

What exactly is process theology?

A Compilation of Quotes and ideas

Process thought is the idea that God is engaged in the time sequence. God doesn't know the future. God has ideals for the future, and tries to lure us to actualize those ideals, but he does not control each individual or occasion on the atomic scale. God needs us because without us God is not concrete. God sets the ideals, but then we create the content and God expands its actuality through us. We add to God.

So, God is constantly advancing in what Hartshorne, in his book *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, calls a "creative advance." God is advancing at every moment in time, synthesizing all the data from every occasion throughout the universe. That happens again and again, multiple times per second, as we move on in time. God is in "process" and is, of necessity, limited to time.

From author, Jay McDaniel:

"Process theologians are relational panentheists. They believe that the relation between God and the universe is and has been from a beginning-less past – an ongoing interaction between manifold creative agents: an all-caring, all-influential, and all faithful agent, whom we name God, and countless other agents, including ourselves, who collectively form God's body."

Definitions

The individual human being – constantly changing and evolving, intimately interconnected with all life and the universe. Carries equal capacities for good and for evil. Has free-will and self-determination and creativity. For humans, the ultimate meaning of life lies not only in the fulfillment of our own individual needs (though they are important), but in our contribution to the greater good (also known as the divine life).

God – For Wieman, God is that which "operates in human life to transform people as they cannot transform themselves, to save them from evil and lead them to the best that human life can ever attain." For Wieman, God is not so much a personality as a perceptible natural process through which humanity can achieve salvation (maximum fulfillment of the individual and society). God acts in the world through persuasive power – as a lure towards both individual fulfillment and the common good. Although Wieman described himself as a theist and a Christian – in his later years he rejected labels and committed himself to what he understood as a process that could bring about the greatest development of good. This process took place through the creative event.

Creative Interchange/The Creative Event – the process that stimulates optimal human development.

"The only creative God we recognize is the creative event itself."

Creative events take place when we:

- Listen and hear each others' voices
- We integrate these differing voices with what we already know – possibly through introspection
- We discover and hunger for the possibilities we were unable to see before
- We experience a deeper sense of community and connection and as a result, we are moved to work for the common good.
- The creative event allows the making of meaning – the connection of people and organisms and the environment. It is a process of reorganization by which events (old and new) are integrated into a whole, and a new, more unified meaning is made.
- The outcome of the creative event – of creative interchange – is inherently good. Creative events result in transformation – always in the direction of the greater good. The creative event is entirely trustworthy. “A kind of religious faith is required by which one commits himself to the creative event with a final devotion.”
- The value of life itself is found in and is increased by these creative events.

What does creative interchange require?

The creative event requires, “A period of loneliness and quiet...” that “provides for incubation and creative transformation by novel unification.” This speaks to the need for quiet, for meditation and for worship as an aid to transformation.

Creativity itself is also a key component – a condition, a prerequisite for creative interchange. Creativity and imagination are the key to connection with God (the creative event) and the world.

Creative interchange provides a way of integrating diverse perspectives so that people can understand each other, learn from each other, be accountable to one another, form community with each other and ultimately live in peace with one another.

Creative interchange requires an openness to new perspectives; the willingness to use those perspectives to re-formulate one's prior judgments about the meaning of good and evil and an acceptance of the possibility that one's self will be transformed in response to new insights. All these attitudes – openness, willingness, acceptance – foster creative interchange and can be developed largely through personal conversation.

Wieman's main concern – the human problem is to shape human conduct and conditions so that the creative event can occur to produce the maximum good.