

The Burning Bush
A Journal of Process Spirituality

Dr. Arthur W. Chang and Hyatt Carter
Founding Co-Editors

The goals of this journal include:

to explore the adventurous frontier of an evolving concept called Process Spirituality, a new spirituality for the new millennium

to present Dr. Arthur W. Chang's innovations, and innovative approach, to teaching the principles of Science of Mind

to initiate a process of participatory discovery by suggesting *practical* applications of the *theoretical* insights of process thought—so that these can be tested, enhanced, and fine-tuned

to stay current with the creative advance in science, philosophy, and other areas of knowledge—(how else can New Thought stay really new?)

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Essays:

Process Science of Mind and the New Age of Anxiety: by Dr. Arthur W. Chang — In the aftermath of 9/11, and what may now be characterized as the “New Age of Anxiety,” Science of Mind, especially as understood from a process perspective, has a vitally important role to play.

The Adventurous Frontier of Process Spirituality: by Hyatt Carter — Long ago the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who declared that all things flow, came up with a memorable saying: you can't step into the same river twice. Alfred North Whitehead, one of the most profound and original thinkers of all time, invites us to consider a bolder claim: No thinker thinks twice! [A shorter version of this paper was presented at the INTA Annual Congress held at the Clarion Hotel James Madison in Norfolk, Virginia, July 21-26, 2002.]

Something New in New Thought: by Alan Anderson and Deborah Whitehouse — Process New Thought is a co philosophy used to update New Thought, to keep the fun and major transformations in living that characterize New Thought, while discarding the perplexities and paradoxes that have marked some versions of New Thought. We are new

every moment in the creative process guided by God's love. This understanding is founded on the best of recent science, philosophy, and theology, as well as on some ancient views.

Towards a Sustainable Metaphysic of Faith: by Arthur Preston Smith — A Paper presented before the 1999 Conference of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion and published in the October 1999 issue of the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Metaphysical Religion*.

Process Science of Mind and the New Age of Anxiety

Dr. Arthur W. Chang

The Field of Challenge

Armageddon! September 11, 2001! Religious war! Anthrax! Cipro! Peace! Air flight! The American flag! Osama Bin Laden! The Taliban! Afghanistan! What have these words in common? They are the heightened ingredients of the brew of culture that spell a-n-x-i-e-t-y.

Any school boy knows that we have seen this anxiety before, yet this familiarity with our fears acts more like rust than lubricant for jangled nerves and like the hollow creaking sounds along the aging floor planks of normalcy. Even in inactivity people report their hearts racing as pointlessly as racing an engine in idle. Anxiety is so prevalent it has become the ubiquitous shadow of the human psyche. Historians and social scientists will remind us, however, that anxiety is “the human condition.”

Any school girl knows that in Act 4 of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare immortalizes a suspiciously similar nervous state of consciousness. He sets the scene of anxiety in a dank, dark cave, not unlike the consciousness of our darkest fear. In the middle of the cave a cauldron is boiling, as indeed is our anxiety. Amidst the roll of thunder the three dark, shadowy witches enter. Shakespeare knew how much the thunder-shaken ground mimics the quaking ground of our inner security during times of high anxiety even as we must faithfully show up at the office of daily life for “business as usual” as our President urges. With the foreboding scene set, Shakespeare's three witches converse:

1st Witch: Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

2nd Witch: Thrice; and once the hedge-pig whined.

3rd Witch: Harpier cries; 'tis time, 'tis time.

1st Witch: Round about the cauldron go;

In the poison'd entrails throw.

Toad, that under the cold stone

Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelt' red venom sleeping got,
Boiled thou first i' the charmed pot!
All: Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

As the witches' cauldron contains magical powers for transforming the details of daily existence into moments of dread, so also, does our consciousness. If this is indeed Shakespeare's point, then clearly what you put into the cauldron of awareness has a lot to do with what comes out of it, and from its ingredients so far, its brew is, "toil and trouble." But the witches continue to fill the cauldron with more items from their disgusting recipe.

This, then, is the brew of the New Age of Anxiety that is before us, and Process Science of Mind or Process New Thought ("Process" for short) has a great role to play. Process, already equipped with crucial spiritual principles for healing, could seize this moment of crisis as a moment of opportunity to move spiritual wisdom forward. Until now it may be, that what has retarded our progress in the world is that we have allowed the lustrous light of Principle to blind us to its conveyance system--process. Process is the healing bedside manner of great doctors; it is mama's love that accompanies her chicken soup. Process is the kinder gentler way to spiritual mind healing that does not require us to strip-mine the warmth of Spirit in applying the powerful but impersonal Law or Principle.

