PROCESS THEODICY:

THE CONTRASTING EFFORTS OF DAVID RAY GRIFFIN AND BERNARD LOOMER

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Contemporary theology in the twentieth century has experienced an increasing diversity. The contributions in this century to the fields of Christian theology and philosophical theology have been both reaffirming and radical. Notably, both contemporary Christian and philosophical theologies have often been and continue to be influenced by one another. It could be said that the development of philosophical theologies in this century has been an attempt at utilizing philosophy for the explanation and defense of faith.

The emergence of process philosophy and the subsequent development of process theology, indeed a philosophical theology, has been one source of great controversy and dispute. The school is viewed as a "radical" theology by many. It is a movement not without influence from Christian theology, but one that offers a new understanding of the relationship of God to, or in, the world and the nature of God and the world in and of themselves. Process theology is the arena in which this thesis will take place.

This arena was chosen because it is a controversial, pertinent, and relatively new movement that is of great interest to myself. It is an important movement, whether one sympathizes with it or not, because it approaches the issues and problems of theology from an alternative, nontraditional viewpoint that has been acknowledged by many theologians as a credible contribution. In addition, process theology addresses and creates issues that are of major concern to laypersons and theologians alike.

Process theologians are as diversified in their perspectives within the field as those in any other school of thought. Nevertheless, there exists certain broad conceptualization that are shared by all process theologians. Therefore, a broadly inclusive, yet brief definition of the basic principles affirmed by process theology is possible and deemed necessary before continuing.

Central in the theology is its emphasis on "processive" (or evolutionary) views of the cosmos. It emphasizes the "becoming" rather than the "being" of all reality. This includes an insistence that the world is made up, not of 'substances', but of events or happenings; that it is a societal or 'organismic' world; that within it there is the possibility of significant decision with its consequences; that this world is in 'process', showing a 'creative advance', although with no necessary progress towards fuller good; and that God is to be seen as related to the world and history in such a fashion that he both influences, and is influenced by, what occurs there, and is not an exception to, but the 'chief exemplification' of, the descriptive generalizations which experience and observation show to be true of the creation.[1]

The seminal problem of theodicy is one of the most vital issues addressed by process theologians. Because of the unique approach of process theodicies, finding an inclusive definition

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[1] Norman Pittenger, Expository Times 92, no. 9, June, 1981 pg. 271.

for the word "theodicy" is also a problem. For the purpose of finding common ground, a "theodicy" will be defined here as "any response to the problem of evil from the perspective of Judeo-Christian religious belief, broadly construed."[2] Theodicy, as defined above, is central to the discussion and practice of theology in general, as it has been throughout history. From ancient, sacred texts to modern writings, evidence of the human struggle with the existence of evil seems ever present. Significantly, theodicy is a thread that permeates many other issues in theology. In particular, process theology's perspectives on the problem are in many ways unique in comparison to others. At the same time, process theologians by no means have a monopoly on the definition of theodicy, nor do they agree on one among themselves.

Derived from two greek words θεός (God) and δίκη (justice), theodicy is the word traditionally used in theology for an argument that attempts to show that God is righteous or just despite the presence of evil in the world.[3] That is, it tries to show that God can be omnipotent and perfectly good despite evil. At this point further problems of definition are encountered.

The meaning of the statement "God is omnipotent" is highly controversial among theologians. A thorough discussion of all its various meanings is not within the scope of this thesis, nor

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[2] Stephen Davis, ed., Encountering Evil: live options in theodicy, pg. 4.

[3] English-Greek, Greek-English Dictionary.

is it within the thesis purpose. Let me suggest that God is omnipotent at a certain point in time if and only if for any logically possible state of affairs the statement that "God brings about that state of affairs" is coherent, God's ability to bring about that state of affairs at that time is essentially unlimited. The precise meaning of the statement "God is perfectly good" is also controversial. I will suggest this statement means that God never does what is morally wrong; all God's intentions and actions are morally right. In addition, God never causes any sort of suffering unless there are overriding moral reasons for God to do so (eg. it will lead to greater good).

In traditional theology the problem of theodicy is the following: if God is omnipotent (as defined above) he must be able to prevent evil. And if God is perfectly good he must be willing to prevent evil. But if God is both able and willing to prevent evil, why does evil exist? Those who deny that God is perfectly good answer this question by claiming evil exists because God's dark side leads God to create evil. The denial of God's omnipotence brings other theologians to claim that evil exists because it is not in God's power to prevent the existence of evil. Though there are, of course, other answers to theodicy, these claims (oversimplified in the way they are stated above) will be the two positions significantly encountered in the theodicies investigated here. These resolutions in theodicy are the opposing view points presented by David Griffin and Bernard

Loomer; both of them process theologians. This thesis will present and analyze their perspectives.

A theodicy is simply one part of a complete theological position. Positively, this means that to defend one's theodicy means finally to defend one's entire theological position, therefore, a more explanatory introduction to process theology's mode of thought than that given above will be instructive. An awareness of the understanding of reality in which these two theodicies function is important before an analysis of them takes place. Therefore, An Introductory Exposition by John Cobb and David Griffin will be used for a summary of process theology. It is a secondary source; a primary source does not exist because of the fields diversity. Though Alfred North Whitehead could be considered a founder of 'process philosophy' and a major influence on process theology, he does not offer a primary source. The theology is based to a great degree on Whitehead's thought, but Whitehead himself did not "create" process theology. Process theologians utilizing Whitehead are responsible for the movements development. Cobb and Griffin are two examples.

Consequently, this thesis will offer an "introductory exposition", rather than a comprehensive presentation of all the major positions represented within the movement. Their book as a source of introduction will be defended later. Furthermore, the thesis is not a defense or apologetic for process theology, but process theology will be the arena in which the above two contrasting process perspectives on the problem of theodicy will

be presented and analyzed.

After the summary of process theology, a section describing Griffin's theodicy will be presented. A presentation of Loomer's argument will follow. Following these sections, a comparative analysis will be drawn. Strengths and inconsistencies of each argument will be addressed, issues will be raised and their resulting implications discussed. Conclusions will be drawn in defense of one of the two theodicies as superior in method, content, and religious availability (eg. how "usable" is the theodicy for those concerned with the problem of evil?). I have no intentions to claim that either individual has actually solved the problem of theodicy, but I do intend to defend one approach as the better argument.

Process Theology

It is logical to use either Griffin or Loomer as a source for an introductory exposition in this context; it is their theodicies that are being presented. David Griffin and John Cobb have jointly written An Introductory Exposition explicating some of Whitehead's basic ideas, as well as simply spelling out their own views; thus, the title "An Introductory Exposition" rather than "an introduction to process theology." Loomer has not, to my knowledge, written such an introduction. Hence, Griffin's position will be used as an introduction and when Loomer's theodicy is presented it will be apparent where his process theology differs from Griffin's. Furthermore, my introduction will not use as source material all of the chapters in Griffin's

and Cobb's book. Many of the chapters expound on implications, extensions and practical applications that are unfortunately beyond the bounds of this thesis.

Process theology speaks about God. Cobb and Griffin acknowledge that processes use of the term is philosophically and religiously opposed to much that has been meant by "God" in metaphysical, theological, and popular traditions. Nevertheless, the authors defend their usage of "God" and the book shows why they do so and that, according to them, this practice is justified.[4] But to verify that many of the common connotations of the word do not fit their intended meaning, they single out five in advance for rejection. They, of course, offer the contrasting doctrines of process theology as well, which will be covered later.

Process theology denies the following images of God:

1. God as Cosmic Moralist..."That God's most fundamental concern is the development of moral attitudes. This makes primary for God what is secondary for humane people, and limits the scope of intrinsic importance to human beings as the only beings capable of moral attitudes."

2. God as the Unchanging and Passionless Absolute. The Greek concept of "perfection" entailing "immutability," the notion of "impassibility" (God as unaffected by any other reality -- lacking passion or emotional response), and God as the "Absolute" who is wholly independent and external to the God-world relation, are all denied by process theology. They claim that the three terms -- unchangeable, passionless and absolute -- all finally lead to the same message, "that the world contributes nothing to God, and that God's influence upon the world is in no

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[4] Process Theology: an Introductory Exposition, John Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, pg. 8.

way conditioned by divine responsiveness to unforeseen, self-determining activities of us worldly beings."

3. God as Controlling Power. The notion that suggests that God determines every detail of the world.

4. God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo. Cobb and Griffin insist that this is supported by the notions of the Cosmic Moralist, that suggests God as primarily interested in order; the Unchangeable Absolute, that suggests God has an established, unchangeable order for the world; and God as Controlling Power, suggesting the present order exists because God wills its existence. In this case, to be obedient to God is to preserve the status quo.

5. God as Male. The theological doctrines above, as the authors interpret them, deem God to be the archetype of the dominant, inflexible, unemotional, completely independent male.

Though there are important diversities among them, all theologians acknowledging the dominant influence of Whitehead agree in these five negations.[5]

Process theology is a philosophical theology.[6] Thus, in addition to the affirmation of faith, "a philosophical theology must introduce the distinctive modes of thought by which it hopes to illumine and enliven the self understanding of faith."[7] Cobb and Griffin begin with an explanation of Whiteheads process philosophy and then proceed to discuss its applications and implications in their exposition of process theology.

The reader may find it beneficial to investigate more

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[5] Ibid, pp. 8-10.

[6] A brief justification of the use of philosophy in theology is offered in Appendix A, pg. 159.

[7] Cobb and Griffin, pg. 10.

extensively certain terms from process philosophy that are used in this summary. For the purpose of efficiency within the text while making available more expansive term definitions, reference page numbers will be offered in footnotes following certain Whiteheadian usage.

