

Review Essay

PROCESS PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL THOUGHT, AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

by Roy D. Morrison II

Abstract. This essay sets forth the decisive notions and postulates of process philosophy in *Process Philosophy and Social Thought*, edited by John B. Cobb, Jr. and W. Widick Schroeder. After commenting on the circumstances in which process philosophy came to be a major option among philosophical theologians, I provide some amplification of those notions and postulates. Then, selecting material from the eighteen articles in the volume, I offer several critical assessments of the process viewpoint and its relation to science and to the contemporary call for liberation.

In 1898 William James gave a lecture at the University of California entitled "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results." In that lecture he laid the foundation for a kind of revolution that launched his notions of pragmatism and radical empiricism. James, in Cambridge, was delighted when the Chicago School of philosophy emerged in 1903 with John Dewey's publication of *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903). Before long, a new type of philosophy, incorporating various aspects of James's radical empiricism made its way into the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

Professor Bernard Meland tells of an interesting and critical meeting that took place in the Common Room of Swift Hall [in the Divinity School] in May of 1926. Alfred North Whitehead's book, *Religion in the Making* had just appeared. The Chicago men read it and were visibly irritated and perturbed. To most of them it was "wholly unintelligible." Dean Mathews [*sic*] remarked: "It is infuriating, and I must say embarrassing as well, to read page after page of relatively familiar words without understanding a single sentence." Dr. Shirley

Roy D. Morrison II is professor of philosophical theology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of black culture at Wesley Theological Seminary, 4500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

[*Zygon*, vol. 19, no. 1 (March 1984).]

© 1984 by the Joint Publication Board of *Zygon*. ISSN 0044-5614

Jackson Case set the book aside as another instance of a “metaphysically burdened philosopher” stumbling through unfamiliar terrain and creating problems where none existed (Arnold 1966, 65).¹

There was one person who might help. This was Henry Nelson Wieman who already was immersed in Whitehead’s thought, including the *Principle of Relativity* and the *Concept of Nature*. He had earned his Ph.D. at Harvard under W. E. Hocking and R. B. Perry in the field of value theory. He was influenced by Henri Bergson and John Dewey. Wieman was invited to explain the new thought to the faculty. On that occasion, “he took the key phrases of Whitehead and translated them into the pragmatic terms that the Chicago men were familiar with” (Arnold 1966, 65).

The term *translated* in the preceding quote is important because it tends to thematize the task of the non-Whiteheadian when dealing with process thought. The metaphysical categories and the vocabulary stand in tension with more traditional ways of thinking. This is particularly apparent in regard to the extension of psychological categories to the whole of reality—even to unit structures that are explicitly regarded as incapable of discrete consciousness.

Process philosophy perceives itself as a corrective to the excessive abstraction, rigidity, and reductive mechanism of the Enlightenment in general and of Newtonian science in particular. This is accomplished with a blend of notions drawn from Dewey, James, Bergson, and from the speculative idealism of G. W. F. Hegel and Plato (Whitehead 1929, viii, 254; 1933, 187, 188, 354, 355). Its proponents assume that it has the authority and comprehensive capacity to reinterpret the entire accumulation of philosophy, religion, and science. In other words, the process viewpoint assumes that the locus of authority for interpreting reality lies in speculative philosophy rather than in critical philosophy or in the methods of the natural sciences.

One consequence of this optimism is the sustained program of transposing the contents of classical Christianity into the categories of process philosophy—thereby creating what is known as process theology (Ogden 1971, 173-87). Another consequence of this optimism is that Whitehead offers a process philosophy of science which, among other enterprises, includes a critical rejection of Albert Einstein’s physically oriented theories of relativity (Whitehead 1948b, 165-86; 1948a, 241-48). That rejection or reinterpretation arises from Whitehead’s substitution of process for substance categories in metaphysics, from his principle of process relativity, from his doctrine of internal relations, and from his theory of the knowledge of universals—which is sometimes called radical empiricism.

After that explanatory lecture by Wieman in the late twenties, process philosophy became the dominant system of categories for reconstructing Christian theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School until the vicissitudes of history began to replace it with the dialectical ontology of Paul Tillich in the early sixties. A major portion of the spectrum of Western philosophy has always been occupied by minds sympathetic to the Platonic and speculative approach. Also, there was the felt need to counterbalance the perceived reductionism of the Enlightenment. These facts, combined with the auspicious beginnings at the Divinity School have produced a powerful movement sustained by some of the most serious theological scholars at work today. *Process Philosophy and Social Thought* is a volume that grows out of the Whiteheadian process option for contemporary philosophical theology.

