THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN DAVID GRIFFIN'S PROCESS THEOLOGY

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Master's Thesis

Institute for Christian Studies

September 1984

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of evil has been a popular topic among theologians and philosophers over the last half of the twentieth century. Our post-Holocaust world daily reminds us of the grim realization of the evil that surrounds us. Even in North America, where many of us have been made impervious to the misery and suffering which the rest of the world experiences, life often resembles the setting of an Albert Camus novel. Simply put, the existence of God is no longer taken for granted in our day because of the unbearable amount of evil that mankind experiences. Evil is a problem for everyone, but it is a special problem for the person who confesses to believe in an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God who providentially rules over His creation. Many theists feel that it is their task to develop a theodicy, a justification of God in light of all of the evil in the world. Inevitably the conclusion of such speculative panegyrics denies the genuineness of evil. It is ambivalently refreshing to discover a theological perspective that takes the reality of evil seriously. Such a perspective is Process thought. Its leading spokesman in regard to the problem of evil is David Griffin.

The present thesis will explore and critically examine Griffin's vision of reality, with particular focus gazed on the relationship between God and evil. Chapter One presents Griffin's methodology and Process worldview. Chapter Two furnishes a

critique of theodicy, with special attention given to Griffin's Process theodicy. Chapter Three sets forth the writer's own views on evil, and includes sections on how we come to know evil and the proper relationship between God and evil. It is sincerely hoped that this final chapter will serve as a corrective on Griffin's ideas and will enable the reader to understand the problem of evil in a way that elicits praise to God.

CHAPTER ONE: GRIFFIN'S METHODOLOGY AND VISION OF REALITY

I. Griffin's Methodology

Griffin readily acknowledges that a theodicy is grounded in one's theology as a whole. How one perceives God's relation to evil has far-reaching implications for other areas of theology besides theodicy, and likewise, flows out of an overall vision of reality, or worldview. Griffin is quite conscious of his methodology, and makes no pretensions about concealing his commitment to rationality as a necessary requirement of the three normative criteria of judgment: logical consistency, illuminating power, and adequacy to the facts of experience.[1] Uncharacteristic of Rationslism, however, is Griffin's recognition that "every conceptualized understanding of reality is based upon some nonrational starting point."[2] Such a starting point reflects one's vision of reality and its accompanying metaphysics by structuring all experience according to a preconceived way of looking at things anterior to any rational conceptualization. Griffin states that "insofar as one argues from rather than to this way of seeing things," this vision of reality "functions as a faith perspective."[3] Every theoretical understanding of the

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[1]Griffin, God, Power, and Evil (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 26.

[2]Griffin, A Process Christology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 153.

[3]God, Power, and Evil, p. 25.

world, whether done in the name of confessional theology or enlightened philosophy, operates on the basis of a faith perspective. Although prior to rational reflection, one's faith perspective is not opposed to reason, for there is nothing irrational about beginning one's worldview without making use of one's reasoning processes. There is simply no other way to begin. Griffin excellently puts it thus:

> The human thinker necessarily begins with some intuition, as to what is real and important, whether this be called a 'model,' 'root metaphor,' 'existential self-understanding,' 'blik,' or 'vision of reality.' That this is the case is one of the great discoveries of modern thought. The thinker's metaphysics is an attempt to develop a conceptualization of reality that both embodies his preconceptual vision and is self-consistent and adequate to all the facts of experience.[4]

As a Christian theologian, Griffin finds the above requirements fulfilled in the essential truths of the Christian faith.

Some disturbing elements protrude, however, from Griffin's enunciation of a worldview, or faith perspective. He remarks that "the Christian theologian is not committed to the truth of the Christian vision of reality" without good reasons.[5] The theologian is "convinced" of the superiority of his faith perspective, but "ideally" he can be argued out of it in the face of "relevant criticism."[6] Commitment for Griffin should not involve the holding of a position regardless of the evidence brought against it.[7] Because it can withstand rational criticism,

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[4] A Process Christology, p. 153.

[5] Ibid., p. 155.

[6] Ibid., p. 155.

[7] Ibid., p. 155; God, Power, and Evil, p. 25.

therefore, being convinced of one's faith perspective rather than being committed to it more adequately defines the stance of the theologian. Being convinced of one's faith perspective arises out of its leading to the "most consistent, adequate, and illuminating account of reality available at the time."[8] In Griffin's understanding, one should not be committed to the Christian faith, except insofar as he is committed to the truth, wherever it may be found. Placing commitment in the context of truth is the only way to prevent a conflict between commitment to the Christian faith and commitment to the truth. In the commitment to seek truth, one becomes convinced that the Christian perspective points him in the right way, and so, one thereby becomes committed to the Christian faith as an expression of the truth.[9] But, theoretically, it is possible that someone might put forth an argument that weighs heavily against the purported truth of the Christian faith. In turn, if this new vision of reality better fulfills than the Christian one the criteria of logical consistency, illuminating power, and adequacy to the facts of experience, the Christian is obligated by the binding norm of truth to redirect his prior commitment to the newer perspective.

Griffin's Process worldview drives in a thick wedge between subjective and objective elements in human functioning. His careful arrangement of placing the act of commitment--the subjective element not accessible to persuasion--after the act of being convinced--the objective element not accessible to avoidance--in human decision allows him to simultaneously subject his own vision of

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[8] God, Power, and Evil, p. 26.

[9] A Process Christology, p. 155.

reality to objective verification by means of propositional truth and dismiss other worldviews as being held primarily on the basis of subjective criteria. It is "self-evident" or a matter of "common sense" for Griffin to "assume that there is a distinction between the way things <u>really</u> are outside the person, and the way they appear to him . . . ."[10] In asserting this, Griffin admits his acceptance of Realism.[11] Objects and events constitute "facts" totally apart from human experience. These "facts in themselves" form the basis of subsequent "facts as they are experienced by us."[12] The two kinds of facts, however, have nothing to do with each other. The facts in themselves are rooted in reality prior to and independently of anyone or anything experiencing them, and so, exist as such, regardless of the differing faith perspectives viewing them. Likewise even the facts as they are experienced by us exist partially structured by their own inherent characteristics, and so, cannot be totally determined by the particular perspective observing them. Griffin states that there is a "complex of pre-reflective beliefs which we all hold in common, since we all immediately apprehend a common reality in every moment of our experience."[13] Examples of such "common beliefs" which everyone holds, whether consciously or not, are causal influence, self-determination, and, surprisingly, the existence of God.[14]

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[10] <u>A Process Christology</u>, pp. 157-158.

[11] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 158.

[12] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 158.

[13] John Cobb and David Griffin, <u>Process Theology</u> (Belfast: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 31.

[14] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 31-32.

If Griffin really believes that there is no such thing as a pre-reflective atheist, then his formal statement of the problem of evil, which logically concludes that there is no God, is suspect, to say the least. Here it is:

1. God is a perfect reality. (definition)
2. A perfect reality is an omnipotent being. (by definition)
3. An omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. (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.)[15]

If we cannot help but believe in God at the deepest religious level of our being, Griffin's logical proof cannot ever hope to convince anyone of its truth. I wonder why Griffin chooses to go the route that he does in God, Power, and Evil in first arguing that God does not exist in order later to show that God lacks omnipotence. Rather it seems that Griffin should construct a logical proof containing premises entailing the conclusion that God is omnipotent, and then demonstrate that one or more of the premises must be rejected. Certainly Griffin believes that logical proofs convince, as long as one accepts the premises as true. This is one of the criteria for either accepting or rejecting a worldview, or vision of reality. Perhaps Griffin

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[15] God, Power, and Evil, p. 9.

structures his magnum opus to help persuade the theoretical atheist that he need not commit rational suicide to believe in God. One can rationally justify belief in both God and the presence of genuine evil by limiting the extension of God's power. In recognizing the logic of this reasoning, the theoretical atheist can stop denying what he has always known to be true in his inner self. Yet even if this is what Griffin has in mind, it still does not make much sense why he centrally focuses the book on a logical proof that concludes by denying God's existence. A theoretical atheist such as Camus does not deny God's existence from logical contradiction as much as from the all-pervading reality of irredeemable evil and suffering. Camus denies God precisely for not being omnipotent, and so, Griffin's answer to the problem of evil, far from convincing him, would have confirmed Camus in his despair!

Griffin's methodology concerns us specifically in relation to his theodicy. Further animadversions on his methodology, therefore, will be postponed until the following chapter which will concentrate on Griffin's theodicy.

II. Griffin's Vision of Reality

Griffin prefers to speak of God's creating the world out of necessary pre-existing materials rather than the traditional doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. The justification for this belief rests with the ambiguity of the Bible in regard to this issue. Griffin points out that the only explicit reference to creatio ex nihilo in the Scriptures is in the apocryphal book, 2 Maccabees, 7:28. Also, the alternative reading of Gen. 1:1 in the

Revised Standard Version says, "When God began to create," rather than "In the beginning God created . . . ." The issue as to how God created should be determined by two questions, asserts Griffin. These are, first, "Which view is more compatible with the essence of Christian faith?", and second, "Which view is, all things considered, most reasonable?".[16] "Rejection of creatio ex nihilo is fundamental" to the solution of the problem of evil, says Griffin, because divine omnipotence cannot mean "having no essential limitations upon the exercise of its will."[17] These necessary limitations may be of two kinds: 1. "pre-existing actualities" that have the power to thwart God's will or 2. "eternal, uncreated, necessary principles" that involve not only logical laws, but also some metaphysical structure to the universe.[18] This alternative to the traditional view of divine omnipotence "is to hypothesize that there has always been a plurality of actualities having some power of their own. This power is two-fold: the power to determine themselves (partially), and the power to influence others."[19] God, of course, is one of these necessary actualities, but He was never the only one. God can influence those other actualities through the power of persuasion, but He can never totally determine them. Likewise God can be affected by the other actualities, but cannot be totally under their sphere of influence. Power, therefore, falls under

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[16]Griffin, "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," Encountering Evil, ed. Stephen Davis (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 102.

[17]Ibid., p. 104.

[18]Ibid., p. 104.

[19]Ibid., p. 105.

the control of a metaphysical principle, and is the most important entity in solving the problem of evil. Griffin states:

> All that is necessary to the hypothesis is that power has always been and necessarily is shared power, that God has never had and could never have a monopoly on power, and that the power possessed by the non-divine actualities is inherent to them and hence cannot be cancelled out or overridden by God.[20]

This necessary principle of shared power is an autonomous metaphysical fact of reality that would obtain in any possible world, regardless of God's will.

Another relationship governed by a necessary metaphysical principle is the correlation between power and value. A correlation exists among the following four variables such that as one rises in degree, the others 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 and 4. the power to influence others (for good or ill).[21] Those entities that contain the above capacity and power in concrete reality Griffin calls, following Whiteheadian Process parlance, "actual occasions of experience." Actual occasions are always individual entities. Griffin avers, "All individuals experience, which means that all individuals have some capacity, however minimal, to enjoy and to suffer," although only as individuals, not as aggregates.[22] Examples of individuals are electrons, atoms, molecules, cells, and animals. Examples of

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[20]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 105.

[21]Ibid., p. 106.

[22]Ibid., p. 106.

aggregates are rocks and hurricanes, as well as collective entities, such as crowds, societies, and nations, which obviously do not experience apart from or above the genuine individuals of which they consist. Again, Griffin emphasizes that the metaphysical necessity of the correlation between power and value "was not ordained by God for some reason that God only knows. Rather, by hypothesis this is a feature that would necessarily obtain in any world; the principles correlating value and power are uncreated."[23]

Since God has chosen to goad the creative process forward, increased evil as well as increased good has been the result. Thus Griffin's theodicy does not assert "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."[24] The crucial point to remember, however, is that God is not indictable or blameworthy for evil because He is never fully responsible for any of it. Good and evil are always eternally necessary possibilities. God always seeks to actualize the best possibility each historical moment for every occasion of experience. This divine urge is called the "ideal subjective aim." It precludes any evil in the divine intent. Any evil that the occasion of experience actualizes arises from refusing to appropriate the ideal subjective aim for it. This rejection of the divine aim is referred to as a "negative prehension" on the part

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[23]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 109.

[24]Ibid., p. 109.

of the occasion of experience. Albeit the chances are astronomically infinitesimal, it is nevertheless a possibility for every occasion of experience to actualize the ideal subjective aim for it. In no instance is evil ever a necessity, but the possibility for evil always is. God bears only indirect responsibility for evil in this perspective. Since God urges potential occasions of experience into existence through the process of "concrescence," He forces them to choose among several options, one of which is always the ideal subjective aim, the others comprising various degrees of evil.

If God had not created a world, no "significant value" would exist for Him to enjoy. For God value and meaning can be sought only in terms other than from within Himself. This is so because meaning exists for God only if something is added to the divine experience from the world. If there were no novelty in the experience of God, His existence would be meaningless because devoid of any value. Since we have seen that a necessary correlation exists beyond God's decision among value (the capacity to enjoy intrinsic goodness), dis-value (the capacity to suffer intrinsic evil), and freedom (the power of self-determination), we have Griffin's answer as to why God called forth the creative process to the point where such destructive possibilities exist in the world. "No significant degree of intrinsic value would be possible without a significant degree of freedom," and this necessitates the possibility of a significant degree of evil.[25] Continues Griffin, the aim of a morally perfect Being "must be to

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[25] God, Power, and Evil, p. 292.

create the conditions that allow for the greatest good while minimizing the evils."[26] Griffin protects God's moral perfection by distinguishing between two types of evil. The first type is discord, or suffering, which is intrinsic evil, evil in itself; the second type is triviality, or boredom, which is evil by comparison of what could have been.[27] Griffin states, "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 involved."[28] God's decision to propel the creative process is thereby justified in order to bring about the best harmony between the prevention of discord and triviality.

Even though God has taken a risk in advancing the creative process, due to the fact that the greater the goods that are possible, the greater the evils, creatures have the consolation that God shares all of their suffering. God is present with the entire creation in all that they experience, and feels their joys and sufferings "analogous to the way that I share the pains of my bodily members."[29] Griffin adds that "God is the only being who has experienced every single evil that has occurred in the creation," so that He "is the one being in position to judge whether the goods achievable have been worth the price."[30]

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[26]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 110.

[27]God, Power, and Evil, p. 284.

[28]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 110.

[29]Ibid., p. 110.

[30]Ibid., p. 111.

And the underlying assumption for Griffin is that, indeed, the evils thus far suffered by the creation have been worth the price, since God has not ceased the creative advance.

Griffin accounts for natural evil in his theology in the same manner in which he accounts for all evil. Natural evil is simply "that which is caused by non-moral agents."[31] Griffin asserts that

> all creatures great and small have some power with which to deviate from 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.[32]

Since all actual entities are partially self-determining, down to the tiniest electron, they all have the capacity to instantiate evil, no matter how trivial. This power of self-determination defines the actual entity as a distinct "enduring object." Its concrescence is ultimately the result of its own decisions, which cannot be coerced by another entity, not even God.

Griffin speaks of three types of entities that have been brought into the world through God's creative activity. First, there are low-grade enduring individuals.[33] These actual entities contain very little power of self-determination. They cannot deviate very much from the divine will. Real possibilities for low-grade enduring individuals cannot include any

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[31]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 111.

[32]Ibid., p. 111.

[33]God, Power, and Evil, pp. 288-290; "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," pp. 112-113.

radical change in behavior, and so, any change on this level is very gradual. Those things that cannot deviate much from the divine will also cannot be influenced by God very quickly. An example of low-grade enduring individuals would be cells. It takes a long period of time for cells to alter radically their normal behavioral patterns and, thereby, become cancerous. Likewise, it takes just as long for the process to be reversed. The second type of entities are high-grade enduring individuals.[34] These objects have tremendous power of self-determination. They can deviate drastically from the divine will for them. Their real possibilities include radical changes in behavior that take place very rapidly. Since they can quickly deviate drastically from the divine will, high-grade enduring individuals likewise can be influenced at equal speed by God. The best example of this type of entity is a human being, who can repent in an instant from a lifetime of evildoing, but may also momentarily abandon faith in God and perform a wicked deed. The final type of entities are aggregates, which we have briefly mentioned above.[35] Aggregates have absolutely no power of self-determination at all. They have no capacity to respond to the divine will--or to the persuasion of any other entity--in any way whatsoever. No real possibilities exist for them, and so, no change can occur for aggregates qua aggregates. Some examples of aggregates about which God cannot do anything are hurricanes, speeding bullets, and boulder avalanches.

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[34] God, Power, and Evil, pp. 290-291; "Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," pp. 112-113.

[35] Ibid., p. 277; Ibid., p. 113.

God's initial creative activity was to bring some primeval order out of the mass chaos that eternally existed, perhaps within God Himself, Griffin suggests.[36] This order, created through divine persuasion, allowed for the formation of enduring objects, which were the first numerically distinct entities to arise out of the pre-existent welter. And so the creative process was on its way, leading up to the highly complex enduring objects living today, chief of which are human beings. Yet, to reach this advanced level of life took several billion years on this planet alone, several times longer in the universe as a whole. The creative process had to take this long, arduous route because God's power is limited to that of persuasion over all entities other than Himself. Since God did not create ex nihilo, He had to gently persuade the uncreated chaos to explore new possibilities in order to develop ever richer and higher syntheses. Thus, from the initial divine urge came the electron, and so on, the atom, the molecule, the cell, organic life, and finally, humans, all emerged through various quantum leaps that took place over endlessly extended periods of time. Perhaps the process could have been shorter, but this would have been decided ultimately by the actual entities, not God. The unsurpassable metaphysical principle in the universe by which all others are defined is creativity, of which God is the supreme exemplification. Griffin states:

> Reference to creativity as the 'ultimate metaphysical principle' which lies in 'the nature of things'

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[36]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 109.