The Dark Side of Religious Certainty

There seems hardly any disagreement regarding the cause of our present state of high anxiety. It is "the attack on America" by people who seem to be brimming with the fervor of religious certainty. "Religious certainty," in any religion, appears to carry with it a dark side. Here, one is apt to reverse Isaiah's "plough shares" and beat them back into "spears," or in this case, razors; but in any event, instruments of war. Long before it manifests in crashing commercial airplanes into buildings, religious certainty can give rise to terrorists of the soul: an absolute adherence to principle (right or wrong), intolerance, inflexibility, respecting neither process nor time. Such an attitude can polarize believers, creating false, unbridgeable chasms between "us" and "them" and with such disastrous effects as we have seen on and since September 11. Some, with religious certainty, can let their feeling of being so unequivocally right, marshal them into see themselves as God's appointed agents, indeed God's executioners of "sinners" or "infidels;" who, ironically, God sees fit to allow time to find themselves by finding the tracks of process in their spiritual evolution.

The absolutist stance will find not firm footing in a Process philosophical approach to spirituality because Process sees life as evolving. There is hope even for naughty children who are, as unbelievable as it may seem, in process of becoming spiritually mature adults despite our initial gloomy feelings about them. Process recognizes that creativity does not aim at sameness but on improvements, not on perfection but on excellence at both the individual and collective levels.

Process engages the evolving consciousness in healing in ways that mere spiritual declarations do not. Process becomes principle in action, and its creative power leaves us filled with the awe of discovery. For Process, perfection lies not in product, which is an effect, but in the process which is causation in action. The standard Process seeks, is not in becoming the best there is, but in the best we can become.

The Process Science of Mind person has no struggle in understanding and working through despair, and anxiety, for it recognizes, like David, that “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (process), I will fear no evil, for Thou (God) art with me . . .” Such a person knows that we are comforted by God’s Presence and we don’t have to be ashamed of going through the process of anxiety to get to spiritual transformation which is inherent in all times of great uncertainty and crisis. Process knows the difference between describing an effect and affirming it. This is a time for Science of Mind to lead first with its heart, before announcing its principle.

Although we recognize that God exists in eternity and is also equally present everywhere in space/time, we, nevertheless, must recognize that God as Principle expresses only through space/time as evolution or process and as our everyday experience. New Thought or Science of Mind without process is apt to become absolutist and cold, and losing, as Ernest Holmes warns against, “the warmth and color” that are really the sense of the Presence of God found only in process. When this happens New Thought will also both miss the opportunity to reach out to a wider group of people, and lose the support even among those with a measure of successful healings because principle alone lacks the warmth necessary for ongoing human relationship. Many of us have experienced at least one absolutist asking us in a dark moment of our lives, “What was in your consciousness?” Process would unjudgmentally ask, “How can I help?”

Past experience suggests that few can fall in love with a fixed unmoving Principle that is impersonal. Process is never impersonal because it is the very point of awareness at which we involve what Joseph Campbell calls “the rapture of being alive.” Cervantes, too, understood this when he observed, “The road is more important than the inn,” for process is what is experienced, the quality experienced as each moment is being lived and not just what is achieved and accumulated. Process is the active participation in being as it becomes.

Should Science of Mind join the chorus of those who will say to our nation at war that the only way to peace is to get rid of your arms? To do nothing? Certainly, war does not look like peace anymore than plowing the ground looks like growing vegetables. But war can be a way towards peace in the same way that plowing the ground may be the way to growing vegetables. The problem we face in the absolutist position is one of fixed, rather than fluid polarities; it is linear rather than cyclic. The absolutist may dread duality like a disease and miss the fact that it’s the way process works, and process is cyclic. It functions like the seasons. It knows that neither spring nor winter is forever but in process, in transition and in full engagement of the creative process. Could it be that seeing war as a thing separate from peace is like seeing the tears of sorrow as not part of a healing--a

restoration of wholeness? We may be confusing a single event of a process with what the process aims at in total. The surgeon may have to make the patient worse before she can be better. A spiritual counselor may have to let us confront our fears before we become open to our healing. This is process.

