

Chapter 1

THE DIVINE AND THE DEMONIC IN A HOLOCAUST UNIVERSE: A SUMMARY WITH RECONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter, I first provide a summary of my reasons for rejecting the traditional theodicies, with special attention to the traditional free-will theodicy, which is the most popular theodicy today. Then I summarize the process theodicy I have developed in earlier writings, most fully in *God, Power, and Evil*. Finally, the sections "The Demonic" and "Meaning and Hope" contain a summary of the ways in which my thinking on the topic has developed and even changed in the intervening years.

The subject of this chapter is the relation between belief in God and the fact of evil, especially those overwhelming evils that seem to be mass outbreaks of demonic power and that we call "holocausts." There are many events to which this term can be justly applied, but here I use it for events of widespread destruction caused by human agency, especially those to which it is most often applied: the Nazi destruction of European Jews and other "undesirables," and the possible destruction of most or all of the human race, and perhaps even most earthly life, by nuclear weapons or more gradual ecocide.

I focus on the question: does belief in God imply that such holocausts cannot occur? In other words, does the fact that the Nazi holocaust occurred invalidate belief in God? And if a nuclear holocaust does occur, should that

be taken as the final proof, for those who might survive for a short period, that there is no God?

A. THE GENERIC IDEA OF GOD

To deal with this question it is necessary to have some definite meaning of the word "God" in mind. Besides the fact that there are countless notions of deity, there are several levels of generality and specificity in the various definitions of deity. There are very general, wholly formal definitions, such as "God is that greater than which nothing can be thought," and "God is that which is alone worthy of worship." At the other end of the spectrum there are highly specific definitions, such as "God is an omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, all-good supreme being who created the world *ex nihilo* and determines or at least could determine all its events." A person who holds this specific definition might consider it the only acceptable content for the purely formal definitions mentioned above. But some who accept the purely formal definitions reject this highly specific one.

A major reason for this rejection is that the reality of a God so defined seems to be contradicted by the evils of the world, especially the most overwhelming ones. They therefore hold that, while the Nazi holocaust invalidates belief in God in *that* sense, there is some other possible way to fill out the formal notion of "that which is worthy of worship" that would not be contradicted by the world's evils. For example, they could hold to omniscience and perfect goodness, while rejecting omnipotence and creation *ex nihilo*. Or they could hold to omniscience, omnipotence, and creation *ex nihilo* while rejecting perfect goodness. These possibilities show that, between the most general and the most specific definitions of God, there are other levels of generality. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall deal with the meaning of "God" at four levels. The first two levels are so general that the more neutral term "deity" is used instead of the more specific term "God."

At the first level, I accept the purely formal definition that deity refers to "that greater than which nothing can be thought and that which is alone worthy of worship."

At the second level, which adds some substantive content while remaining highly generic, deity refers to "the supreme power of the universe, the power that is nonderivative and ultimately most effective." I use the expression "the Holy Power" to refer to this definition of that which is worthy of worship. This definition seems to apply to everything that has in fact evoked human worship in the various traditions. Insofar as other things have seemingly evoked worship, they have done so by being regarded as embodiments or representatives of this supreme, nonderivative power

My third level of definition jumps over other possible levels of increasing specificity to a definition that contains much of the quite specific content that is usually present, at least implicitly, in cultures whose idea of deity comes mainly from the biblically based religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This definition contains features that would be widely agreed upon in these cultures, by believers and nonbelievers alike, as essential to the idea of God. I refer to this level of definition as "the generic idea of God." There are seven major features of this generic idea of God, the first two being the more general definitions already mentioned. In parentheses, I shall indicate which of those moves, often made to save "belief in God" in the face of the problem of evil (or other problems), are ruled out if the features of this generic definition are accepted as essential to the meaning of "God." According to this generic definition, God is:

1. Alone worthy of worship, ultimate concern, unconditional commitment. (This feature rules out giving the name "God" to anything imperfect, to any object to which we think human beings should *not* commit their lives without reservation.)
2. The Holy Power; the nonderivative, supreme, most effective power. (This feature rules out defining God as a cluster of [nonefficacious] ideals,¹ as a derivative power that emerged only at some point in the evolutionary process, or as a power ultimately less effective than some other power.)
3. The purposive creator of our world. (This feature rules out defining God as "being itself," "power itself," "energy itself," "creative interchange," or anything else devoid of aim.)²
4. Perfectly good. (This feature rules out thinking of God as having wholly or partially evil purposes or impulses, or as being morally neutral or indifferent, in terms of our best judgment as to what it would be for a creator to be "good.")³
5. The source of norms, at least *moral* norms distinguishing good from evil, especially right from wrong uses of power by human beings. (This feature rules out as God any ultimate creative power that cannot embody norms and that would sanction the principle that "might makes right," because to declare power to be its own norm is to say that there are no norms for its use.)⁴
6. The ultimate guarantee for the meaningfulness of human life. (This feature supports the widespread intuition that atheism ultimately implies nihilism. It rules out any definition of God that provides no basis for an affirmation of the ultimate meaningfulness of human life.)⁵
7. The trustworthy ground for hope in the ultimate victory of good over evil. (This feature follows from the second and fourth features, and rules out definitions that do not see God as a power for good in history now or

in the future, and also those doctrines that regard this providential power as too impotent ultimately to overcome the power of evil.)