> indicates that the fact that the world's actual entities have creative power is not a contingent feature of reality. It is beyond all volition, even God's.[37]

In this statement we have summarized the relationship that obtains between God and the world, and the possibility of evil thereof, in Griffin's thought.

III. A Critique of Griffin's Rejection of *Creatio ex Nihilo*

Griffin leaves us with the impression that the Bible is rather ambiguous in regard to God's creation of the universe. But this is not really so. A study of the Hebrew and Greek words employed for God's creative power and the ideas associated with them allow little room for doubting that God created *ex nihilo*. Werner Foerster states the following concerning the Old Testament Hebrew word for "create," *bara'*:

> *bara'* obviously had an original concrete significance, but this cannot now be traced. It is used exclusively for God's creating . . . . The word was given a special theological stamp and reserved for the belief in creation . . . . The presupposition is that something fails to be said about God's creation for which there is no analogy in the sphere of human life and knowledge.[38]

We notice that *bara'* had a distinctive usage in the Hebrew vocabulary, one that was shrouded in sacrosanctity, for it was to be used of no creaturely agent, but only of God. This idea is also expressed by Claus Westermann:

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[37] *God, Power, and Evil*, p. 279.

[38] Foerster, "*ktidzō*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 1008.

> In the priestly account of creation, there is a special word for God's creative act: bara', a specifically theological word. It is of the utmost significance that this word bara' occurs in the Old Testament only with God as its subject; it never has a man for subject. And never is there any material named out of which God creates the world.[39]

In reference to the creation of the world, therefore, creatio ex nihilo was not merely suggested by bara', but encapsulated its unique meaning. It was thereby distinguished from other words used for divine creative activity that did presuppose some previously given material or reality.

Gerhard Von Rad adds another nuance to the meaning of bara' in the following quotation:

> Thus, the concept of creation by means of the word is to be taken as an interpretation of the bara' of [Gen.] v. 1. It gives to begin with an idea of the absolute effortlessness of the divine creative action. It only needed the brief pronouncement of the will of Yahweh to call the world into being. But if the world is the product of the creative word, it is therefore, for one thing, sharply separated in its nature from God Himself--it is neither an emanation nor a mythically understood manifestation of the divine nature and its power. The only continuity between God and His work is His word.[40]

Griffin's aside comment that the necessary metaphysical principles may be eternally located within God, therefore, would have been absolutely unthinkable to the ancient Hebrew. Von Rad correctly understands the Hebrew link between God and His work to be His sovereign word, what I prefer to call the creation order. Creation order has the double advantage over word

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[39]Westermann, Creation, trans. John Scullion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p. 114.

[40]Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, vol. 1, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 142.

in that, first, it is not readily confused as a synonym for the Bible, and, second, it evokes the idea of God's law, the norms that God intends His creatures to positivize, and so, broadens God's personal word disclosed in specific instances in Scripture to a cosmic covenantal imperative. Foerster too explains creation of the world to be effected through the divine word (creation order). Commenting on Ps. 33:9 ("For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm." NIV), which he finds to be a summary statement on creation, Foerster remarks:

> . . . the only theologically adequate concept (so far as this is possible) to express God's creation is that of creation by the Word . . . . Word alone safeguards creation against all emanationist misunderstanding and makes it clear that the Creator is a person. For word is the expression of one who wills and acts consciously. What God wills, He does. At the same time, creation by the Word brings out the miraculous and spiritual character of creation and also the absolute transcendence of the Creator over the creature, which cannot offer even the passive resistance that material might offer to being fashioned.[41]

Before God created, nothing at all existed. Creation is the direct response of a command that sovereignly flowed forth from God.

Now, creation in the Old Testament does not always appear to mean ex nihilo, even when speaking of God. A mythological strand of creation presents itself in various parts of the Old Testament. Foerster briefly states the issue:

> According to this a battle between more or less personified powers of chaos preceded the true fashioning

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[41]Foerster, pp. 1011-1012.

> of the world. There are all kinds of references to this from the clear use of mythological names (Rahab, Leviathan) to the faintest echoes, e.g., Yahweh's chiding of the sea. But the myth itself does not occur . . . . If one considers the way in which the myth is used, it will be seen that all the echoes and allusions assume that the mythical monsters are mere objects of the divine action . . . . In other words, the mythical allusions are statements about God, not about the forces of chaos.[42]

The Old Testament writers, therefore, employed images and ideas from the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East, but always in ways which conformed to their own uniquely Hebraic religious commitments. All of reality, in its becoming, being, and perishing, remains totally dependent on the will of the Creator, Yahweh.

In the New Testament, the Greek word, ktidzō, and its derivatives, are strictly used as the translation of the Hebrew bara'.[43] This was done in order to protect the distinctive Hebrew idea from becoming lost in the philosophical and mythological trappings surrounding the pagan Greek idea of creation. Foerster states that "creation out of nothing by the Word explicitly or implicitly underlies the New Testament statements."[44] He points to Rom. 4:17b as encapsulating God's creative activity as understood by the New Testament writers: "the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were (NIV)."

Contrary to Griffin's estimation, therefore, creatio ex nihilo is one of the few biblical teachings that is not

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[42]Foerster, p. 1009.

[43]Ibid., p. 1028.

[44]Ibid., p. 1029.

ambiguous. Creation by the word of God always implies *creatio ex nihilo*.[45] Although "pre-existent matter is never mentioned in connection" with God's creative activity, "the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* is connected with it."[46] Creation "involves the beginning of the existence of the world, so that there is no pre-existent matter."[47] Jurgen Moltmann states:

> According to the texts, creation in the beginning is evidently creation without any presuppositions. The expression *creatio ex nihilo* . . . is intended to convey the liberty of the creator and the contingency of all being--both its initial contingency and its permanent, fundamental contingency. The question: why is there something rather than nothing? cannot be answered by pointing to any necessity. But it cannot be answered by pointing to pure chance either. *Creatio ex nihilo* defines in a negative way the positive ground of creation in God's good pleasure.[48]

Foerster asserts that "creation is an act of absolute power. The Creator is here wholly personal will. There can be no limitation of His power."[49] If we wonder why the idea of creation out of nothing was not ever expressed in so many words in the Scriptures--except for that brief mention in 2 Maccabees--Foerster reminds us that

> it is in keeping with the practical nature of the Old Testament that it does not formulate creation out of nothing as a dogmatic principle but always . . .

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[45]Foerster, p. 1012.

[46]Von Rad, p. 142.

[47]Foerster, p. 1029.

[48]Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 119-120.

[49]Foerster, p. 1010.

> makes about God only statements which do not subject Him to, or bring Him under the influence of, any pre-existent conditions.[50]

It seems that Griffin's rejection of the doctrine of _creatio ex nihilo_ radically differs from the above views of current biblical scholarship. And Griffin cannot accuse me of stacking the deck against his position, for the theologians cited--Foerster, Westermann, Von Rad, and Moltmann--to support the view that God created the world out of absolute nothingness certainly cannot be said to have any leanings toward traditional or conservative theology. Griffin is entitled to his deviant position on this issue, and can point to the views of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Juan Luis Segundo as favoring the idea that creation was God's first act of redemption, but he has a paucity of evidence in offering it to the Christian and Jewish communities as an equally legitimate interpretation of the biblical data concerning how God created the world.

IV. A Critique of Griffin's Espousal of Necessary Metaphysical Principles

A. The Omnipotence Fallacy

Griffin offers three reasons why a majority of people, at least in the Western world, need to affirm the absolute omnipotence of God: cultural conditioning, polemical motives, and the omnipotence fallacy.[51] Regarding the charge of cultural

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[50]Foerster, p. 1012.

[51]_God, Power, and Evil_, p. 258.

conditioning, although it is accurate, it is an empty criticism. All views of God are culturally conditioned to some extent. No such thing as perfect neutrality, or objectivity, exists in formulating one's idea of God. Griffin's modification of the idea of omnipotence is also culturally conditioned. Griffin reflects the post-60's American liberal view occasioned by the Vietnam War, and the disillusionment with power which that war evoked. Responding to the second charge, there is nothing wrong with polemical motives, for they are indications of the force of one's convictions, as Griffin himself clearly realizes. When one analyzes his interpretations of such figures as Martin Luther and John Calvin, one notices Griffin's own polemical motives at work. A tendentious line of criticism runs its course through all of the views of divine omnipotence that Griffin treats.[52] It is rather amusing to quote Griffin as asserting that "it is a recognized philosophical principle that one should consider the strongest rather than the weakest forms of a position one rejects" when one can easily surmise that Griffin does not present opposing views of divine omnipotence in their best possible light so that they sound plausible, but rather, exploits

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[52] _God, Power, and Evil_, ch. 6, "Augustine: The Traditional Free-Will Defense," pp. 55-71; ch. 7, "Thomas Aquinas: Divine Simplicity and Theological Complexity," pp. 72-95; ch. 8, Spinoza: Everything Is Simply Divine: Unorthodox Conclusion from Orthodox Premises," pp. 96-100; ch. 9, "Luther: The Explicit Denial of Creaturely Freedom," pp. 101-115; ch. 10, "Calvin: Omnipotence without Obfuscation," pp. 116-130; ch. 11, "Leibniz: The Best of All Possible Worlds," pp. 131-149; ch. 12, "Barth: Much Ado about Nothingness," pp. 150-173; ch. 13, "John Hick: All's Well that Ends Well," pp. 174-204; ch. 14, "James Ross: All the World's a Stage," pp. 205-219; ch. 15, "Fackenheim and Brunner: Omnipotence over Logic," pp. 220-230; ch. 16, "Personal Idealism: God Makes a Sensational Impression upon Us--More Unorthodox Conclusions from Orthodox Premises," pp. 231-250.

their negative features so that they sound incredible.[53]

Griffin's final charge against those who hold to a view of divine omnipotence without any limitations is the strongest of the three. The omnipotence fallacy occurs, says Griffin, because of a general assumption that simply because a state of affairs is logically possible, then God, being omnipotent, can unilaterally bring about that state of affairs. Griffin replies to the contrary, however, that this assumption does not logically follow, since the state of affairs would not be totally up to God, but presumably, would be partially determined by the actual realm whose being is distinct from God. Such a realm must be affirmed as real according to Griffin or else one is forced to accept the disturbing alternative of pantheism. Divine omnipotence means, therefore, that God contains all the power that it is possible for one being to have in any given world. But this does not mean that in a world where there are two or more distinct actual entities, one being can have a monopoly on power. Those philosophers and theologians who hold to this view of monopolization in reference to God's power are merely verbalizing; they are not uttering a logically coherent proposition. This is the crux of what Griffin calls the omnipotence fallacy.[54]

A critical response to Griffin's analysis of the omnipotence fallacy must first make mention of an instance in which his limitation on divine power is correct. Any state of affairs that includes genuine evil is not a possibility for God to

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[53]*God, Power, and Evil*, p. 261.

[54]*Ibid.*, pp. 261-274.

actualize. This is not due, however, to some metaphysical structure of the universe, but rather, to evil's inability to find a place in God's creation order. For the ultimate reality to create something evil would be an existential contradiction which would totally vitiate all standards of order and judgment. It would in fact demonstratively prove that God does not exist, for the ultimate reality's commission of some evil act would thereby nullify its right to be called God. What every person intuitively means by evil is this quality of not finding a place in our world. A God who is thought to be evil, or who is believed to send evil, equally cannot find a place to function in our view of reality. Griffin, undoubtedly, lends such harsh criticism against the traditional view of God because he realizes the enormous sense of alienation which this idea of God produces in people, due to His being responsible for all of the evil and misery in life, and at the same time, demanding uncompromising worship. On this score, I am wholeheartedly with Griffin.

Nevertheless, any thing that God creates is contingent by definition. The quality of contingency dictates that the created thing is ultimately dependent on its Creator for its existence. Since God is the Creator of all things, including necessity and possibility, both metaphysical and logical, He can unilaterally bring about any state of affairs He pleases, except one that contains genuine evil. Genuine evil occurs when no meaning exists for a dimension or aspect of the world, contrary to Griffin's formulation, "anything, all things considered, without

which the universe would have been better."[55] Griffin defines evil primarily in terms of a valuational judgment, namely, that which is worse than what can be the case. Whether something is more or less meaningful or meaningless to God is determined by the creation, according to Griffin. He contends that creating meaning in the world is totally a creaturely task designed to enrich God's experience. God, therefore, creates the world neither meaningful nor meaningless, but rather, neutral, with the valuational judgment of the universe to be decided by God on the basis of the degree of creative advancement reached. Contrary to this somewhat bizarre view, however, God in the very act of creating gives meaning, which is why everything that He creates is by definition good. Only those things that have not been created by God have no meaning. This set of things that God did not create comprises the category of evil. In this way, evil can never be attributed to God, not even indirectly, which Griffin cannot avoid doing. Evil is the result of the creation's outright abuse of the power and meaning that God has freely bestowed upon it. Since possibility and necessity have meaning in both logic and metaphysics, they, like every other ontological datum, must have been created by God. No thing can derive meaning apart from the Source of all meaning.

Perhaps one may counter, as does Griffin, that possibility and necessity have a unique relation to God in that they seem to have an autonomous existence apart from God's creative activity. But this is not really so. We can assert meaningfully

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[55] God, Power, and Evil, p. 22.

the proposition, "God cannot do evil," and affirm such a statement as unequivocally true without subjecting God to any constraint of necessity. God's inability to do evil does not detract from His omnipotence; rather, it reinforces divine omnipotence by guaranteeing steadfastness in terms of love, righteousness, and faithfulness on God's part. None of our language exactly describes God. It is all anthropomorphism. Words such as possibility and necessity do not possess a special metaphysical relationship to God to which He must conform. That all talk about God is anthropomorphic does not suggest that it is all meaningless, as Positivists would say. Talk about God is very meaningful when done not to define Him, but instead, to expand His presence among us. To include God under the universality of modal logic is to deny His sovereignty. God remains omnipotent over abstract modalities, such as possibility and necessity, because they are based on a norm that freely originates in Him. Possibility and necessity are contingent on God's giving them meaning through the creation order. They do not possess absolute logical or metaphysical priority over God. Even the committed Rationalist Rene Descartes was convinced that divine omnipotence holds sway over logical and metaphysical laws:

> . . . the power of God cannot have any limits, and . . . our mind is finite and so created as to be able to conceive as possible things which God has wished to be in fact possible, but not to be able to conceive as possible things which God could have made possible, but which He has in fact wished to make impossible. . . . even if God has willed that some truths should be necessary, this does not mean that He willed them necessarily; for it is one thing to will that they be necessary, and

> quite another to will them necessarily, or to be necessitated to will them.[56]

Humanity's existential needs demand that God be the Creator of all or else such a being is not God.

Focusing again on the omnipotence fallacy, Griffin is correct that omnipotence cannot signify God's having all the power in the universe, in light of His having created a world totally distinct from Himself. Yet I must take exception to Griffin's belief that this situation is a result of necessary metaphysical principles totally apart from God's will. Certainly before God created anything, He was the only real being. God must be the Originator of the metaphysical principles that govern relationships of power or else these relationships would be meaningless, and hence, evil, which Griffin surely would not want to say. Power derives its meaning, like everything else, from God's creation order, which is the set of norms to be concretely instantiated by the creation. If everything created would have followed God's creation order, there would be no evil. Needless to say, everything has not lived up to the divine expectation. Evil intrudes its ugly face every moment of the creation's experience. If we ask, "Why does God allow evil if He is omnipotent in the full sense of the term?", the answer is that He does not. Evil's presence is not due to divine permission or allowance. God too cannot find a place for evil; even God cannot redeem evil. Griffin's definition of genuine evil ("anything, all things considered,

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[56]Descartes, "God Can Do the Logically Impossible," The Power of God, eds. Linwood Urban and Douglas Walton, trans. Anthony Kenny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 39.

without which the universe would have been better") does not go far enough. Evil is anything whatsoever that has no place in God's plan, no meaning or purpose for existing, no possibility in the creation order's infinite realm.

Evil's not having a place extends to the logical sphere as well as any other. Any solution to the theoretical problem of evil must fail. A solution cannot help but explain that which it solves, and any explanation of evil necessarily explains evil away. Evil thus loses its genuine character when it is fitted into a theoretical paradigm with the intention of its being allowed a place in the universe for some logical or metaphysical reason. Griffin himself clearly articulates this fact in his penetrating, albeit stilted, analysis of the traditional theological interpretations of the problem of evil. But by redefining divine omnipotence to make room for metaphysical necessity, Griffin also loses the genuineness of evil which he is so meticulously careful to preserve until the final chapter of <u>God, Power, and Evil</u>. The only proper response concerning the theoretical problem of evil is that no solution exists <u>in principio</u>, and furthermore, this is the way that it should be. God help that person who would attempt to explain in any way whatsoever why innocent children were forced to watch with horror as Turkish soldiers brutally murdered their parents, and then were dragged into the Syrian desert to die a slow, agonizing death of starvation during the Armenian Genocide!

B. Logical and Metaphysical Necessity

Griffin states that his view

> . . . greatly alters the problem of evil. Even a being with perfect power cannot unilaterally bring about that which it is impossible for one being unilaterally to effect. And it is impossible for one being unilaterally to effect the best possible state of affairs among other beings. In other words, one being cannot guarantee that the other beings will avoid all genuine evil. The possibility of genuine evil is necessary.[57]

In another place, Griffin remarks that "although sin as such may not be essential to the definition of 'fully human,' the possibility of sinning certainly is."[58] Here we clearly see the impasse to which Griffin leads us. He speaks of necessary possibilities rooted in the metaphysical design of reality totally beyond even God's volition. A more representative example of antinomy cannot be conjured up. Such hopeless entrapment should lead a precisely logical thinker, as Griffin assuredly is, to reconsider his worldview. The only intelligent way out of the antinomy, so it seems, would be to suppose that concepts such as actuality, necessity, and possibility--be they logical or metaphysical--make sense only because they obey a norm that is directly intuited without engaging in a process of rational thought. This norm which serves as the universal, and in which actuality, necessity, and possibility find their meaning, cannot simply exist by itself as an eternal truth. A universal can never prove its own validity. Let us take for example the most elementary rule of inference: a=a, the tautology. How do we know that this is so? Obviously we cannot present premises to

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[57] God, Power, and Evil, pp. 268-269.