Process philosophy continues to be an influential, major option as the symbols of Christianity and the heritage of the West pursue their quest for a credible, hospitable system of metaphysical categories in the late twentieth century. For all the above reasons and because of the scope of their claims, process philosophy in general and this volume in particular have a legitimate interest for any community of scholars and thinkers who are seeking creative and credible syntheses of religion and science.

BASIC NOTIONS: THE ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE, THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATIVITY, CREATIVITY, AND REASONABLENESS VERSUS THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE

In the preface the editors identify four notions, central to Whitehead, that are variously reflected in the articles.

(I.) *The ontological principle.* This is explained as a philosophical realism which holds that the reasons for things are to be found in actual (particular) entities in the world and in God. Among other things, this means that process thought tends to understand reality in a monistic fashion—in the sense that there is one natural world. There is no dualism as assumed by classical supernaturalism and theism. This world is self-sufficient and its source of order is immanent.

(II.) *The principle of relativity.* Although the preface does not say so, it should be noted that Whitehead's principle of relativity has little if anything in common with Einstein's theories of relativity. Einstein's special theory of relativity is explicitly a physical theory, and it has three major components: the absolute velocity of light in a vacuum, the relativity of simultaneity, and the relativity or equivalence of all Gali-

lean frames of reference for the formulation of natural (invariant) laws with respect to the transition from one inertial system to another. Generally speaking, a Galilean frame is an inertial body or a nonaccelerating body in rectilinear motion. Among such bodies, there are no privileged frames of reference. Any one can be taken as at rest—with the consequence that other bodies appear to be in motion in relation to it. However, the special theory of relativity retained the notion of a rigid space-time continuum, a kind of absolute grid against which physical motion could be measured or at least interpreted (Einstein 1961, 148, 150-51).

The general theory of relativity established a certain equivalence of acceleration and gravity or of inertial and gravitational mass. Going beyond the special theory, the general theory asserts that all natural laws must be covariant with the mathematical transformations of a continuous physical field. This eventuates in the conclusion that space and time have no independent existence; they are dependent functions of a continuous physical energy field (Einstein 1961, 152-55; 1954, 347-48).

Several points are important here. First, Einstein's theories of relativity presuppose a *physical* theory of nature, a kind of substance or energy philosophy—but not speculatively psychologized process. Second, they presuppose a categorial subject-object distinction. Consequently, the major categories and relations of the cosmos are regarded as theoretically postulated—not as immediately experienced. Hence, subsequent correlation with sense data is required for the generation of reliable knowledge concerning events that are spatially distant from the observer. Third, Einstein's theories were designed to be subjected to experimental verification or falsification. Fourth, those theories have been verified by the most sophisticated experimental tests that are available (Einstein 1949, 673; 1961, 123-32).

The preceding excursion into Einstein's relativity theory provides some background for understanding the radical contrast between the process approach to reality and scientific method, and the classical, physically oriented approaches that Whitehead intends to overcome. This contrast is revealed in the following characteristics of his thought. First, it technically rejects the use of physical or substance categories. Instead, it employs the notion of process, and the category of experience (not necessarily mental or conscious) is the most comprehensive category of reality. Second, Whitehead's metaphysics and epistemology are decisively thematized by a sustained polemic against bifurcation. Insofar as this position is pursued consistently and coherently, there can be no dualism either between basic kinds of reality or in the act of knowing and perceiving (i.e., no epistemological dualism). In the

technical foundations of his methodology, the rejection of bifurcation leads to a rejection of the distinction between space-time as sensed and space-time as theoretically postulated. Consequently, process philosophy rests upon a kind of phenomenalism which asserts (a) that each atom mirrors the structure of the whole cosmos and (b) that each human experience contains within itself the given, immediate presence of the rational relations of all of reality—no matter how far these relations may extend beyond the location of the percipient. Consequently, in treating temporal and serial processes, Whitehead appeals, “(1) to the immediate presentation through the senses of an extended universe beyond ourselves and *simultaneous* with ourselves, [and] (2) to the intellectual apprehension of a meaning to the question which asks what is *now immediately happening* in regions beyond the cognizance of our senses” (Whitehead 1948b, 182, 104; 1929, 495). Some of the universal, necessary categories that Immanuel Kant located in the mind are now regarded as externally and objectively located in the whole cosmos. According to Whitehead, these universal relations do not require an allegedly bifurcating process of correlation and inference. Instead, they are immediately given to us in every particular experiential event.