In the process approach, peace and war are Brahman and Shiva, God the Creator and God the Destroyer; just two aspects of a single process of evolution that positive and harmonious thinking along with greater tolerance can transform into a sustainable good. For underlying the process of evolution is the realization that spiritual evolution is the inevitable destination of creation.

Of course this is not an argument that war is the only option, or even the best option for peace, but in process it is not to be ruled out.

As awe-inspiring as the creation story of Genesis 1 is, there, even there, we find God creating along a specific sequence of time. In other words there is process, not just principle. Principle works through the unfolding process.

The Work of Process Science of Mind Mystics

The New Age of Anxiety is an opportunity for Science of Mind to reach out to people in areas that the pharmaceuticals cannot cure. What is to be healed is the deep soulful restlessness that comes upon us like Pharaoh's plagues. The challenge for Science of Mind is to lead with our hearts, to remember Ernest Holmes' sage observation that "Love works through Law." We must give compassion the lead and through Process we will work to heal this epidemic I have called, the New Age of Anxiety and make it the New Age of Infinite Peace.

The Adventurous Frontier of Process Spirituality

BY HYATT CARTER

The general, or popular, notion of "process" goes back at least as far as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who declared that all things flow, and who came up with an analogy so memorable that it has become part of our common vocabulary: you can't step into the same river twice.

Process philosophy, however, as conceived by Alfred North Whitehead, one of the most profound and original thinkers of all time, is a unique creation of our era. Whitehead's thought is of such quality that it has been characterized as ". . . some of the most careful and elegant thinking in the history of Western philosophy." (RE 412) Whitehead made

significant contributions not only in philosophy but also in mathematics, physics, and formal logic. When quantum physics dematerialized Newton's billiard-ball atom into a vibrational "structure of activity," it took a genius of Whitehead's breadth to glimpse that such a structure could be further dematerialized into a non-substantial "unit of experience," and to conceive the entire universe in terms of dynamic units of living process. From this new process perspective Whitehead was able to upgrade the saying of Heraclitus by making a rather startling statement. He said that "no thinker thinks twice." *No thinker thinks twice*. Hold that thought—it will become clearer as this discussion unfolds.

Process philosophers today, and in the 20th century, differ among themselves in how they accommodate, or oppose, the complex metaphysical system conceived and developed by Whitehead. Some, like Nicholas Rescher, try to distance themselves as much as possible from Whitehead. Others are more intent on refining and advancing the intellectual task that Whitehead initiated.

Such a philosopher is Charles Hartshorne who independently came up with some of the same ideas he later found in Whitehead. Hartshorne originated electrifying new insights himself, clarified many process ideas, and corrected some of Whitehead's oversights. It can hardly be overstated how much Hartshorne has done to strengthen the case for process philosophy. Among 20th-century philosophers, Hartshorne stands out as one of the premier metaphysicians and the most influential proponent of the process conception of God.

In contrast to Hartshorne, Frederick Ferré is among those in process thought who prefer to get along without introducing the notion of God into their systems.

Given all this, is there any agreement or consensus as to what constitutes the basic ideas of process philosophy. Hartshorne identifies fifteen common theses accepted by most process philosophers. David Griffin has set down what he calls the Ten Core Doctrines of Process Philosophy. Donald Wayne Viney finds Griffin's list laudable but problematic, and defines process philosophy in terms of four propositions:

- (1) The fundamental constituents of reality are processive—involving change, motion, time, and/or contingency;
- (2) Whatever is *not* processive is part of or grounded in what is processive. As Hartshorne argues, becoming includes being, not vice versa;
- (3) Reality is social—Hartshorne has the most coherent doctrine of social relations, saying that the present moment is internally related to the past but partly externally related to the future;
- (4) Value is inherent in process.

My paper is divided into six main sections, each dealing with what I see as basic and important ideas in Whitehead's system, and a final section wherein I make variations on a theme introduced by the philosopher Frederick Ferré. These are:

- (1) the centrality of the body in human experience
- (2) the idea of panexperientialism: there is experience in everything
- (3) dipolarity: an essential two-foldedness that runs through all nature
- (4) the two basic types of “process” in process philosophy
- (5) A Holographic Universe
- (6) God and the World
- (7) A Kalogenic Universe (“kalogenic” means the “creation of beauty”)

All of these are tied together by the unifying theme of the idea of experience.