[58] A Process Christology, p. 131.

support the truth of the tautology, since the tautology itself forms the deductive base for all proceeding canons of logic. One can never arrive at a rational justification of the tautology by thinking, because the best that one can do is to argue in a vicious circle that revolves on the surface, but cannot dig beneath. No, one does not know the validity of the tautology on the basis of reason, but rather, only through unadulterated intuition. Moreover, intuitive knowledge is not only just as convincing as rational knowledge, it lays the foundation for the possibility of rational knowledge, and so, is epistemologically prior.

Regarding the metaphysical status of actuality, necessity, and possibility, definite norms uphold the properties and uses of these modalities. These norms themselves cannot be necessary, for then we would have exactly what Griffin gives us to accept: the antinomy of necessary actuality, necessary necessity, and necessary possibility. The metaphysical properties and uses of actuality, necessity, and possibility must be based on something beyond themselves, and this something can only be God's creation order. But, cannot one rebut this argument by asserting that God is a necessary actuality? The answer is no. Although we can speak of God only by means of concepts, and so, can say that He is actual, this does not mean that God is a necessary actuality. God is not subject to the law for necessity. Subjecting God to all sorts of logical and metaphysical principles is usual practice in philosophy books written by fanciful thinkers who forget that they are creatures in relation to the Creator, and that all talk about God is creational lingual expression

that evinces the limits of human understanding. Human knowledge of reality occurs only by means of the fixed laws that God's creation order prescribes. The creation order serves as the boundary between God and the universe (including logic and metaphysics), and as such, remains an impenetrable barrier beyond which rapacious minds cannot reach. The Kantian dualism between God in Himself and God in relation to us becomes obsolete in this perspective. We know God only in relation to us, just as we know anything only in relation to us. Nothing exists in itself. Everything that is exists only in relation to the creation order. Presumably this applies to God as well. Since God is God only in relation to us, as far as we are concerned, we know Him only in relation to the creation order. Existentially God is prior to all that is, but again, this is affirmed in relation to us, explicitly as human beings, implicitly as contingencies. We cannot think of God in any way whatsoever apart from ideas and concepts that are themselves derived from the creation order, which is the only means by which God relates to us.

Griffin rejects the belief that an omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil because it necessarily entails that the entire world must be divine (Spinoza's "unorthodox conclusion from orthodox premises"). This, however, is not so. That God could create a world over which He has complete control does not then necessitate that the world would be an extension of God. This is absurd, for anything created cannot be divine, since the divine must be

uncreated by definition. Neither may one impose an arbitrary metaphysical limitation upon God that makes impossible His creating anything over which He unilaterally controls. The experiential fact that in the world in which we live, actual entities seem to be self-determining centers of power need not be elevated to a necessary metaphysical law beyond God's desires. That the world is ontologically distinct from God, and yet has its own power, is the result of God's sovereign choice. God could have created the world in any way that He wanted, in ways totally beyond our feeble powers of abstract possibility.

C. God and Other Occasions

Griffin's presentation of the relation between God and evil may fulfill the criterion of logical consistency, but not those of illuminating power and adequacy to the facts of experience. Since it is metaphysically impossible, according to Griffin, that any being could ever have a monopoly on power, power in the universe is always shared power. But shared power is always power in conflict. A world in which the manifold centers of power cohere with one another is sorely absent in Griffin's vision of reality. Although discrete beings necessarily share the same reality for Griffin, their interests for creative advancement and the avoidance of evil necessarily differ, producing a necessary conflict of power.

For example, let us envision that at one time there was only God and the pre-existent matter, as Griffin suggests. At this point in time, God holds the overwhelming amount of power

in the universe, but the pre-existent matter also contains some infinitesimal amount for itself. God's desire to call forth the creative process arises out of the need to develop newer and higher syntheses of richness and intensity of experience while seeking to avoid triviality and boredom. The pre-existent matter, however, seeks to actualize what is most comfortable for itself. What is most important for the pre-existent matter is not the creation of novel forms of expression, but rather, survival. Security, not risk, is foremost to be sought by all actual entities, except God. This remains the state of affairs throughout the long, arduous process, although the survival instinct may develop into security for the species to the exclusion of the self in higher forms of life, and in the case of mankind, it may take the form of the survival of an ideal, or certain values, to the exclusion of the life cherishing those beliefs. This relationship between God and the world can only be described as tense. Apart from divine persuasion, there is no internal or external influence to serve as a predisposition on the part of actual entities to heed the divine urge. After all of the persuasive influences have acted on the object, its final emergent concrescence is ultimately determined by its own decision. The object's capacity of freedom, though minimal, is nevertheless sovereign among its real possibilities of actualization, all except one of which are evil in various degrees.

For Griffin God changes along with the world because He prehends all new experiences that the world originates. God is merely one occasion of experience alongside an infinite number

of other such occasions. The fundamental nature of an occasion of experience is to be in process.[59] Certain necessary metaphysical principles are not in process, however, since they are abstractions that never actually exist apart from their being instanced in an occasion of experience. Whether they are conceived as inhering within God or separate from Him--Griffin allows either as a possibility--these necessary metaphysical principles keep the process going without themselves participating in the process, except if one can abstractly conceive of a universal participating in a particular. The necessary metaphysical principles serve as norms in making sure that a minimal amount of order is present in the process. It is the hallmark of Process theology to clearly differentiate between creativity and God.[60] As one of the necessary metaphysical principles, creativity, not God, guarantees that the process will advance. God can only discern the ideal contours the process should take. God, therefore, shares with actual occasions the property of being subject to the necessary metaphysical principles, especially that of creativity. Although He is the chief exemplification of the metaphysical principles, God is still one occasion alongside other occasions.

By elevating the necessary metaphysical principles to the level of norms, or universals, Griffin has lowered God to the level of a creature, dependent for His existence on things

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[59]Robert Neville, Creativity and God (New York: Seabury, 1980), ch. 2, "Process and Eternity within God," pp. 21-35.

[60]This is the central thesis of Neville's book.

external to His sphere of volition. What escapes Griffin's notice is that what gives certain principles--such as creativity--their metaphysical foundation and necessary operation is not their being universals, but rather, their call to fulfill a universal, or norm, beyond themselves. These universals, or norms, are embodied in God's creation order. The norms are related to both God and creation in the same way, so there is no room for equivocation, yet only creation remains subject to them, never God. The crucial distinction between God and creation is achieved in this perspective at the same time that they are related through universals that give meaning to both. Griffin's Process worldview, on the other hand, blurs the distinction between God and creation, making Him an occasion of experience alongside other occasions, all of which are subject to metaphysical principles that are somehow, inexplicably, necessary in and of themselves.

D. Freedom

Griffin's view of freedom should be briefly discussed here in relation to the biblical view. All actual entities have freedom, according to Griffin, although the higher, more complex entities, such as humans, have a much greater capacity of freedom than most other entities. Whatever level or degree, however, freedom is always uncoerced, and always involves a choice between good and evil possibilities. Says Griffin, "The good cannot be had without the possibility of the bad."[61] The stance of the

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[61] Process Theology, p. 73.

actual entity contemplating its freedom resembles autonomy and neutrality with respect to the possibilities which are available to be chosen. On the contrary, however, freedom in the biblical understanding is not the abstract capacity for self-determination.[62] A person or thing is only truly free in the fulfilment of God's will or creation order. Self-determination in itself, the ability to choose one's own destiny, is not freedom, but rather, bondage and coercion, which the Existentialists so brilliantly have shown us. Biblical freedom is always service rendered to others in love and in obedience to the law of God. Freedom is the surrendering of one's self-determination to the righteous norms put forth by God for the enjoyment of all the works of His hands. Rudolf Bultmann states that freedom in the New Testament is not "a release from all binding norms, from the law of God, but rather, a new servitude . . . to 'righteousness.'"[63] These "binding norms" of which Bultmann speaks are embodied in God's creation order, and mark the definite boundaries which freedom may traverse. Anything outside these boundaries cannot in any sense be called freedom, but rather, enslavement, resulting from an atrocious abuse of power. "Freedom and demand constitute a unity: freedom is the reason for the demand, and the demand actualizes the freedom."[64] The law of God is the demand apart from which freedom is not an existential possibility.

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[62]Heinrich Schlier, "eleutheros," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 2, p. 496.

[63]Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, vol. 1, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribners, 1951), p. 331.

[64]Ibid., p. 336.

E. The Transference of Omnipotence

In Griffin's system, God's power and control over the world diminishes as He calls forth the creative advance into higher and more complex forms of existence. This is so because reality contains a limited field of space upon which the numerous centers of power can operate. In proportion to the world's actualization of more and more novel possibilities, God's power must yield more and more control. A necessary power struggle between God and the world is built into the metaphysical structure of things. Each cannot exist without limiting the other's range of influence. God's power is manifested only insofar as the world gives ground by allowing itself to be persuaded by Him. The creative process continues to produce creatures capable of an infinite number of possibilities, but since only one of them is God's ideal subjective aim, all of the other possibilities are necessarily evil. The overwhelming probability, then, is that actual entities will choose evil time and time again. Aggravating this situation is the fact that negatively prehending God's ideal subjective aim by highly complex creatures actualizes not only evil possibilities, but evil possibilities of tremendous destruction, ones that were not real options for the most advanced forms of life one million years ago. The increasing richness in the values of experience that marks the creative advance, therefore, is offset by the increase of suffering which accompanies it. At best, the net result is a standstill in progress. In light of the horrors of the twentieth century, however, the cosmic process seems to be characterized by an accelerating regress.

Griffin winds up losing the ideal of persuasion that he cherishes so dearly. Persuasion is relegated to a minor influence in the freedom of genuine individuals. Although persuasion serves as an impetus in advancing the creative process, it has no power in determining what final forms the process will take. That unique power belongs to the necessary metaphysical principles. These are responsible for allowing all of the evil in the world, and so, exercise providential government over all of reality, including God. Griffin thus exchanges the traditional view of divine omnipotence, which he brands causally determinative and insulting to human dignity, for a metaphysical scheme that nonetheless acquires identical powers of divinity, and places them in the realm of impersonal, necessary principles that create more questions than they are supposed to answer. For example, why should it be a necessary metaphysical principle that a cancer cell not be influenced very much by the divine will, and yet, be able to cause such excruciating pain? And why should it be a necessary metaphysical principle that a hurricane be able to wreak such widespread havoc, and yet, not be able to respond to divine influence at all? Answering, as Griffin does, that this is simply the way it is mocks all those who endure misery and suffering day by day.

F. John Cobb's Process Perspective

Griffin emphatically states that "the process theodicy which I am presenting here hinges upon the notion that there are metaphysical principles which are beyond even divine decision."[65]

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[65] _God, Power, and Evil_, p. 298.

But a Process theology need not construe the relationship of power between God and the world according to such metaphysical principles that divide power to each side in a quantitative fashion. John Cobb, Griffin's colleague at the Claremont School of Theology and Center for Process Studies, states the relationship of power this way: "God is not another agent alongside the creatures. God acts only in them and through them."[66] He goes on to say that

> There is no divine action apart from creaturely action, but equally the divine action is the principle of hope in the creaturely action. Hence we cannot divide up responsibility for an action, supposing that the more God is responsible for what occurs, the less human beings are responsible, or the more human beings are responsible, the less God has to do with it. On the contrary, it is precisely in the freest and most responsible of human actions that the action of God is most clearly discerned.[67]

This is a more organic way of viewing events and their causes than Griffin's scheme, although it suffers from its own peculiar problems. In Cobb's vision, it is difficult to see how God remains innocent for all the evil done by responsible, free human actions. Maybe Cobb locates the divine activity only in the good that is done by human beings and creation at large, since every action is an admixture of good and evil. This certainly would be an acceptable analytic construction of how God acts for those of us who believe that God is not an agent alongside other agents in the universe. But such a view

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[66] Process Theology, p. 158.

[67] Ibid., p. 158.

substantially differs from Griffin's numerical arrangement in which God is another number in the vast fold of actual occasions. Although Cobb and Griffin co-authored Process Theology as a joint effort, and together head the Center for Process Studies, it seems that the differences between the two extend beyond the usual polarity where the Process theologian either leans toward the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead or that of Charles Hartshorne. It is interesting to speculate how Cobb would formulate a Process theodicy of his own. That it would deviate much from Griffin's, however, is clear.

CHAPTER TWO: A CRITIQUE OF GRIFFIN'S PROCESS THEODICY AND ALL THEODICIES IN GENERAL

I. The Traditional Task of Theodicy

In discussing evil, we must first reach a consensus on the definition of evil in terms of its reality. An apt quotation is the following from John Roth:

> What does 'evil' mean? That question itself is a crucial element in the problem of evil. The word often functions as a noun, suggesting that evil is an entity. In fact, evil is activity, sometimes inactivity, and thus it is a manifestation of power.[68]

Evil's lack of ontological status, yet effluence of energy in the form of power, is generally recognized by theists, especially of the non-dualistic sort. The idea of power plays the key motif in Griffin's theology in the explanation of how evil can exist in the same reality with God. Griffin judges his vision of reality to be the most accurate because it fulfills three criteria that he finds largely ignored in traditional theology. These three criteria are logical consistency, illuminating power, and adequacy to the facts of experience.[69] Meeting the requirements of these criteria entails the affirmation of the reality of genuine evil, a redefinition of divine

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[68]Roth, "A Theodicy of Protest," Encountering Evil, p. 8.

[69]A Process Christology, p. 157.

omnipotence, and a Process metaphysics.

Regarding God's existence, the presence of evil is primarily a rational problem for Griffin. Once again we present the following logical argument, which serves as a foil for Griffin:

1. God is a perfect reality. (definition)
2. A perfect reality is an omnipotent being. (by definition)
3. An omnipotent being could unilaterally bring about an actual world without any genuine evil. (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.)[70]

Focusing on God's power, Griffin shows how the theist may avoid the conclusion of the argument by rejecting either premise 2. or 3., depending on one's interpretation of omnipotence. Griffin finds a reasonable answer for the presence of genuine evil through a "speculative hypothesis" that portrays God's power as persuasive rather than coercive. The traditional biblical image of a God who is sovereign over all things is drastically modified.

For one who professes to believe in an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, the problem of evil looms at every moment. A common reaction to this menace is to attempt to justify God's

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[70]God, Power, and Evil, p. 9.

ways to man, in short, to construct a theodicy. This term was coined by Gottfried Leibniz, inspired by John Milton's "Paradise Lost." The task of theodicy was understood no better by anyone than Immanuel Kant. Kant set forth the criteria and methodology for theodicy that have been employed up to the present. According to Kant, the theodicist must prove one of three things: 1. what one deems purposeless in the world is not so 2. although there is purposelessness in the world, it is the inevitable consequence of the nature of things, and so, not evil 3. although there is evil, it is not the work of God, but of some other responsible beings, such as persons or demons.[71] The method by which any one of the above is to be demonstrated is rational thought. Kant tersely states:

> The author of the theodicy agrees that the case be tried before the tribunal of reason, and agrees to be an attorney who will defend the case of his client under attack by formal refutation of all the complaints of the adversary. Therefore, he may not during the course of the process declare arbitrarily that the tribunal of human reason is incompetent.[72]

The theodical enterprise, then, owes its origin, development, and conclusion to creative reasoning, which is exalted as the final court of judgment on the guilt or innocence of the accused, who is none other than God.

II. Griffin's Theodicy

A. Explication of Griffin's Theodicy

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[71]Kant, "On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies," ed. and trans. Michel Despland, Kant on History and Religion (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1973), p. 283.

[72]Ibid., p. 283.

Griffin's theodicy exactly corresponds to the theodical endeavor articulated above. Griffin unabashedly decides that evil is a problem for the theist, and vehemently opposes the idea that the Christian theologian must accept both that God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent and that there is genuine evil in the world. Evil must be accounted for in some other way than as a mystery, and the chief burden of responsibility for its presence must rest on God. Once Griffin establishes these preliminary points, he undertakes his theodicy with eager resolution. His plan of attack is Kant's third defense--proving that some other being or beings than God is the actual cause of evil--which uncannily resembles a plea not so much of innocence as justifiable criminal activity, since God remains ultimately responsible for all of the evil in the world.[73] Griffin's means of attack is reason, strictly logical and seductively compelling. It is treated as an invincible weapon that commands awesome respect. Reason's inability to grapple with the relation between divine omnipotence and evil is given some consideration by Griffin, but in a rather condescending way, partly due to the inadequate opposition to logic in this matter by Emil Fackenheim and Emil Brunner, in whose context of thought Griffin broaches the idea.[74] A foundational analysis of the nature and extent of reason in aiding the understanding of the connection between God and evil, dissociated from previous dogmatic "irrational"

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[73]"Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil," p. 109.

[74]_God, Power, and Evil_, ch. 15, "Fackenheim and Brunner: Omnipotence over Logic," pp. 220-230.

formulations--such as those of Fackenheim and Brunner--is conspicuous by its absence in Griffin's writings. For Griffin logic is Lord, and all of the other aspects of human existence must grovel at its throne.