These seven features are widely taken to be essential to the meaning of "God" by persons in our culture, both theists and atheists, so that we cannot take seriously any "solutions" to the problem of evil that seem to deny one or more of these features. The question is, then, Does the reality of evil in general, and of holocausts in particular, make belief in God in this sense incredible?

Many would answer yes. For example, Richard Rubenstein argues that, *After Auschwitz*, no Jew, and really no one, should believe in the biblical God of history.⁶ He can still affirm a Holy Power. But he cannot understand it in terms of any of the other features (3 through 7) of the biblically based notion of God. Auschwitz empirically disproves, he holds, that the Holy Power of the universe is good in any moral sense of the term, and therefore that there is any transhuman source of norms, especially of any norms that are effective enough to provide for a victory of good over evil and therefore to guarantee the meaningfulness of human life.⁷ Other thinkers say that, although belief in God does not rule out evil, even an evil as great as that of the Nazi holocaust, it does rule out the possibility of total annihilation. For example, some persons would consider such an event the ultimate victory of evil over good; it would therefore show that there had never been a trustworthy ground for hope in the ultimate victory of good over evil. Some persons go so far as to say that the annihilation of human life would destroy all meaning whatsoever.⁸ This annihilation would obviously prove, accordingly, that there is no ultimate guarantee of the meaningfulness of human life (the sixth feature) and thereby no God. Some persons in fact hold that the very possibility that a nuclear annihilation could occur—which they see no reason in history to deny—already disproves the existence of God for these reasons. Surely, they say, or at least feel, a world in which such an eventuality is even a possibility cannot be grounded in a supreme power that is "perfectly good" by any meaning we could give to this notion. The ultimate power of the universe must at best be indifferent, at worst demonic (which is a denial of the fourth feature).

All these views have one point in common, which I reject. The point at issue here involves two ways of further specifying the second feature of the generic definition, which is that "God" by definition refers to the Holy Power—the supreme power in the universe, the power that is finally most effective. This further specification brings us to the fourth level of the definition. The two ways of specifying how to understand the Holy Power give us a contrast between two fourth-level definitions of God, which I will here call "traditional theism" and "process theism." The contrast involves two ideas

of the relation between God and the aboriginal power of the universe, and consequently a contrast between two kinds of power attributed to God.

According to traditional (or classical) theism, all of the aboriginal power of the universe essentially belongs to God. Monotheism essentially means monism. There is no power that essentially and aboriginally belongs to any other being (dualism) or beings (pluralism). If any other beings seem to have power of their own, this is either an illusion or is due to the fact that God has voluntarily given power to them. Their power is either merely apparent or it is derivative; it is not both genuine and inherent. God's power in relation to the world is therefore *unilateral* power. God *can* unilaterally determine what will happen, if God chooses to do so. There are two major versions of this traditional theism.

B. TRADITIONAL ALL-DETERMINING THEISM

The first version of traditional theism can be called "all-determining theism." It is found in the theologies of Augustine, Thomas, Calvin, Luther, and Barth. God in fact totally determines every event, including all human decisions and actions, and therefore all "sinful" acts. But how, then, do we explain evil, especially those forms we call "demonic?" Traditional Christian theism spoke of Satan as God's cosmic opponent. Behind the imagery allowed for popular consumption, however, the ultimate monism of traditional monotheism had to hold that Satan was a mere creature of God. To say otherwise would have been disallowable dualism. Satan was a creature who had fallen away, but this fall itself had been unilaterally engineered by God. To say otherwise would have been to imply that there was some power in the universe not totally under God's control.

Not to allow any uncontrollable power, however, seems to make all the talk about sin meaningless, if "sin" means going against the divine will. Theologians gave a verbal solution to this problem by distinguishing between two "wills" in God (in spite of their insistence otherwise on the divine simplicity). When we sin, we violate the "revealed" or "commanding" will of God. But monism was protected by adding that our sinful activity was itself caused by the "hidden" or "secret" will of God. Does this addition mean that God causes evil? Yes, in one sense. God was said to do all sorts of things that cannot seem other than evil to us, given our limited perspective. These things were attributed by some theologians to God's "left hand." Was this not admitting that the demonic was within the Godhead, that Satan is nothing but a mythological projection of the "shadow-side" of God?

That would seem to be the conclusion—except for one fact. These traditional theists finally denied that there *is* any genuine evil in the universe.

From a less limited standpoint than we now have, we will sometime come to realize that all things—including even the holocausts and other things that seemed most demonic at the time—were for the best. Partial evil, universal good, whatever is, is right. The realization that this traditional view of God implied that Auschwitz must finally be regarded as good is what led Rubenstein to renounce theism. Many others are horrified today by the realization that many fundamentalist Christians believe that a nuclear holocaust would not be genuinely evil, from a God's-eye view. The conclusion is logical. If God is the sole power in reality and perfectly good, there is no evil. Then let us quit bemoaning the last holocaust and trying to prevent a future one.

One way out of this conclusion is to deny that our various theological propositions have to be logically consistent. We can admit that the doctrine that God is all-good and the sole power *should* (logically) mean that there is no freedom and therefore no possibility of genuine evil in the world, while nevertheless holding that freedom and evil are genuine. We do this by denying that theology must abide by the basic principle of rationality, the law of noncontradiction. We can thereby say all these things: the demonic happens; God is the sole power; yet God is not demonic.⁹

But this desperate solution implies special pleading, allowing inconsistency (or even celebrating it as a virtue) in our own tradition while using the presence of inconsistencies in rival doctrines (Marxism, Hinduism, capitalism, scientism, materialism, dualism, flat-earthism, astrology) to argue against their credibility. The only way to hold without inconsistency that self-contradictions within one's own theology do not prove its falsity would be to allow all other theologies to claim equal exemption from the law of noncontradiction. But of course when one has claimed the right to violate the law of noncontradiction in one case, there is no reason not to be inconsistent in this matter. One can simply say that inconsistencies in all other traditions show that they are false, but that inconsistencies in one's own theology do not count against its truth.