Chapter three of Process theology: an Introductory Exposition is entitled "God as Creative-Responsive Love" -- the authors descriptive name for the process God. The explanation of this description is contained within these subtitled sections: The Existence of God, God as Responsive Love, God as Creative Love, Divine Creative Love as Persuasive, Divine Creative Love as Promoting Enjoyment, Divine Creative Love as Adventurous, and God as Creative-Responsive Love. Each of these sections will be discussed.

The Existence of God

Process Theology operates from two perspectives; on one side Christian faith and on the other in the metaphysical context provided by process philosophy and its doctrine of God. Arguments defending the existence of God are not essential to process theologies task. Nevertheless, the authors found it necessary to present a Whiteheadian ontological argument for the existence of God.

The philosopher is interested in some form of ontological

primacy or superiority.[8] Philosophical doctrines of God vary with the view of reality expressed within the system. "One cannot believe in the God of one philosopher if one accepts the conflicting understanding of reality of another philosopher."[9] Process thought continues the effort to clarify both the object of theistic worship, admittedly broadening the use of the word "theism", and the formative ontological elements in reality.

Process philosophy has not introduced any new arguments for the existence of God. Whitehead introduced a principle of concretion or limitation "to explain the ordered novelty and novel order in the world," but the necessity for this grew out of his metaphysical analysis of an empirical world.[10] His reasons for affirming God are convincing, according to the authors, within the context of his total analysis, but they lose their strength of validity if formulated outside his own system of thought.

Griffin (this chapter was written by him -- Cobb's contribution is editorial) offers an illustration of the movement of Whitehead's thought to God.

> He envisions a vast congeries of events coming into being momentarily and then lapsing into the past. Each new event must take account of the many events that make up the world given for it. It must do so in some

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[8] I realize this is a generalization and that positivists would deny such an interest, but I retain the statement anyway.

[9] Cobb and Griffin, pg. 41.

[10] Ibid, pg. 42. Though it will be discussed more extensively later, "Novelty" (pp. 27-29) is available for reference.

> definite way, for without definiteness there is no actuality. Since it has a past different from that of any event in its world, it must have a new form of definiteness. The past cannot impose such a form upon it, since the present can derive from the past only what the past contains. This form of definiteness can be derived only from the sphere of possibility. But the sphere of possibility is purely abstract, lacking all agency to provide selectively for the need of new events. There must be an agency that mediates between these abstract forms or pure possibilities and the actual world. This agency is best conceived as an envisagement of the abstract forms of definiteness such as to establish their graded relevance to every new situation in the actual world.[11]

To summarize, God is that factor in the universe which establishes abstract possibilities as relevant to concrete actualities, and persuades the world toward new forms of realization.[12]

Griffin argues that process philosophy offers a more enriching and coherent doctrine of God in which the ontological argument can be cogently formulated because it coheres with human understanding of the world and, thus, diminishes the necessity for an isolated and abstract proof. He claims "a theistic vision of all reality can gain adherence best by displaying its superior adequacy to other visions."[13]

God as Responsive Love

The notion of divine perfection and the religious aspiration

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[11] Ibid, pp. 42-43.

[12] Cobb and Griffin discuss how this doctrine of God permeates and creates connecting topics examined in other chapters (eg. Jesus Christ, Eschatology, Human Existence, A Theology of Nature, The Church in Creative Transformation, and The Global Crisis and a Theology of Survival).

[13] Ibid, pg. 43.

of humanity to participate or be in harmony with perfection is, by definition, assumed in a universal religion, according to Whitehead. Christian faith confesses that the nature of perfection and the basic character in the divine reality is best described by the term "love". Though the meaning of the statement "God is love" is far from self evident, Whitehead attempts to recover much of its meaning as it is found in the New Testament.[14]

Psychologists and, most importantly, experience informs us that love in its fullest sense involves a sympathetic response to the loved one (feeling their feelings, grieving their grief, rejoicing with their joy). We sympathize most immediately with the "others" of our body. We do not view the pain in the cells of our hand, for instance, impassively from without. When our bodies feel good, we feel good with them. In turn, we sympathize with other human beings.[15]

The traditional theistic notion that God is impassive, that sympathetic responsiveness is not an element in the divine love, means that God's love is entirely "creative" (purely outgoing, active goodwill) which, according to Whitehead, is inconsistent with the biblical witness to God's equal love for all. We are not all equal regarding the "Good things of life"(whatever they may be) that we enjoy. And yet, Griffin retorts, "if God's love

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[14] Ibid, pg. 44.

[15] Ibid, pg. 44. See also ps. 18-22 on Essential Relatedness and particularly pg. 19 bottom on Prehension.

is purely creative, totally creating the goodness of the beings loved, this implies that God loves some persons more than others."[16] Love as solely creative was girded on the greek value judgement that independence or absoluteness is unqualifiedly good, and that dependance or relativity derogates from perfection. Whitehead redefines what is meant by "perfection" in such a way as to remain consistent with experience and the biblical witness.

Whitehead argues that perfection entails both independence (absoluteness) and dependance (relativity). Process thought gives primacy to interdependence as an ideal and an ontologically given characteristic over independence. It is also a variable in that we can actualize ourselves in such a way as either to increase or decrease it.[17] But there is a distinction to be made in perfection.

> It entails ethical independence, in the sense that one should not be deflected by one's passions from the basic commitment to seek the greatest good in all situations. But this ethical commitment, in order to be actualized in concrete situations, requires responsiveness to the actual needs and desires of others. Hence, to promote the greatest good, one must be informed by, and thus relativized by, the feelings of others...In other words, while there is a type of independence or absoluteness that is admirable, there is also a type of dependance or relativity that is admirable. And, if there is an example of absoluteness that is unqualifiedly admirable, this means that there is a divine absoluteness; and the same holds true of

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[16] Ibid, pg. 46.

[17] Ibid, pg. 47. Chapter seven argues that the perfection of human life involves maximizing our relatedness to others ,and hence our dependance on them.

relativity.[18]

Process affirms both divine absoluteness and divine relativity as true. In this sense process theism is sometimes called "dipolar theism," in contrast to the traditional doctrine of divine simplicity. Whitehead distinguishes between the "primordial" nature of God and God's "consequent" nature. God's absolute aspect is a "primordial" nature, which will be discussed in the next section; God's concrete actuality (temporal, relative, dependant, and constantly changing) is the divine "consequent" nature.

> In each moment of God's life there are new, unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable. Hence, God's concrete knowledge is dependant upon the decisions made by the worldly actualities. God's knowledge is always relativized by, in the sense of internally related to, the world.[19]

This divine relativity is not limited to an omniscience of all actual experience past and present, but includes responsive sympathy with the worldly beings. Hence, "it is not merely the content of God's knowledge which is dependant, but God's own emotional state."[20] Process claims, finally, that God enjoying our enjoyments and suffering our sufferings is a truly divine responsiveness and belongs to the nature of perfection, which in turn makes it the ideal for human existence.

God as Creative Love

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[18] Ibid, pg. 47.

[19] Ibid, ps. 47-48.

[20] Ibid, pg. 48.

Creative activity is equally as essential in Christian love as sympathetic responsiveness. Whether it be considered theme or presupposition, central in the biblical tradition is God's activity in the world as overcoming evil and creating new things. To be in harmony with the God of Israel and of Jesus is to be involved in the struggle to "overcome the various impediments to the fullness of life."[21]

The belief that God acts in the world with equal love for all, and hence desires justice, and that God is directly acting in the world to create just conditions, is greatly responsible for Western Civilizations individual and social impetus for programs alleviating human misery and injustice. "Cultures in which the sacred is not understood as involved in creating better conditions for life in the world have had difficulty in generating the sustained commitments necessary to bring about significant change."[22] Griffin states that the reason for this western characteristic is not only the religious drive to be in harmony with God, but also the drive to be in contact with the divine reality.

> It is because God is personally present and active in the world that contact with the sacred reality does not necessitate fleeing from history. Our activity aimed at creating good puts us in harmony and contact with God. Indeed, this activity can be understood in part as God's acting through us.[23]

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[21] Ibid, pg. 48.

[22] Ibid, pg. 49.

[23] Ibid, pg. 49.

This notion of divine creativity has been problematic within theological circles and the culture at large in recent centuries. Traditional popular christian thought held that direct "acts of God" were understood as occasional intervention without natural cause. Traditional theological thought held all events to be "acts of God" but distinguished between those acts where God was the "primary cause" but the acts were mediated through natural antecedent "secondary causes", and those events of God's direct intervention (ie. "miracles") that occurred without "secondary causes". Thus, both popular and theological circles gave meaning to the idea that God was creatively active in the world.[24]

According to Griffin there exist two major problems with this notion.

> First, it raises serious doubt that the creative activity of God can be understood as love, since it creates an enormous problem of evil by implying that every event in the world is totally caused by God, with or without the use of natural causes. Second, since the Renaissance and Enlightenment, the belief has grown that there are no events which happen without natural causes. Accordingly, the notion of "acts of God" has lost all unambiguous referents...if these (natural forces) provide a "sufficient cause" for it (an event), what justification is there for introducing the idea of another perspective?[25]

Twentieth century theology has reaffirmed the centrality of the idea of God as active in history. But, according to Griffin, it has generally lacked the conceptuality in order to consistently explicate this belief. Griffin notes the

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid, pg. 50.

predominant return to the idea of the double perspective; an idea he finds lacking in intelligibility.[26]

In western culture the problem of evil and the predominant belief that events result from natural cause and effect, to the exclusion of divine intervention, have come together to render the notion of divine creative love problematic. Because of modern theologians lack of an intelligible way to speak of God's activity, leading secular thinkers confirm that this belief belongs to the past. But process theology claims to provide a way of recovering the notion of God acting creatively as an expression of divine love for the world.

> The notion that there is a creative power of love behind and within the worldly process is no longer one which can only be confessed in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Instead it illuminates our experience.[27]

Divine Creative Love as Persuasive

As indicated in the five negations, traditional theism, according to the authors, portrayed God as the controlling power. The notion of a God with a complete knowledge of the world which is not dependant on it, and that this knowledge is unchanging, suggests that God must in fact determine every detail of the world, lest something occur which was not immutably known.