Upon surveying Griffin's formal statement of the problem of evil, we immediately notice that the argument is entirely based on logical necessity. The importance placed upon logically precise analysis comes from "ideas suggested by Greek philosophers . . . in the attempt to achieve philosophical consistency."[75] Griffin's project is an intentional synthesis of classical Greek thought and biblical perspectives. Since he believes that truth may be found anywhere in the history of ideas, Griffin strongly promotes the method of natural theology. Revelation for Griffin ought to be understood from the perspective of the rational human mind. Revelation must reveal something to the person; revelation that cannot be understood is a contradiction in terms.[76] Griffin has no patience, therefore, for a supposed revelation that logically conflicts with another purported revelation, or for a revelation that is hopelessly scrambled and must forever be labelled a mystery. The logical proof, then, serves as the ideal medium through which to clearly convey the truths of the Christian faith that supposedly have been revealed. In this manner, the various articles of the Christian faith are expressed in straightforward declarative propositions employing

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[75]_God, Power, and Evil_, p. 53.

[76]Almost the whole of _A Process Christology_ deals with supporting this thesis.

common terms with common meanings. Also, assumptions are precluded (except for the first proposition), for each proposition either is logically deduced from prior ones or more fully expands a core idea set forth in prior ones. Whatever the conclusion of the logical proof, it necessarily follows from the premises. Even if one does not prefer the conclusion drawn from the premises believed to be true, one still does not have a choice in rejecting it. As Kant said, one "may not during the course of the process declare arbitrarily that the tribunal of human reason is incompetent."[77]

Criticism of Griffin's attempt at theodicy revolves around two foci. The first deals specifically with Griffin's methodological choice of articulating his theodicy through a logical proof. The second area of criticism broadens out into the legitimacy of the theodical enterprise in any form.

B. The Commitment to Reason

One cannot talk about facts, knowledge, proof, or reality, without being committed to them as certain, as Michael Polanyi has demonstrated.[78] For example, one cannot without self-contradiction speak of a logical proof that fails to convince, regardless of the validity or soundness of the argument. This is the situation we encounter with Griffin's formal statement of the problem of evil. The method employed by Griffin, i.e.,

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[77]Kant, p. 283.

[78]Polanyi, Personal Knowledge (Chicago: University Press, 1958), ch. 10, "Commitment," pp. 299-324.

theodicy by rational proof, is misguided and illegitimate because he intentionally construes the argument in such a way that the reader who is committed to the laws of logic as the final arbiter of all truth must accept the embarrassing conclusion that God does not exist. And once this step is taken, Griffin has the reader in a position where she becomes vulnerable to the plausibility of doubting God's omnipotence, if one yet wishes to retain belief in God.

One should throughout this escapade, however, in all reverence to God, consider whether it is appropriate to submit the problem of evil to logical proof. Do God and evil simultaneously inhabit a common universe, such that each must be defined in the light of the other's reality? Can any amount of evil in the world falsify belief in an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God? Or is, perhaps, reason promulgating a verdict in this case for which its laws are ill-designed to resolve? Polanyi states that "to be tormented by a problem is to believe that it has a solution and to rejoice at discovery is to accept it as true."[79] This holds for the problem of evil as well, but, as we shall see, in a radically unique way, a way that precludes theodicy.

A rational solution to the problem of evil must in the process of justifying God explain why evil exists or, at least, put forth possible reasons for evil's existence. It must be made clear <u>why</u> evil exists, and not just <u>how</u> it comes to be. The cause or causes of evil must be found. The explanation of something dispels the difficulties of accounting for its presence.

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[79]Polanyi, p. 300.

Answers are provided for the many questions the thing evokes. A key is put forth in understanding it. Giving a coherent explanation of something involves putting forth a natural or logical connection with other things.

None of the above requirements for an explanation, however, are possible in dealing with evil. To eliminate the difficulties of evil's presence is to eliminate evil itself. To give a coherent explanation of evil is to make it fit in with everything else in God's creation, which, again, is impossible. To explain evil is to allow it a rightful place in the world, to excuse it, to legitimate it, to give a reason for it. None of these things can be done without transforming the meaning of evil. There cannot be an evil reason or purpose for an action or event, for a reason or purpose always intends to justify the action or event by explaining the wherefore of its occurrence. One cannot without misguided presumption dare to attempt an explanation as to why an evil occurred. Explaining an evil as due to sin does not convey a purpose for the evil, but rather, only prompts the unanswerable question, "How does one explain sin?".

There is a tremendous difference between asserting that we cannot ever find the solution to the problem of evil and asserting that we can know that no such solution exists. The former way of viewing the problem of evil leaves one in utter agnosticism, and so, hopeless despair. The latter way leaves one with a clear understanding that can form the foundation of an authentic Christian worldview. It is the latter, rather than the former, way of viewing the problem of evil that designates the basic thesis of

this essay. In other words, although evil is anti-normative, this does not mean that there is no normative response to it. Although the normative response falls far short of an explanation, it still goes a long way toward understanding the problem. We need not waste time looking for a solution to the problem of evil where one does not exist.

Evil is generally recognized to be a problem in relation to God's being, and those who have found it to be their calling to defend a contemporary theistic position in light of evil tend to present the problem as a logical one, and nothing more. Such a narrow perspective on evil ineluctably leads to highly speculative theodicies that reconcile God and evil in ways that seek to appease the rational mind. This procedure has become quite popular in the philosophical literature on evil lately, and is not limited to liberal thinkers, such as Griffin, but also extends to conservatives, such as Alvin Plantinga and Stephen Davis in their "free-will defense." Characteristic of these popular theodicies is focusing the problem of evil on God, drawing reasonable answers by redefining the traditional biblical idea of the God who is sovereign over all things. God's being is thereby safeguarded at the expense of His divinity. "God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth" is made subject to the laws of logic and metaphysics, which He did not create. Out of this state of affairs, evil arises. Thus, a rational solution for evil's presence in the world is suggested, and so, the theodicist sees his task accomplished. On the contrary, however, evil is not a rational problem for God's being; it is an existential problem for humanity's being. To assume

that the presence of evil casts doubt on God's being is to hold a false view of God. The abundance of theodicies offered in our day by theists plainly shows the deceptive quality of evil. Even those who believe that they are fighting against evil in their theorizing are in fact promoting it in the worst possible way. Evil is an existential problem that pervades every aspect of humanity right to the core of our being, and so, threatens us in all our created selfhood.

Griffin construes the presence of evil in the universe as a logical problem that calls into question the being of a morally perfect, omnipotent God. Griffin's solution to the problem of evil is a metaphysical one that seeks to explain evil's presence within the parameters of a cosmic power struggle between God and creation. Evil, however, is an existential problem for humanity, not God. It is humanity's distorted logical and metaphysical worldview that perceives evil as the result of God's doing and evidence that He does not exist rather than as humanity's own doing and evidence that we are recalcitrant sinners against God. Since evil infects every aspect of our existence, it is a problem that cannot be solved only within one aspect, such as the logical. The problem of evil, in fact, has no solution in principle! It is in keeping with the nature of existential problems that they are thus. That is why they bring about so much <u>angst</u>.

The problem of evil will always remain a problem for all eternity. It begs credulity to suppose that God will tell us the reason for all of the world's misery and suffering after we

have attained the resurrected state as it does to believe that God has the solution to the problem of evil at hand, but refuses to reveal it for some inscrutable higher purpose, such as that faith in Him would then become impossible. There is not, and cannot be, a solution to the problem of evil because any solution must necessarily justify evil, either by resorting to helplessness on the part of God or to unwillingness on His part, which, perhaps, is the worst of all possible evils to imagine. This is so because such a being's power of choice would include evil, and this would discount his right to be called God. The universe over which this being might rule, then, would in a very strict sense be named atheistic. Evil will discontinue to present a problem to the saints in the resurrected state only because its effects will no longer reach them in the new heavens and the new earth under God's reign. This does not mean, however, that the problem of evil will be solved; it simply will be irrelevant, except for those who will have alienated themselves from God. For these persons, an entire eternity of frustration will be available in searching for a solution.

III. The Biblical Attitude toward Theodicy

A. Job

One curiously notes that nowhere in the Scriptures does a solution to the problem of evil appear, not even in the book of Job, where one would surely expect to find one. Robert Duncan states:

> . . . the Joban poet obviously does not offer [God's allowing Satan to deprive Job of health and possessions] as the ultimate solution to the problem of human suffering. If so, why should he include the Speeches of the Almighty as the climax of the dialogue between Job and his friends? And for Job himself, deprived of the knowledge that God is using him to prove a theological 'point,' there is no rational basis for his suffering.[80]

To the ancient Hebrew, rational explanations were not generally convincing. Job's three friends (antagonists) provide the most rational explanations of the events that befall Job. Yet their 'theodicy' is not only rejected as erroneous, it is likewise considered blasphemous by none other than God Himself. Duncan continues:

> The words of the Almighty to Job instead serve to reveal the wisdom and power of God in creation. Evil is thus left in the realm of mystery, beyond human comprehension and rationalization . . . . The question of how evil originated and why it should run rampant in the world is not answered in any ultimate sense. No Miltonian 'justification [of] the ways of God to men' is accomplished or even attempted.[81]

Theodicies and rational explanations of evil, therefore, dare not flaunt their guile in Scripture, except by those who speak apart from divine inspiration.

It is always inappropriate for man, the creature, and a sinful one at that, to attempt a rational justification of God for all of the evil in the world. Evil is not God's responsibility; it is humanity's. In any theodicy, attention is diverted from the guilty party, humanity, and focused on God,

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[80]Duncan, "The Problem of Evil: A Comparison of Classical and Biblical Versions," Christian Scholars Review, vol. 3:1, 1973, p. 31.

[81]Ibid, p. 31.

who is forced to take the witness stand in order to defend Himself from charges of criminal activity in the creation of a world saturated with gross imperfections. God is assumed guilty in this enterprise until some elaborate scheme of accounting for all of the evil in the world, apart from God's direct authorization, is put forth by the theodicist, who smugly pats himself on the back for "saving" God's moral integrity. All attempts at theodicy are blasphemous creaturely responses that tacitly shift the blame for evil from man to God. God needs no justification in light of evil, however, for He is not responsible for evil, and therefore, needs no pronouncement of vindication. The idea of theodicy is the bastard offspring of human logical deduction.

B. The Cross

Although the Bible does not give us a rational justification of God for evil and its misery and suffering, the cross functions as a symbol for God's triumph over evil, and thereby, for His righteousness in terms of His not being responsible for evil, yet taking it upon Himself to eradicate it. It is no historical quirk that Christians have adopted the cross as the most fundamental symbol of their faith. Although the cross evokes a cognitive content--the idea of atonement--its impact goes far beyond the analytical level of human consciousness. In the midst of traumatic existential suffering, Christians look to the cross for strength. God's righteousness shines forth from Calvary, transcending human understanding, but nevertheless, gripping the person who has surrendered to God in faith in the very center,

and therefore, in the totality of her being. The Christian should not question God's justice or seek to find the explanation for evil in any limitation in God, but rather, should seek to address the problem of evil in the context of the cross, the symbol of the redemption of the entire creation and of the vindication of all innocent suffering.

In this regard we must reject any theory of the atonement that puts forth a purpose or reason for Christ's crucifixion. It was simply the most atrocious and heinous evil ever perpetrated by mankind, and vividly testifies to his sheer wickedness and utter depravity. Because God brought forth redemption out of the crucifixion of His only begotten Son, we should not suppose that God could not have redeemed His creation in any other way, or even that the crucifixion necessarily contributed to the redemptive process that ensued. The widespread belief in biblical times that God demanded a blood sacrifice as a payment for disobeying His law mistakenly interpreted a universal human response as a normative divine edict. Because of His longsuffering and covenant faithfulness, however, God accepted this response--at least in Old Testament Israel--as a sincere attempt by humans to acknowledge their sin and guilt. God never intended, however, that a blood sacrifice, least of all a human one, should be a vicarious atonement for mankind's sin and guilt. That God has brought forth good out of the crucifixion has not occurred <u>because</u> of the crucifixion, but rather, <u>in spite</u> of it. God's bringing forth good out of this most evil event witnesses to the divine judgment upon humanity rather than to the divine

blessing. If "O felix culpa" is an inappropriate response to the Fall of mankind, it is an absolutely abhorrent response to Christ's crucifixion.

The importance of the cross as a symbol struck me upon viewing the closing scenes of the splendid movie, Ben-Hur (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1959). No theological articulation of the doctrine of the atonement in any systematics textbook could compare in significance to the masterfully photographed and edited scenes of the decimated Christ hanging on the cross, His blood dripping down onto a pool of water gathered from a thunderstorm, flowing down Calvary hill, going out to cleanse the world. Without a single word spoken in this scene, the film powerfully presents in a heart-rending way the message of Christ's suffering and death. It was one of the few times in my life that I have been led to tears.

IV. Griffin's Critique of Traditional Theodicies

Griffin spends much time evaluating past theodicies. It may be worth briefly to summarize the difficulties that he has with the four most influential theologians that he criticizes: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin.

A. St. Augustine

For Augustine all evil is the result of the misuse of free will. God is absolved from all responsibility for evil because He did not create those evil volitions that arise out of the wills of men and angels. Evil is thereby reduced to sin. God's

attributes of omniscience and omnipotence do not in any way conflict with human freedom. Although divine foreknowledge is infallible, it does not preclude free will. Likewise, although divine omnipotence causes every occurrence in the world, it does not take away the free agency of creatures. There is a reason why God allows evil, but we do not comprehend exactly what that reason is, except that we can confidently affirm that God allows evil in order to bring about a greater good that could not have been brought about in any other way. Augustine states the following:

> When, however, we come to that judgment of God, the proper name of which is 'judgment day' or 'the day of the Lord,' we shall see that all His judgments are perfectly just: those reserved for that occasion, all those that He had made from the beginning, and those, too, He is to make between now and then. Then, too, it will be shown plainly how just is that divine decree which makes practically all of God's judgments lie beyond the present understanding of men's minds, even though devout men may know by faith that God's hidden judgments are most surely just.[82]

All evil is therefore instrumentally good; there is no such thing as genuine evil. What appears as misery and suffering is none other than punishment for sin. Augustine's entire theodical argument hinges on the assumption that every single person deserves the punishment of everlasting hell because of original sin. Yet Augustine's theodicy proclaims that God deemed it better to bring good out of evil than not to have allowed evil to exist at all. Augustine escapes this tension in his theodicy by positing two wills in God, the divine will and the

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[82]St. Augustine, City of God, transs. Walsh, Aema, Monahan, and Honan (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 486.

eternal will. Everything that is evil goes against the divine will, but nothing ever goes contrary to the eternal will. Hence the actual result is nevertheless one will in God, since the divine will necessarily becomes absorbed into the eternal will. Evil is either built into the structure of things or ultimately nonexistent. Either way one interprets Augustine, the genuine horror of evil is lost in his theology.

Griffin interprets Augustine as ultimately denying genuine evil. This is so because Griffin sees Augustine's primary concern to be the preservation of God's moral integrity in the execution of His judgments. Good must teleologically flow out of every single instance of evil on account of God's providential ordering of events. Griffin brands this divine rule over evil a causally controlled process that fully annihilates any idea of authentic human freedom. He sees divine foreknowledge, as understood by Augustine, to be the cause of everything that transpires within history. Although human wills are the general causes of human actions, God's foreknowledge includes the genuine causes of all things. Griffin argues that since Augustine's God knows all things beforehand, all of the so-called free choices of persons are necessarily fixed, so that they do not really possess any freedom to choose other than the way they actually do. What appears to be human freedom in the Augustinian schema actually is God's overriding omnipotence working itself out through the individual creature. And since God is the cause of all things in this understanding, He certainly cannot be the one responsible for all of the evil in the world without permanently damaging

His holiness and moral perfection. The only logical alternative left for Augustine to adopt, therefore, according to Griffin, is to deny the actuality of genuine evil, or proposition 7. in the formal statement of the problem of evil. It is this denial of genuine evil that irks Griffin the most about Augustine's theodicy.

B. St. Thomas Aquinas

Griffin's critique of Thomas Aquinas follows similarly to that of Augustine, as the two thinkers hold the same notions about God. Griffin summarizes what he labels the essential core of Thomistic theism in seven points. The first point is eternity, signifying that God does not go through temporal moments in succession, and so, does not experience a before and after. The second point is immutability, or impassability, meaning that God is not affected by anything, and cannot change, not even from within. Then there is Thomas' favorite designation of God as <u>actus purus</u>. <u>Actus purus</u> describes God's not possessing any latency or potentiality that is not actualized. Everything that God is able to do, He does. The fourth point is divine simplicity, which includes such ideas as there being no distinction between God's essence and existence, nor between God's essence and any of His attributes, nor even among any of the attributes individually. The fifth Thomistic point concerning God is that He is necessary. This does not mean only that God exists necessarily, but also that everything about Him is necessary. The sixth point is omniscience, which means that God

knows absolutely everything that it is possible to know, and when combined with the previous five attributes, entails that God's knowledge comes totally from within Himself, and not tied to experience. The final point, completing the Thomist understanding of God, is omnipotence. When put in conjunction with the other attributes, divine omnipotence means not only that God can do anything that is logically possible, but also that everything done is done by God. God causes everything that occurs, and so, actually possesses all of the power in the world.

Thomas accounts for evil in the universe by means of a careful distinction between primary and secondary causation. Whereas God does in fact cause everything that occurs, He employs agents or instruments to carry out these causes in all cases except miracles. So God is the primary cause in every event while the particular agent or instrument is the secondary cause. The relationship between the two causes is not 50%-50%, but rather, 100%-100%. This is how Aquinas accounts for evil in the world, at the same time absolving God of any moral imperfection. Since evil is due solely to deficient secondary causation, God is not responsible for it. Thomas prefers to speak of God's permitting, rather than causing, evil, but nevertheless, this is only a verbal assuagement in response to the charge of divine imperfection. Also, like Augustine, Thomas resorts to two divine wills when confronting the inexplicable presence of evil. The "antecedent" will in God is qualified by not taking into account all of the relative data, and, as such, excludes evil. The "consequent" will in God, however, operates in terms of all

available data, and may necessitate such evils as the taking of life in order to fulfill God's demand for justice.