C. TRADITIONAL FREE-WILL THEISM

Not being able to countenance either of these desperate attempts to salvage belief in God in a holocaust world—denying either the reality of genuine evil or the idea that theology must conform to logic—some theologians holding the traditional view on divine power have taken another approach, hinted at earlier. They suggest that, although God *essentially* has all the power in the universe, God has *voluntarily* delegated power to creatures. The "creatures" in question *could* be all of them, down to subatomic elements, but usually the creatures thought to have some freedom are limited to ani-

mals, and in fact primarily to *human* beings (at least on this planet). Freedom in this form of traditional theism is understood to mean that free acts are not totally determined by God. "Compatibilism" is rejected: genuine human freedom is not, contrary to Thomas Aquinas, compatible with complete divine determinism. This move provides the basics for a "free-will defense" of God in the face of the world's evils, including its holocausts.

This traditional free-will theism is the second of the two major versions of classical or traditional theism. It offers the hypothesis that reliable laws of nature and genuine human freedom *vis-à-vis* God, which are seldom if ever interrupted, are necessary aspects of God's overall purpose for the creation, which is a good purpose (perhaps the "best conceivable" one). This purpose is to encourage the formation of beings who freely develop moral-spiritual character. Given this perspective, the occurrence of natural and moral evil is said not to contradict God's goodness and power. God *could*, of course, interrupt the laws of nature to alter the otherwise inevitable spatiotemporal features of physical things (bullets, bombs, cancerous cells) or the decisions of free subjects that would otherwise lead to massive suffering. God could have prevented Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Wounded Knee, and the current mass starvation in the world. But to have done this to avoid momentary pain and suffering would actually have hindered the realization of the long-term purpose, the development of moral and spiritual qualities through free decisions. This is the case not only because this purpose requires genuine freedom and regular laws of cause and consequence, but also because pain and suffering are essential conditions to the realization of many of the most important moral and spiritual qualities. Without suffering, for example, there cannot be courageous endurance of suffering. Although some forms of suffering seem counterproductive to this purpose, because they seem to defeat rather than to stimulate the process of soul-making, it is often precisely the most horrendous evils, those that seem least capable of being understood as contributing to any moral-spiritual purpose, that evoke the deepest compassion in others.¹⁰ They are thus not counterproductive after all.

Although this position can be presented in an initially plausible manner, it can be seen, upon closer examination, to have severe shortcomings. To see these, we need to consider a little more fully the basic hypothesis. According to traditional theism, we recall, all power essentially belongs to God. There are no other entities with inherent power whose cooperation God must have in determining the details of the world, at least up to the point where free beings are created. And the basic structure of the world (in contrast with its concrete details or events at the level where free beings are involved) is unilaterally determined by God. This being the case, there could not be any basic principles, other than purely logical ones, to which the structure of the world would have to conform. Not only those principles normally called the

"laws of nature," but also those more general principles often thought to be "metaphysical" or "ontological" because applicable to being *qua* being, would be products of the divine decision. There would therefore be no necessity that a world develop gradually through a long, evolutionary process; that it have such things as earthquakes, hurricanes, and droughts; that its living cells have the capacity to become cancerous; that physical things be composed of elements that could be fashioned into weapons capable of destroying a planet; that living organisms be susceptible to pain, especially to any pain-producing mechanism that could not be voluntarily turned off when it was no longer serving a useful warning purpose. Because God essentially has all the power, so that creatures have power only insofar as God has freely delegated some to them, all of these and similar "laws" were (by hypothesis) imposed on the world from without, by God's unilateral action. When all this is kept in mind, several questions arise that make the free-will defense of God's goodness questionable. I will raise ten.

The first question is already implicit in the previous paragraph: Is it plausible, granting that virtue often presupposes suffering, that *every* basic structural aspect of the world can be justified as necessary to the promotion of creatures with moral and spiritual qualities? As some critics have focused the question: Can a carcinogenic and holocaust universe be the unilateral product of a perfectly good God? By hypothesis, the universe could have been in most respects similar to ours without having the capacity to produce cancerous cells or nuclear weapons. Does not the assumption that these capacities contribute to the overall good strain credulity? It may not constitute an outright refutation of this free-will defense, but it at least prevents us from saying unambivalently, "Yes, things are as they should be!" even if we have accepted the basic principles of the theodicy.

The second problem is that much of the suffering in the world produces not virtue but its opposite. Poverty and hunger, especially because they are unequally distributed, often lead to crime and war rather than to industry and cooperation. A lack of material necessities often leads to preoccupation with material things rather than to a spiritual outlook. Debilitating illness often leads to despair and bitterness rather than to hope. Much suffering seems so pointless that it leads to atheism rather than to faith. The way of the world is often so cruel that it leads human beings to curse the universe and its creator rather than to love them. And so on. If the creator set up the world to produce virtuous beings, the plan seems to have backfired on a massive scale, suggesting incompetence.