Filmer S. C. Northrop argues that Bergson’s influence on Whitehead’s theory of knowledge can hardly be exaggerated: “The Bergsonian emphasis on immediate intuition led Whitehead to deny any scientific knowledge except that given by sense awareness. ‘Nature,’ Whitehead writes in *The Concept of Nature*, ‘is nothing else than the deliverance of sense-awareness’ [Whitehead 1971, 185]. All scientific concepts are consequently derivable from what is immediately sensed by mere abstraction, and any ‘bifurcation of nature’ into the sensed and the postulated must be rejected [Whitehead (1920), 1971, chap. 3, 4]” (Northrop 1951, 169).²

If Whitehead’s phenomenalism is correct, then he has provided an alternative and true solution to the central problem of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*: How is it possible for human beings to know with certainty that there are universal and necessary principles and categories in the cosmos? If this phenomenalism is not correct, then perhaps Whitehead is attempting to build a metaphysic, an epistemology, a theology, and a social ethic on a speculative mystical attitude or preference. Everything in Whitehead’s rationalism—his theory of reality, his theory of knowledge, and his theory of society—rests upon this phenomenalism; yet this is a purely speculative procedure and the information that it allegedly delivers is not subject to discrete perception or to any publicly accessible verification.

As a third major characteristic, Whitehead’s principle of relativity asserts that every being (thing, occasion, actual entity, society) consti-

tutes a potential for every becoming. "It is the basis for the social character of existence and for the reciprocity and mutual influence of God and the world" (Cobb and Schroeder 1981, x). The preface correctly points out that Whitehead creates his "reformed subjectivist principle" by combining his ontological principle and his principle of relativity. According to the subjectivist principle, one's own subjective experience is the point of departure for interpreting all other experience (all of reality). All occasions (things, events, actual entities) embodied in the causal past of the individual subject are objectified in that subject. Consequently, one's subjective experience necessarily includes the relational aspects of the world that are beyond the knowing subject. From this point, the preface concludes that "existence is inextricably social, and the basic rhythm of the cosmos is participation-individuation. . . . Complex issues about the relation of the individual to the community in social theory and social ethics are clarified when this basic relational matrix is recognized" (Cobb and Schroeder 1981, xi).

(III.) *The category of creativity.* The third fundamental notion undergirding these articles, refers to the dynamic urge that brings about the multiplicity of actual occasions while holding them in a dynamic unity. In Whitehead's own words,

Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian "matter" is without a character of its own. It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality. The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation is at once a creature of creativity and a condition for creativity. It shares this double character with all creatures. By reason of its character as a creature, always in concrescence and never in the past, it receives a reaction from the world; this reaction is its consequent nature. It is here termed "God"; because the contemplation of our natures, as enjoying real feelings derived from the timeless source of all order, acquires that "subjective form" of refreshment and companionship at which religions aim (Whitehead 1929, 47).³

Finally, in the cosmological scheme here outlined one implicit assumption of the philosophic tradition is repudiated. The assumption is that the basic elements of experience are to be described in terms of one, or all, of the three ingredients, consciousness, thought, sense perception. According to the philosophy of organism these three components are unessential elements in experience, either physical or mental. . . . These elements, consciousness, thought, sense perception, belong to the derivative "impure" phases of the concrescence, if in any effective sense they enter at all (Whitehead 1929, 54; see also Whitehead 1958, 31, 32).

For Whitehead, God is a creature of creativity. "Every actual entity, including God, is a creature transcended by the creativity which it qualifies" (Whitehead 1929, 134). The operative notion of God's be-

havior in classical theism received its intelligibility from the postulation of a center of *discrete* consciousness. Such a God perceived the details of his own creation, could weigh alternatives in focal consciousness before acting miraculously, and could employ sentences to give moral codes to human beings. Humans could converse with this God in their own language and receive responses to prayer. Whitehead does not assign these metaphysical attributes or this kind of consciousness either to the primordial nature or to the consequent nature of God.

The metaphysical role of creativity symbolizes the status and limits of the process God. Whitehead's notion of God as a Persuader is explicitly drawn from Plato's concept of a Supreme Craftsman who is not omnipotent and, therefore, has to shape the world through the persuasion of ideas. Logically, the contemporary process use of divine persuasion appears to be a floating poetic metaphor without an objectively existing referent. This is the case because the category of centered theistic consciousness has been surgically removed from "experience" and from God—thereby leaving no entity that could intelligibly serve as the subject of the verb *persuade*. The conceptuality here is somewhat like the German tradition of voluntarism—where God is a form of vitality and is diffused throughout the cosmos, without discrete consciousness, and yet is described in psychological terms. These observations of mine do not involve a desire to return to a classical deity; neither are they merely technical criticisms of process categories. Two serious concerns are at stake. One is the procedure by which specific ethical directives can be effectively sanctioned if their alleged source is a process type God. The other concern asks what empirical changes can reasonably be expected from the process God by the seekers of liberation.