Coming to Terms

Before I go any further it may be helpful to briefly discuss some of Whitehead’s key technical terms that I will be using in this paper, terms some of you may not be familiar with. First—

ACTUAL ENTITIES

What are the basic units of nature, what are the most fundamentally real things in the world? Strictly speaking, this is not a scientific, but a metaphysical question. To answer this question, Whitehead began with a single moment of human experience. For surely the one thing we cannot doubt is the reality of our own experience. If we can’t start here, then there’s simply no starting at all.

The first thing to be noticed is that a moment of experience is a discrete unit: experience comes in drops or buds. Experience is quantum in nature. Whitehead’s analysis of a single moment of experience also revealed a tripartite structure:

First, a moment of experience is heavy with the presence or pressure of the immediate past. This accounts for our distinct sense of continuity. From this there arises a feeling or valuation of what is thus received with the felt possibility of novelty, or deviation from the past. Finally, there is a “decision” for either originality or conformity with the past, and a handing on of this as influence on the future. Whitehead then generalized that this basic structure must hold throughout all reality: a moment of experience in anything—from people to protons, from elephants to electrons—will exemplify this structure, or better: this process.

For Whitehead, this is the most basic process in the universe, and he calls this universal process an *actual entity*.

An actual entity is Whitehead’s term for the basic units, or building blocks, of nature. It is a dynamic unit of process, a pulsation, a throb of self-achieved actuality that endures only for a split-second. In contrast to Newton’s billiard-ball atom, note how Whitehead’s actual entity is a *unit of creative change*. The universe of Alfred North Whitehead is an adventurous universe—right down to the very core.

The next term is—

PREHENSION

Undergirding sensory perception is a more basic and primitive form of nonsensory perception that Whitehead calls “prehension.” Before sensory perception arose in evolutionary history, this was how creatures were able to take account of their immediate environment. Thus, a single-celled life form, such as an ameba, will retreat from what it prehends as danger and advance toward, and engulf, what it prehends as possible food.

Or, I can remember my favorite dog when growing up, a beagle I named Ike-ey. When I played with him, and spoke to him in a warm and friendly way, he would become very animated and frisky, and begin to bark and wag his tail and jump all over me. He was feeling, or prehending, my affection and approval, and responding in kind. A scolding, however, with sharp words and tone, would cause him to hunker down with his tail between his legs.

Another example may help to make clear how this works. When Laker basketball star Kobe Bryant ate a tainted hamburger in Sacramento during the NBA playoffs, he fell ill with food poisoning and began to feel very sick at his stomach. What Kobe experienced were not sense perceptions. He was directly feeling the causal influence of his body. He was prehending the cells of his stomach, feeling their feelings of acute distress. In fact, Whitehead’s most concise definition of “prehension” is the “feeling of feeling.”

An example from the botanical world would be heliotropic flowers. In a prehensive “taking account of” sunbeams, or photons, such flowers turn their blossoms to follow the sun, from morning till evening, from horizon to horizon. Underground the same sort of thing happens with the roots as they meander here and there in a prehensive search for water and essential nutrients. This surely illustrates a primitive form of “awareness.”

Even in the inorganic world something of this can be seen. The mutual “attraction” of oppositely charged particles is made manifest in magnets, for if you hold two magnets close together, you can feel them straining for union. Does this illustrate a primordial form of “yearning?”

The third term is—

THE ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

Whitehead’s philosophy is strongly empirical, meaning that it is grounded in experience. Reflecting this empirical commitment, his ontological principle states that only actual individuals can act. All explanation, in metaphysical discussion, is to be in terms of, or referable to, an actual thing or fact. Paraphrasing his words, “nothing simply floats into the world from out of the blue.” An example of a violation of the ontological principle would be to say that laws, such as the laws of nature, cause or make things happen. Laws

merely describe the relatively stable but evolving “habits of interaction” of the many entities that populate the universe.

The Body Electric

“I sing the body electric.” — Walt Whitman

Whitehead derived his metaphysics, in part, from a keen observation and analysis of his own everyday experiences as a human subject. Much of the time we tend to ignore the body, or to take it for granted. But for Whitehead the human body is “the starting point for our knowledge of the circumambient world.” (PR 81)

All sense perception is entirely dependent on the prior functioning of our bodies; what we experience is derived from extensive and interconnected chains of antecedent experiences that occur within the body. We experience other experiences.