At this point, the traditional free-will theist usually agrees that some evil is so horrendous, that it is so unequally distributed, and that it produces saints so seldom, that the critic's position would be sound if life in this world were alone taken into account. Accordingly, the traditional free-will defense,

to be convincing, must include as an essential component the doctrine that human life continues on beyond bodily death. We can believe that in this future life, all injustices will be righted, and that it will become evident that all the sufferings were worth undergoing. Kant's vision of a realm in which virtue and happiness are coincident will be realized. Without this belief, the traditional free-will theist admits, the kind of world we have could not be regarded as the unilateral creation of a perfectly good power. This conclusion will follow all the more if a nuclear holocaust results in agonizing illness and finally death for billions of human beings. This feature of the traditional free-will theodicy—that it makes belief in life after death an *essential* element of the theodicy as a whole—has to be regarded as a fatal weakness by those who do not believe in life after death, and as at least a serious weakness by those who think the idea doubtful.

A third problem involves the importance of freedom *vis-à-vis* God, which I call "theological freedom." Part of the initial plausibility of the free-will defense derives from the consent that we give almost unthinkingly to the importance of having genuine freedom. We know how precious social and political freedoms are. We do not want to be subjected to a totalitarian form of government. We do not want to be put in prison, especially without due process. We do not want any violations of our freedoms of speech, of the press, of assembly, of religion, of suffrage, and so on. By not having them, Native Americans, African Americans, and to some extent women in this country have experienced how important these freedoms are for many of the activities we find most valuable. We recognize that freedom has its costs, that countries in which citizens have large degrees of social, political, and economic freedom have to risk putting up with certain forms of evil that more totalitarian governments can suppress. But we would be unwilling to make the trade. When a theodicy justifies all the forms of evil in the world as inevitable corollaries of genuine freedom, we are therefore predisposed to nod in agreement.

A closer look, however, shows us that there is no connection between these forms of freedom and the theological freedom *vis-à-vis* God around which the traditional free-will defense revolves. Social, political, and economic freedoms do not require theological freedom. In fact, one could easily argue that it is theological freedom that leads to restrictions upon those other forms of freedom, because these restrictions usually result from human sin, which means activity that goes against the will of God. If human beings had no freedom to go against God's will, they would enjoy far more social, political, and economic freedom than they now do, on every part of the planet.

In this light, we have to ask if it was justifiable for God to give us genuine theological freedom. We cannot (within this theological position) base an affirmative answer on the principle that freedom in relation to God is

part and parcel of all the values unique to human beings. An omnipotent God, by hypothesis, could have created beings who were like us in all respects except for having no genuine freedom *vis-à-vis* God. Such beings could have enjoyed all the forms of value we enjoy, such as great music (both the creating and the listening), great art, great food and drink, great love and sex, the joy of a job well done, parenting, friendship, and sports. And all of these could have been enjoyed without the ambiguity that infects so much of them in our present existence, due to fear, hate, greed, and other manifestations and effects of sin. The world could indeed have been a paradise.

In response, it could be argued by the traditional free-will theist that theological freedom is necessary for the most important kind of enjoyment: unless we are genuinely free, we could not enjoy the feeling that we have freely avoided sin, that we have freely developed moral and spiritual virtues. The answer to this claim is that, by hypothesis, God could have made it so that we *thought* we were genuinely free, even though we were not. (According to the all-determining theism of Augustine, Thomas, Luther, and Calvin, that was indeed the case.) Only God would know that we were not really free. The only one who would lose any genuine value would therefore be God; that is, God would not enjoy the value of knowing that those of us who developed moral character and spiritual virtue, especially the virtue of faith in and love for God, did so freely. God would know that our virtues were not authentic. The only one who really benefits from the presence of creaturely freedom *vis-à-vis* God is, accordingly, God. Can we unambivalently praise the goodness of a creator who unilaterally created a carcinogenic and holocaust world instead of a paradise if that creator is the only one who benefits from this choice?

In response, the traditional free-will theodist can point out that it would be deceptive of God to give us the illusion of being free when we really were not, and that this deceptiveness would count against God's perfect goodness. But this response leaves a difficult question: Which of these two pictures of God is less morally reprehensible—a God who created an earthly paradise but deceived its self-conscious inhabitants about their true status, or a God who freely and unilaterally made all the forms of evil in our world possible solely for the value that would thereby accrue to God? Once the question is thus posed, many, I suspect, would find neither being worthy of worship and thereby worthy of the name "God."

In response to the claim that, on their premises, this world could have been a paradise, traditional free-will theists reply that God indeed could have made the world into a "hedonistic paradise," but that this was not the type of "best possible world" that God wanted. God wanted it instead to be a "vale of soul-making." This hypothesis creates a fourth problem, which is that this theodicy requires an excessive belittling of the importance of enjoyment and

suffering in comparison with virtue and vice. Besides the pejorative term "hedonistic" to describe a pain-free and sin-free world (the kind of world toward which God is by hypothesis leading us!), we read statements such as the following from advocates of this point of view: "sin is the chief intrinsic evil, in comparison with which the intrinsic disvalue of pain is of minor importance, just as sanctification is of supreme worth and pleasure a trifle."¹¹

Many of us can indeed agree that the more active and creative values, which include the development of moral and spiritual virtues, are ultimately more important than the more passive or receptive forms of enjoyment: character is more important than enjoyment, sin is worse than suffering. But the degree to which the traditional free-will defenders are forced to go in making the sin-virtue spectrum virtually all-important, and the enjoyment-suffering spectrum virtually irrelevant, seems excessive. They are forced into this extreme position by their basic premise. Because God, by hypothesis, built the capacity for so much suffering into the world deliberately, for the sole purpose of stimulating moral and spiritual virtues, the theologian must conclude that the question of suffering is very trivial in comparison with the question of virtue.