All of the above Scholastic distinctions, however, are of peripheral concern in Thomas' handling of the problem of evil. Actually, Thomas needs no defense for evil's presence, since he readily accepts the principle of plenitude, first put forward by Plotinus. This doctrine states that evil enhances the overall beauty of the universe by presenting such sharp contrasts to the good. Aquinas states:

> Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe.[83]
>
> Now if evil were taken away from certain parts of the universe, the perfection of the universe would be much diminished; since its beauty results from the ordered unity of good and evil things, seeing that evil arises from the lack of good, and yet certain goods are occasioned from those very evils through the providence of the governor, even as the silent pause gives sweetness to the chant.[84]

Thomas need not appeal to an eschatological solution, as does Augustine--and as we shall see, Luther and Calvin--for the presence of so much evil in the world, for in his rationalistic system, it is quite intelligible to human reason already in this world that all evil can be adequately accounted for in such a way that safeguards the divine integrity.

Griffin's analysis of Thomas' thoughts on theodicy concludes

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[83] *God, Power, and Evil*, p. 85.

[84] Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, vol. 3:1, transs. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1928), p. 177.

with the same charge of denying genuine evil as we saw in Augustine. The distinction between primary and secondary causation is a specious argument put forward by Aquinas because it conflicts with the essential core of his theology. Since there cannot be any contingency in the universe due to divine omnipotence (which necessarily does what it does), it is impossible for a secondary cause to impede God's causation. God does everything that happens in the world. Talk of His permitting, or allowing, evil through secondary causes or deficient causation is at logical odds with the way that Thomas construes divinity. Unless we are ready to allow the option of logical inconsistency on Aquinas' part, which Griffin quickly rejects, the alternatives remain that either all of the evil in the world is caused by God, indeed, even willed by Him, or everything that appears to be evil is actually good. Griffin correctly assumes that no self-respecting Thomist would opt for the former, since divine moral perfection would be abandoned with such a belief. And no Christian theologian expresses more the principle of plenitude in explaining the pervasive presence of evil than Thomas Aquinas. Again it is this idea that evil actually adds harmony to the whole, thus making the world a better place to live, that Griffin finds so revolting, for he rightly interprets this belief as the denial of genuine evil.

C. Martin Luther

As representative of the thought of Luther on the question of theodicy, Griffin limits his critique to The Bondage of the

Will. One can legitimately question the propriety of choosing one work from Luther's voluminous writings to establish his position on this subject, especially a work so narrowly polemical in combating opposing viewpoints not directly related to the problem of evil. The debate in The Bondage of the Will revolves around soteriological issues, such as free will, justification, and the nature of true faith. Griffin does not always keep this in mind in his analysis of Luther. Nevertheless, Luther does assert some things in The Bondage of the Will that directly deal with the relationship between God and evil.

Unlike either Augustine or Aquinas, Luther does not attempt to modulate the belief that God causes everything that occurs. No free-will defense or distinction between primary and secondary causation arises in Luther's thought. He is straightforward and explicit in denying creaturely freedom. Luther thunders forth in reply to Erasmus that "God foreknows nothing by contingency, but . . . foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will."[85] Since God's predestination, foreknowledge, and will are all the same, each flowing from necessity, the idea of creaturely free will is precluded. That God causes everything that happens--including all of the evil--in the universe does not hinder faith in Him, according to Luther. Instead it actually makes faith possible by believing that God is righteous when human reason cannot arrive at that conclusion. There is, however, a certain logic

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[85]Luther, The Bondage of the Will, trans. Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), p. 38.

in believing that God is righteous when He appears unrighteous. Luther insists that divine justice is incomprehensible to human understanding, and so, it is fitting that God would not appear righteous in His eternal decree that causes misery and suffering. That human standards of justice cannot embrace divine justice gives faith in God a solid foundation, for we should expect it to be this way. So as not to be guilty of equivocation, though, Luther, like his predecessors, Augustine and Aquinas, falls back on the idea of two wills in God. We should concern ourselves only with God's "revealed will," which is set forth in Scripture. There is also, however, a "hidden will" in God. This hidden will "is not to be curiously inquired into, but to be adored with reverence as the most profound secret of the divine Majesty . . . ."[86] It is the hidden, not the revealed, will that causes all things to take place as they do. Everything that occurs reflects God's justice. Even though we cannot comprehend now how this is possible, Luther has confidence in an eschatological answer. God's ways of dealing with the world seem unjust, for it too often appears that the wicked prosper while the innocent suffer, but God "promises that it shall come to pass, that when He shall reveal His glory, we shall all see, and palpably feel, that He ever was, and is, just!"[87] For Luther, then, a reason exists why God causes evil, but this reason, at present, is inscrutable.

In his critique of Luther, Griffin, on the one hand, finds

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[86]Luther, p. 171.

[87]Ibid., p. 387.

refreshing the clarity of statement with which Luther expresses his views, unlike either Augustine or Aquinas. On the other hand, however, Griffin finds Luther's views, in their brusque candor, more inadequate to experience than the aforementioned theologians. Griffin suggests that Augustine and Aquinas make honest, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to show that God is not the direct cause of evil, whereas Luther does not even bother to protect God's moral integrity, but unequivocally states that God causes all evil, including the commission and eternal punishment of sin. "Adequacy is generally a higher good than consistency," says Griffin.[88] Though inconsistent with their theism as a whole, Augustine, in asserting free will, and Aquinas, in asserting secondary causation, attempt to be adequate to the facts of experience, and in so doing, deserve some merit, according to Griffin. Luther, however, though consistent, cannot be taken seriously in his views about God and the world. Griffin argues that Luther goes so far to demonstrate divine sovereignty that he winds up losing the idea altogether. This is so because Luther denies power to any entity other than God. But, for Griffin, to exist means to be a center of power. If God is the only being with any power, then He is the only being that exists. Everything, therefore, must be God. Furthermore, Luther states that God wills necessarily throughout all eternity. Not only is free will denied to creatures, then, it is also denied to God. What God wills, He must will. To speak of divine sovereignty choosing a certain course of action becomes meaningless in Luther's

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[88] *God, Power, and Evil*, p. 112.

paradigm. The appeal to two wills in God, then, does not solve any problems, for the hidden will swallows up within itself the revealed will, and is itself implemented by necessity. It is not God who decides anything, therefore, but rather, necessity. Griffin states:

> Luther's own answer [to the question of theodicy] would doubtless be that we cannot expect to find a solution, but that we should have faith that the light of glory will provide one. This would certainly take faith, insofar as it is difficult to imagine what the justification could be; but one must admit that there _might_ be one. This answer would force into the foreground one of the basic issues that is raised by Luther's theodicy in general, viz., does an acceptable theodicy need to provide a merely _possible_ answer, or does it need to provide a _probable_ answer?[89]

As far as Griffin is concerned, the only possible answer in Luther's theodicy is the denial of genuine evil, and this answer simply is not probable, given the facts of experience.

D. John Calvin

Griffin's analysis of Calvin's theodicy is quite intriguing because he identifies Calvin's God to be the God of traditional theism. In short, if any pointed objections can be raised against the God of Calvinism, it is an indication that the idea of God is flawed in the minds of most people. No previous theologian was as penetrating in dissecting God as Calvin. Although in many ways Calvin's God is a summary of the views of Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther, in other respects He is the goal to which these views looked forward.

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[89] _God, Power, and Evil_, p. 115.

Calvin clearly sets forth omnipotence to be the central attribute of God. He proclaims that "all events whatsoever are governed by the secret counsel of God,"[90] and that God "so overrules all things that nothing happens without His counsel."[91] Calvin thereby concludes that "it is certain that not a drop of rain falls without the express command of God,"[92] and that God even directs "the branch which falls from a tree, and kills the passing traveler."[93] Not only does God control inanimate objects, but also "the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which He has destined."[94] And God's destiny, or predestination, has already been firmly established in eternity before He created the world. This means everything that God has predestined must necessarily take place according to His sovereign will. The reverse side of this "dreadful decree" is that nothing can happen in this world outside of God's predestination. Absolutely everything--the evil as well as the good--that occurs in reality, therefore, exactly follows God's predestination, and consequently, His will. Calvin tempers these statements by asserting that "we must use modesty, not as it were compelling God to render an account, but so revering His hidden judgments as to account His will the best of all reasons."[95]

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[90]Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. 1, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 199.

[91]Ibid., p. 200.

[92]Ibid., p. 204.

[93]Ibid., p. 205.

[94]Ibid., p. 207.

[95]Ibid., p. 211.

Again Calvin says regarding God's will that it is "our only rule of justice, and the most perfect cause of all things . . . from which nothing flows that is not right, though the reasons thereof may be concealed."[96] These reasons of which Calvin speaks, however, although they cannot be comprehended by man's feeble mind, can be discerned by faith to exist. Like Augustine and Luther before him, Calvin thereby appeals to an eschatological solution to the problem of evil.

Of all the thinkers that he surveys, Griffin finds the clearest expression of the omnipotence of God and the concomitant belief in the denial of genuine evil in Calvin's writings. Although Calvin tends to dabble in equivocation at times, the unmistakable thrust of his theology as a whole points to the triumph of God's will in all things. Griffin becomes very irritated at Calvin's view of the divine will because it supposedly is just by definition and the norm of righteousness, yet we cannot perceive how this is so in its concrete operation in the world. Calvin's defense of the justice of God's will is the by now tiring view of two distinct wills at work, one revealed and one hidden. The revealed will is relegated to mere precept, and really has nothing to do with the hidden will, which is the cause of all that transpires. The Bible does not then deal so much with God's will, but rather, teaches us God's precepts. We are commanded to obey God's precepts, according to Calvin, and not worry about God's will. A murderer, therefore, disobeys God's precept ("Thou shalt not kill"), but in the same act,

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[96]Calvin, p. 214.

fulfills God's will. To aggravate this already tense interpretation, Calvin reasons that even though the murderer was acting, knowingly or unknowingly, as God's minister, he should, nevertheless, be punished for his act because he disobeyed God's commandment. Griffin is utterly bewildered by this line of thought in Calvin, since it is strikingly precluded by his austere doctrine of predestination. Griffin finds ideas such as punishment and reward totally meaningless in Calvin's thought. Creatures cannot be responsible for what they do because ultimately it is not they who do anything, but God. And since what God does is by definition right, nothing in the world can be evil. It is perhaps Calvin's views on evil that Griffin's Process theodicy most existentially opposes.

V. A Response to Griffin's Critique

Griffin's steady irritation with all of the preceding theodicies stems from a common notion which those theologians have adopted. This common notion, as Griffin has admirably shown, is the denial of genuine evil. Griffin intuitively recognizes that such an answer does not fit reality. Yet, as to what is so sadly mistaken about such an answer, Griffin focuses all of his mental powers of criticism on the logical inadequacy of denying that evil exists. Griffin's definition of evil ("anything, all things considered, without which the universe would have been better") is a very rationalistic one.[97] It involves only qualitative and quantitative judgments, and so is theoretical in its

[97] God, Power, and Evil, p. 22.

formulation. For Griffin, evil is known best in its theoretical dimension, because the theoretical is the most dispassionate, and hence, most unbiased stance, allowing for the clearest, most objective point of reference.[98] From a logical point of view, the denial of evil makes no sense, for persons necessarily think in terms of modalities, such as quality and quantity, that include evil (as Griffin defines it). Wholly apart from any personal experience of evil, persons can always think of some state of affairs without which the world would have been better. Evil is woven into the very fabric of a person's modes of thought.

Griffin's inability to discover the real error of denying genuine evil results from his own distorted perspective. Since the analytical mode necessarily contains the idea of evil, Griffin sees his task as harmonizing evil with the reality of God. This is accomplished by means of necessary metaphysical principles that obtain exclusive of God's volition. Griffin, therefore, falls captive to the identical temptation to which the entire theological tradition has likewise done: solving the problem of evil. The answer to the problem of evil, however, is neither the denial of genuine evil nor the obtaining of necessary metaphysical principles, but rather, that no solution is possible in principle. All the theologians Griffin treats believe that evil can be accounted for in some way, maybe not now, but certainly in the eschaton. In other words, God right now possesses the answer or solution to the problem of evil, and will reveal it in full

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[98] _God, Power, and Evil_, p. 16.

clarity at the consummation of the world process. For Griffin, moreover, the answer has already been located in the struggle for power between a perfectly moral God and a freely developing creation.

The human mind naturally searches for intelligible solutions to perplexing problems, first of which is the awareness that things are not the way they ought to be. We cannot rest contentedly until such answers are found and clearly articulated. Frederick Sontag states that "the religious consciousness searches, whether consciously or unconsciously, for a 'solution' to the problem of evil."[99] Since a solution is impossible, though, nothing can ever remove the omnipresent angst that pervades the human spirit. Although Sontag realizes that "most of us seem to demand an explanation which will take away all mystery," even he questions the propriety of such a demand in regard to evil.[100] That there is no solution to the problem of evil should not discourage us, for this is the way that it ought to be. What would really be despairing is if there were a solution, for that would bless all the filthy horrors of this world as the righteous execution of a cosmic plan. The theological tradition does this in its denial of genuine evil, thereby accepting everything that is as God's will. Griffin does this in his postulation of necessary metaphysical principles which make possible everything that happens. Humankind can no longer in good conscience accept these or any other solutions to the problem of evil.

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[99] Encountering Evil, p. 24.

[100] Ibid., p. 160.

The final chapter intends to serve as the normative response to evil and God's relation to evil. In so doing, it corrects the erroneous views on evil of Griffin and the theological tradition, substituting for them a worldview that can affirm without apology both God and creation.

CHAPTER THREE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO GRIFFIN'S VIEWS OF KNOWING EVIL AND GOD'S RELATION TO EVIL

I. Knowing Evil Normatively

The act of knowing forms an essential task of human life. Man is a knowing subject. All of his relationships are defined by knowledge. Nothing is more natural for man than knowing the world in which he lives. Human knowledge consists of many different dimensions and levels. Although all of the various dimensions cohere to form a unified grasp, a certain faculty of the mind or will usually preponderates over the others, depending on the pursued object of knowledge. For example, to know the sum of 7+5, the analytic faculty of the mind functions above the others as the decisive component. On the other hand, to know kindness requires the principal use of one's moral faculty, although the analytic component is still necessary in formulating a concept of kindness. The human subject functions integrally among all his dimensions in the acquisition of knowledge. Noetic integrality falls apart, however, when the object of one's knowledge is evil.

The following section explores how we should normatively know evil, and offers an alternative to Griffin's extremely rationalistic views. Major topics of discussion are some biblical givens on the subject, analysis of the reality of evil, rationalistic attempts of knowing evil, and finally, the

the non-rational way of knowing evil, which is the primary focus.

A. Some Biblical Givens

1. Biblical View of Knowledge

The Old Testament word for "know," yada', basically means the knowledge of the relationships among objects that form the circumstances of the world. Heavy emphasis rests on experience, and so, knowledge is viewed as a process, a coming to know. The Hebrew word has a much broader range than the English. It not only applies to concrete understanding, but also the ability to do things, what ought to be done, detecting, feeling, and learning by experience, which includes knowing God through His blessing and retribution as well as knowing one's mate through sexual intercourse.[101] Bultmann succinctly describes the Hebrew meaning of knowledge:

> The distinctive feature . . . is that the concept of knowledge in the Old Testament is not determined by the idea that the reality of what is known is most purely grasped when personal elements are obliterated between the subject and object of knowledge, and knowledge is reduced to contemplation from without. On the contrary, the Old Testament both perceives and asserts the significance and claim of the knowing subject . . . . It is in keeping with this that we do not find in Israel any knowledge which objectively investigates and describes reality . . . . Old Testament reality is not constituted by the . . . timeless and permanent forms and principles which give shape to things, but by that which constantly takes place in time.[102]

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[101] Bultmann, "ginōskō," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 697.

[102] Ibid., p. 697.

To round out the biblical view of knowledge, we should add the idea of volition and its responsibility, for not knowing in a biblical framework entails not simply error, but also guilt. What should be known makes a claim on the Hebrew person so that the proper stance of the knower is one of "anxious concern."[103] This idea of an anxious concern plays a significant role in the knowledge of evil. Elucidation of this will be presented later.

The New Testament Greek usage of the idea, "to know," does not considerably change from its Old Testament Hebrew counterpart. Although in some instances the word is used for theoretical knowledge, it is never thus used apart from a concrete person knowing theoretically, and living on the basis of such knowledge. God is known in the New Testament, as in the Old, by means of His will, revelation, or word. To know God is not to know His essence, or to contemplate His divinity in some mystical fashion, but rather, to do His will. Knowledge of God's will is not the possession of it in one's mind at the expense of acting it out. Merely comprehending God's will in a theoretical manner is never spoken of as knowing God's will in the Bible (not even in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament does knowledge have this theoretical idea). Totally absent in the New Testament, moreover, is a theoretical knowledge of evil. To know evil is to be evil, that is, to do evil. We are commanded in the New Testament, therefore, to be innocent in regard to evil, emulating our Lord Jesus Christ "who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21)."

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[103]Bultmann, "merimna," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 4, p. 591.