(IV.) *Reasonableness versus the limits of language.* The fourth fundamental Whiteheadian notion cited in the preface involves a tension between two ruling assumptions: reality ultimately contains an intrinsic reasonableness, and ordinary language is incapable of expressing the truth. The first assumption supports rationalism, and generally it means that Whitehead assumes and respects the so-called law of noncontradiction. The second assumption leads him to distrust attempts at semantic precision and to place additional emphasis upon "feeling," that is, upon the unconscious and quasi-mystical deliverances of our "prehensions" of the depths of reality.⁴ These two assumptions proceed, to some extent, in opposite directions. Consequently some process thinkers emphasize the rationalistic element and develop arguments for the existence of God (the process notion of God). Others, emphasizing the alleged ambiguity and limited descriptive power of language and symbolic forms, concentrate on the depths of experience

and have no need for arguments for the existence of God. This latter wing of process thinkers is thereby more decisively dependent upon the mode of inquiry that is designated as radical empiricism.

Several notions in Whitehead's works and in this volume deserve some additional illumination here. These are "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness," "radical empiricism," and "the doctrine of internal relations."

The alleged fallacy of misplaced concreteness rests upon the procedure that Whitehead terms the mistake of simple location. The notion of simple location was used from the seventeenth century onward in classical science. According to this doctrine, a unit of matter can be adequately interpreted by reference to its definite location in a particular region of space-time—without reference to the relations that the entity has to all other sets and extensions of space-time.

In Whitehead's view, the notion of simple location is a result of abstraction from the extensive relatedness of reality. Therefore, it leaves one with conscious sense perceptions and a resultant view of nature that is mechanical, dull, soundless, colorless, and meaningless. Since this notion of simple location made possible the enormous success of science—along with the dualism of matter and mind—simple location came to be regarded as *concrete*. Actually, however, reality is organismic and every entity or actual occasion is dynamically related to all other occasions, actual entities, and potentialities throughout the whole of reality. The exactness of the special sciences is a "fake" (Whitehead 1948a, 74). The fallacy of misplaced concreteness, therefore, means the acceptance of sense and/or intellectual abstractions as if they were all there is to reality. Explicitly and implicitly, this argument contends that one does not have philosophical and scientific concreteness until and unless one has accepted Whitehead's entire metaphysical system. At the same time, he believes that he has solved the problems of knowledge raised by David Hume and treated by Kant. Namely, he insists that we know the universality and necessity of the principles of order of the universe because we experience them, although that experience is not at the level of discrete consciousness.⁵

Radical empiricism is a name for the method involved, first, in our unconscious prehending of the universal processes and principles of order and, second, in the speculative generalizations that process thought makes from daily sense experience (Loomer 1969, 159; Meland 1969, 53-54; Gilkey 1969, 345-54). Radical empiricism presupposes the doctrine of internal relations. This doctrine is simply a way of restating Whitehead's principle of relativity which was cited earlier. Briefly, it means that any unit of reality is what it is as a consequence of its relation to, and its status within, all other processes, entities, univer-

sals, and so on, that constitute the whole of reality. The doctrine of internal relations obviously makes assertions that cannot be verified at the level of conscious empirical experience. It is also the source or referent for the categories that process thought employs to interpret social relations at the level of conscious human perception.⁶ We now turn to representative perspectives from the essays in this volume.

SELECTED MATERIAL FROM THE CONTRIBUTORS

The contributions of Douglas Sturm and W. Widick Schroeder exemplify the procedures by which social thought and liberation theology are drawn from, or associated with, process philosophy.

Sturm's essay is entitled "Process Thought and Political Theory: Implications of a Principle of Internal Relations." For him, political theory presupposes some sort of metaphysical and cosmological foundation. Whitehead's process philosophy is his choice for such a foundation and he sets forth some of the required conceptuality. The doctrine of internal relations is the ground for all his proposals and arguments in this paper. According to this doctrine or principle, an individual (person, event, or actual occasion) is selectively and uniquely constituted by relations. The understanding of an event presupposes not only recognition of its uniqueness but also attention to its "communal ground" and to its impress on the future—its legacy to the ongoing process. An event is laden with a continuum of extended relations and contradictions that elude clear analysis and are yet integral to its existence.