A fifth problem with this position is moral: it could promote callousness. It could be used to belittle the importance of liberating persons from conditions producing suffering. If God does not think suffering is a serious evil, and if God in fact deliberately creates conditions producing suffering in order to stimulate moral and spiritual qualities, such as patience in adversity, persons could easily conclude that they should not join efforts to liberate the world from suffering, lest they undermine God's purpose!

A sixth problem involves animal pain. The traditional free-will defense orients everything around the conditions necessary for human (or at least humanlike) beings to develop moral and spiritual qualities. How, then, can one justify the vast amount of pain in all those animals that do not have the capacity for moral and spiritual virtues? This failure of the traditional free-will theodicy is staggering: the pain and suffering of only one species in millions has been explained! Although some animal pain provides an opportunity for compassionate feelings and actions on the part of humans, this cannot plausibly be said of most animal pain—especially because animals had been suffering pain for hundreds of millions of years prior to the appearance of human beings. It also cannot be claimed within this framework that pain is somehow necessary as a warning signal; divine unilateral omnipotence could easily have devised some painless warning device. It cannot even be claimed (within this framework) that nature needed carnivores—creatures who prey on other creatures with the capacity for pain. William Blake's question stands: If the same creator who made the lamb also made the tiger, with its "fearful symmetry," can this creator be called wholly good?

A seventh problem with the traditional free-will theodicy involves the evolutionary process itself. If God's only purpose involves humanlike creatures, why would God have used a method to create our world that took billions of years to bring forth such creatures? By hypothesis, there were no constraints under which God operated. God did not create the present order out of a chaos of self-moving things that could only gradually be subjected to more and more complex forms of order. If God created our world out of chaos (a "formless void," as Genesis 1:1 suggests), say traditional theists, this chaos itself was created out of absolute nothingness. It therefore (contrary to Plato) had no inherent principles to confront God with any kind of "necessity." This is the theory. But when combined with the modern view that creation has involved a long evolutionary process, the resulting picture is that God devoted over 99.9 percent of the history of creation thus far to that which was mere preparation for the only part of it having any intrinsic value. By joining a premodern view of God's power, which was developed when it could be assumed that the world in its present form was created all at once, or in only six days, together with a modern, post-Darwinian view of the developmental history of our planet, this theodicy rests upon a quite implausible doctrine of creation.

An eighth problem with the traditional free-will theodicy is probably the central problem that it creates for most persons. Its basic hypothesis, it will be recalled, is that none of the power in the world, including the human power of self-determination, is inherent to the world; it was all delegated freely by God. God voluntarily relinquished omni-control. God could at any time, therefore, overrule the world's course momentarily, whether the internal decisions of human beings or the spatiotemporal characteristics of physical things, such as atoms, cells, bullets, bombs, human limbs, rain clouds, and earthquake faults. God could thereby intervene to prevent all individual acts of rape, murder, kidnapping, child molestation, and so on, and all mass sufferings, whether due to drought, earthquake, or human agency and technology. Most of us would be appalled by a Superman who had the power unilaterally to prevent such things but stood by idly on the grounds that it was best, all things considered, never to violate human freedom or to interrupt the laws of nature, even occasionally. But the traditional God is said to have just that kind of power and yet to refuse to use it, on those grounds. There are, to be sure, relevant differences between an imagined Superman and such an imagined God that weaken the force of the analogy. But after all the qualifications are made, and after all the reasons are rehearsed as to why it is good for God not to interrupt, it is hard to still the thought, when confronted with a concrete case of horrendous evil: "In *this* case God should have done something!" And that thought soon leads to another: "If there is a God." And then to another: "If there is, I will not *worship* such a being." Which is in effect to say: "There is no God—no reality worthy of worship."

A ninth problem is implicit in the very notion of a traditional free-will theodicy. In most such theodicies, freedom, in the sense of the power of self-determination *vis-à-vis* God, is said to be a divinely bestowed superadditive to the actuality of those beings that have it. Freedom in this sense is also thought to be given by God only to a portion of the actualities comprising the world. In most cases it is effectively limited to human beings (and to other spiritual beings, such as angels, if such are believed in). The free-will defense or theodicy therefore provides no explanation for all the "natural evils" in the world, defined as evils resulting from (nonhuman) nature—unless, of course, all such evils are said to be caused by a Satanic figure of cosmic proportions. For those who find this Satanic suggestion implausible, and also believe that plausible explanations are needed, the tendency is to suggest that all so-called natural evils might be only apparently evil. But this suggestion is equally implausible.

A tenth problem is an extension of the ninth: there is a tendency among traditional free-will theists finally to deny, after all is said and done, that *any* genuine evil occurs. The reason for this tendency is that, if God is truly omnipotent in the traditional sense as well as perfectly good and wise, God would surely have set things up so that everything works together for good. If anything really, genuinely, unredeemably evil were to happen, such theists often seem to think, it would be a smear on God's power, goodness, or wisdom. Accordingly, the answers to the earlier problems—why God allows theological freedom, why God does not intervene (at least more often), why animal pain occurs, why suffering and enjoyment are trivial in comparison with sin and virtue, and so on—move strongly in the direction of denying that any genuine evil occurs. But then this theodicy becomes as implausible as that of all-determining theism, because it denies a belief that we all presuppose in practice (even if we deny it verbally). We all—as I suggested in the Introduction—reveal by our emotions, attitudes, and actions that we believe that not everything that happens is for the best. We cannot reconcile God and evil by denying evil.

