherein we *can* speak literally about God, but only when we are talking about the most abstract aspects of philosophy of religion. Analogical and symbolic (or metaphorical) language—what I think Raposa has in mind regarding vagueness—is required when talking about the concrete reality of God.

Further, in order to specify this layered approach to discourse about the divine, the distinction between divine existence (i.e., the fact *that* God is) needs to be distinguished from divine actuality (i.e., *how* God exists from moment to moment). The upshot of these distinctions is that when talking about whether or not God in some fashion or other is, it seems that we need to speak literally. Either God's existence is necessary or it is impossible; this is St. Anselm's great discovery. But on either alternative we are speaking quite precisely (if not literally) and not vaguely.

However, if we talk about what it is like to think, feel, or love as God does, if we are talking not about the abstract existence of God but about concrete divine actuality, then Raposa's view becomes more plausible. That is, I do not necessarily disagree with what Raposa says about apophaticism, but I think it is important to place what he says in a more comprehensive, layered scheme of what can and cannot be said in philosophy of religion. As I see things, to

25. See Daniel Dombrowski, *St. John of the Cross* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

26. See Daniel Dombrowski, *Analytic Theism, Hartshorne, and the Concept of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 157–64.

insist that all discourse about God has to be vague is to condemn metaphysics and philosophy of religion to irrelevance.

Or again, the dipolar use of apophaticism makes sense to me. In order to be consistent, we should insist *both* that the vastness of the permanence of God's existence *and* the sublimity of divine change in response to all creaturely experiences are to a great extent beyond our ken. That is, one should be even-handed in one's use of negative theology. But Raposa, in his classical theism, if I understand him correctly, claims to know nothing whatsoever about divine change, thus leaving him to emphasize too much what is known about divine permanence. That is, I suspect that muscular versions of apophaticism are really concealed versions of kataphatic discourse.

4. *Theodicy*. I am not sure what to make of Raposa's criticisms of neoclassical theistic theodicy. On the one hand, he accuses neoclassical theists of desiring a God to meet human needs, to pander to them, as it were. On the other hand, he notes that Hartshornian theists, at least, deny subjective immortality and hence refuse in a dramatic way to pander to the human desire to survive death; this is the dark shadow cast over neoclassical theism, according to Raposa. It is hard for me to see how Raposa can have it both ways.

In any event, the dark shadow that Raposa mentions presumably refers to the idea that it is no comfort to many people to learn from Hartshorne that, despite the absence of subjective immortality, our lives are preserved in the divine memory. I think that Raposa might be accurate in his report about what many people think in this regard, but what many people think might need to be challenged if their conception of religion is informed only by the claims of classical theists. Even Raposa misunderstands neoclassical theism if he thinks that the omnibenevolent God defended by neoclassical theists might edit divine memories so as to attenuate or eliminate human tragedy. As I suggested in a Wordsworthian way in response to Crosby, for any being with an accurate memory and who cares for the past sufferings of sentient beings, "what having been, must ever be."

Raposa is correct in noting that a sonnet is not necessarily inferior to an epic, hence we are led to ask about whether a well-lived life that is short is necessarily inferior to a well-lived life that is long. I think that it is. It is rational for us to hope for and in some respects to expect a lifespan appropriate for members of our species. Death simply as such might not be an evil, but surely premature or ugly or intensely painful death is. Hoping to live for a thousand years (Zorba's ambition), much less to live everlastingly, strikes me as hubristic, but to hope to live to be 103 like Hartshorne is, albeit at the outer limits of rational hope, quite understandable. That is, I have a very strong sense of human beings as sentient *animals,* albeit typically rational ones.

I take it that God is the only everlasting person. But Raposa, the author of an excellent book on boredom,[27] asks an interesting question: how does such a being avoid monotony? The reason why I think Raposa's question is important is that if any one of us lived everlastingly, boredom *would* be the likely result, especially if our bodies were deteriorated or in the process of deteriorating most of the time. It seems that the only being that would not succumb to boredom under the weight of omnitemporality would be a being who was also omnispatial, a being who was the Soul for the body of the cosmos. Only such a being would have an infinite number of relationships with which to interact over the immense amount of time in which the World Soul existed everlastingly. Further, this being would have aesthetic and moral sensibilities that would be as vast as the time and space in which such a divine person existed; this is precisely what is meant by divine omnibenevolence.

Biological animals that gradually wind down do show signs of fatigue as they age, hence we are led by Raposa to think carefully about the characteristics of divinity that would nonetheless be compatible with a certain *élan* or zest or adventure that would not diminish as time goes on. Raposa is right to imply that omnitemporality without omnispatiality would likely lead to the aesthetic disvalue of monotony.

IV. Conclusion

As a result of the above I hope I have shown that I have taken quite seriously my role as a partner in the dialectical method that is at the heart of philosophy. I know that my three critics have played their roles quite well.

27. Michael Raposa, *Boredom and the Religious Imagination* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).