Sturm follows Whitehead in replacing scientific materialism with the philosophy of organism. Scientific materialism assumes the principle of simple location. Briefly, this means that entities exist in definite regions of space and for definite time spans. Scientific materialism also regards nonhuman reality as brute matter, senseless, valueless, and purposeless. The charge is repeated that modern science has been guilty of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. On the other hand, the organic theory of nature presupposes the metaphysical generalization of categories drawn from biology, psychology, and social relations. The notions of simple location and misplaced concreteness are allegedly overcome because, "In a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times, for every location involves an aspect of itself in every other location" (Sturm 1981, 83; see also Whitehead 1948b, 133, 251). The philosophy of organism rests upon the principle of internal relations. In this metaphysic, any entity is not only constituted by its creative syntethesis of all the relevant data in the cosmos, its character is shot through with valuational orientation. Value resides in the mode of selection and receiving that is experienced by each occasion or individ-

ual. Since *value* carries overtones of mentality, purpose, and meaning, the philosophy of organism overcomes the blind, purposeless view of reality that was developed by scientific materialism.

Sturm acknowledges that the proposals of his political theory are not strictly entailed in Whitehead. Instead, process thought is simply the angle from which he approaches his themes. Having said this, he then makes several arguments or proposals from which we select two. First, the Marxist notion of alienation articulates the central problematic of the modern period. Alienation can be understood as an expression of the principle of internal relations and is, therefore, compatible with process philosophy. Second, the constructive political outcome of process philosophy is not classical individualistic liberalism. Instead, process leads to communitarianism in which the doctrine of human rights must be modified by a doctrine of responsibility (Sturm 1981, 82, 84, 99).

Alienation means contradiction, paradox, or, more strictly, strains of experience radically out of kilter with each other. Understood as such, the concept of alienation rests on a principle of internal relations. To locate the concept of alienation in Whitehead's philosophy of organism, I would suggest it means a certain type of lack of conformation between appearance and reality. It is that type of falsification of relations that, in its institutional form, may be grand in technical proficiency and organizational elegance (take as an example any multinational corporation) but sadly deficient in moral truth and thus in at least one of the basic qualities of civilization (Sturm 1981, 92).

As Max L. Stackhouse indicates, too much emphasis on the dynamics of change in the principle of internal relatedness will dissolve or revoke individuals into the process and thereby undercut the inviolability of persons. Stackhouse also advances the heretical suggestion that a certain amount of alienation is required for a realistic view of the world, of politics, and for a profound sense of otherness (Stackhouse 1981, 108, 111). These criticisms seem to reinforce the suspicion that there is not yet any clear, logically necessary path from the basic process categories to a social or political doctrine.

Also, in the preceding quote, the reader would have appreciated an elaboration of the metaphysical assumptions about the deterministic progress of nature and of the way these assumptions serve as background for Karl Marx's notion of alienation in the preface to the second edition of *Das Capital*. It might then have been possible to develop a critical comparison of alienation and the principle of internal relations that would have made the argument more convincing. Again, one encounters the characteristically abrupt oscillation from a very high level abstraction such as "falsification of relations" to a persisting reality grasped through sense perception such as multi-national corporation. The imposition of the metaphysical scheme is quite artificial

here and moral truth, even if definable, can hardly be derived from the organismic doctrine of internal relations except by the application of semantic violence.

All criticism aside, Sturm's article is a laboratory example of the way in which a major metaphysical concept in Whitehead can be used to attempt to develop a political ethic that is not determined by the creative act of the individual, but by emerging from the communal ground of its being.

Schroeder's second essay is entitled "Liberation Theology: A Critique from a Process Perspective." He points out that American process theologians frequently draw upon Plato, Whitehead, and Charles Hartshorne. On the other hand, most of the Protestant liberation theologians have emerged from German culture and their sources, generally, are Paul, Martin Luther, Hegel, Marx, and Karl Barth. He then selects the German Protestant liberation theologian, Jürgen Moltmann as the object of his comparative critique—which is designed to correct Moltmann through the use of Whiteheadian process categories.

Jürgen Moltmann founds his theology of liberation on Schelling's dialectic of negation: every being can be revealed only in its opposite. This metaphysical principle implies that there is a radical discontinuity between God and humanity. The gap can only be spanned when God takes the initiative to reveal himself to humans. Schroeder then presents his belief in a transrational intuition of the rational character of the universe. "This intuition is rooted, I believe, in the envisagement of the eternal objects by God's subjective aim. My awareness of aesthetic satisfaction, order, peace, harmony, and the lure for intensity of feeling is rooted in this intuition" (Schroeder 1981, 213). Schroeder seems to be saying that he intuits the entire metaphysical structure of Whitehead's process system. He then rejects Moltmann's dialectic because it violates the process postulates of continuity, relational essence, rationality, and the all-pervasive presence of the divine lure. Three other quotes will extend the basis of our discussion.