I do not pretend that these ten considerations constitute a knockdown, drag-out demonstration that the traditional free-will theodicy is impossible for any rational, sensitive person to hold. There are always counter-arguments that can be offered; questions concerning the relative importance of competing values do not lend themselves to demonstrable settlement; and the appeal to "mystery" can always be made—after all, no position can be expected to give a complete answer to every possible objection. My argument has only been that, whatever initial plausibility this theodicy has, its unsatisfactoriness becomes more and more evident as it is probed. In any case, many thoughtful persons have decided that, while it is an improvement over the all-determining version of the traditional theodicy, it does not provide a satisfactory solution.

If, therefore, the generic idea of God entailed the kind of unilateral omnipotence ascribed to God by traditional theism, the case for belief in God in a holocaust universe would seem to many of us to be shaky in the extreme. And indeed, much of the atheism in the world has been based just on this assumption.

It is important to note that those contemporary theologians who are saying that God is partly evil do so after already having presupposed the gift of freedom to human beings (see note 3). Even given the free-will defense, they find it necessary to locate the demonic within God. But by our generic definition of God, the creator cannot then be called "God," because it belongs to the definition that God be perfectly good. It seems, therefore, that unless we are willing to violate the law of noncontradiction, a monistic universe can have no God.

D. PROCESS THEISM

Would it be possible to reject the equation of monotheism and monism? This approach is taken by a number of nontraditional theisms, most explicitly and fully by *process theism*, which has been worked out by thinkers belonging to the movement known as process philosophy and theology, with Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne as its two major originators. Process theism distinguishes between God and the aboriginal power of the universe, which it calls *creativity*. Creativity is not a thing, or a being. It is simply the ultimate activity that all concrete actualities embody. Like Aristotle's "material cause," it cannot exist apart from concrete beings that embody it. Unlike Aristotle's material cause, however, it is not passivity, but activity; and it is embodied by *all* concrete beings, including God (and any "angels" there might be).¹²

Whitehead's *creativity* is primordial power. Like Berdyaev's *Ungrund*, it could be called "uncreated freedom." This term, however, would characterize only one of its two aspects. Creativity is the twofold power of an individual (1) to create or determine itself on the basis of creative influences received from others and then (2) to be a creative influence on the self-creation or self-determination of subsequent individuals. The first aspect of this twofold power is the power of *e pluribus unum*—the power to make a unity out of a multiplicity. Creativity in this phase answers to Berdyaev's reference to it as uncreated freedom. The second phase answers to the notion of efficient causation, meaning the influence of one being or event upon another. Creativity in this second phase is not self-creation but creative influence upon future beings or events.

According to this view, the ultimate reality of the universe is an incessant twofold process: the many become one, and then this one is part of a

new "many" that exerts creative influence upon still newer creative unifications. This view means that reality necessarily has a multiplicity of beings. Creativity must be *embodied*, and it must be embodied *by a multiplicity*, because the very nature of creativity involves incessant oscillation between the one and the many.

This view of reality does not fit traditional categories. It is not a dualism between God and another being of cosmic proportions, because creativity is not a being. It is not monism, because creativity is essentially embodied by nondivine individuals as well as by God. And it is not simply pluralism, because God's embodiment of creativity is categorically different from that of all other beings in some respects. God is the only primordial, omnipresent, all-inclusive embodiment of creativity. And God is the only one who characterizes creativity with perfect love. This love is twofold: God's active outgoing, creative love, and God's receptive, responsive, sympathetic, compassionate love.

It is pluralism, nevertheless, in the sense that there has always been and always will be a plurality of individuals. Our world was created not out of *absolute nothingness*—as if God alone existed once upon a time, or "before time"—but out of a chaos of finite events. This chaos can be called *relative nothingness* (to use Berdyaev's term), in that there were no enduring things, even such primitive enduring things as electrons or quarks. This relative nothingness did not preexist God's creative activity, but was itself the product of prior divine activity. There was no beginning. The chaos from which our world began can be considered the final state of a previous world. Creation is the gradual bringing of order out of chaos.

Because power is essentially shared, God's power cannot be thought to be unilateral power. If all creatures essentially have some power to determine themselves and to influence other things, God cannot unilaterally determine any state of affairs. God's power needs to be reconceived as *evocative* power. By perpetually offering attractive alternatives to creatures' habits, God has gradually brought forth those increasingly complex forms of order that we call atoms, molecules, macromolecules, procaryotic cells, organelles, eucaryotic cells, plants, animals, animals with central nervous systems, animals with conscious souls, and animals with self-conscious souls. God cannot unilaterally determine anything. But by taking the long view, we can see the power of the creator, who works only by evoking responses in creatures, to be finally the most effective power in reality.

This view can also be called dualistic, or better, semidualistic. We can distinguish between God's embodiment of creativity, which is primordial, all-inclusive, and characterized by perfect love, and the embodiment of creativity in the plurality of creatures. Although creativity has always been embodied by some creatures or others, no particular creature exists eternally.