The biblical record does not consistently depict a God in complete control of the world; much of it implies that divine

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[26] Griffin briefly discusses the perspectives of Barth, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich on ps. 50-51.

[27] Ibid, pg. 51-52.

providence is not all determining. But the valuational influence of the greek philosophical notion of perfection has overpowered the biblical witness to a mutable God, thereby making creaturely freedom vis-a-vis God merely apparent.[28]

Process thought, in its alternate understanding of perfection, sees responsiveness to the world as the basis for divine creative activity.

> Since the very meaning of actuality involves internal relatedness, God as an actuality is essentially related to the world. Since actuality as such is partially self-creative, future events are not yet determinate, so that even perfect knowledge cannot know the future, and God does not wholly control the world. Any divine creative influence must be persuasive, not coercive.[29]

Divine creativity, for Whitehead, is God seeking to persuade each occasion with an "initial aim" toward that possibility for its own existence which would be best for it, given its concrete situation (which necessarily implies that all possibility, in its abstract sense, is within God); but God cannot control the finite occasions self actualization. The "subjective aim", in which it chooses the "initial aim" or any of the other real possibilities open to it, is a product of its own decision.[30] Accordingly, divine creative activity involves risk. The obvious implication arises: because of God's lack of complete control of the worlds events, the actualization of genuine evil is not incompatible

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[28] Ibid, pg. 52.

[29] Ibid, ps. 52-53. For further reference, see "actuality" on pg. 14 and "Self-creation" on pp. 25-26.

[30] See also "creative self-determination", ps. 24-26 and "possibility", pg. 39.

with God's beneficence toward all God's creatures.

Furthermore, this doctrine of divine persuasion presents an ideal for the way we should seek to accomplish our ends. Jesus' message, life, and death should have resulted in a re-examination of the divine power in terms of divine love, but this did not occur. Power, in the sense of controlling domination, remained the essential definition of deity. Accordingly, control of other persons, events, actualities, which was understood (more or less consciously) to be a divine attribute and is considered to some extent a "natural" human tendency, gave a sense of quiltless satisfaction from the recognition of imitating the divine.[31]

Process theology proclaims an alternative perception of divine reality.

> Process theology's understanding of divine love is in harmony with the insight, which we can gain both from psychologists and from our own experience, that if we truly love others we do not seek to control them. We do not seek to pressure them with promises and threats involving extrinsic rewards and punishments. Instead we try to persuade them to actualize those possibilities which they themselves will find intrinsically rewarding. We do this by providing ourselves as an environment that helps open up new, intrinsically attractive possibilities.[32]

Divine Creative Love as Promoting Enjoyment

According to Griffin, traditional Christianity has understood God as a Cosmic Moralist whose primary concern is the development of moral behavior and attitudes in humans. Creaturely enjoyment was not God's first concern, and in most

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[31] Ibid, pg. 53.

[32] Ibid, ps. 53-54.

Christian communities enjoyment was considered at best tolerated by God and often something that God apposed. God has been understood as commanding us to suppress our desire for most of those experiences which we find intrinsically good in favor of being morally good. And moral goodness has been understood primarily as the negative suppression of the natural forms of enjoyment.[33]

This notion of as Cosmic Moralist is not unrelated to the idea of God as Controlling Power. If God were understood as controlling all events as well as willing maximum enjoyment for all creatures, then the problem of evil would easily suggest that God is either malevolent or incompetent, if not both. But if creaturely enjoyment is not of primary interest then the notion of God's complete control can supposedly be retained intelligibly. In fact, "the sufferings of life, and even the inequalities in this regard, can be regarded as divinely intended means to promote the desired moral and religious attitudes."[34]

Hence, the Cosmic Moralist supports the notion of the Controlling Power. In contemporary theology, especially in Protestant thought, theology has become increasingly moralistic. Griffin indicates this movement.

> The ontological dualism of the modern age, especially in its Cartesian variety, made it difficult to think of existence as such as intrinsically good [such was the emphasis in the early Augustinian centuries and was maintained throughout the Middle Ages], since humans

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[33] Ibid, pg. 54.

[34] Ibid, pg. 58.

> were the only created beings with any intrinsic (experiential) reality...Accordingly, and especially in modern protestant thought, the dominant trend in theodicy has been to explain the great sufferings of the world by declaring that God did not intend the world as a "hedonistic paradise," but as a " vale of soul making." (Cf. John Hick, Evil and the God of Love, 1966, pp. 291-297; and A. C. Knudson, The Doctrine of Redemption, 1933, p. 215.)[35]

Process theology argues that God's fundamental aim is the promotion of the creatures own "enjoyment".[36] God maintains a loving creative influence that aims at promoting experience that is intrinsically good. Since God is not all controlling, the divine love is not contradicted by the great amount of intrinsic evil in the world. "The creatures in part create both themselves and their successors."[37]

Experiential actualities, all having some degree of

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[35] Ibid, pg. 56.

[36] The word "enjoy", which Whitehead frequently uses, is more suggestive than the term "process". Applying the normal connotations of the meaning of "enjoy" would be somewhat misleading in a Whiteheadian context. Every unit of process, whether at the level of human or of electronic events, has enjoyment. All experience is enjoyment. To be actual is to be an occasion of experience and hence an occasion of enjoyment. Hence, we are not to think of enjoyment as being necessarily conscious, or as related to the pleasure end of the pleasure-pain continuum. What is normally meant by pleasure is bound up not only with consciousness but with the whole structure of high grade animal bodies. But distinguished within this "rich matrix of meaning" is an element that can be broadly generalized. To be, to actualize oneself, to act upon others, to share in a wider community, is to enjoy being an experiencing subject quite apart from any accompanying pain or pleasure. In Whitehead's words, experience is the "self enjoyment of being one among many, and of being one arising out of the composition of many" (Process and Reality, 1929). In this sense, every individual unit of process enjoys its own experience. See pp. 16-17 for further explanation.

[37] Ibid, pg. 56.

enjoyment, are subject to the extension of God's creative love. The promotion of enjoyment is God's primary concern throughout the whole process of creative evolution. The contrary doctrine (God as Cosmic Moralist) "is in the uncomfortable position of maintaining that over 99 percent of the history of our planet was spent in merely preparing the way for beings who are capable of the kind of experience that really interests God."[38]

Enjoyment remains God's primary concern even with humans, as beings capable of developing moral attitudes. This does not conflict with an emphasis on morality. Positively stated, God wishes us to enjoy while simultaneously increasing the enjoyment of others.

> To be moral is to actualize oneself in such a way as to maximize the enjoyments of future actualities, insofar as these future enjoyments can be conditioned by one's present decision. Hence, although the development of moral attitudes is of extreme importance, it is a derivative concern, secondary to the primary value, which is enjoyment itself.[39]

In process thought, morality and enjoyment are not in opposition, rather morality stands in the service of enjoyment. The divine initial aim for our human experience is such as to transform into immediate enjoyment the intention to contribute to the future good of my own future experiences as well as those of other enduring individuals.

Divine Creative Love as Adventurous

God's persuasive love takes risks. Each divine creative

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid, pg. 57.

impulse into the world is adventurous, in that God does not know what the result will be. But process claims a further dimension to the divine adventurousness, that contradicts "traditional" theologies portrayal of God as the Sanctioner of the Status Quo ("God" and "order" were closely associated).[40]

The notion of God as Sanctioner of the Status Quo is closely connected with that of God as Cosmic Moralist. In the realm of morality in general, belief in God has been closely associated with the idea of moral absolutes, especially of a negative nature. Christian morality as abstention from certain types of "God forbidden" acts has directly sanctioned the status quo through the notion of immutable moral absolutes. Furthermore, the focus on the development of fixed moral attitudes or principles, understood as being in opposition to the growth of enjoyment, distracted attention from the primary moral question of what kinds of conditions are needed within a particular context in order to maximize the possibilities for enjoying existence now and in the future. This question was not of ultimate importance, since moral attitudes can be developed in any situation.[41]

Process theology understands God precisely as the basic

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[40] The notorious appeal to Romans 13 is an example of the connection between obedience to God and submission to the political status quo, in addition to illustrating the connection of "Sanctioner" and "Controlling Power" (ie. the presupposition that God is at least in control of the major features of the world process, for if God did not want those rulers in power, they would not be in power.

[41] Ibid, pg. 59.

source of unrest in the universe. Whitehead said, "the pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe"; the "essence of the universe" being actuality in process.[42] At the root of process there is the Primordial Nature of God, sometimes called the Divine Eros, conceived as "the entertainment of all ideals, with the urge to their finite realization, each in its due season."[43] "Due season" necessarily implies that not all ideal possibilities can be realized simultaneously. This is why there is process. In turn, no ideal can be repeated indefinitely without its novelty diminishing. The Primordial Nature of God is the force toward novelty in the universe, "stimulating us to realize new possibilities after the old ones no longer are sufficient to give zest to our enjoyment of being actual."[44]

But process theology insists that it does not abandon the essential ingredient of order in the maximization of enjoyment. Whitehead, for example, attests that "it is by reason of the body, with its miracle of order, that the treasures of the past environment are poured into the living occasion."[45] Conversely, excessive order can inhibit enjoyment; it is the condition for excellence as well as the potential stifler of the freshness of living. "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

and to preserve change amid order."[46]

But Griffin makes two important qualifications to the notion of God as the source of order.

> Order represents dominance of an ideal possibility which was at one time a novel element in the world. Hence, God is the source of order by virtue of first being the source of novelty. Second, neither order nor novelty is understood as intrinsically good, but only as instrumental to the one intrinsic good, which is the enjoyment of intense experience. 'God's purpose in the creative advance is the evocation of intensities. The evocation of societies is purely subsidiary to this absolute end' (Process and Reality, Whitehead, pg.161). As Whitehead puts it elsewhere, the aim toward order, which is impersonal, is subservient to the love of individuals, which is personal.[47]

Therefore, order as only instrumental to enjoyment, calls for its types to be rated according to their success in promoting strength of experience.

