

7

Comment on John Cobb

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Philosophy, as we know it in the West, began in ancient Milesia. People asked the question of ultimate reality in this way: what is everything ultimately made of? Interestingly, after nearly 26 centuries of philosophy and theology, Cobb wants to ask the question in a similar way. With a slight refinement he asks: what is it that that of which all things are made (or at least all things without components) is a form? Cobb recognizes that there are other legitimate ways of asking the question of ultimate reality and other answers to the question than God. Cobb argues that his view of God possesses appropriate continuity with the use of the term in Scripture and in the Christian tradition and, in most respects, I agree.

I am dubious, however, about his denial of the claim that God is ultimate in the line of material causes. Of course the God of Christianity is not the material cause of things in the sense that the marble is the material cause of the statue. Material objects are not made of God or of God's substance. But I would argue that any denial of the notion that God is the cause of the existence of all material things, and indeed of material reality itself, is a radical departure from the tradition, not appropriately continuous with it. If material reality exists only because God created it, that is, if there would be no material reality apart from God (as in my opinion the tradition virtually unanimously affirms), then God *is* (in this sense) ultimate in the line of material causes.