And all finite beings have local rather than all-inclusive perspectives, and often respond to their fellows with indifference or hate rather than with perfect love. Creativity as embodied by God is thereby essentially different in important respects from creativity as embodied in creatures. And the creativity of creatures cannot be unilaterally controlled or canceled out by God. In this sense we can speak of a cosmic semidualism.

It is on this basis that process theology responds to the problem of evil. The existence of evil does not contradict the belief that the supreme power of the universe is perfectly good, because this supreme power is not the sole power. Creaturely freedom and causation are exerted not only by human beings, but by all individuals, down to the most primitive. Even so-called natural evils can be attributed to some extent to creaturely decisions. Because God has no monopoly on power, God's power is the creative power to evoke or persuade; it is not the unilateral power to stop, to constrain, to destroy. The reason God does not intervene in nature or human affairs to prevent some of the worst evils is not that God is evil or indifferent, or that to do so would run counter to God's policy; it is simply that God's power is of a different kind.

It can be objected, however, that if God is to be understood by analogy with us, God should have coercive as well as persuasive power. We have the power to control, at least within limits. We can twist arms; we can tackle or shoot a would-be murderer or rapist; we can make a shield to deflect bullets; we can use bombs to stop tanks, and rockets to stop bombers; we can put would-be perpetrators of holocausts in prison or execute them. In other words, besides the evocative, persuasive power we have in relation to other souls, we have coercive, controlling power to use on other bodies when persuasion fails. If we finite creatures have both kinds of power, why does not the creator of heaven and earth?

The answer is implicit in the essential difference between a finite, localized creature and the omnipresent, universal creator. We exercise our evocative, persuasive power not only in relation to other souls, but also in relation to those billions of centers of power constituting our bodies. This power becomes quite reliable, at least in relation to some parts of our bodies, due to structures that have been built up over billions of years of evolution, and through practice. Our power in relation to our bodies is not the power of unilateral control. This is obvious with regard to all those functions of our bodies labeled "involuntary." We have learned, to be sure, that we *can* exert more influence upon them than previously thought, but it is far from total control. Even in relation to our voluntary nervous system, we do not have total control, as becomes clear when there is lack of cooperation due to disease, alcohol, or prolonged nonuse. But to the extent that we do acquire rather strong influence over certain parts of our bodies, through which we

can determine the spatial movements of our bodies quite well, it becomes an instrument through which we can exert unilateral, controlling power upon other bodies, whether animate or inanimate. It is especially through our hands that we have developed so much controlling power in relation to the world and each other's bodies, both directly, and indirectly through the instruments our hands have fashioned. The importance of hands for this kind of power is reflected etymologically in the word "manipulate," which, like "manually," refers to work done with the hands and which can be used synonymously with "control" and "coerce."

It is important to see that this controlling or manipulative power, which we have by virtue of our bodies, is a secondary, indirect form of efficient causation. Efficient causation in the direct, primary sense, which is the influence of an individual on one or more other individuals, is always persuasive causation. It influences but does not totally determine. The individuals upon whom it is exerted must make a partially self-determining response to it. The only efficient causation I as an individual (as a soul) can directly exert is persuasive. I can exert controlling or coercive efficient causation only indirectly, by means of my body, insofar as its response conforms to my persuasion upon it. Controlling or coercive causation is always produced indirectly, by means of instrumentalities. It can be exerted only by things (such as hands and billiard balls) that themselves cannot initiate activity, things that are devoid of the power of self-determination. Things that *can* initiate activity (souls, cells, and other true individuals) cannot directly exert controlling causation. They can do so only indirectly, by virtue of a body.

But God has no body, at least in this sense. We can say that the world as a whole is God's body, but there is no divine body between God (as the soul of the world) and our bodies, and this is the essential point. God has no independent body distinct from the world, which could be used to exert controlling, constraining power *on* the world. God's power in relation to us is necessarily analogous to that of one soul directly upon another, without bodily mediation, or to the direct influence of our souls upon the cellular members of our bodies. God's power is thereby necessarily evocative, persuasive, attracting power. God refrains from using controlling power upon us not voluntarily, by renouncing that kind of power, but because that kind of power cannot possibly characterize the supreme center of power of the universe as a whole.

Seen in this light, the traditional doctrine of divine power has been implicitly self-contradictory. On the one hand, the traditional theologians denied that God has a body; this denial was central to the insistence that God was "simple," not composite. On the other hand, they attributed to God the *kind of power* that can only be attributed to an agent who has a body distinct from the beings upon which the agent's power is exercised. Process theology

agrees with the poem, "God has no hands but our hands." God therefore cannot manipulate. The traditional theology implicitly attributed hands to God, by assigning manipulative, unilateral power to God. And if God has hands, God must have a *left* hand (this being the metaphor used for God's causation of all those things that cannot but seem evil to us).

By denying that God has hands, meaning unilateral, controlling power, process theology can consistently say that the supreme creative power of the universe is good without denying the genuineness of evil. Because power is necessarily shared, multilateral power, so that God's purposes always require the cooperation of creatures for their realization, the possibility of genuine evil is necessary. Because it is always possible that creatures will respond positively to God's proposals, doing the best that is possible in that situation, the existence of genuine evil is not necessary (defining "genuine evil" as any occurrence that is less good than something else that could have occurred in that situation). But because God cannot guarantee this positive response in any given event, the *possibility* of evil is necessary.