Hence, Griffin concludes that no type of social order is to be maintained if it no longer tends to maximize the enjoyment of the members of the society. The creative advance calls for progress beyond limited ideals, and therefore a continuous substitution of higher for lower types of order. In addition, since God encourages novelty as the means to maximizing creaturely enjoyment, continuation of a state of affairs that originally resulted from a high degree of conformity to God's aims may not express God's present will. As Henry Nelson Wiemann stressed, we should worship the Creative Good, not the created

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid, pp. 59-60.

good.[48]

God's love is adventurous in that it takes risks and promotes adventure toward novelty in the world, but it is also adventurous through combining this creative aspect of God's love with the responsive aspect. This is the concept of an Adventure in the Universe as One, using Whiteheads term. "This Adventure embraces all particular occasions but as an actual fact stands beyond any one of them."[49] This is a way of describing God. God's own life is an adventure, for the novel enjoyments that are promoted among worldly individuals are then the experiences providing the material for God's own enjoyment. Consequently, God will experience the discord as well as the harmony involved in the finite actualizations.

God as Creative Responsive Love

Though the traditional stereotypically masculine characteristics attributed to God have led to a one-sided and hence unhealthy Christianity, an overcompensating reaction resulting in a concept of God devoid of these characteristics would be destructive to authentic Christian existence. The loss of the creative aspect of the divine love would diminish much of the good that biblical faiths have brought into history, as Griffin has frequently suggested. The same can be said of the strong moral concern that has been attributed to God by biblically influenced cultures. Likewise, "the loss of the notion

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[48] Ibid, pg. 60.

[49] Ibid, pg. 61.

of a divine purpose that at its most general level is inflexible would lead to a complete relativism." Masculine and feminine aspects must be integrated to revolutionize the concept of God to reflect our inclusive experience of the divine. The incorporation of responsiveness, flexibility, a degree of passivity and a balance of moral concern with an appreciation of beauty -- all stereotypical feminine traits -- will change the masculine traits qualitatively.[50]

The world, according to process theology, does not involve two separate "natures" or "poles" of God that stand externally related to each other, the one influencing the world (Creative -- masculine) and the other being influenced by it (Responsive -- feminine).. Rather, the Primordial Nature is abstract, while the Consequent Nature is God as fully actual.

> It is finally to God as a whole that we are related. The creative activity of God is based upon sympathetic responsiveness; and the responsiveness of God is an active receptiveness made in the light of an intended creative influence upon the future.[51]

The above summary provides a theological setting for the examination of David Griffin's and Bernard Loomer's theodicies. Some of Loomer's fundamental theological propositions significantly differ from Griffin's principles, and affect his theodicy accordingly, thus, providing the material for this discussion. Griffin's theodicy is presented first in light of

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[50] Ibid, pp. 61-62.

[51] Ibid, pg. 62.

his theological position having been represented above.

David Griffin: The Task of Theodicy

Before formally presenting his substantive theodicy, Griffin affirms his understanding of the task of a theodicy for our times. He insists that a theodicy should be part of a total theological position that is intended to be more consistent, adequate, and illuminating of our experience than any of the alternative philosophical and theological positions of the time. Such a theodicy cannot merely show that the evils of the world do not necessarily contradict belief in God's perfect goodness and power. Nor can such a theodicy resort to encouraging us to believe that there is a God of perfect goodness and power in spite of the fact that the appearances suggest that some other hypothesis is more probable. Rather, such a theodicy must attempt to portray the world so that the hypothesis that the world has been created by such a God seems more likely than other hypotheses, so that those who accept this belief can come to perceive the world in these terms. In such a theodicy, the evils of the world should not be an embarrassment to the total theological position; they should not be that "fact" to which the theology somehow manages to be "adequate" but which would fit more comfortably within some contrary hypothesis. Rather, the theodicy should ideally be more illuminating of the nature of evil, and the reason for its existence, than other portrayals of

reality, including atheistic ones.[52]

Griffin does not pretend that his theodicy achieves these ideals, but these are the standards in which he thinks a theodicy in our time should be measured. Loomer would agree with him on these formal matters. Griffin reaffirms that in the dialectical relation between substantive and formal issues, ones substantive beliefs influence one's position on formal issues at least as much as the other way around. Ultimately, debates as to the adequacy of various theodicies should not be carried on apart from reflection on the over-all task of Christian theology in our time.[53]

Some arguments for the substantive principles of Griffins theodicy have already been covered in the summary of his theology. These principles will be restated clearly but the arguments for them will not be fully reiterated.

Creation Out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." This is how Genesis 1:1 has been originally translated. Even the Revised Standard Version so renders it. However, the RSV in a footnote gives an alternative reading "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void...." Griffin argues this is what most Hebrew scholars believe to be the accurate translation. To him the central issue

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[52] God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy, David Ray Griffin, 1976, pp. 25-26.

[53] Ibid, pg. 27.

between the two readings is whether creation was "ex nihilo", i.e., whether God created the world out of absolutely nothing. The traditional reading suggests that the world was created "ex nihilo" more readily than does the alternate reading. And it has been used by traditional theologians to support the doctrine of "creatio ex nihilo."[54]

The alternative reading, while also not spelling out things with the precision desired by philosophical theologians, suggests that God's creation of our world did not involve the absolute beginning of finite existence but rather the achievement of order out of a pre-existing chaos. Traditional theologians have contrasted the "Christian" or "biblical" understanding of creation with the Platonic view of a craftsman remolding pre-existing materials to create out of chaos as good a world "as possible". Most importantly, the Platonic view held that these pre-existing material put limits on what God could do; since they were not created by him out of nothing, they were not totally subject to his will.[55] This runs counter to clear biblical statements of divine omnipotence. And it is destructive of the hope that God will totally defeat the powers of evil and make all things new. Accordingly, the traditional Christian view of "creatio ex nihilo" was formed in direct opposition to the idea

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[54] Ibid, pp. 31-32.

[55] Ibid, pg. 39.

of creation out of chaos.[56]

Many contemporary theologians who think the notion of "creatio ex nihilo" is important agree that they have the weight of the biblical evidence against them (most OT passages that speak to the issue support that creation involved bringing order out of chaos), but argue that this is not decisive: the crucial question is, which view is more compatible with the essence of Christian faith? Some would add: and which view is, all things considered, most reasonable? Griffin argues that these indeed are the grounds upon which the debate should rest, especially since the biblical evidence is so ambiguous.

The point that is stressed by Griffin is that the contrast between the two views is not a contrast between one view that is "biblical" and based on "revelation" and another that is a "departure from the biblical view" based on "dubious speculation." The biblical support is ambiguous. And both views are speculative hypotheses. The question for Griffin is, of course, which hypothesis has more to commend it.[57]

Statement of the Problem of Evil

Griffin contests the traditional four step statement (stated in this papers introduction) of the problem is ambiguous particularly because of the lack, among other things, of indication as to whether the evil they refer to is genuine evil

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[56] Ibid. Examples of this view are exhibited in the theodicies of Augustine (pp. 67-68), Aquinas (pg. 81), John Hick (pg. 191), Berkeley (pg. 241).

[57] Ibid, pp. 52-53.

or merely apparent evil (Evil that ultimately contributes to a greater good).[58] He utilizes an eight step statement that helps eliminate ambiguities.

> (1) God is a perfect reality. (Definition)
>
> (2) A perfect reality is an omnipotent being (with an "omnipotent being" defined as one whose power to bring about what it wills is essentially unlimited -- except [perhaps] by logical impossibilities)
>
> (3) An omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil (With "genuine evil" defined as anything that makes the world worse than it could have otherwise been). (By definition)
>
> (4) A perfect reality is a morally perfect being. (By definition)
>
> (5) A morally perfect being would want to bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. (By definition)
>
> (6) If there is genuine evil in the world, then there is no God. (logical conclusion from 1 through 5)
>
> (7) There is genuine evil in the world. (Factual statement)
>
> (8) Therefore, there is no God. (Logical conclusion from 6 and 7)[59]

Creation and Divine Power

Griffin argues that the problem of evil is uniquely a problem for those theistic positions that hold the doctrine of omnipotence implied by the doctrine of creation out of nothing. For the problem of evil can be stated as a syllogism validly entailing the non-existence of deity only if deity is defined as

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[58] Ibid, pp. 21-22.

[59] Ibid, pg. 19.

omnipotent in the sense of having no essential limitations upon the exercise of its will. And it is precisely omnipotence in this sense that the speculative hypothesis of creatio ex nihilo is designed to support. For Griffin the rejection of creatio ex nihilo is fundamental.[60]

Two issues are involved. First, if God in creating our world necessarily worked with some pre-existent actualities, these actualities might well have some power of their own with which they could thwart the divine will.[61] Second, there might be some eternal, uncreated, necessary principles (beyond purely logical truths) about the way these actualities can be ordered which limit the sorts of situations that are really possible.[62] But if God created this world out of absolutely nothing, then the beings of this world are absolutely dependant upon God. Any power they have is not at all inherent, but is totally a gift of God, and as such can be overridden (or, which amounts to the same thing, withdrawn) at any time. The above is the position of some theologians.[63] And if there has not always been a multiplicity of finite actualities, it does not make sense to think of any uncreated and hence necessary principles as to how the actualities of the world can be ordered. Any such principles would be purely contingent ones, created along with the

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[60] Ibid, pg. 279.

[61] Ibid, pp. 279-280.

[62] Ibid, pp. 276 and 297.

[63] See footnote 56.

actualities whose behavior they describe, and hence alterable at divine will.