2. Biblical View of Evil

From what we observed concerning the biblical view of knowledge, it should come as no surprise that the Scriptures do not present evil in theoretical terms. Rather, what grips our attention immediately is the blunt way in which evil appears time and time again in the text without explanation. The ancient Hebrew did not need to ground evil in a theoretical, conceptual framework in order to acknowledge its reality; the reality of evil could not be disavowed or avoided. Moreover since the united theme of the biblical writings is the joyous news of salvation, or redemption, prolonged discussion of evil would have been a cacophany in the midst of a euphony. Finally it is interesting to note that those books which did venture to speculate on a philosophy of evil in the universe, namely, the apocryphal books, were rejected by both Jewish and Christian councils for straying beyond all legitimate parameters of thought.

In the Old Testament, God determines what is evil, and evil is simply that which is contrary to His word, or will. The Hebrew word for "evil," ra', is used of men, women, and children; societies, cities, and assemblies; the organs at the disposal of man's will and thoughts, such as hands and eyes, but most often the term is used in a moral sense.[104] Evil in the New Testament goes beyond the moral sense, denoting things and concepts. Days are called evil, thoughts are called evil, and for the first time, when used with the article, the term, ponēros,

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[104]Gunther Harder, "ponēros," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 6, p. 551.

one of two words meaning "evil" in New Testament Greek, identifies the devil, or Satan, the one who stands in direct antithesis to God.[105] This usage of the word is unique, not having any previous models in the world out of which primitive Christianity sprang.[106] In the form of the devil, or Satan, ho ponēros stands for the spiritual opponent of Jesus Christ who battles with Him for control of men's lives, and like Christ, seems to be archetypal.[107] Further in this subchapter, we will investigate knowledge of evil through archetypes.

The other Greek word used for "evil" is kakos. Kakos does not have positive signification, but rather, expresses a lack. This lack, or incapacity, affects all spheres of life. Like ponēros, therefore, kakos has more than purely moral significance. The idea of kakos stimulates questions of ultimate importance in regard to evil, namely, its origin and purpose in relation to the universe and the plan of God, what philosophers today would call the problem of theodicy, although the notion of justifying God for all of the evil in the world would have seemed repugnant to both Jew and Christian alike in the Bible.[108] Evil is always viewed in terms of its concrete existential forms in human life, and never is the attempt made to transform evil into a metaphysical principle that is taken out of the world. Kakos is used as the

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[105]Harder, p. 558.

[106]Ibid., p. 558.

[107]Ibid., p. 559.

[108]Walter Grundmann, "kakos," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 3, pp. 469-470.

exclusive translation of ra' in the Septuagint when the meaning is a divine act of punishment for sin.[109] Here man stands guilty before a righteous God, and evil is a way of manifesting the divine righteousness, but again, we must never suppose that the writer of divine revelation seeks to give us a theodicy in regard to God's sending evil. Five basic contexts serve as occasions for the use of the word, kakos, in the New Testament: 1. the human heart inspired by ho ponēros, which gives rise to kakos (God is separated from everything that is evil; evil does not modify His righteousness) 2. the ruin which befalls man whether in this world or the next 3. the evil in the world to whom God gives government the task to restrain 4. evil as man's only possibility in living without the Spirit, necessarily ending in death and 5. evil as a force which disrupts human fellowship.[110]

B. Analysis of the Reality of Evil

Analysis of objects is a scientific enterprise. As such, the procedure entails abstracting the object from its naturally rooted condition of functioning in order to grasp its universal structures. Endemic to any science, therefore, is the use of concepts. Scientific knowledge is understood through conceptual thought. We can assert, therefore, that scientific knowledge is qualified in terms of expression by the analytic mode of existence. The purpose of analysis is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge

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[109]Grundmann, p. 477.

[110]Ibid., pp. 479-481.

through the use of abstract thought. But abstract thought is a distortion of reality in the sense that nothing in the world exists in total isolation or in itself. The object of analysis must be returned to its properly functioning integrality in mutual coherence with the world around it if a true knowledge of it can rightfully be possessed. Knowledge of an object cannot be reduced to a scientific knowledge of it. Although scientific analysis is helpful in gaining understanding, and often necessary, it cannot boast of being the most pure or certain knowledge, and at times, it must admit its impotence in unravelling reality. Such times occur when analytical thought confronts evil.

Evil is not an object or thing out there in the world, like tangible objects or things. This does not mean that evil is somehow less real than tangible objects. On the contrary, the experience of evil, unlike other experiences, usually instills a lasting impression on the mind. The reality of evil is perhaps one of the few phenomena to which all people attest. If evil is not an object, however, how is it possible for there to be a universal confirmation of its reality? The following serves to correct Griffin's almost exclusively rationalistic answer to the possibility of knowing evil, an answer to which Griffin assumes everyone implicitly agrees, evidenced by his countless remarks about the inevitability of imagining something without which the world would have been better.

Evil impinges upon man at the existential level, i.e., at the religious root of his existence. At this level of ultimate meaning in life, evil cannot be denied to exist. Borrowing Martin

Heidegger's distinction between the ontic and the ontological, we should say that evil has ontic status, but not ontological status. Ontic status defines anything that is experienced as real. Ontological status defines only those things to which normative structures can be conceived. In this categorization, evil's reality is safeguarded, but not to the point of rendering to evil a rightful place in God's creation. Evil is taken seriously as a demonic power to be battled and overcome, but not viewed as a part of being which has a structure of its own. This distinction defends against false views of evil, such as the ancient Greek and Thomistic denial of the reality of evil by calling it mere privation of being and the more contemporary affirmation of the ontological character of evil through necessary metaphysical principles espoused by Griffin.

God created the world according to an ordered plan that reflected His own sovereign will. This ordered plan set the structures and boundaries that the creation should follow. Part of God's plan was to give the creation its own power so that it would be much more than simply an extension of its Creator. This does not imply that the creation acts independently, or autonomously, with respect to God. Creation remains every moment dependent on God and subject to His creation order. Nevertheless, the creation order does not guarantee that the creation will properly exercise its power, since the creation order conditions creation only by providing norms for functioning. Norms do not contain within themselves the possibility of not being upheld, i.e., the possibility of evil. A guarantee against evil in terms of a further constraint would disallow the creation's having power by making

it a metaphysical extension of God's will, thereby blurring the infinite distinction between Creator and creation.

Evil arises out of God's creation, but it is not part of God's creation, because it has no place in the creation order. Evil derives its power from the creation. This is why evil is not a thing. Its reality is totally derivative. Evil cannot survive apart from the given creation upon which it feeds. Evil's ontic dependence looms even larger than the creation's, because its existence flows out of the creation, and therefore, it has no power by itself apart from usurping the creation's power. Evil is nothing more than an abuse of the creation's power that transcends the lawful freedom prescribed by the creation order.

C. Rationalistic Attempts of Knowing Evil

Knowledge of evil becomes distorted in any rationalistic framework. Whenever one forces evil into such a framework, it ceases to be evil by either one of two ways. The first way views evil as "irrational" in the sense of directly contradicting reason. Here evil is a surd that militates against all the canons of modal logic. The point of view from which to analyze evil, nevertheless, is reason, and so, a transformation of evil occurs whereby anything that refuses to allow itself to be understood within a rationalistic paradigm is evil. Thus whatever cannot be rationally qualified in man's psychic nature is considered evil. Misery and suffering are often reduced to a rational state of existence in its frustrating attempt to comprehend its object of scrutiny. It is not so much that I feel pain or suffer emotionally that is evil, but rather, that such

experience cannot be rationally understood. The second way of viewing evil from a rationalistic perspective presents evil as "rational" in accordance with a higher purpose of reason than superficial analysis shows. The prevention of understanding of the purpose or meaning of evil occurs because of such limitations as history, sinfulness, and our own inadequate ways of thinking. Every instantiation of evil contains an inner logic that reflects a superior reason which governs the universe. Here, too, evil is transformed so that misery and suffering enhance the overall condition of the universe, and so, are not really evil after all. Both of the above forms of Rationalism commit the identical error of treating evil as an object or thing in itself that can be analyzed by reason.

We naturally seek to form a conceptual grasp of those things that trouble us in order to know how to appropriately deal with them. One important element of any conceptual grasp is to know the origin of the object under analysis. This is impossible in regard to evil, however, because evil has no origin. G. C. Berkouwer states that the origin of evil "can only be seen as an inexplicable riddle, for the mere professing of God's good creation can provide us with no answers."[111] Herman Bavinck simply asserts that sin and evil have no origin, but only a beginning.[112] The question of the origin of evil is illegitimate, Bavinck continues, because a logical explanation makes that which is intrinsicall

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[111]Berkouwer, Sin, trans. Philip Holtrop (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 13.

[112]Bavinck, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, vol. 3 (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1906), p. 48.

nonsensical sensible; it gives rationality to that which is intrinsically irrational; it assigns an order to that which is intrinsically disorderly. In this same line of thought, Herman Dooyeweerd remarks that senselessness cannot give sense to the senseless, because it is not an autonomous principle, but rather, the negation of creaturely reality, namely, a will for self-rule.[113]

The most compelling factor in the quest for the origin of evil, however, is the excuse of personal sin and guilt that will be given when the ultimate creator of all evil is unveiled. Berkouwer insightfully discusses this longing for personal exoneration:

> Whoever reflects on the origin of sin cannot engage himself in a merely theoretical dispute; rather he is engaged, intimately and personally, in what can only be called the problem of sin's guilt. As soon as he refers to a definite evil or a particular guilt he is no longer concerned about a purely logical or abstract theory. Factors of an entirely different sort come into play, and these influence his question of origin decisively. Any 'causal' explanation we propose can only be seen, in the practice of living, as a means of fashioning an 'indisputable excuse.'[114]

An excuse for one's sin and guilt is achieved by either one of two means: 1. either one attempts to make evil fit, or belong, in the cosmic order or 2. one attempts, tacitly or indiscreetly, to shift the blame for one's sin on another. In the first instance, personal sin and guilt are dissolved because a justification for the presence of evil appears that transforms it into an

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[113]Dooyeweerd, "De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee en de Barthianen," Philosophia Reformata, 1951, p. 153.

[114]Berkouwer, p. 14.

instrumental good for the world as a whole. In the second instance, personal sin and guilt disappear because another is ultimately responsible for my actions, such as the God who created me, the devil who tempts me, Adam from whom I inherited original sin, or society which oppresses me.

The proper role of reason when confronting evil begins negatively, i.e., not finding a place for evil anywhere in the rational flow of things. Evil's not fitting into rational processes of thought precludes our forming a concept of it. This does not mean, however, that reason's task has ended. Although we cannot form a concept of evil, no articulate knowledge of evil can be expressed without concepts. Concepts build on the intuition of evil as an object of experience, but do not transfer evil's "objectivity" from the experiential realm to the ontological realm, which would make evil a thing. Instead concepts help to classify kinds, or types, of evil, such as alienation, meaninglessness, and guilt. We can categorize certain evils under various headings because of universal symptoms. Thus, even though evil cannot be conceptualized, its concrete manifestations very often can. Yet forming a concept of a type of evil does not imply that one thereby knows evil. To know evil, one must experience it. Knowing evil is a non-rational process that begins in our existentially rooted state of anxiety from which we intuit the idea of evil, develop the idea into myths by means of symbols and archetypes, and finally arrive at the awareness that evil is not a distant object that we can contemplate from without, but rather, a living reality within ourselves. We <u>know</u> evil

because we *are* evil. We are victims of evil only to the extent that we are also perpetrators of evil.

The remainder of this subchapter will investigate the non-rational process of knowing evil. It must be kept in mind that these steps involved in knowing evil do not form separate, unrelated means through which we become aware of evil's presence, but rather, form a structured process that coheres in order to present an unambiguous, albeit non-rational, view of evil.

D. The Non-rational Way of Knowing Evil

1. Anxiety

The German word, *angst*, captures the existential meaning of the phenomenon upon which we are focusing. Unfortunately, English has no exactly corresponding word. *Anxiety* is the closest English correlate, and so, must do as the intended word. *Anxiety* comes from both Latin and Greek derivatives. The Latin form, *angor*, literally means "to be suffocated."[115] Here we have the image of one's throat being strangled by an invisible force that refuses to let go, yet which also refuses to apply the final death squeeze. The Greek derivative, *merimna*, conjures up the image of two opposed forces battling within a person in order to pull him apart.[116] Since the time of Sigmund Freud, *anxiety* has been popularized to such an extent that in common parlance, it means *eagerness* as well as its derivative meaning of *uneasy*

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[115] *Harper's Latin Dictionary*, ed. E. A. Andrews (New York: American Book Co., 1907), p. 118.

[116] Bultmann, "*merimna*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, pp. 589-593.

anticipation due to inner conflict. Again, the need for a more precise translation of the German angst arises. We must keep in mind, nevertheless, that when one is anxious, one is not thereby eager.

Soren Kierkegaard first analyzed anxiety in his paradoxical masterpiece, The Concept of Anxiety, paradoxical because the essay consists of Kierkegaard ably showing the virtual impossibility of conceptualizing the fleeting phenomenon.[117] Kierkegaard relates anxiety to a conflict between one's freedom and one's finitude, thereby instantiating the formula that was to be built upon in the following century, and still used to the present day. The realization that man always experiences anxiety in relation to God prompts Kierkegaard to locate the most intense state of the dialectic of freedom and finitude in the deliberation of whether to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ or not. The most important decision in life, and therefore the most anxious, is whether to be drawn to God, acknowledge one's guilt before Him, and seek refuge in the atonement that He has provided in Christ, or to reject that gospel and refuse to take responsibility for one's decisions either by dwelling on the aesthetic realm of existence or by justifying oneself on the ethical realm. Kierkegaard clearly notices the uniquely religious character of anxiety.

Heidegger expands Kierkegaard's analysis of anxiety into an ontology of finitude. He calls anxiety the essence of existence

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[117]Kierkegaard, The Concept of Anxiety, ed. and trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton University Press, 1980).

and the primary existential phenomenon, thus retaining anxiety's religious significance, though eliminating God. Heidegger grounds his view of anxiety in the ontological analysis of Dasein, an untranslatable word signifying man in all his manifold aspects in the totality of existence, in concrete temporal wholeness, past, present, and future. Anxiety provides one of Dasein's possibilities of being by serving as "a phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being."[118] Being with a capital B is not a thing for Heidegger, but rather, the ground of everything, including Dasein. Dasein discloses itself in three temporal modes: facticity, fallenness, and authenticity. Facticity is the reality that Dasein exists in a particular world at this moment. Fallenness characterizes our being in the midst of a world we cannot justify. Authenticity refers to the discovery of possibilities for oneself out of facticity and away from fallenness. Man finds his true essence by holding out such possibilities to himself. These possibilities are not gained from everyday habits or relationships with other people. Rather, one encounters authentic possibilities from feelings, moods, and intuitive reactions. The most fundamental of these feelings or moods of Dasein is anxiety. This unique mood is characterized by a sense of being trapped between the systematic, monotonous roles we find ourselves forced to play (the fact of finitude) and the authentic possibilities of our own choosing that we would like to actuate (the fact of freedom). For Heidegger anxiety leads us to project possibilities

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[118]Heidegger, Being and Time, transs. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 227.

not gained from the world, but which must nevertheless be carried out in the world. Anxiety makes us aware of the urgency to act decisively and responsibly.

The existential analysis of anxiety culminates in the philosophy of Paul Tillich. Man has two permanent fears according to Tillich: the fear of God and the fear of anxiety. God represents the absolute threat of nonbeing which alone ultimately arouses anxiety. Man seeks to avoid both God and anxiety, but cannot do so, because both are part of human existence, yet "it is impossible for a finite being to stand naked anxiety for more than a flash of time--the unimaginable horror of it is too strong to bear."[119] Such is the existential contradiction that man finds himself in. Tillich distinguishes among three types of anxiety that together comprise the miseries of life. The first type is the anxiety of death, where "nonbeing threatens man's ontic self-affirmation, relatively in terms of fate, absolutely in terms of death."[120] The second type is the anxiety of meaninglessness, where man's spiritual self-affirmation is threatened, "relatively in terms of emptiness, absolutely in terms of meaninglessness."[121] The third and final type is the anxiety of condemnation, where man's moral self-affirmation is threatened, "relatively in terms of guilt, absolutely in terms of condemnation."[122] Others have also engaged in a study of anxiety, such

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[119]Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 39.

[120]Ibid., p. 41.

[121]Ibid., p. 41.

[122]Ibid., p. 41.

as Reinhold Niebuhr and Rollo May, but Tillich's account is probably the most representative yet written.

All of the above-mentioned writers recognize the element of threat in anxiety, but they all misconstrue the nature of the threat. The tension between the possibilities of freedom and the limits of finitude dominates their treatment of anxiety. They are held captive by what Dooyeweerd calls a nature/freedom ground motive. A ground motive determines one's worldview, the ultimate religious perspective from which one views the world. Although the fleshing out of a worldview may go in diverse directions, at the deepest existential level one always operates on the basis of the averred truth of a worldview as a life or death issue. Thus in regard to anthropological models, Kierkegaard is a structural dualist while Tillich is a contradictory monist, yet at bottom they share an identical ground motive. Reality has an inherent defective quality about it for these thinkers that can never be resolved, but only endured. The conflict between the boundless possibilities of freedom which the human spirit longs to instantiate and the radical finitude of nature which imposes its indifferent resistance becomes absolutized as the universal existential situation for mankind. The nature/freedom ground motive, therefore, understands the world as tragic, and man as an unfortunate victim. This is the religion to which the Christian Kierkegaard and the agnostic Heidegger actually pay heed.

