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Dierker, Farina: Gottes »Mit/Leidenschaft« im Werden der Welt. Zur Relevanz prozesstheologischer Ansätze für ein neues Denken über Gott und Schöpfung. – Ostfildern: Grunewald 2022. 406 S., kt. € 60,00 ISBN: 978-3-7867-3293-8

At the outset, I will say that this is a beautiful book: It is thorough in reviewing streams of process theol., in new ways invigorating Christian theol. of creation; it is aware of the diversity of process thought; and it is specific regarding the dialogues motivating it: with science, in an ecological horizon, and by an ecumenical approach – and all in a deeper eco-feminist perspective. Farina Dierker's book is an important contribution to the reception, in a German (speaking) context, of a fairly different thought pattern (from its theol. ancestors) with its own deep spiritual roots, reconfiguring theol. from the passion of a compassionate God, engaging the precariousness of the world but with the hope for a creative transformation and a divine metamorphosis.

Yet this book is a challenge to the reviewer: Not only does it follow his early work closely, while utilizing a gamut of other sources; it gives many actors a voice that the reviewer knows personally; it is confronted with the same ambivalence of articulation, as the original English generated by the work of Alfred N. Whitehead is hardly translatable in its poetic affection concomitant with its intellectual depth; and it focusses on Catherine Keller with whom the reviewer shares a deep intellectual friendship. All of that makes this review personal in ways a regular review would not tend to be; compels me to answering in the language in which my own work has unfolded since I assumed the Chair in Process Studies at Claremont School of Theol. some seventeen years ago; and suggests commenting *with* process thought, which is not a merely intellectual object of observation or application, for the reviewer, but mediates the world through the lens of compassionate thinking.

Before I, accordingly, reflect on those deeper layers – fragmentarily, given the available space – this is the progression of the book: The first two parts review the Catholic context for a renewed theol. of creation, instigated by the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis, ecologically unfolding against its classical theol. siblings; connecting it to a panentheism, in contrast to classical theism, as the assumed paradigm of process theol.; and with its ecological sensitivity reconfiguring theol. doctrines from deep relationality. The second part, in consequence, analyzes process thought with reference to these intentions, not only for a theol. of creation, but for Christian doctrine, confirming the thesis of the first part: that the best way for understanding creation in relation to a God-in-process is its redeemed temporality, the togetherness of creation *ex nihilo*, *continua* and *nova*, mediated through Catherine Keller's creation *ex profundis*, from the depth for the com/passion of God. The last two parts seek the dialogue between these sources, offering a relational God in interaction with the world who not only feels its pains but activates creative change, motivated by a divine lure as the

expression of love for, in, and between all creatures, with immediate ecological, liberationist, and eco-feminist consequences and a new spirituality of transformation in which salvation becomes experienceable.

In this complex meandering through a strange “process” universe in resonance with classical theol. categories, one could strengthen its insights by sounding the existential and ethical, social and political, spiritual and ecological dimensions of process theol. from a deeper study of Whitehead’s own creative tensions between phil. and poetics, science and religion, in the interest of a civilization process in which envisioning the transformation of societies and religions by non-violent, persuasive, activating ideas – which are themselves a sign of the aesthetic immanence of God – utilizes their power-critical meaning as a basis for current liberationist and intersectional (nor only feminist, but womanist, interracial, multiethnic, and postcolonial) perspectives. For this endeavor, sources both in English and German (not to speak of French and Spanish, Japanese and Chinese) are available—and so is the majority of the works of the reviewer after the material used in this book—which would make it more difficult to yield depth of insight to the inertia of theological ancestors who had only a limited access to these sensitivities. Such an engagement would reveal that beyond the veil of technical language waits a liberating landscape of thought that comes from experience: that all that experience experiences is itself a synthesis of the experiences of others; that becoming is the movement of contrasts of mutual otherness in creative togetherness. This alone would change the way we look at any thought, theol. doctrine, or our relation (and of divine reality) to a vast world: in which religions exist only in the plural; in which a democracy of fellow creatures is to be liberated from oppressive binaries; and in which humanity is not elevated by anthropocentrism, but is an interwoven intermezzo of cosmic relations in perpetual renewal.

In Whitehead’s “secularization” of divinity – as neither is Christianity the limit or God defined by Christian doctrine, nor religious language under a structural submission to any imperial mechanisms – this compassionate, ecological cosmology, with God as its liberating symbol, reveals the *radical* preconditions for its very understanding perhaps only in its pluralistic and mutually interdependent dimensions: its multireligious and naturalist engagement that escapes merely western tradition. So is the notion of Creativity closer to the Dao than the Logos, and Process closer to a mutual self-creation (which is always initiated by the immanence of God) than any assumption of a universe of independent things, or fixed structures, or of a simple teleology toward its overcoming. It is a world in which action is passion, that is, the feeling of others that in itself is compassionate, as every event or being exists not as a self that is self-referential, but transcends its self into a universal web of relations for which God stands as their *apotheosis* – or, with the Eastern Christian tradition, a process of universal *theosis*, not only of humanity, but an *ecotheosis* of all creatures.

Herein lies the reason for Whitehead’s use of the symbol of God as Poet: *theopoiesis* is an ancient term for *theosis*, not indicating “creation” (despite the ancient connotation of *poiesis*), but worthing. While worth is created by the aesthetic synthesis of all creatures and in light of the worth that they leave as they pass into a world beyond themselves, it is the *valuation* by values, which are, in the last analysis, of the Good that God activates, that makes them valuable in themselves, for their own sake, and, in the compassionate perception of God, saves them for the universal web of the world. *This* is the “theopoetic difference” between the aesthetic immanence of God and the immanent self-creativity of all creatures: that God is not a creator-cause, but the attractor to values of worthing. The sources of apophatic theology would have been illuminating here – such as Meister Eckhart’s

difference between, and indifferenciation of, God and Godhead: God in Whitehead does not “create” the world from the past (*ex nihilo, ex vetere*), but “saves” it in the “form” of the novelty (*ex nihilo, ex novo*) which God releases *ex amore* and to which God attracts without coercion: creation presupposing salvation. *This* theopoetic difference is also the reason that Whitehead’s intimation of God cannot be occupied by any religious doctrine, but releases to a God-spectrum, from pantheism to (neo-)classical theism, because none of these images can comprehend the apophatic nature of the divine love of the manifold of creative expressions in light of the poetic worthing.

With this *philosophical* theol., three consequences rise for any understanding of creation: First, the world in mutual immanence cannot be divided into binaries—be they of mind and matter, or genders and races, or nature and supernatural grace (and entities). Second, God must become expressible beyond imaginings of power or causality as the attractor to intensity and harmony without which all thought (and social) patterns are already beguiled into overruling mutuality. Even “pantheism” does not express the radicality of Whitehead’s trans-pantheism, which releases disjunctive categories by the complete mutuality of God and the world. Third, that the poetic and apophatic nature of creation in the symbol of God is meant to make us sensitive to the depth of the experiences from which we begin to think here: that all being is the becoming *from the other* and the self-transcendence *into* otherness—the least, the last, the excluded, the invisible, the othered other—without which no transformation of the world deserves the epithet of being God’s creation.

Über den Autor:

Roland Faber, Dr., Kilsby Family/John B. Cobb, Jr. Professor of Process Studies at an der an der Claremont School of Theology in Claremont (roland.faber@whiteheadresearch.org)