For example, what happens when we see a patch of red before us? As Whitehead says, a datum of information is passed from the excited “cells of the retina, through the train of actual entities forming the relevant nerves, up to the brain. Any direct relation of eye to brain is entirely overshadowed by this intensity of indirect transmission . . . the predominant basis of perception is perception of the various bodily organs, as passing on their experiences by channels of transmission and enhancement.” (PR 118, 119) And even this account abstracts from the complexity of the biological details underlying our experience of “red.”

What you are seeing is a presentation made possible by many antecedent processes occurring in your body. From this David Griffin observes: “So even though the *data* of sensory perception give us a purely spatial world, the *process* of sensory perception itself suggests that the cells in our bodies are not purely spatial but are *prehensive unifications of data from prior events*, being in this respect analogous to moments of our own experience.” (RS 106-07)

The body is a vast ocean of feelings—a labyrinth of elegant routes of communication whereby information of various kinds is passed on, amplified, enhanced, integrated, and reintegrated. Whitehead again:

It is a set of occasions miraculously coordinated so as to pour its inheritance into various regions within the brain. There is thus every reason to believe that our sense of unity with the body has the same original as our sense of unity with our immediate past of personal experience. (AI 189)

Your relationship with your body is a social relationship: a relationship of the one self, or soul, to the many micro-individuals that make up your living body—the hundreds of thousands of different kinds of cells whose total number ranges in the trillions. Each cell in turn is a vast society of molecules wherein each molecule in turn is a teeming society of elementary particles. All of these micro-individuals are, to some degree, taking

account of one another, or “socializing.” Electrons are very “attracted” to those flirtatious entities we call protons. We are complexly social through and through.

* * *

So closely do we identify with our bodies, that we tend to lose sight of an obvious fact: that the body is *in the world*. Far from being apart from the external world, the body is only the most intimate part of the environment we experience.

As Whitehead puts it, “We think of ourselves as so intimately entwined in bodily life that a man is a complex unity—body and mind. But the body is part of the external world, continuous with it. In fact, it is just as much part of nature as anything else there—a river, or a mountain, or a cloud. Also, if we are fussily exact, we cannot define where a body begins and where external nature ends.” (MT 21)

Given that our bodies are the most intimate part of nature that we can observe most directly, Whitehead took this as a clue as to what was happening in the rest of nature, and he surmised that “other sections of the universe are to be interpreted in accordance with what we know of the human body.” (PR 119) “The human body,” Whitehead says, “provides our closest experience of the interplay of the actualities of nature.” (MT 115)

Whitehead calls the body “a miracle of order” and indeed it is the extraordinary structure of the human body that makes possible what may be called high levels of experience. The body, and I mean the body itself, is structured for conceptual adventure. The body is that locus, or matrix, wherein the possible and the actual intersect. On this fundamental contrast is based all novelty.

On this matter of the body, Teilhard de Chardin is in agreement with Whitehead, for he has written:

Hitherto, the prevailing view has been that the body (that is to say, the matter . . . attached to each soul) is a *fragment* of the universe—a piece *completely detached* from the rest and handed over to a spirit that informs it. In future, we shall say that the Body is the very Universality of things, in as much as they are centered on an animating Spirit, in as much as they influence that Spirit—and are themselves influenced and sustained by it. . . . My own body is not these cells or those cells that *belong exclusively* to me: it is *what*, in these cells *and* in the rest of the world, feels my influence and reacts against me. *My* matter is not a *part* of the universe that I possess *totally*: it is the *totality* of the Universe possessed by me *partially*.” (SC 12-13.)

A Panexperiential Universe

During the 300-year reign of science over which the analytical spirit of Sir Isaac Newton presided, the universe was viewed as a gigantic clockwork machine, ticking away in timeless perfection, a perfection created once and for all by God, who then stepped back, according to that view, to dispassionately contemplate his handiwork for all eternity.

The world the scientist looked out upon was, in essence, a fixed world, a changeless world, governed by immutable laws. It was a predictable world of force and matter, ruled by a rigid determinism, a mechanical world of billiard-ball cause and effect. Now, one undeniable attribute of a machine is that it has no life in it. So too, said science, was the material universe devoid of life: sheer matter acted upon by mechanical force. And back of it all, a changeless God—Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover. In a deterministic universe such as this, there’s not much room for adventure.

