

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

God of Becoming and Relationship: The Dynamic Nature of Process Theology

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Introduction

What do you think of when you think of the term “religious”? What about the term “spiritual”? What about “intuitive”? What is the best take on each term? What is the less good connotation that each carries?

What prevents you from being more religious or more spiritual?

Do you think that science and religion are in conflict? Do they have to be?

Are we outgrowing religion because of new scientific knowledge and technological power?

Religion has, for several millennia, met deep-seated human needs. What meets those needs in our own time? What should?

Part 1: On the Way

Many philosophers and theologians define God as eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, all good, and radically simple. Does that work for you? Does it raise problems for you? Do you think it is true?

The Bible portrays God expressing human emotions, changing opinions, enlisting partnerships, reaching out in covenant, and loving and rejecting. Does that work for you? Does it raise problems? Do you think it is true?

What does it mean to exist in relationship? How does that work out in your life?

If being a logical abstraction and becoming are what we actually do at every instant, then the key to reality is becoming. What would it be like to acknowledge the dynamic, becoming nature of each thing and of all things? How would it change your relationship to the world? to your loved ones? to your faith?

If the future is truly open, then we have a role in shaping that future. Does that fit your understanding of the world and of personal responsibility better than a conviction that everything is predetermined? What do those options hold out for God’s ability to know in advance?

If God empowers us to make optimal choices at each moment, then we and God choose the future. What choices are you facing? How would affirming your ability to intuit the best future help you make better choices? What would God’s role be in those choices?

How can we integrate scientific understandings of the origins of our cosmos with religious convictions of the purposefulness of creation?

Why do bad things happen? Why do we suffer? Where is God to be found in the pain and in the suffering? What can God do? What is God doing now?

If all things are always becoming, and we are God's partners in that becoming, how does that change our understanding of how Torah is produced? What is God's ongoing role? What is ours? How does that modify your sense of the authority of Torah? of its wisdom?

What do you think happens when we die? Do you expect consciousness to continue after death? What about identity? What about meaning?

If we are in relationship with a God who seeks to persuade rather than coerce, what does that do to our notion of *mitzvot*? Are they still commandments? In what way? How does our individuality play into our notion of *mitzvot*?

How does our relationship with the State of Israel and the Land of Israel alter with our notion of identity-in-relationship and a sense of always becoming? What does love of Israel imply for where we live? for what we criticize or praise?

If God doesn't break the rules of nature, then what are we doing when we pray? What is it we want from God when we pray? What do we want from ourselves?

Conclusion: Judaism—A Personal Affirmation

How does Process Theology shape our understanding of Judaism? What does it shift? What does it affirm or deny? What does it make more clear?

Does Process Theology provide you with a useful framework for your own beliefs and practices?

Epilogue: A Father's Letter to His Son

The book closes with a personal letter from Rabbi Artson to his son, Jacob. Try writing a short letter to someone you love, articulating your own core beliefs and how those translate into hopes and dreams for the person you are writing.

If you'd like, try writing such a letter to yourself too.