Griffin affirms his solution dissolves the problem of evil by denying the doctrine of omnipotence fundamental to it. Of the various ways of denying deity's essentially unlimited power to effect its will, his is to hypothesize that there has always been a plurality of actualities having some inherent power of their own that cannot be cancelled or overridden by God, it did not arise at some point in the past (such as with the creation of human beings). This power is two-fold: the power to determine themselves (partially), and the power to influence others.[64] Hence God can only persuade what we become and how we affect others. All creatures have at least some iota of this two-fold power. And there have, by hypothesis, always been such creatures.

The present view that the creation of our world occurred through a long evolutionary process is congruous with the notion of creation out of chaos and its correlative assumption that divine creative power is necessarily persuasive. Contemporary theologians who accept the evolutionary hypothesis and yet hold to the hypothesis of divine omnipotence have plenty of explaining to do, according to Griffin. Most centrally, they must explain why a God whose power is essentially unlimited would use such a long, pain filled method, with all its blind-alleys, to create a world. The need for explanation is further aggravated when they

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[64] Ibid, pp. 285 and 287.

hold that human beings are the only creatures that are really important to God, and that the rest of the creation exists only for the sake of the divine-human drama.[65] If that is so, why did God take os long getting to the main act? Of course, theologians can claim that they need not answer these questions. But the hypothesis of divine omnipotence must, like any hypothesis according to Griffin, commend itself by its explanatory power. Each unanswered question reveals deficiencies in that power.

Necessary Metaphysical Correlations Between Value and Power

The fact that our world arose through an evolutionary process has further theological relevance beyond the support it gives for the idea that God's power is necessarily persuasive. It also gives support, according to Griffin, to the idea that there are certain necessary principles correlating Power and Value. These correlations form the second major section of Griffin's theodicy. His thesis is that there is a positive correlation among the following four variables, so that as one rises in degree the others necessarily rise proportionately:

(1) The capacity to enjoy intrinsic goodness (or value).

(2) The capacity to suffer intrinsic evil (or dis-value).

(3) The power of self-determination.

(4) The power to influence others (for good or ill).[66]

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[65] Ibid, pg. 285. The concept of the "Cosmic Moralist", discussed in this thesis, presents a similar problem (pg. 22).

[66] Ibid, pg. 291.

By "intrinsic value" Griffin means the value that something has for itself, apart from any value it may have for others. Intrinsic value can be possessed only by individuals that experience, although this experience need not be self-reflexive or even conscious. According to Griffin's Whiteheadian non-dualistic position, there are no non-experiencing individuals which are mere objects. All individuals experience, which means that all individuals have some capacity, however minimal, to enjoy and to suffer, i.e., to experience intrinsic goodness and intrinsic evil.[67] This does not entail the extreme and unwarranted hypothesis that everything experiences. Aggregates of individuals do not experience (e.g., rocks, chairs, typewriters, and probably plants are aggregates which as such have no experience, but only contain the experience of those individuals making them up). Examples of genuine individuals would be electrons, atoms, molecules, cells, and animal (including human) souls or psyches.[68] This means that there is a hierarchy of individuals: less complex ones are compounded into more complex ones.

The direction of the evolutionary process toward increasing complexity raises the question as to whether this progression is explainable as a reflection of the creative purpose of God. This would be the case if complexity could be correlated with something that a loving God would be interested in promoting.

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[67] Ibid, pg. 277.

[68] Griffin, pp. 290 and 295.

And this is precisely what we find: increased complexity of the organism seems to be the condition for increased richness of experience, hence of increased intrinsic goodness.[69]

However, each increase in complexity, and thus the capacity to enjoy intrinsic goodness is likewise an increase in the capacity to suffer. Griffins thesis is that this correlation between the capacity to enjoy and the capacity to suffer is a necessary, metaphysical correlation, inherent in the nature of things. This thesis answers to the question as to why God created us so susceptible to physical and psychological suffering -- God could do no other without foregoing beings capable of the kinds of values we can experience. To have the good is necessarily to risk the chance of the bad.[70]

Griffin admits there is nothing certain about this thesis. It is a speculative hypothesis. But the denial that the correlation is necessary i.e., that it would have to obtain in any world, is even more speculative according to Griffin. For, we know from our experience of this world that worlds in which the correlation obtains are really possible. But we have no experiential basis for knowing that a world in which the correlation would not obtain is even possible.

Furthermore, Griffin hypothesizes that the other variables rise proportionately with the first two, and with equal necessity. Individuals with greater capacity for the enjoyment

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[69] Ibid, pp. 285-289.

[70] Ibid, pp. 293-294.

of values necessarily have more power of self-determination, i.e., more freedom.

Griffin's correlation continues. To have creatures who can enjoy much more intrinsic good than can electrons, atoms, and molecules is necessarily to have creatures with much more power of self-determination with which to deviate from the divine will. Greater Freedom is a necessary corollary of the possibility of higher value experiences.[71]

The correlation between this third variable and the second one (the capacity to suffer) helps illumine the reason for the extent and depth of human suffering. It is precisely we creatures who have by far the greatest capacity for suffering who likewise have by far the greatest power to deviate from God's will for out lives. Combining these two factors gives us an extraordinary capacity to make ourselves miserable. God created us this why because there was no choice -- except the choice of calling off the evolutionary advance before beings of our complexity had emerged.[72]

The fourth variable offers an explanation for the need for an evolutionary process in order to attain the kind of world we have. This fourth variable says that those individuals with more intrinsic value (for themselves) also have more instrumental

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[71] Ibid, pg. 292.

[72] Ibid.

The Goodness of God and "Harmony\Intensity" vs. "Disharmony\Triviality"

The theodicy of David Griffin does not attempt to maintain that God is not responsible for any of the evil in the world. For, in a very real sense, God is ultimately responsible for all of those things that we normally think of when we refer to the problem of evil. Indeed, if God had not persuaded the world to bring forth living cells and then animal life, there would be no significant suffering in the world. If God had not continued to draw the creation toward greater complexity until creatures with the capacity for rational thought were evoked, there would be no moral evil, or sin, i.e., deliberate disobedience of the divine will; nor would the most awful forms of suffering exist.[75]

The question that remains then is, "Can God be responsible without being indictable?" Griffin says "Yes." In the first place, although God is ultimately responsible for the world's having reached a complex state in which evils can occur, God is never totally responsible for the evils that do occur as a result of God's limitation of persuasive power (When the creatures actualize a lesser possibility than God intended it is their failure due to an exercise of power).[76]

In the second, the aim of a "morally good being" is more accurately stated positively than negatively. That is, the aim is first of all to produce good, not to avoid suffering. If the

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[75] Ibid, pg. 300.

[76] Ibid.

moral aim could be adequately expressed as the intention to avoid suffering, then moral adults would never have children -- that would be the way to guarantee that they would never have children who would suffer or cause suffering. Analogously, a perfectly moral God would simply avoid bringing forth a world with any creatures capable of any significant degree of suffering. But -- by hypothesis -- this would mean that there would be no world with any significant value in it. The aim must be to create the conditions that allow for the greatest intrinsic good while minimizing the evils.[77]

Experience is that which can be intrinsically good. The criteria for intrinsic good are aesthetic for Griffin. They can be summed up under "harmony" and "intensity." That is, the experience is good to the degree that it is both harmonious and intense. The criteria of intrinsic evil are opposites of these. The opposite of harmony is "disharmony" or "discord." This occurs when two or more elements of an experience clash, so that there is a feeling of mutual destructiveness. The opposite of intensity can be called "triviality." This could be defined as the loss of high experience for low experience. The human experience is evil if it degenerates to a porcine level.[78]

In other words, suffering and sinful intentions resulting in suffering are not the only forms of evil. Any absence of good that could have been realized is evil even if no suffering is

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[77] Ibid, pg.301.

[78] Ibid, pp. 282-285.

involved. Griffin recalls that the definition of genuine evil offered earlier was "anything which makes the world worse than it could have otherwise been." Any absence of good that makes the world worse than it could have been, all things considered, is an evil. Hence, for God to have failed to bring forth beings capable of experiencing significant value when this was possible would have made God indictable. Recognizing that unnecessary triviality is an evil provides a basis for understanding the evolutionary development of our world as manifesting the creative purpose of a good God. Unless the evils that were thereby made possible are so great that the goods that could be achieved are not worth the risk. Griffin insists that he cannot imagine that the conclusion would be reached that the evils of life have been so great that it would have been better had life never emerged.[79]

The theological conviction that God shares all our sufferings brings Griffin to conclude accordingly, that while every advance in the creative process has been a risk, since greater sufferings were thereby made possible as well as greater goods, this has never been a risk which God has urged the worlds creatures to run alone. It has always been a risk for God too. But evil is "overcome by good" in the sense that God, in responding to the evil facts in the world, provides ideal aims for the next state of the world designed to overcome the evil in the world. This means that God is the one being in position to

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[79] Ibid, pp. 308-310.

judge whether the goods achievable have been worth the price.[80]

Natural Evil

"Natural Evil" is that which is caused by non-moral agents. It is this form of evil that most theodicies find most problematical. These theodicies say that God voluntarily bestowed freedom upon creation -- and usually only to a select portion of creation (human beings). Accordingly, they have a difficult time with evils apparently caused by sub-human nature, since the beings constituting this realm by hypothesis have no power with which to deviate from God's will.[81]

In Griffin's theodicy, all creatures great and small have some power with which to deviate form the divine will for them. This means that there never has been a time at which we could say that the creation was necessarily "perfect" in the sense of having actualized the best possibilities that were open to it. Granted, very low-grade actualities cannot be thought to deviate very much from the divine aims for them. But over a period of billions of years very slight deviations occurring in each moment can add up to state of the world that is very far removed from the state that would have resulted had the divine aims been actualized all the way along.[82] With this ability to deviate and

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[80] Ibid, pp. 303-306.

[81] Ibid, pg.28.