Modern science has, in a sense, eviscerated the basic units of nature. As a consequence, they are seen as inert, dead, completely insentient, nonpurposive, devoid of experience, incapable of self-movement. Whitehead calls such matter “vacuous actualities,” meaning that it has no interiority.

Enter panexperientialism: this is a long eight-syllable word with a simple meaning but some rather complex and surprising implications. It simply means that experience is the basic reality. In sharp contrast to Newton’s vacuous actualities, the fundamental units of nature, what Whitehead calls “actual entities,” are experiencing subjects. The basic units of nature are units of process and that process itself is a momentary flash of experience. Whitehead is clear and emphatic about this when he says that “apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.” (PR 167)

Whitehead makes an important distinction between actual entities and what he calls enduring objects, entities that endure, or persist in time. These enduring entities are the real individuals that you can see and touch in the everyday world: all life forms that act and feel as one, such as dogs and fish and birds. Or the simple life forms that can be seen through a microscope: the cells of the human body, bacteria, protozoa, and plankton. And those inorganic enduring entities that can be, if not seen, at least detected by scientific instrumentation: molecules, atoms, subatomic particles, photons of light.

An actual entity is a single moment of experience in any one of these enduring entities. A moment that begins and ends very quickly—in a fraction of a second. When an actual entity achieves its moment of actuality, it “perishes,” to use Whitehead’s word, and is immediately followed by a new pulse of actuality.

Simply put, actual entities arise and “perish” whereas enduring entities persist through time. Whereas an enduring entity has a history, and sometimes a very long history, an actual entity happens “all at once.”

Whitehead states the importance of making this distinction:

The real actual things that endure are all [enduring entities]. They are not actual occasions. It is the mistake that has thwarted European metaphysics from the time of the Greeks, namely, to confuse [enduring entities] with the completely real things which are the actual occasions. . . . Thus [an enduring entity] . . . enjoys a history

expressing its changing reactions to changing circumstances. But an actual occasion has no such history. It never changes. It only becomes and perishes. (AI 204)

In making this distinction Whitehead is insisting on the essential quantum nature of all reality, as opposed to the view of an enduring substance that somehow persists over time while exhibiting changing qualities. This includes the human mind or psyche, and so it is proper to speak in terms of the *quantum soul*. As David Griffin has stated, “The enduring self, understood as an enduring substance, is deconstructed.” (FC 202) Such a quantum view of the soul has been commonplace in Buddhist thought for centuries.

* * *

For panexperientialism to be a tenable doctrine, two other distinctions are required, and to overlook either is to invite confusion.

Some critics of process like to make fun of the idea of panexperientialism. They misconstrue the doctrine to mean that everything has experiences—everything without exception. They can then talk about how silly it is to claim that a chair has feelings, or that a stone or a rock can think.

The “pan” in panexperientialism means not that *all* things experience, but that there is experience *in* all things. A rock, for example, enjoys no unified experience, but a rock is teeming with a multitude of micro-individuals who do experience—molecules, atoms, elementary particles, and so forth. Internally, on the quantum level, a rock is roaring with activity. Even though a rock itself cannot be said to experience, there is experience, and plenty of it, *within* the rock.

Which brings me to the second distinction:

Experience varies vastly as to complexity, beauty, and intensity. This is the whole thrust of evolution, which began with very primitive units of experience, and only much later, after billions of years, evolved consciousness and self-awareness. Although experience does go all the way down, consciousness does not. As Whitehead puts it, “consciousness is the crown of experience . . . not . . . its base.” (PR 267)

Thus, those who ridicule the idea of panexperientialism by pointing out the obvious—that rocks can’t think—have completely overlooked these two essential distinctions.

For clarity, it should be pointed out that not all actual entities are exactly alike. In fact, Whitehead distinguishes four different grades:

In the actual world we discern four grades of actual [entities] . . . First, and lowest, there are the actual [entities] in so-called ‘empty space’; secondly, there are the actual [entities] which are moments in the life-histories of enduring non-living objects, such as electrons or other primitive organisms; thirdly, there are the actual [entities] which are moments in the life-histories of enduring living [entities]; fourthly, there are the

actual [entities] which are moments in the life-histories of enduring [entities] with conscious knowledge. (PR 177)

They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space. But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of function, yet in the principles which actuality exemplifies, all are on the same level. The final facts are, all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent. (PR 18)

In short, although there are great differences among actual entities, they all exemplify the same fundamental process of coming to be.