The "doctrine of last things" does point to the intuition of the everlasting appropriation of the creatures of the world into the consequent facet of God's nature—a peace beyond the strife and turmoil of the temporal world. God's all-inclusive rationality permits God to receive the creatures of the world into Itself without loss and to synthesize conflicting and disharmonious components into the richest possible harmony. In this manner the creatures of the world are transformed and pass into the Kingdom of Heaven (Schroeder 1981, 224).

Because Freud rejects the notion of a Divine Agency, he is unable either to discern a locus of potentiality in the cosmos or to explain the lure for harmony and intensity of feeling embodied in our experience (Schroeder 1981, 227).

In my view, three constitutive principles of justice are embodied in human experience and serve to provide some formal criteria to evaluate human forms of social organization. These principles are rooted in the *emerging unification of a drop of experience* (italics added) (Schroeder 1981, 234).

Three points command attention in the preceding statements. First, in process eschatology the doctrine of personal immortality evaporates and is replaced with discourse about a limited lure that preserves the good in ultimate harmony and beauty and in intensity of feeling. All inequalities are resolved in Saint Paul's mystical body of Christ or in the process "intuition of the everlasting appropriation" of all creatures into God's consequent nature. The hypnotizing delusion that such a projection should be satisfying to the dispossessed is part of the causality for the emergence of liberation theology.

Second, the critical reference to Sigmund Freud's "atheism" possibly reflects overconfidence that process intuition can describe the dynamics of ultimate reality. Moreover, one wonders just what the process God can *do* that perceivably, verifiably surpasses that which is done by Freud's acknowledged naturalism. One suspects that even if the process God has been performing up to its limited capacity in the real world, there would still be a need for liberation theology.

Third, Schroeder uses the phrase, "emerging unification of a drop of experience" to describe the genesis and locus of the constitutive principles of justice. This illustrates the esoteric problem of translation and semantic oscillation in the process enterprise. The phrase raises the problem of semantic accountability in addition to the arbitrary association of specific ethical principles with intuitive metaphysics.

Schroeder is incisive in pointing out that Moltmann's analysis of the causes of poverty is too simplistic an explanation of an exceedingly complex phenomenon, and he expresses doubt that the mere redistribution of economic power (as called for by Moltmann) would reduce the worldwide cycles of poverty. Taking a more comprehensive, analytical view of the human situation, Schroeder observes that without the contribution of a scientific and technological elite, only a tiny fraction of humankind could possibly live above the poverty level. He also rejects Moltmann's assertion that liberation demands the synthesis of democracy and socialism. In these judgments he is quite correct. However, such conclusions can emerge whenever causal analysis is conducted without dogmatic presuppositions. One cannot uniquely attribute them to process metaphysics.

NORTH ATLANTIC THEOLOGY: PART OF THE PROBLEM

The term *North Atlantic theology* is used to designate the church and university theology of Western Europe (especially Germany), the

United States, and Canada. After twenty-five hundred years of Western metaphysics and innumerable prayers to the Judeo-Christian deities, the emergence of empirically oriented liberation theologies poses a dilemma for North Atlantic theology in general and for process theology in particular. North Atlantic theology is written by and for a privileged class, secure in the knowledge that its members are culturally perceived as fully human. Lacking such security, the unliberated have a radically different notion of the task of theology.

The unliberated may not wish to be evangelized into the speculative metaphysics of their would-be liberators—be they Marxists, Tillichians, evangelicals, or process theologians—as the price for unspecified socioeconomic improvement. In a typical scenario, the unliberated are expected, first, to accept the one true theology and, second, to exhibit infinite patience while awaiting such liberation as can be derived from that particular speculative metaphysics. Operative here is an unwarranted optimism about the theologian's capacity to acquire descriptive truth about ultimate reality. Also, North Atlantic theology traditionally tends to find contentment while providing merely cerebral, mystical, poetic, mythological, or transcendental solutions to the empirical problems of racism, sexism, and economic violence. Insofar as it contains the perspectives just cited, North Atlantic theology, including process thought, constitutes part of the problem instead of providing a solution. Remarkably, some of the contributors to the volume under consideration proceed down this almost bankrupt path one more time. Encountering this well-worn pattern, a reader who is identified with liberation objectives suspects that external pressures, rather than the inherent character of Whiteheadian metaphysics, has compelled process thinkers to acknowledge the legitimacy of the liberation theology movement.

The majority of essays in this volume were written between 1975 and 1979. It is interesting that in October, 1981, John Cobb, Jr., one of the editors, offered this criticism of another contemporary theologian:

[David] Tracy makes an important place for the liberation theologies in his overall scheme, but he does not allow the insights of blacks, women, or Latin Americans to affect the overall structure of theology and its tasks. This view is shaped by the North Atlantic church-university experience of white males. To phrase the criticism harshly: there is a place for the advocates of liberation, but they are expected to stay in their place. Let me make plain that this limitation of Tracy's work does not distinguish him from most other North Atlantic white male theologians. Similar criticisms apply to most of our work, and I include most of my own (Cobb 1981, 283).