[82] Ibid, pg. 277. Generally the entire chapter, A Process Theodicy, because of the professed absence of a dualism between individuals, conveys this message concerning "natural evil."

to influence their successors forevermore, there is no reason to infer that cancer, polio, tornadoes, and earthquakes exist because God wanted our world to have them.

Upon concluding this summary it is apparent that Griffin's argument could be called a "Theodicy of Divine Integrity." A persuasive God retains her character of "all-goodness" without indictment amidst a world free to choose between the possibilities of good and evil. This is a classic line of argument in process theodicies. It is this very argument that Bernard Loomer contests, stepping beyond mere criticism of traditional theodicies into criticism of the theodicies of his own process arena.

Nowhere is Loomer's theological position better encapsulated then in his essay The Size of God. A thorough presentation of Loomer's theology as it is presented in The Size of God is not within the manageable bounds of this thesis. But, as with Griffin, his entire theology is the context from which a theodicy is developed. Loomer has conveniently provided a delineation of the fundamental propositions of his essay in an Abstract preceding the full text. It will be utilized as a summary of his theological position. Points specifically relevant to his theodicy will, of course, be further clarified as the need arises.

Bernard Loomer: "From Integrity to Size"[83]

"The Size of God" deals with certain aspects of God's stature. Loomer's philosophical mode of thought is process-relational and his method is rational-empirical. His emphasis is naturalistic. Loomer, in the essay contends that "if the one world, the experienceable world with its possibilities, is all the reality accessible to us, then one conclusion seems inevitable: God is to be identified with either a part or with the totality of the concrete, actual world." Loomer's thesis is that "God should be identified with the totality of the world, with whatever unity the totality possesses."[84]

> More particularly, the focus is on the character and stature of God in relation to His concrete actuality. It represents another effort to characterize the reality and limits of a finite and concrete God.[85]

The fundamental propositions of the essay are the following:

1. The self-sufficiency of the world enshrouds the inexhaustible mystery inherent with the actual world.

2. Order is an abstraction from the interconnectedness of events.

3. Love is grounded upon interconnectedness, rather than the other way around.

4. The widest generalization of the principle of interconnectedness results in the conception of the world as a web of interconnected events.

5. The unity of the world is the unity of this

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[83] The Size of God: The Theology of Bernard Loomer in Context, ed. William Dean and Larry E. Axel, 1987. This title is borrowed from William Dean's introduction.

[84] Ibid, pg. 20.

[85] Ibid, pg. 23.

societal web of interrelatedness.

6. The perfection of a God derived from a priori considerations is the perfection of high abstractions. As concretely actual, God (or the world) is ambiguous.

7. The unity of the world conceived as a universal order (or God defined as a principle of order) leads to a theology or philosophy of abstractionism.

8. Christian doctrines of God and Christology have been shaped by their passion for perfection or the unambiguous, but the unambiguous has the status of an abstraction. The concretely real is ambiguous. An ambiguous God is of greater stature than an unambiguous deity.

9. Process-relational thought has been notable in its efforts to overcome the various bifurcations of modern philosophy, but the major exponents of this mode of thought exemplify the ultimate bifurcation -- that between good and evil.

10. Whitehead does this by ontologically separating God and creativity.

11. Wiemann does this by defining God as one process among others, a God of creative transformation. Both views result in making God an abstraction.

12. The basic theological and philosophical tradition of the West has maintained that the answer to the ambiguities of life is some form of unambiguity. In terms of this essay this translates into the notion that the answer to life is death.

13. The creative advance of the world is not to be understood as an adventure toward perfection. Rather, this advance is a struggle toward greater stature.

14. Ambiguity should perhaps be understood as a metaphysical principle.

Loomer's theodicy begins with the recognition of the ineradicable presence of ambiguity in every natural and historical process, but denies the actuality of (and the need for) the unambiguous. On the contrary, as stated above, his thesis asserts that the unambiguous has at best the status of an

abstraction, and that consequently an ambiguous God is of greater stature than an unambiguous deity. But his point can be easily misunderstood.

> The aim in the first instance is not to seek and cherish ambiguity for its own sake. The aim is qualitative richness. The quest in the first instance is not for an ambiguous God. The guest is for a living, dynamic, and active God -- in short, a concrete God. An ambiguous God is not of greater stature simply because He is ambiguous. His greater size derives from the concreteness of His actuality in contrast to the reality of nonliving, undynamic, and inactive abstraction. The concretely actual is ambiguous; only the highly abstract can be unambiguous. Thus, the conclusion, and the thesis, that an ambiguous God is of greater stature than an unambiguous deity.[86]

In its conception of God, Christian theology has been obsessed with God as embodied perfection. Theologians have recognized in varying ways that evil and ambiguous factors are either inherent within the structure of the world or are due to creaturely sin and evil or to the presence of demonic powers, but ultimately have been interpreted as being finally phenomenal in nature. That is, they are not characteristic of ultimate

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[86] Ibid, pg. 43. According to William Dean (pg. 14), Loomer's notion of size is finally a criterion of interpretation. "It is a postmodern substitute for the rationalistic criterion of integrity. Loomer rejects modernism when he rejects the authority of rational integrity; he rejects the claim to evaluate thought and maturity by reference to "unities" in, with, and under the self or the world. Size is a category that rejects all extrahistorical referents, and it is a radically historicist criterion in three ways: first, it is realized in relation only with the diverse phenomena of the past; second, it assesses the past not primarily conceptually but primarily aesthetically -- that is, with regard to qualities of experience; third, judgments of size are themselves tested pragmatically in history by asking whether what is claimed to have size truly combats the tedium of insufficient contrast on one hand, and on the other hand avoids excessive contrast (which destroys one's identity)."

reality. For these thinkers, according to Loomer, the very meaning of meaning is "wholly dependant on the eventual or ultimate overcoming of these problematic conditions."[87] Unless the partial and fragmentary meanings we achieve are completed; the phenomenal appearances in all dimensions of life give way to God-perceived reality; the obscure is clarified; the ambiguous is purified; the contradictions of life are resolved; and sin and evil are vanquished by triumphant goodness, then life has no basic or intrinsic meaning.[88]

Loomer reiterates that the dominant tradition of Western thought has proceeded on the value premise that the resolution of the ambiguous, in terms of the perfect and unambiguous, is a development from the less to the more. Loomer's thesis asserts that the converse is the case, that this movement is a transition from the more to the less. In terms of Loomer's language, it is a movement from the concrete to the abstract. From his perspective, the traditional resolution of the ambiguity of life is an abstract justification of a theoretical vindication. This is to say that it is not a resolution.

Consequently, Loomer criticizes much of process-relational theology, including Griffin's theodicy, for their retention of the notion God's perfect character (goodness) or, using Whitehead's term, "God's Primordial Nature" (refer to process

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[87] Ibid, pg. 44.

[88] Ibid.

introduction).[89] The stipulated perfection and unambiguousness of God's unchanging character is, in fact, a conception of God's character. But, according to Loomer, God's actual character does not correspond to this conception, for there are no unambiguous, concrete actualities in the world of our experience. God as concretely actual is involved in ambiguity. In Griffin's system God's character can be analytically abstracted from His actuality; but the character of God that is abstracted is not unambiguous.[90]

> An unambiguous structure or character can be derived only by a complex abstractive process, the end result of which has no counterpart in reality. In short, the conception of the character of God that constitutes the premise of the ontological argument, which ostensibly establishes the necessary existence of God, is not the character of the God who is concretely actual.[91]

Loomer contends that the a priori necessity is or tends to be a philosophy of abstractions. The religious position of a theology of God's necessary existence fosters the impulse to become the worship of an idea of God. "It acknowledges the reality of mystery, but it subsumes its sense of mystery under the structures of it metaphysics."[92] The empirical philosophy of attachments attempts to think and live in terms of holding its

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[89] Loomer assesses Whiteheads motives and concludes that his distinction between the realm of creativity and the primordial nature of God is designed, finally, "to relieve God of the responsibility of evil" (pg. 7).

[90] Ibid, pg. 38.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

ascertained structures of experience subject to the dynamic presence of mystery. "The tragic richness of the concretely actual can never be redeemed by the poverty of abstractions, however purified they may be."[93]

In terms of Loomer's analysis, God as a wholeness is to be identified with the concrete, interconnected totality of this struggling, ambiguous, imperfect, and evolving "societal web".[94] God is not only the ultimate end for which all things exist; God is also the shape and stuff of existence. As this universal society God includes all modes of temporality. "God's action is not wholly or even primarily identified with the persuasive and permissive lure of a final cause or a relevant and novel ideal, as the case in Whiteheadian thought."[95] An exclusive or even a primary emphasis on final causation is abstractionism for Loomer. God is also physical, efficient cause that may be either creative or inertial in its effects.

Stated otherwise, God is not only, or perhaps even primarily, the divine eros, understood as a conceptual appetition toward the good (as per Griffin's "Primordial Nature of God"). This, again for Loomer, is an abstract mode of operation that has its important role; but more concretely, God is expressed as "the organic restlessness of the whole body of creation, as this drive is unequally exemplified in the several parts of this societal

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[93] Ibid, pg. 45.

[94] See "The Web of Life" pp. 31-43.

[95] Ibid, pg. 41.

web."[96] This discontent or restlessness, which Loomer states is an expression of the essential "spirit" of any creature, may exemplify itself as an expansive urge toward greater good. It may also become a passion for greater evil that, however disguised or rationalized as a greater good, also has its attractiveness.

The pervasiveness of ambiguity is seen in contemplating the goodness and evil of a person, and, on a more complex and immense scale, God.