Rooting anxiety in a perceived irresistable tension between human freedom and natural finitude distorts the signal that

anxiety emits. The experienced threat of anxiety does not indicate the tragedy of man's frustrated aspirations for fulfilment. On the contrary, the universal human state of anxiety occasions the primordial awareness of evil, which has no place in the structures of existence. We immediately intuit evil by experiencing its effects, all of which are filtered through us in creating a state of anxiety, as Tillich has shown us above in his three types. Why we intuit evil from the state of anxiety occurs because anxiety threatens our trust in God, which is the foundation for doing the good. All evil, including sub-human levels, can be ultimately rooted in a lack of trust in God.

God grants everything in the creation--people, animals, plants, rocks, molecules, electrons--its own potence, subject to the creation order, and so, related to God in a special way. When these created functors live up to the lawful prescription for meaningful activity embodied in the divine creation order, they respond to God in the way that He intends, i.e., in trust. The relationship of trust that normatively characterizes God and His creation signifies a joyous exercise of freedom on the part of the functor in full knowledge, corresponding to its appropriate level of development, of God's providential care. If it seems absurd that molecules and electrons can respond to God in such a manner, one must recognize the only remaining alternatives, both of which are unacceptable. The first alternative is that sub-biotic levels of existence cannot respond to God because they have not been endowed with any power of their own to so act. Such entities have no freedom or will, because they do not control their activity. Some other entity with the power of freedom

must thereby direct the actions of these more primitive entities so that these latter ontologically form an extension of the former. Presumably this more highly developed creature cannot be a human being, animal, or plant, since it contradicts all experience to so maintain. And unless one still believes in a supernatural world in which angels and demons fly around, pulling invisible strings in order to control all sub-biotic forms, the only candidate left is God. This view would require a belief in a quasi-pantheism, whereby all sub-biotic reality would actually be an extension of God, and hence divine. The implausibility of such a belief goes without mention. The other alternative is that sub-biotic reality simply does not have a relation to God, but rather, exists autonomously. While clearly granting power and freedom to act to this segment of the universe, this view suffers drastically because it must inevitably admit that creaturely autonomy implies that God did not create it, and so, any relation between the two is artificially contrived. God is no longer the Creator of all things, and so, ultimately, is not really God at all. If one counters that perhaps God created the world with its own autonomy apart from any relation to Him, one would be uttering something inconceivable, for the affirmation that God creates necessarily implies a relation between creation and Him.

We assert, therefore, that anxiety is the tension experienced between trusting God for all things in life and surrendering to evil forces, thereby placing trust in something or someone other than God. Anxiety serves as our first awareness of the presence

of evil in the world. It generates all of our ideas and images of evil. It is the only link between who we are as God's creatures in whom He delights and what we have become as defiant sinners who have vitiated God's handiwork. Anxiety reflects the opposition between the decretal ought and the existential is. Anxiety arouses in us a knowledge of evil that shatters our playful innocence and mars our pretentious civility. This knowledge of evil in turn serves to aggravate the anxiety, which creates a continuously unfolding spiral that goes from bad to worse. Such a situation prevents people from turning to God unless He graciously intervenes to reveal that He is not the cause of evil, and in no way can be blamed ever for any evil in the universe. Anxiety is induced only by evil, because God never tempts His creatures to lose or abandon faith in Him, not even indirectly through the creation. Whenever we put our ultimate faith and trust in something other than God, we break communion with Him, though not our relation to Him. Because we find that we cannot rest comfortably in our rebellious decision, however, our anxiety ceases to disappear. The possibility of renouncing our sinful existence and restoring communion with God avails itself every moment, revealing God's judgment upon our choice against His creation order, a choice to which we torment ourselves by suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.

We will next investigate the roles of intuition and archetypes in bringing to a conscious level the knowledge of evil gained from anxiety.

2. Intuition and Archetypes

Intuition is the act of a person functioning in his or her concrete wholeness. It serves as the basis for grasping all ontic phenomena. Since intuition proceeds from the human self's conscious root, it represents the original act of knowing. A brief mention of what some thinkers have said about intuition may help us to understand how evil is intuited.

Edmund Husserl remarks that "whatever presents itself in 'intuition' in primordial form . . . is simply to be accepted as it gives itself out to be, though only within the limits in which it then presents itself."[123] Intuition verifies all genuine knowledge for Husserl. It possesses a certain objectivity that can never be doubted. Intuition provides its own apodictic certainty for what it presents, not rationally, but phenomenologically. In so doing, intuition forms the indubitable starting-point, beyond all prejudices and presuppositions, from which to perceive the world. Only through bare intuition do we capture the thing itself as it displays itself to our consciousness.

The impossibility of creeping beyond intuition in grounding knowledge is ably demonstrated by Dooyeweerd. He states that intuition cannot be theoretically isolated because it is the bottom layer through which thought proceeds. One immediately grasps intuition beyond all theoretical and conceptual limits. The impossibility of theoretically isolating intuition by analysis arises "because it has a continuous temporal character . . . .

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[123]Husserl, Ideas, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 83.

Intuition is thus a cosmic intuition of time."[124] Time secures the coherence of meaning among the diverse modal aspects of reality. The immediate grasp of reality as a coherent whole takes place, therefore, before any theoretical reflection. Although intuition occurs on the level of naive experience, or pre-theoretical thought, theoretical knowledge of any sort remains impossible without intuition, for intuition immediately apprehends the laws governing analytical thought which make theorizing possible. A concept of intuition, however, would mask its essence, which is to render knowledge through pre-conceptual means.

C. G. Jung sees intuition as mainly dependent on very complex unconscious processes, going so far as to define it, "perception via the unconscious."[125] He observes that

> . . . psychological experience has shown time and again that certain contents issue from a psyche more complete than consciousness. They often contain a superior analysis or insight or knowledge which consciousness has not been able to produce. We have a suitable word for such occurrences--intuition. In pronouncing it, most people have an agreeable feeling as if something had been settled. But they never take into account the fact that you do not make an intuition. On the contrary it always comes to you.[126]

Jung views intuition as emerging from the unconscious, and so, possessing a unique authority--almost tantamount to divine revelation--for whatever it presents to the person as knowledge.

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[124]Dooyeweerd, A New Critique of Theoretical Thought, vol. 2, transs. David Freeman and H. De Jongste (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), p. 473.

[125]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 2nd ed., trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: University Press, 1968), p. 282

[126]Jung, Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 49.

Jung finds the contents of intuition to be based on archetypes. Archetypes are rooted in a collective unconscious, present in all persons and identical. As immediate data of psychic experience, archetypes cannot be finally explained and disposed of. All possible explanations transform the archetype into a metaphor, thereby never reaching beyond analogues. Archetypes are a necessary element of a healthy psychic structure. Jung succinctly states, "There is no 'rational' substitute for the archetype . . . ."[127] Archetypes are primordial images that are given to the unconscious a priori, and so, must be clearly differentiated from concepts and ideas. They cannot be fleshed out in detail simply by rational means, but rather, through non-intentional procedures, such as psychoanalysis. Archetypes are known mainly through dreams, fantasies, and delusions. They function as corrections of the "inevitable one-sidedness and extravagances of the conscious mind."[128] Archetypes do not belong to the distant past of man's history, but rather, they continue to exist in the present in order to properly orient all persons so that they do not become alienated from the laws and roots of their being through constant dependence on the mental processes of the conscious mind, chief of which is reason. Without archetypes, therefore, knowledge of evil would be impossible, for archetypes alone can objectify evil, unlike concepts and ideas, by allowing the psyche unconsciously to visualize images

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[127]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 161.

[128]Ibid., p. 162.

that in turn consciously develop to symbolize evil.

Briefly citing the views of Husserl, Dooyeweerd, and Jung has clarified how intuition functions in our daily lives. We need not exactly accept their explication of intuition, however, in order to recognize its place in the epistemological process. For example, we can mitigate Husserl's excessive claim of intuition's ability to capture the thing itself or Jung's exalted regard for intuition as quasi-divine. Even Dooyeweerd traverses slippery ground when he speaks of intuition's resisting comprehension. We can readily perceive, however, the important link that intuition creates between the welter of phenomena bombarding the person and the mind's organization of the chaotic mass. Archetypes also help the person cope with reality in allowing the mind to get a firm handle on what it experiences. Here again we need not agree with the large measure of autonomy that Jung prescribes to archetypes. Nevertheless in some reflective moments we are aware that archetypes exist in that hazy area of the unconscious zone of our psyche, although we cannot understand what triggers our consciousness of them.

Through the act of intuition, one incipiently becomes aware of evil. No rational process of thought is needed to ascertain evil's revelatory character. Man knows evil in the very existential moment of his being entrenched in it. The act of intuiting evil from our situation in the world suggests a peculiar psychological mood that distinguishes it from the intuition of other phenomena. Whereas intuition normally grounds the coherence of life in its temporal flux, the intuition of evil sounds an alarm

that something is not right, that things are not the way they ought to be. One always stands on guard upon intuiting evil, for one cannot rest in such a mood. The casual stance of drifting through naive experience without reflection disintegrates into a frenzied search for security at the existential level. We strive to attain security through complex psychological dynamics that present to the mind archetypes, which serve as a defense mechanism against evil. Archetypes give us a handle on how to understand evil in a non-rational way. Through archetypes we confront evil from an adversarial perspective in which we know that evil must be opposed because it is anti-normative. One cannot analyze archetypes apart from their integral rootedness in symbols and myths. These are the focus of the following subheading. Here we can note that the marked transformation in response to the intuition of evil is brought about by anxiety. Only through an anxious state can we ever become aware of evil. We cannot help but to immediately intuit evil from anxiety. No human mechanism can fail to monitor the signals that anxiety emits. Evil cannot be mistaken to exist. Because it is immediately grasped through intuition, the knowledge of evil is more sure than analytic tautologies.

Thus far in the process of arriving at a knowledge of evil, we have examined the roles of anxiety, intuition, and archetypes. Next we will see how the human consciousness expands the phenomenon of evil, intuited from anxiety and unconsciously confronted through archetypes, into symbols and myths.

3. Symbols and Myths

Symbols are signs or expressions that communicate a meaning through the lingual mode of creaturely reality. All symbols have a signal meaning, which is its primary or literal meaning, and a symbolic meaning, which points beyond the signal meaning. The symbol contains a double intentionality in that the symbolic meaning (the second meaning) is arrived at analogically, and so, remains essentially bound to its primary meaning. Perhaps no one has investigated more the symbolism of evil than Paul Ricoeur.[129]

Ricoeur posits three dimensions of symbolism: the cosmic, which corresponds to hierophanies, the oneiric, which corresponds to dreams, and the poetic, which corresponds to language. Expressed through these three dimensions are three fundamental symbols of evil. The first symbol is that of defilement. Here evil is experienced as fault and is pictured as a stain, representing an exterior infection.[130] Such an experience of evil takes place on the level of ritual, for example, the Levitical prescriptions of the Old Testament. The second symbol of evil is sin. In contrast to defilement, sin represents an interior infection, and so, is religious before it is ethical.[131] Sin is interpreted as a violation of a sacred bond or trust with God or the gods. Sin is not known through reflection, but rather, through standing before the face of the divine, where Ricoeur locates the level of morality. The Hebrew words for "sin" (chattat, missing the target; 'avon, a tortuous road; pesha',

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[129]Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967).

[130]Ibid., pp. 25-46.

[131]Ibid., pp. 47-99.

revolt, rebellion, obstinacy; shagah, having gone astray, being lost; also the Greek hamartēma, missing the target) all signify the idea of a violated relationship.[132] Ricoeur remarks that sin, "as alienation from oneself, is an experience even more astonishing, disconcerting, and scandalous, perhaps, than the spectacle of nature, and for this reason it is the richest source of interrogative thought."[133] The third and last symbol of evil is guilt, which includes infection understood both within and without the person.[134] Guilt expresses the consciousness of being burdened by a weight. It is experienced on the level of the existential, "the depths of possible existence."[135] Guilt is not to be confused with fault, for guilt "designates the subjective moment in fault as sin is its ontological moment."[136] These three symbols of evil are archetypal; they are given in reality as "a manifestation of the bond between man and the sacred."[137]

Ricoeur's analysis of the symbolism of evil gives us tremendous insight into a person's arriving at conviction regarding discord, sin, and guilt. Ricoeur's use of the biblical material to support his claims champions the authentic Hebraic vision of reality. Grounding the symbols of evil on archetypes allows

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[132] Ricoeur, pp. 72-73.

[133] Ibid., p. 8.

[134] Ibid., pp. 100-150.

[135] Ibid., p. 103.

[136] Ibid., p. 101.

[137] Ibid., p. 356.

Ricoeur to account for their possibility as conveyors of knowledge, but not at the expense of their being rationally deduced. Also Ricoeur does not disengage the covenantal relationship between God and man that has been molested. This breach of troth more than anything else accounts for the symbols of evil. Man knows that he has offended the source of his being, and he anxiously seeks to know what he has done, what has been the result of his actions, and how he can bring about some restitution. Through his three fundamental symbols of evil, Ricoeur ingeniously illuminates the existential bearings of man.

The literary genre that makes the most effective use of the symbol is the myth. Ricoeur defines the myth as follows:

> . . . not a false explanation by means of images and fables, but a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself in his world.[138]

> . . . a species of symbols, as symbols developed in the form of narrations and articulated in a time and a space that cannot be co-ordinated with the time and space of history and geography according to the critical method.[139]

Myths, then, incorporate symbols, whose analogical meanings are spontaneously formed and immediately significant, in order to express a universal truth about mankind. Myths thereby serve as the ideal literary medium through which to reflect on the origin of evil in a non-speculative, unsophisticated manner. There is

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[138]Ricoeur, p. 5.

[139]Ibid., p. 18.

no logic to the myth, and in that absence of rationality, the myth reflects life. Myths prove themselves to be true on the basis of how they deal with reality. Reality is always integrally enthralled to the sacred. Mythic history is sacred history. Myths are designed for worship. Mircea Eliade states that "the foremost function of myth is to reveal the exemplary models for all human rites and all significant human activities . . . ."[140] Myths contain communicative power to illuminate man's existential predicament. One experiences the truth of the myth; one lives it through. Eliade adds that the meaning of the symbols that comprise the myth "shows a recognition of a certain situation in the cosmos and . . . implies a metaphysical position."[141] Although the primitive character of the myth prevents the use of sophisticated terms, such as being, nonbeing, real, unreal, those terms are signified through symbols that are immediately coherent.[142] The myth portrays reality as "a function of the imitation of a celestial archetype."[143] Historical acts acquire meaning through the constant repetition of primordial acts narrated in the myth.

Myths of evil function in three primary ways. First, they "embrace mankind as a whole in one ideal history."[144] For example, the Adamic myth of Genesis 2 and 3 narrates a time which represents universal history and a man, Adam, who signifies the concrete

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[140]Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 8.

[141]Eliade, Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: University Press, 1954), p. 3.

[142]Ibid., p. 3.

[143]Ibid., p. 5.

[144]Ricoeur, p. 162.

universal man. Adam, therefore, gains archetypal status, and becomes the symbol for each and every one of us in our experience. Second, myths of evil present universal history in an evolutionary, teleological way that stretches from an origin to a fulfilment.[145] This movement or narration in the myth orients human experience toward the entire historical process of the fall and salvation of man. Finally, myths of evil attempt to set forth "the enigma of human existence, namely, the discordance between the fundamental reality--state of innocence, status of a creature, essential being--and the actual modality of man, as defiled, sinful, guilty."[146] This tension is kept intact only through the use of narration. No logical transition is possible between the present existential condition of man as alienated and his created ontological status as a being destined for happiness. Through these three characteristics of concrete universality, temporal orientation, and ontological exploration, the myth reveals things that are not translatable into a highly developed, clear language.

Myths protect against undue speculation concerning the problem of evil by refusing to treat it as a problem that can be corrected by reason. Since myths depend upon archetypes that are intuited from the unconscious without prior explanation and immediately translated into symbols by the consciousness, their meaning cannot be rationally deduced. Myths treat evil the way that it is existentially experienced by man before reason can begin its

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[145]Ricoeur, p. 163.

[146]Ibid., p. 163.

pernicious probing, which often transforms evil into an illusion, or worse, into a reconcilable entity. Also, myths arise out of a state of anxiety. Ricoeur asserts:

> This distance between experience and intention has been recognized by all the authors who have attributed to the myth a biological role of protection against anxiety. If mythmaking is an antidote to distress, that is because the man of myths is already an unhappy consciousness; for him, unity, conciliation, and reconciliation are things to be spoken of and acted out, precisely because they are not given.[147]

If myths are composed of symbols gained from archetypes, which are the ideal images for life in the fullest sense of the word, we should not be surprised that man would automatically respond to his anxious existence by projecting myths, and not attempt to apprehend evil in some other way. Only the myth fully embodies a wholistic perspective on life that unambiguously teaches man about his relation to evil.

Man's coming to grips with the reality of evil consists, therefore, of feeling anxious (guilt, alienation, meaninglessness), intuiting evil from the anxiety, instinctively defending oneself against evil by registering archetypes through the unconscious, and seeking to express in language symbols of evil based on the archetypes through the medium of the myth.

We have now reached the final stage in the process of knowing evil. This last stage is the existential clincher in that we become stigmatically aware that we are evil. The existential contradiction at last is seen to inhere in us. We cannot escape ourselves, yet what we are is what we most dread to be.

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[147]Ricoeur, pp. 167-168.

4. Being Evil

Since the problem of evil is a human existential problem that pervades every aspect of man right to the core of his being, it cannot be solved through logical propositional form. Yet many philosophers and theologians, especially those who follow a Scholastic methodology, seek to explain a necessary relation among evil, sin, and misery. It is common among such thinkers to suppose that evil causes sin, and likewise, that sin causes misery. Conclusions such as these, however, result from an improper use of reason. The causal necessity of each state on the other, which theoretical thought attempts to explain, actually functions to explain away man's responsibility for his sin and miserable condition. The level of theory can only grasp evil in a vague, detached manner, adorned with conceptual formulations which, although help to make understanding of evil more clear, make man's involvement in evil more obscure. Theorizing on evil is a very precarious task, for evil can never be finally explained or understood, but expressed only in an antipathetic way if it is truly to be grasped for what it is--evil! Theories of evil tend to mask psychological motives at work that seek to exonerate the one theorizing from any alleged participation in evil. Again we must heed Berkouwer's warning about making excuses for our sin and guilt.