This remarkable statement may very well be worth as much as the entire contents of the volume under review. It reflects a slight tendency, during the decade of the eighties, for process and other North

Atlantic theologians to look beyond their parochialism and perceive theology's obligation to those who seek liberation in terms of their own empirical experiences and needs.

Included in the volume are two articles by David Griffin. In "Values, Evil, and Liberation Theology," he consults liberation theologians, including the black theologian James Cone, while addressing the problem of theodicy. Griffin's solution to this classical dilemma is Whitehead's limited, persuasive God who—because it is limited—cannot be held responsible for the dehumanization and absurdity in the world.

In "North Atlantic and Latin American Liberation Theologians," Griffin makes a very humane analysis and appeal. He states that the life-context of Latin American theologians legitimates, in principle, their single-minded focus on the alleged evils of capitalism. On the other hand, the different gifts, good fortune, and life-contexts of the white male North American theologian legitimate their involvement in a variety of concerns—some of which are academic and long-run problems, that is, metaphysical problems. He correctly observes that the long-range problems are just as important as the short-range problems (Griffin 1981, 204). His appeal, then, is for Latin American theologians to understand that there are sufficient contextual reasons why North American theologians are disinclined to make the elimination of capitalism the exclusive focus of their concern—if at all. This point is well taken since it recognizes that the very complex causality operative in our time cannot be reduced to a single economic system.

However, once again, one finds in Griffin the expectation that those seeking liberation should first be convinced to accept process categories and its unconscious god of persuasion—and then derive empirical liberation from the social outcome of that belief. Theodicy is the study of the problem of evil in relation to a righteous God. If God has all the knowledge, all power, and is absolutely righteous, then the question is why there is so much violence, tragedy, and systematic dehumanization in the world. Elsewhere Griffin has argued that process philosophy has a solution to the classical problem of theodicy through its vision of God as limited persuasion (Griffin 1976, 9, 275-91). The reader thinks of women who realize that focused legislation on their behalf might not be palatable to our conservative government. Again, one thinks of South African blacks who must still carry the hated, humiliating apartheid pass in order to walk the streets of Johannesburg. It is difficult to believe that they will wish to be converted to a mystical philosophy which proclaims that every atom is a drop of experience. Serious difficulties surround the conclusion that it is a breakthrough or a great achievement to offer such groups of persons

the Platonic/Whiteheadian God of poetic persuasion as their last and best hope for empirical and economic liberation. They might not rejoice. Such are the problems that emerge when the architects of North Atlantic and process theology come face-to-face with evil and real human beings in the real world.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Whitehead's process philosophy tends to be thematized by certain identifiable attitudes, perspectives, and procedures. Among these, mysticism, poetics, and the speculative psychologizing of the cosmos are particularly important. "If you like to phrase it so, philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken. But the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism: not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated" (Whitehead 1966, 174).

This explicitly mystical understanding of the nature of philosophy pervades Whitehead's major works and places his thought in a distinct category. It also explains why one must "translate" to enter the system and then translate or oscillate back out of the system in order to make it partially applicable to the world of publicly accessible reality. His notion of feeling as an activity that is found at all levels of reality, conscious and unconscious, intensifies his mystical, psychologizing tone. To this volume James Luther Adams has contributed an essay of exceptional richness and beauty that is empathetic, yet analytical. Very interestingly, he senses that the reader, initially, may have to exercise "a willing suspension of disbelief" in order to grasp Whitehead's meaning for the term *feeling* (Adams 1981, 124). For some thinkers, that disbelief reasserts itself and remains permanent—even after having been suspended for purposes of understanding.

In his program for overcoming scientific materialism, Whitehead identifies organic philosophy with the romantic revival that was conducted by poets such as William Wordsworth and Percy B. Shelley. In treating the insights of such poets as "evidence," he tends to elevate poetic intuition to the status of an epistemological instrument for the authentication of process metaphysics (Whitehead 1948b, 121, 130, 134, 138, 139). Such a program seems to possess few, if any, credentials for evaluating the enterprises of the physical sciences.

While remarkably abstract and disassociated from discretely conscious, empirical perception, the overall scheme and its attitudes carry a powerful religious appeal for some persons. One wonders, however, about the real value of the attempt to replace classical, supernaturalistic theism with process theology. To an outsider, they both may be equally incredible. Liberation needs for its referent a minimum

metaphysics—one that is credible because its content is indispensable for thinking and for the intelligibility of discrete, publicly accessible experience. The needed notion of liberation must be capable of being shared and internalized in the world's marketplace of ideas and religions. It certainly must be formulated with the participation of those who have personal need of liberation.