Once this is clear, the question can still arise: Why is *so much* evil necessary? Why must there be the possibility of cancer, of decisions that seem to run totally counter to anything we can imagine a good creator willing, and of the degree of power that can make decisions so destructive—destructive to the point of genocide, even omnicide? In particular, why do human beings have that dual power (1) to act totally counter to the good of their own kind and the whole biosphere, and thereby (2) to threaten the very viability of their own race and of the biosphere itself—a dual power that has led many to liken the human race in the twentieth century to a cancerous growth? How can process theology justify belief in God in a holocaust universe?

E. ETERNAL PRINCIPLES OF VALUE AND POWER

The answer I have suggested to this question is based on the notion that there are some necessary principles to which any world in the making would have to conform. These principles can be regarded as belonging to the essence of the eternal reality, which is a multiplicity of nondivine events with a divine center. If there has eternally been a realm of finite events, as well as a series of divine events, it makes sense to think of a set of eternal principles in terms of which finite events interact with each other and their divine center. The crucial implication of this doctrine of creation out of chaos or relative nothingness, in contrast to the traditional doctrine of creation out of *absolute* nothingness, is that these principles should not be thought to be arbitrary. They are eternal, not the result of a voluntary decision. They could

therefore (by hypothesis) not have been otherwise. That is what is meant by calling them "necessary."

Among these principles is, by hypothesis, a set of correlative variables: (1) capacity for intrinsic good, (2) capacity for intrinsic evil, (3) capacity for instrumental good, (4) capacity for instrumental evil, (5) internal power, and (6) external power. There are really only four variables. The fifth is finally identical with the first two combined, and the sixth with the third and fourth combined. But discussing them as six variables helps to bring out the main point.

The two parts to the argument involve (1) showing that these variables do in fact always rise correlatively with each other, and then (2) suggesting that this *empirical* fact about our world is a *necessary* principle that would have to obtain in any world.

An adequate argument for the universality of the correlations in our world cannot be given here; a few illustrations must suffice. That the capacities for intrinsic good and intrinsic evil are correlated is obvious: we do not suppose that inorganic entities enjoy much value; neither do we worry about their pains. Only in those forms of life to which we attribute a significant capacity for suffering do we suppose there to occur a significant level of enjoyment. Only those creatures that have the capacity for enjoying the higher forms of value sometimes find their experience so miserable that they commit suicide.

This dual capacity for intrinsic good and intrinsic evil is, I said, identical with internal power. This is the power of self-determination, or self-creation. This is freedom in its most fundamental sense, the freedom to transcend to some extent the causal power of the past (including the immediate environment) in order to decide what one's reality in that moment will be. This freedom does not mean the power to be uninfluenced by the past. Greater freedom means, rather, a greater range of alternative ways to incorporate these influences. We assume that this internal power rises proportionately with the capacity for intrinsic value: we assume that mosquitoes have more freedom than amoebae, birds more than mosquitoes, apes more than squirrels, humans more than apes. The great human capacity not to be determined by environmental influences includes the capacity not to conform highly to the influences coming from the central power of the universe, the soul of the world, God. God's decision to lure the creative process on past the higher apes entailed bringing forth creatures who could sin—who could respond with a loud and deliberate *no* to the lure to live in harmony with the ecosphere out of which they emerged. God may not play dice, but God does take risks.

The riskiness of the cosmic adventure in which we are involved becomes even clearer when we recall that this increase in internal power entails

a correlative increase in external power—the power to influence others, including the entire future. The evolutionary ascent from simpler to higher forms of existence brings forth entities with more and more power to affect others—for good or ill. This is a point for which lengthy discussion would be required, because in this reductionistic and nuclear age we have come to think of the most primitive entities, the subatomic particles, as having the most power to affect the environment.

I can here only mention three ingredients for an argument to the contrary. First, the power unleashed in a nuclear explosion is not based on any extraordinary power of the subatomic entities in themselves, but on the extraordinarily strong relations in which they exist within the nucleus, the so-called strong force. Free-floating protons and neutrons have no capacity to produce explosive effects. Second, the power of a nuclear explosion results from a chain reaction involving *billions* of subatomic particles; each particle involved is responsible only for a tiny fraction of the explosive power. Third, the destructive power of a nuclear explosion on the environment is due to the fact that that environment is composed primarily, quantitatively speaking, of other subatomic particles, which are susceptible to the influences of those involved in the chain reaction. These three points taken together suggest that individual subatomic entities are not more powerful than higher entities (molecules, macromolecules, cells, psyches); they only *seem* to be more powerful because there are so overwhelmingly many more of them. Much more powerful is the mind that can make a nuclear bomb (or the Mind that can make a star).

Assuming that that argument can be made, we can see otherwise that the correlation holds, as long as the power of one individual of a higher type is compared with the power of one individual of a lower type, not with that of billions. An animal has more power to change its environment than does a plant, although each may have the same number of cells; the higher animals have more external power than lower ones; human beings have changed the face of the earth more drastically in the past ten thousand years than all the other species combined did in the previous ten million years. We are the only ones with the power to understand and manipulate matter so as to unleash the otherwise dormant destructive power in the nucleus of the atom.

Each increase in external power is an increase in the capacity for instrumental good and evil. The most fundamental type of causal influence is the passing on of values one has enjoyed to others, as grist for their mills. In one moment I experience certain values as I appropriate influences from the environment and make my self-determining response to them. In the next moment these values, which were intrinsic values for me, became instrumental values for my bodily parts and (partly) through them for the world beyond. Insofar as the values I experience are harmonious, I will tend to be a good