Knowing evil is not a task to which any person looks forward. To know evil is to be evil, and to be evil is to do evil. One struggles to break out of this insidious cycle, but the process of knowing evil serves as a relentless reminder that evil cannot

be avoided. God never intended that we should know evil, but rather, that we should be innocent in regard to it. Now that evil is a reality, however, we cannot pretend that it does not exist. That itself would be evil! On the contrary, one must acknowledge evil in the world, first in one's own life by recognizing personal sin and guilt. Existentially appropriating evil to oneself forms the last stage in the process of knowing evil. One has reached as far as one can go in understanding evil in the realization that one <u>is</u> evil. Such a momentous realization forbids further speculation and fascination with evil. Here one is brought to the limit of existence. The greatness of man becomes his shame and his exuberance for life becomes a cursed dread. In these moments when existential paralysis overcomes the self, the problem of evil is known to be a mystery <u>in principio</u>. One cannot reach any other conclusion, although one is certain that he cannot rationally account for such a statement. This conclusion is the anti-climactic result of the process of knowing evil: experiencing anxiety, intuiting evil from the anxiety, unconsciously registering archetypes in order to confront evil, devising symbols from the archetypes, expanding the symbols into myths that seek to explain evil non-rationally, and, finally, existentially committing myself to the realization that I <u>am</u> evil.

E. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

A section on knowing evil should make mention of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" found in the myth of Genesis

2 and 3. Undoubtedly one of the most controversial expressions found in Scripture, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" nevertheless epitomizes all of the evil in the world. In order to arrive at this conclusion, we must exegete the phrase. We have already investigated the meaning of the Hebrew word, yada', at the beginning of this chapter. In the context of this phrase, however, it is difficult to ascertain any evil quality about the tree. Von Rad explains:

> The word yada' signifies at one and the same time knowledge of all things and the attainment of mastery over all things and secrets, for here good and evil is not to be understood one-sidedly in a moral sense, but as meaning 'all things.'[148]

John Stek adds that "good and evil" is a common Hebrew idiomatic expression whereby the whole is signified by means of a pair of opposites; hence, the meaning of 'all things' from the idiom, "good and evil."[149] It is not that the acquisition of the knowledge of all things is inherently evil or a prerogative that belongs only to God, because we see quite clearly in 1 Kings 3 that Solomon is given by God a mind to discern good and evil, that is, to judge all things. The big difference here, of course, is that Solomon humbly petitions God for this knowledge, and understands that such knowledge is useless unless it is based upon God's law, or creation order. Adam and Eve, on the contrary, attempt to acquire the knowledge of all things by means of their own pretended autonomy, and gravely suffer the consequences for

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[148]Von Rad, p. 155.

[149]Stek, Aspects of Old Testament Poetics, class syllabus, 1980.

not trusting God to grant them knowledge of His creation order. The refusal to allow God to be the Lawgiver by exalting human autonomy at the expense of God's creation order is the foundation for all sin.

Human autonomy results only in alienation and meaninglessness. Such pretended autonomy does not reflect a person's growth or freedom, but rather, on the contrary, a person's active rebellion against the root of her existence and willing slavery to the forces of dehumanization. The affirmation of humanity and existential meaning in life occur only in grateful response to God and trust in His creation order. Understanding the truth of this, we must confess that we are all Adam and Eve who eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We all must renounce the sinful tendency to become our own god and fix our own order in the world. Putting such disobedience behind us, we must in reverent gratitude place our full trust and faith in the true giver of life, and seek to discern His Word as revealed in the creation order. In this way we can once again become innocent in our knowledge of evil, not by pretending that evil does not exist, but rather, by recognizing that evil has no place in God's creation order. This is the only normative response to evil.

II. An Alternative Way of Construing God's Relation to Evil

We have seen that Griffin's Process theodicy results in still another form of theological casuistry, different in content from previous theodicies, but achieving a similar conclusion, i.e., that despite the widespread presence of evil, God is indeed

responsible, but not indictable. From an existential point of view, such a conclusion is unacceptable. The question must be put straightforwardly to Griffin (and to all who attempt a theodicy), can we truly worship God if we suspect that He has even the remotest part in the widespread misery and suffering of the world? Anyone who answers in the affirmative has religiously committed herself to evil as a norm in God's creation order. What follows serves as a corrective on the views of Griffin and the entire theological tradition with respect to the relationship that obtains between God and evil.

God is not responsible for evil in any way, not even indirectly. God, therefore, is not responsible for all events that occur in His creation. Not everything that happens in this world is due to divine providence. Evil forces stand over against God in a radically antithetical way; they are neither commissioned nor permitted by God. God did not take a risk--as Griffin suggests--when He created the world. Evil was not a possibility to be found in the creation order. Creation acquires the quality of risk only <u>post factum</u>. The alien character of evil is disclosed in its unlawful intrusion into the reality that God so tenderly molded into the object of His delight. In short, evil took God by surprise. It had no place in either the divine predestination or foreknowledge. God's predestination, or plan for the world, embodied in the creation order, precludes evil. Likewise His foreknowledge expresses God's covenantal faithfulness to bring about what He ordained in His predestination. Divine foreknowledge does not include knowledge of future evil,

for evil cannot be known except in an experiential sense by which its effects attest to its reality. God did not know evil, then, until He experienced it after He created the world. This does not detract from God's omniscience, because it is not as though evil could have been known beforehand, but God failed to do so; rather, evil cannot be known in a rational, detached manner in the form of a concept that can precede its actual existence. A concept of evil remains an impossibility even after evil is experienced. This means that God does not understand evil at the present any more than He did at the initial entrance of evil into the world, and, accordingly, He will never understand evil in the future any more than at the present. Evil resists comprehension.

God created the universe, but He created it distinct from Himself, i.e., with its own potence, or power. Here we should pay heed to Griffin's criticism of the traditional view of divine omnipotence, which results in God containing all the power in the universe, the universe being nothing more than an extension of God. Creation, however, remains every moment dependent on God for its existence, even though it is ontically distinct from God. Divine power and the creation's power are not equal: God's power is infinite; creation's power is finite. Evil arises out of the power that God graciously bestows to the creation, but it is not part of God's creation order. Since evil derives its power from the finite creation, its power is also finite. If God did not create anything, there would be no evil. Thus God does have control over whether evil exists or not. He is truly

God Omnipotent. This does not mean that God is ultimately--or even partially--responsible for evil. It is simply a confession that God, not evil, has the final word on the destiny of the universe.

Evil never serves God's purposes. It is not a means to bring about good in the creation. That God brings good out of evil occurs not because of evil, but in spite of evil. This is Paul's message in Rom. 8:28 ("We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose" RSV), and in Rom. 8:18 ("I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" RSV), the relationship between present suffering and future glory is not one of flowing continuity, but rather, one of antithetical contrast. God does not decree that there be evil in order to transform it into good. This would make a cruel mockery of God's providence, and Paul exudes righteous indignation at such a slanderous charge in Rom. 3:8a ("And why not do evil that good may come?" RSV). On the contrary, through the working of His grace, God counters the intruding evil, and by means of His vociferous battling against it, brings forth good. The Scriptures reveal a crucially important point to keep in mind about evil: it will never be redeemed. The creation only will be redeemed <u>from</u> evil. A true biblical worldview must reflect the cosmic battle between good and evil as a struggle of totally irreconcilable forces that are as antithetically opposed as humanly conceivable.

God's relation to evil is different from His relation to

the good. The source of all good is in God, and so, God's decree of the good--embodied in the creation order--issues forth from within Himself. On the other hand, evil does not have a source or origin, but instead, exists as an alien invader against God and His creation order. God's relation to evil was initiated from without Himself, apart from His will, in the actual historical moment when evil first inexplicably appeared in the creation. Any attempt to root evil further back than this inevitably charges God to be the author of evil. Before God created the world, He neither knew what evil was nor that it would occur.

God's bringing good out of evil is His banishing evil from the original good creation. Thus God does not take evil (which is not a thing to begin with) and transform it into good, but rather, He takes what is already good, though corrupted, and redeems it from the corruption, thereby restoring the original goodness of the thing. That God brings good out of evil demonstrates both God's mercy and God's judgment. God shows mercy by putting strife between evil and us, instead of abandoning us to our evil ways. God shows judgment by shaming us for not bringing about the good except through evil. We are never excused for the evil that God, by His power, transforms into good. Divine forgiveness of sins is always conditioned on man's personal admittance of inexcusability for doing evil. No confession of sin is possible without confession of guilt. God created man to achieve the good without reliance upon evil. The same may be said for the rest of God's creation.

Evil is totally alien to God. Its source cannot be traced

to God, not even indirectly, e.g., in God's predestination. Whether one adopts a supralapsarian or infralapsarian view does not matter here. Both views root evil back into God. The infralapsarian position does possess one advantage over the supralapsarian one, though, by decreeing evil (in the form of eternal reprobation) as a just response to man's willful plunge into disobedience. Supralapsarianism does not even feign divine justice, but simply utters the dreadful decree of evil in solemn reverence. Infralapsarianism, however, only verbally defends God's justice in its logically contrived order of divine decrees, and is really just as repulsive as supralapsarianism. Both views fail to leave the mystery of evil as a mystery. Evil is not only a mystery to us, but it is also a mystery to God. Viewing evil as a mystery is not caused by human sin and fallibility. Evil is an inherent mystery that in principle cannot be solved. This is why even God has no solution to its presence, not in the creation order, not in the revealed Word of Scripture, not at the Final Judgment, not ever. This does not make evil superior to God in any way. Evil's essential incomprehensibility attests to its alien nature that cannot find a place to fit in God's creation order.

God cannot do evil. He cannot sin. It is not that He chooses not to do evil; evil is not even a remote possibility for God. If God had decided not to create the world, He still would not have done evil. God never sends evil upon His creation. Neither does He passively allow, or permit, evil for some unknown reason. Whenever the biblical writers speak of God's "sending"

evil upon the world, such as through natural catastrophes, "holy wars," and everyday trials and tribulations for the supposed purpose of discipline, they are seduced by their monotheism into attributing evil's source to God.

Perhaps we should introduce a helpful distinction so that the reader does not wrongfully assume that what is being advocated here is the Bible losing its cherished attribute of infallibility and trustworthiness. We always ought to distinguish between what the Bible says and what it intends to teach us. What the Bible says is the proper concern of textual criticism. What it intends to teach us is the proper concern of theological hermeneutics. Scripture's authority resides in the meaning of its text. In this consists Scripture's inspiration. Even though there are passages in the Bible that say, "God sends evil," they do not thereby mean to teach that God sends evil. No doubt even the writer of Scripture sometimes was not aware of this distinction between statement and pedagogy, such as the writers of Exodus and Samuel, who probably did believe that God sends evil. Other times, however, the writer was very much aware of the distinction, such as in the book of Job, where although it states that all things come from God (Job 2:10), reading the entire book in one sitting reveals that this is not what the writer intends to teach us. In the case of the writers of Exodus and Samuel, they incontrovertibly reflected the prevailing view of their day in saying that God sends evil, but what these passages intend to teach us is governed by subsequent progressive revelation, and that precludes the belief that God sends evil. It is not the

words of the biblical writer with his prejudices and foibles that we must heed, but rather, the Holy Spirit, who gives the true meaning of sinful man's often botched attempt to make known God's Word.

Although God's "sending" evil presupposed evil situations that had no place in God's design for the world, responding to them in an evil way does not fulfill the demand for justice in God's creation order. God never repays evil for evil. Precisely for this reason, we are admonished in the New Testament time and time again never to repay evil for evil. Rom. 12:17 states, "Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all (RSV)." 1 Thess. 5:15 says, "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all (RSV)." 1 Pet. 3:9 states, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing (NIV)." Not paying back evil for evil precisely captures the biblical meaning of forgiveness. Repaying evil for evil, far from bringing about restitution, serves only to increase evil in perpetuity. Because God does not repay evil for evil does not mean that He does not take evil seriously. God does not take pleasure in observing evil run rampant in His creation, and precisely on account of this does God work to eliminate evil rather than add to it.

We do not mean to assert that God does not punish sinners. We simply are saying that God's punishment can never be called evil. God does not punish through the use of any evil means.

God's punishment is His judgment upon mankind. Divine judgment does not consist of bloody massacres, widespread famine, and contagious disease, but rather, of agonizing exposure to God's holy law, or creation order. God need not do any more to establish retribution in the world, for sending massacres, famine, and disease upon people would cause misery and suffering which they would translate into a sense of false atonement for their sin and guilt, and would thereby serve to alleviate the pain of anxiety, and so, remove the basis of our coming to know that evil exists. Beliefs akin to this idea reinforce the depraved notion that responding to evil with evil somehow brings about justice. The fact that many people do attribute many horrors to God's wrath suggests a perverted view of God formulated at the expense of truly coming to grips with evil. Such a perverted view of God itself clearly invites divine punishment.

God's will does not always take place in this world. Since the fall of creation, which introduced evil into reality, events occur that run counter to God's good intentions for the creation. If God's will always took place, there would be no evil in the world. Divine omnipotence must be understood in the context of the reality of evil, and therefore, must allow for God's will not always being accomplished in history. Although the creation still unfolds according to God's laws, embodied in the creation order, the reality of sin and evil has forced God to uphold the peace and justice that He originally ordained for the creation by otherwise deviant means. God's creation order can now be realized only by combating sin and evil. This means that creation

must now be redeemed if it is to fulfill the creation order. Part of this process of redemption involves God's misery in remaining faithful to His plan to bring about a world totally obedient to His creation order. God, therefore, hates evil, suffers with those who are suffering on account of evil, and opposes those who fight His Kingdom. It would be demonic for God not to hate evil, incompassionate for Him not to suffer with the innocent sufferer, and cruel for Him not to oppose those who resist His Kingdom. God is incapable of so responding. Because of evil, therefore, these responses (hatred, suffering, and opposition) attain normativity. Otherwise, they are anti-normative.

For those like Griffin who demand that one must first have reasons for holding to one's view of God, no better reason can be thought than existential need. Believing in God's omnipotence translates into fulfilling human existential need. This cannot be psychologically reduced into mere wish fulfilment. The need is there, and cannot be denied. Its fulfilment must also be there. This line of argument, of course, does not constitute rational proof for divine omnipotence. One can, however, be much more certain of the truth that God is omnipotent by intuiting one's existential needs than by reasoning out one's logical possibilities.

POSTSCRIPT: THE QUESTION OF WORSHIP

The preceding description of the relationship between God and evil intends to portray God in a light that pays Him homage. Only in such a light can God sincerely receive from His creatures the worship and praise due Him. It must be emphasized that the above corrective of Griffin's views does not solve the problem of evil. My central thesis, which claims that there is no solution *in principio* to the problem of evil, and that this is the way it should be, cannot take away any of the *angst* experienced because of evil. Only God can comfort those who are drowning in misery and suffering. Whenever we find ourselves surrounded by evil, we must look to God for help, and rely on His power to protect us from being completely destroyed. Here we must confess God's omnipotence, for not to do so would add to our misery by locating evil's origin and continuous existence in God's helplessness. Griffin's opposing point of view on this issue, redolent of optimism, smacks of inner existential crisis concerning the feasibility of worshiping God in total surrender and trust. To believe that God is not omnipotent means ineluctably to believe that one need not surrender one's total self to God. Perhaps only partial surrender would suffice. After all, why surrender one's total self to a being who is not the ultimate ground of all that is, but merely a co-ultimate ground among others? Such is the God of Process theology. Personal commitment must be

dispersed to fit the Process worldview. Allegiance cannot be given to only one source, because reality by nature is the product of several sources. True worship of the Process God is an impossibility.

The following is quoted rather disdainfully by Griffin:

> From time to time thinkers suggest that there is a God who is all-good but not all-powerful, or who is all-powerful but not all-good. Such suggestions clearly avoid the problem of evil; but we are merely bored by them. The alternatives are always tacitly restricted to two--either there is a God who is all-powerful and all-good, or there is no God at all. Christianity may not have convinced everybody, but it has certainly made us all very finicky. For . . . the only God in whose existence we can evince interest is one whom it would be proper to worship. And worship in the Western world does not mean the appeasing of an angry God or the encouragement of a weak one. It necessarily includes submission and moral reverence.[150]

The issue of worship is central in any discussion of God. The most important question is not whether or not God exists, which can be asked in a detached, indifferent mood, but rather, whether or not one worships God, which can only be asked existentially as a life or death issue. Griffin focuses on the former question. God, Power, and Evil is devoted from beginning to end on how we can avoid the conclusion rendered in the formal statement of the problem of evil, "Therefore, there is no God." But in so doing, he eliminates both the problem of evil and the worshipability of God. Evil ceases to be a theoretical problem because it is explained quite logically as resulting from God's

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[150] God, Power, and Evil, p. 258; originally from Terence Penelhum, "Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil," Religious Studies, vol. 2, 1966, p. 107.

inability to do anything about it. And since God is stripped of omnipotence, He ceases to be a being who is worthy of worship. The above quotation neatly summarizes the available alternatives: either God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent or He does not exist. In more existentially religious terms, this means that either I worship God or I do not. Twentieth-century man cannot escape from these alternatives. In the words of Peter Geach, "Process theology is not a live option."[151]

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[151]Geach, Providence and Evil (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), p. 42.

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