

1. "The person-making process" as the heart of evolution and therefore as a modern, science-conformable holophrase for "God"--that teaching was at the heart of my great teacher Henry Nelson Wieman's every class-session. The one who translated his teacher Whitehead's process philosophy into process theology, Wieman was nudging me--when he often wrote on my papers, "Must you believe in a personal God?"--not away from the biblical heritage and hope, but away from the traditional language of his and my Christian faith. In a great theological tradition [including Schleiermacher and Tillich] aiming to make Christian faith plausible to its "cultured despisers," who claim earth for humanity and leave the hollow heaven for myths and deities of transcendence, Wieman radically immanentized "God," making transcendence ancillary, as qualitative rather than ontological--to coin a phrase he didn't [as far as I know] use, and that has the virtue of grammatical hierarchy, adjective being inferior-dependent on noun, *transcendent immanence*. [Noun and adjective are transposable in the two ways his system is described: "naturalistic theism" or "theistic naturalism."]

2. My argument against him and his kind was then, and continues to be, that theological language--unlike the academy-oriented language of philosophy of religion --is church-oriented, the language of the Christian mind serving the whole Christian reality, including the Christian tradition with its language roots and branches and fruits. For this communal task, theology cannot dispense with a certain handfuls of phrases/words, one of which is the holophrase "God." To say that "God's creation naturally expresses, in the person-making process, God's own nature, of which this process is the central image"--that I could and can and do say; and thank God that Wieman has enabled us to say it better than could theologians of former generations [though Wm. Temple approximated it]. But to treat the affirmation as a reversible proposition--"The...process is God"--is logically questionable and theologically flawed [as both idolatrous and reductionist]. It is, furthermore, forensically jejune: the concession to modernity is excessive if not fatally concessive--open to easy defeat through the law of parsimony.

3. As theologian-teacher-counselor, I'm redacting for this thinksheet's purpose "the person-making process" to "the personning process" so as to open up Wieman's creation-evolution phrase for God's action--to open it up as a mode of conceiving humanity's ministry, person to person and person to group and group to group. In our century, no one seems to have understood this better than Buber, as in this passage: "It is the melancholy fate of every I/thou that it must turn to an I/it"--life's task being to be open to, and eager for, authentic meeting, in which one meets in an through the other, the Other, God. Closed to Thouness, we convert the world, the neighbor, the self, even God, into "it" [almost the opposite, be it noted, of Hinduism's use of "It" (*Tat*, from which root we get in English a word for it-as-pointed-to, viz. *that*)]. With his radical personizing-as-task, Buber went beyond the impersonal/personal fight and restored the balanced, nuanced tension of transcendence/immanence, the person-Person being fulcrum. God as Creator is transcendent, as Preserver-Savior is immanent--in fact, the biblical understanding, give and take a little vis-a-vis contemporary philosophies. In comparison, atheisms and humanisms are autistic, closed, diminished, truncated. God stands behind and within the moment of meeting, of dialog.

4. As the life of dialog [God with Israel/Church, Marianne with Johan in *Scenes from a Marriage*] is, for Buber, not a metaphor of reality, but reality itself, I remind myself often of this as I live in family, church, community--as I teach, counsel, preach--as I listen, and try to suffer-with-and-for, in love. The Ingmar Bergman telefilm here referred to is a genius-level artistic revelation of the pathology of dialog: the dialog with God has been [Buber] "eclipsed," and we watch with horror and sadness the eclipsing of the dialog between husband and wife, who increasingly, instead of personning each other, establish processes of mutual diminishment. Contrast gratitude to God for each other, joy-producing!*

* As atheism is honest projective rationalization from prayerlessness, the neglect of daily addressing ourselves to God as "Thou" (whom we can address but not express, pray to but not theorize about--says Buber), so separation and divorce are the natural, honest, rational sequences from Johan and Marianne's personninglessness [failure to person each other daily].