> We cannot divide the seamless cloth of actuality, especially the concrete actuality of the self. There are no separable or autonomous divisions within the self. There is no part of the self that is the fountainhead of goodness and another part that is the ground of evil. Virtues and vices, while distinguishable in their natures, are inseparable with respect to their source. The good and evil of a person derive from the same origin. They are in fact two sides of one coin. This common source is the basic spirit of the individual. The spirit, which is the unity of the self in its self-creative freedom, includes all the forms of ambiguity...[97]

The specific qualities and dimensions of an individual's goodness is a reflection of the qualities and dimensions of that individual's spirit. The individuals capacity for evil is included in these features which embrace all the interdependent facets of his\her personality and character. The qualities of goodness cannot be separated from these diverse elements. "This ambiguous and composite goodness, which arises out of the ambiguity and the dimensions of his spirit, is the only concrete

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid, pg. 47.

goodness he possesses. He has no other goodness."[98]

> This seamless actuality of the self houses the composite unity of the spirit of an individual. Within this unity of the spirit the inseparability of the capacities for good and evil is rooted. This means that the evil of a person cannot be exorcised without decimating his capacity for achieving goodness. The evil proclivities of a person can be transmuted only be transforming his essential spirit... If, as some psychologists insist, there is no light and good "side" of the self without the presence of a dark shadow, then the whole person must be accepted if the creative advance of life is to be enhanced.[99]

Finally, in synthesizing Loomer's essay, his theodicy can be characterized by the insistence that identifying God solely with (as) the empirical totality of the world necessitates concretely identifying God with all that is good and evil in the world. God as "a symbol of ultimate values and meanings in all of their dimensions"(pg. 42) is as responsible, and equally as indictable, for evil as are the human spirit, the life-determining processes and the precarious growth of qualitative richness.

The absence of a good\evil dichotomy in Loomer's thought changes the very nature of the task of theodicy. For him, evil is not so much a "problem to be dealt with", but rather an integral reality in natural, historical, and religious processes that is to be recognized and accepted as such. The very use of the term evil is deceptive when discussing Loomer's theodicy. Its use tends to presuppose that "evil" (and in turn, "good") is a detachable entity of the universe -- a split in the nature of

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[98] Ibid, pg. 48.

[99] Ibid.

things. In Loomer's "web of life", there is mutually supportive relationality. Thus, it might be helpful to speak of evil in this context as "distorted relationality" in a theology in which mutually supportive, internally experienced relatedness is celebrated.[100] Loomer's aesthetic category of SIZE goes beyond those formulas of aesthetics that identify the experience of beauty with a morally neutral unity amid diversity. William Dean adds:

> For Loomer the aesthetics of size involves also the capacity to experience the diversity between good and evil. The person with greater size will be able to take within himself or herself greater evil and greater good without losing personal identity.[101]

It is apparent that Loomer's The Size of God only affirms some of the most basic concepts of the introductory exposition of process theology offered in this thesis.[102] Loomer's criticism of Griffin's Whiteheadian "primordial nature of God" (God as the source of the "initial aim", and therefore the final cause, for the actualization of Goodness; as "the novel order and the ordered novelty" in the world, or for Loomer, the presumed fact of the abstract unity of the world as in itself entailing the concrete unity of the world; in sum, God as having an eternal and unchanging character) as an abstraction, is enlightening to the

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[100] Ibid, pg. 62. This remains a suggestion. There remains the potential for an abstract dichotomy between the terms "mutual relationality" and "distorted relationality".

[101] Ibid, pg. 16.

[102] I refer here primarily to his affirmation of the ultimacy of "becoming" and the primacy of relationships.

understanding of the difference in approach between Griffin and Loomer concerning the very nature of the task of theology, and for our purpose, the nature of a process theodicy.

Griffin recognized the task of theodicy to be based on an appeal to the most adequate, consistent position that is more illuminating to our experience than any of the other alternative philosophical and theological positions of our time. He insists that a theodicy "cannot merely show" that the existence of evil does not contradict the perfect goodness of God nor can it encourage us to believe in such a notion if appearance makes another hypothesis seem more correct. Loomer would agree emphatically, going so far as to say, "The question of the meaningfulness of life does not depend on whether nature, in its behavior conforms even to the deepest hopes, needs and aspirations of man."[103] Yet Griffin and Loomer, claiming nearly identical empirical criteria for the development of a theodicy, reveal from beginning to end apposing views of reality. It is my contention that Loomer better succeeds under the empirical criteria then does Griffin, although each theodicy has its problems.

Central to their difference in views is based on Griffin's quest for a primarily unambiguous deity and Loomer's insistence that such a quest is not true to the empirical task at hand. Loomer accuses those in Griffin's position as fleeing from the

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[103] Ibid, pg. 17.

concrete, in search of a transcendent that renders clear and resolves, that is unambiguous and unchanging, that is indeed lifeless. Loomer charges Griffin with developing a highly rational theodicy that is not truly empirical; and to the extent that he denies the concrete nature of God, he denies God's stature.[104]

David Griffin's book God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy, is an attempt at a definitive defence of the moral goodness of the Whiteheadian conception of God. In the conclusion Griffin raises the question of how one may still affirm the goodness of God in spite of all the evil within the divine creation. His answer, which comprises a summary review of the general lines of process theodicy, does not, however, make it clear that process theodicy has actually succeeded in salvaging a valid meaning of the goodness of God in the face of the genuineness of evil. This is an especially serious problem, for a major rationale for the way in which Griffin (and process theology in general) has reconceived the attribute of divine omnipotence in terms of the power of persuasion has been for the sake of protecting the attribute of divine goodness, on the

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[104] Nancy Frankenberry warns us that Loomer's "sharp distinction between concreteness and abstraction can lead to a disabling antithesis between 'empirical' and 'rationalistic' forms of process thought, as though they are distinct alternatives rather than complementary emphases. Loomer did as much as anyone to foster this division. I do not think it will stand up. Even for radical empiricism, experience includes both concrete and abstract dimensions, which are not, strictly speaking, correlative with the belabored distinction between particulars and universals." The Size of God: Taking Measure of "The Size of God", pg. 79.

assumption that the reality of genuine evil is not compatible with a theism which predicates the attributes of both unlimited power and perfect goodness to God. If, therefore, in addition to problems with his conception of "persuasive" and "coercive" power (which I have opted not to discuss in detail here), Griffin also fails to make good on his claim to protect the moral character of deity, then it appears that his theodicy does not represent a real or fundamental advance over traditional theodicies at all.

Consider, for example, Griffin's own admission that God is responsible for "all the evil of discord in the world" and that "God is responsible for all the suffering in the world in an important sense."[105] This in itself is a major admission, one which ought to suggest, if anything could, that the doctrine of divine goodness is not the conclusion of an a posteriori mode of reasoning. But however willing he is to concede God's 'responsibility' for evil and suffering, Griffin stops short of any logic that would move toward an 'indictment' of God. He claims instead that "in this context, the question as to whether the positive values that are possible in our world are valuable enough to be worth the risk of the negative experiences which have occurred, and the even greater horrors which stand before us as real possibilities for the near future."[106]

This gives every appearance of being a question to which empirical data and historical observations are relevant. An

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[105] God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy, pp. 300, 308.

[106] Ibid, pg. 309.

affirmative judgement on the matter world need to conclude that certain specifically appraised "positive values that are possible in our world" are worth the torments, the terrors, the severity of such negative experiences as slavery, the poverty of Bangladesh, or the holocaust. But there are two answers to this question and Griffin does not wrestle with those voices in our century (like Loomer) who have taken, if it is appropriate here, Job's side of the case against God (Elie Wiesel is another example).

Another item of defence on Griffin's list invites us to hold to the doctrine of divine goodness "because God constantly works to overcome the evil in the creation with good, and in human experience does this by simultaneously seeking to increase our enjoyment of life and to enlist our support in effort to overcome evil be maximizing good."[107] This claim, too, would appear to require much more substantial appeal to empirical data than Griffin offers. When Griffin argues that things might have been much worse if the divine creative urge, with its power of persuasion, had not been at work (whatever that work might have been) he fails to mitigate our conviction, born out of the uncertain record of modern times, that things could be much, much better, not just much worse. The fact that they are not much better may be due entirely to the corruption of freedom within worldly events, but this recognition scarcely serves to commend the deity of Griffin's process theology.

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[107] Ibid, pg. 310.

Ultimately, these problems root in the conviction that intrinsic to any defensible meaning of divine perfection is a doctrine of God's goodness, and that nothing short of perfection is worthy of worship. The theological habit of connecting worshipfulness with moral goodness is not, of course, peculiar to Griffin's process theology, as witnessed in the first sections references to traditional theologies. But Griffin has insisted that unless it is possible to predicate the words 'good' and 'moral' of God in some sense, there is no justification for worshipping such a reality or committing oneself to it. The difficulty develops, however, when one recalls that 'moral goodness' has to do, in this conception, with the aesthetic criteria of maximal intensity and complexity of experience, necessarily involving the promotion of a certain amount of discord and conflict in order to achieve novelty and depth. All this appears to express a necessary feature of existence. It even goes a long way toward substantiating the general thesis of process theodicy that the possibility of genuine evil is rooted in the metaphysical (ie. necessary) characteristics of the world. But in connection with a defence of the divine goodness, aesthetic considerations would seem to lead to a more ambiguous and mixed estimate. Upon close examination, this aesthetic order at concrete moments of history can appear to be at best utterly indifferent and at worst implacably malevolent towards human good, even though Griffin generously regards it as good "because God does not promote any new level of intensity without being

willing to suffer the possible consequences."[108]

There is an additional problem with the secondary evil which Griffin has identified as the aesthetically moral evil of incompatibility. According to Whitehead, in order for society to avoid triviality, it must be "permissive of actualities with patterned intensity of feeling arising from adjusted contrasts."[109] But at the same time he recognizes that the good of contrast lays the seed for the evil of opposition and mutual obstruction. The necessity for contrast in nature then becomes a factor that serves to describe the ground for the possibility of evil in the world. On the basis of this aesthetic conception of value, Griffin has been led to argue that intensity as well as harmony is essential to the higher forms of experience so that moral goodness is obligated to overcome unnecessary triviality, not just discord. However, in its theological application this line of reasoning is seductively misleading with its suggestion that the evil which lacerates the life of creatures hardly cuts deeply into the life of the creator at all, except as an intensity of contrast within the harmonized incompatibilities of process. God purifies things by a wider sweep of interest. But if the lacerations are felt simply as contrasts, it is difficult to see to what extent 'the fellow sufferer' can possibly 'understand'. And if, on the other hand, the lacerations are suffered more immediately by God, and the revolts of destructive

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[108] Ibid, pg. 309.