Much remains to be done if process thought is to be effective in addressing the theological call for liberation. Nevertheless, in a universe that is characterized by so much silence, process theology remains one of the major options as our best champions of the human spirit contemplate the metaphysically disinherited Christian symbols and seek to rehabilitate them within rapidly changing visions of reality.

NOTES

1. For a concise and authentic historical overview of the persons and ideas involved here, see Meland (1969, 7:1-62).

2. Northrop studied extensively under Whitehead and Einstein. For his comparative epistemological analysis see Northrop (1951, 184-207). See also Northrop (1931, 115-17).

3. This treatment of creativity and God seems to flow logically from his general position: "Philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken. But the purpose of philosophy is to rationalize mysticism" (Whitehead 1966, 174).

4. "I will use the word *prehension* for *uncognitive apprehension*: by this I mean *apprehension* which may or may not be cognitive" (Whitehead 1948b, 101).

5. The fallacy of misplaced concreteness is elaborated in *Science in the Modern World* (Whitehead 1948b, 72-82, 85, 96, 98).

6. Whitehead's notions of internal relations, methodology, semantics, and organic/psychological categories are analyzed in Nagel (1954, 266-95, 152-60). See also Whitehead's discussion of "external relations" (1933, 144-47).

REFERENCES

- Adams, James Luther. 1981. "The Lure of Persuasion: Some Themes from Whitehead." In *Process Philosophy*, 114-31. See Cobb and Schroeder 1981.
- Arnold, C. Harvey. 1966. *Near the Edge of Battle: A Short History of the Divinity School and the "Chicago School of Theology" 1866-1966*. Chicago: Divinity School Association, Univ. of Chicago.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. 1981. "David Tracy, the Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism," *Religious Studies Review* 7 (October):281-84.
- Cobb, John B., Jr. and W. Widick Schroeder. 1981. *Process Philosophy and Social Thought*. Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.
- Dewey, John. 1903. *Studies in Logical Theory*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Einstein, Albert. 1949. "Remarks to the Essays Appearing in this Collective Volume." In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, 663-88. Library of Living Philosophers, Vol. 7. Evanston, Ill.
- _____. 1954. *Ideas and Opinions*. New York: Crown, Bonanza.
- _____. 1961. *Relativity: The Special and General Theory*. 15th ed. New York: Crown.
- Gilkey, Langdon. 1969. "New Modes of Empirical Theology." In *Future of Empirical Theology*, 345-70. See Meland 1969.
- Griffin, David. 1976. *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

- _____. 1981. "North Atlantic and Latin American Liberation Theologians." In *Process Philosophy*. See Cobb and Schroeder 1981.
- Loomer, Bernard. 1969. "Empirical Theology Within Process Thought." In *Future of Empirical Theology*, 149-74. See Meland 1969.
- Meland, Bernard E. 1969. "Introduction: The Empirical Tradition in Theology at Chicago." In *The Future of Empirical Theology*, ed. Bernard E. Meland, 1-62. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Nagel, Ernest. 1954. *Sovereign Reason*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press.
- Northrop, Filmer S. C. 1931. *Science and First Principles*. New York: Macmillan.
- _____. 1951. "Whitehead's Philosophy of Science." In *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, 165-207. Library of Living Philosophers. New York: Tudor.
- Ogden, Schubert M. 1971. "Toward a New Theism." In *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought*, ed. Delwin Brown, Ralph E. James, Jr., and Gene Reeves, 173-87. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Schroeder, W. Widick. 1981. "Liberation Theology: A Critique from a Process Perspective." In *Process Philosophy*, 210-41. See Cobb and Schroeder 1981.
- Stackhouse, Max L. 1981. "The Perils of Process: A Response to Sturm." In *Process Philosophy*, 103-13. See Cobb and Schroeder 1981.
- Sturm, Douglas. 1981. "Process Thought and Political Theory." In *Process Philosophy*, 81-102. See Cobb and Schroeder 1981.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. 1929. *Process and Reality*. New York: Social Science Bookstore, Macmillan.
- _____. 1933. *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: Macmillan.
- _____. 1948a. *Essays in Science and Philosophy*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- _____. 1948b. *Science and the Modern World*. New York: Macmillan.
- _____. 1958. *The Function of Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- _____. 1966. *Modes of Thought*. New York: Free Press.
- _____. [1920] 1971. *The Concept of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.