[109] God, Power, and Evil, pg. 284.

evil are not simply relegated to 'triviality' or to the small role they may play in an all-inclusive divine vision, then the 'complexity' of the concrete nature of God may just as well "spell the viper's tangle", and its 'intensity' reflect the full force of evil's perversity.

The suspicion that Griffin's 'fellow sufferer' may be too deeply riddled with antagonistic impulses to be unambiguously 'good' raises the question of the propriety of the presuppositional link between God and moral goodness in the first place. While the doctrine of God's goodness is hardly an ad hoc hypothesis in western theism, it is important to see that it proceeds from an a priori religious commitment, one which may or may not find justification in experiential warrants. It is not a metaphysical generalization derived from or adequate to concrete empirical reality, as Loomer demonstrates. For that concrete reality is deeply ambiguous and does not furnish the basis for an unequivocal meaning of he 'goodness' of God. Especially when one takes into account the intricately complex interweaving of processes which go together to make up the life of both God and the world, it becomes enormously difficult to state real perceptual criteria for identifying God's good act as distinct from the action of the rest of the process. Out of the countless diversity of process, events, qualities and their interrelations, all with varying degree of relevance, to factor out any which can be discerned as unequivocally 'good' or 'redemptive' is to perform a remarkable feat of abstractive analysis. In a vast

interconnected matrix of processive-relational events in which creative and destructive (catabolic and anabolic processes depend upon and participate in each other far more intimately than western thought has accustomed us to recognize, as Loomer would affirm) how is the grace of God to be distinguished from the sunny day or good digestion, or the voice of divine persuasion from that of the false prophet? If we are to speak of certain events as pointing to the goodness of God, it seems we must first have some way of distinguishing these from the other events which are not in the same sense evidence of the goodness of God. But what are the criteria for deciding which events are of God and which are not of God? To exempt God from association with productive power, as did Griffin with Whiteheads help, is already to beg the question by an a priori assumption of the unambiguous character of divine goodness.

On the other hand, it is possible -- and I would argue preferable -- to take the altogether different stance that regards God's reality as revealed in concrete events for both good and for ill, and which allows the doctrine of divine goodness to fall wherever the empirical evidence points. To the extent that natural and historical experience does disclose a divine salvific and redemptive activity, to the extent that it does reveal a deity who creates beauty and conserves value, and to whatever extent the transformations of existence do, however perilously, get promoted in the direction of greater stature and freedom -- then to that extent God is good. Here I believe that

not only Loomer, but another theologian, Robert Neville, has issued an important challenge to Griffin in his protest that,

> If God's primordial decision regarding values and limitation in general is at root arbitrary, as Whitehead says it is, then it is only coincidence if God is metaphysically good, this being an arbitrary decision God makes in determining the metaphysical principles to which divinity must conform. Although Ockham's razor is a dangerous weapon, I think the simpler doctrine would be that, if God is to be judged by moral categories (remember Job), the divine character is only as good as experience shows it to be as creator of just this world, and no more. God is a good creator insofar as the creation is good, and beyond that there is no reason to judge.[110]

The implications of such a resolutely empirical posture might even lead process theologians, including Loomer, more in the direction of the stance represented by ancient Judaism. Job, ever paradigmatic of the mystery of evil, attributed all his suffering to God's affliction, a charge that is asserted in the prologue of the Book of Job and never refuted in the subsequent divine speeches or even in the epilogue. The voice from the whirlwind is powerful, creative and inscrutable. In this instance, there is not a word about goodness.

To the extent that Griffin is committed to clear distinctions between 'God' and 'creativity', between 'persuasive' and 'coercive' power, and between those processes which make for creative transformation and those which do not, his solution to the problem of evil is founded on distinctions of reason which are abstracted at the expense of process and interlocking

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110 Creativity and God, A Challenge to Process Theology, Robert C. Neville, 1980, pp. 11-12.

relationships. And, as Loomer's Size of God argues, these distinctions do not conform to the concrete actuality of the processes themselves. Moreover, if there is no independent mode of existence, and if, as Whitehead writes, "every entity is only to be understood in terms of the way in which it is interwoven with the rest of the universe", then neither is there any process, divine or human, which is unambiguously good or evil, creative or destructive.[111] The problem then, is not only that our mode of experiencing reality is deeply ambiguous, but also that we have no experience of any concrete reality that is not itself ambiguous. Transposed to the discussion of theodicy, this recognition raises new problems concerning the interpretation of the nature of divine power, the meaning of God's goodness, and the realistic assessment of what we may reasonably hope for by way of creative advance.

Loomer makes a formidable attempt at arguing that that which is supremely worthy of worship is the totality of inseparable interrelated events with an eros toward the future which comprises the ultimate concreteness of life and which expresses the truth that conceptual experience and physical experience are both valid to priority in creation (a mutual credibility I think Loomer downplay to a degree by emphasizing physical experience over conceptual as the final word in actual experience). Into this totality enter all the discords, imperfections, conflicts, trivialities, and evils of temporal existence. Then, as Loomer's

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[111] God Power and Evil, pg. 303.

> explicit statements of God and the totality of the world with the focused commitment to life-enhancing processes and the growth of qualitative richness. Perhaps this stems from a judgement that this is what the totality is in fact accomplishing. Such an optimistic judgement about the world would indeed explain why it can appropriately be called God. The final sentence of his paper goes still further to explain why Loomer sees the world as a totality as God. 'The conception of the stature of God that is presupposed in this essay may be indicated by the speculative suggestion that the world is an interconnected web endeavoring to become a vast socialized unit of experience with its own processive subjectivity.'[114]

This information is helpful, but not completely satisfying. What remains is the judgement that the suggestion that the world is endeavoring to become something, when the world now lacks unity or subjectivity, seems to reflect the fallacy of misplaced concreteness with which Loomer likes to charge advocates of other positions.

But if the world does not have this characteristic of aiming at "increased qualitative richness through heightened interconnectedness of all its parts, and if the world is equally represented in inertial and entropic forces... then how does calling the world God help to direct our energies toward the enhancement of life and the increase of size?"[115] It appears that Loomer's excellent reasons for us to direct ourselves to these ends necessarily leaves God's role out of the picture. It seems some clarification is needed, but unfortunately our author is gone.

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[114] Ibid, pg. 53.

[115] Ibid, pg. 53.

The world "endeavoring" leads to a further criticism of Loomer. By hypothesis, does not "endeavoring" to become something better, necessitate the abstract presupposition that there exists the potential for future possibilities? Furthermore, does not "becoming better" necessitate a conceptual experience of a notion of one "qualitative experience" being "more perfect" than another? My point is, Loomer emphasizes the credibility (besides establishing a difficult dichotomy -- see footnote 104) of physical experience over conceptual experience as the primary source of empirical data. Should not conceptual experience receive as much validity or is Loomer's fear that it is based on forms and forms are abstract? I hope I am not reading Loomer incorrectly, but does not the often inescapable yearning for the belief in a "good God" by many people that do not have the psychological disposition to receive meaning from the totality of the world and still remain theists (Loomer apparently does have such a capability), necessitate that such a yearning be considered as part of our experience.

For example, I doubt very seriously that most people have the sincere psychological capability to do as Larry Axel did at a funeral of the mother of one of his students. He retorted to his student after the student asked about the "Why's" of such a death, such questioning would be the reaction of most humans I am familiar with, by saying that our purpose is not to understand but to immerse ourselves in "the power and intensity and ache struggling to penetrate us" to "experience the presence of our

suffering." This, perhaps, is a marvelous ideal -- to appreciate openly the intensity and the subsequent growth of 'stature' as a result of this kind of suffering, but I am not aware of many who, at least immediately, can obtain this type of openness. The question remains: Is Loomer's call to commit ourselves solely to the interconnected web, subsequently intensifying relationships and increasing size, an abstract, unattainable ideal? Loomer argues that this should be the chief exemplification of our existence because it is the whole of our experience as beings in an actual world, yet I would argue that many peoples conceptual experience keeps them, in some mysterious way, from releasing the notion of a necessary presence of unambiguous deity or of a metaphysical unity. As abstract as such conceptions may seem, it is necessary to incorporate such experience credibly into empirical observation. We cannot escape from the imposition of form into our interpretations of our lives, yet we must strive to maintain some notion of the primacy of the experienceable world, conceptual and physical, in our search for meaning.

The above reflections are a result of a concern for religious availability in promoting Loomer's theodicy as truer to empirical method and more consistent in content over Griffin's less responsible and less mature argument. Though Loomer maintains, and credibly, that the question of meaning does not depend on our needs, I equally maintain that our hopes and aspirations ultimately cannot escape our discussion of meaning, nor can they help but influence even Loomer, however minimal that

influence might be. Thus, the consideration of the above theodicies religious availability (or, how "usable" is the theodicy for those concerned with the problem of evil) remains important, but should not diminish the appreciation of the intrinsic SIZE of Loomer's The Size of God. The future of such empirical theology is for many, including myself, the future of the growth of our communal and personal religious lives. Yet even Loomer, in the words of Nancy Frankenberry, "harbored deep doubts about the very enterprise of theology in our time, and could often be heard to mutter, 'Can these dry bones be made to live?' As for his own measurement of how close "The Size of God" might come to reality, it is likely that Loomer would answer with the phrase he loved to repeat from William James: 'ever not quite.'"[116]

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[116] Ibid, pg. 84

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