We are rarely, if ever, consciously aware of actual entities. In John Cobb's words:

These individual occasions are only detectable either by intense introspection or by scientific instruments. None of the entities of which we are conscious in common experience are individual occasions and only rarely do these appear even in the sciences. For the most part, our conscious experience is concerned with entities that are groupings of occasions rather than individual occasions. (CN 40)

* * *

There are three very distinctive features of human experience. First, the inwardness of experience. We are more than our bodies and our mere behavior as glimpsed by others. Experience is something that transpires within and in a very real sense is hidden from the rest of world.

The second feature is that experience is not continuous but comes in discrete units, or "quanta." William James called them drops or buds of experience. As we've seen, Whitehead uses the technical term "actual entities" or sometimes he refers to them as "occasions of experience."

To use a cinematic analogy, we flash along our quantum way at about ten to twelve frames per second. This would seem like slow motion to an electron for whom a minute must seem like a millennium.

As mentioned previously, for Buddhists the quantum nature of reality is nothing new. In a book entitled *The Secret Oral Teachings in Tibetan Buddhist Sects*, we find this:

The tangible world is movement, say the Masters, not a collection of moving objects, but movement itself. There are no objects "in movements," it is the movement which constitutes the objects which appear to us: they are nothing but movement.

This movement is a continued and infinitely rapid succession of flashes of energy (in Tibetan "tsal" or "shoug"). All objects perceptible to our senses, all phenomena of whatever kind and whatever aspect they may assume, are constituted by a rapid

succession of instantaneous events . . . the movement is intermittent and advances by separate flashes of energy which follow each other at such small intervals that these intervals are almost non-existent.

The third feature is creativity. Every moment of experience provides windows of opportunity for creative advance—for adventure. Whitehead’s thought is adventurous because he found reality itself to be adventurous.

Whitehead was an empiricist and, as such, he founded his epistemology, his theory of knowledge, and his ontology, his theory of reality, on that concrete reality we know best, most directly, and most intimately: our own experience as human subjects. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to characterize Whitehead’s entire conceptual system as “the metaphysics of experience.”

Whitehead made the bold conceptual move of generalizing this to include all of reality: experience, inner experience, goes all the way down, from people to protons. Human experience is thus a high-level exemplification of reality in general. Or, as Frederick Ferré puts it:

Coherence would strongly suggest that the one precious sample of reality to which we have intimate access should be taken instead as our best clue to whatever else is real and effective in itself. It is our *only example* of the interiority of an existing being; and it provides the *inescapable context* for every bit of data we receive. (BV 351)

Since our experiences are the “only complete data” given to us directly, and since we *are* those experiences, it is difficult to see how knowledge could be any more intimate than this. With this in mind it is far from obvious that the other units of reality are completely different in principle than that which we most intimately feel and directly know.

To attribute feelings “all the way down” is one aspect of Whitehead’s attempt to reflect, in his metaphysical system, the unity of nature. Whitehead was the first philosopher to formulate the doctrine of panexperientialism with conceptual clarity. As so formulated, this doctrine has been hailed as “one of the greatest philosophical discoveries of all time.”

* * *

Panexperientialism is a powerful conceptual tool that provides many theoretical benefits. I’ll briefly mention only two.

First, the mind-body problem.

For over three centuries, the mind-body problem has proven highly resistant to solution by philosophers. This problem has been so difficult to untangle that Arthur Schopenhauer called it the “world-knot.” With regard to our era, philosopher John Searle has said that, “contrary to surface appearances, there really has been only one major topic of discussion

in the philosophy of mind for the past fifty years or so, and that is the mind-body problem.”

In 1998 David Ray Griffin published a book (UW) devoted to the problem and some of us believe that he has at last unsnarled this perplexing knot, arguing from the vantage point of panexperientialism. If mind and matter are completely different in kind, the problem to be overcome is how they could possibly interact. From the point of view of materialism and dualism, the problem, according to leading theoreticians, appears to be insoluble. But what they miss seeing is that these are not the only options.

Panexperientialism, with its view that mind and so-called matter differ in degree but not in kind, provides a clear understanding of how interaction between the two is possible.

Another long-standing problem concerns evolution.

Some scientists have concluded that the problem of how first life, and then consciousness or mind, evolved out of mere inert matter is theoretically insoluble. From the perspective of panexperientialism, this is only a pseudo-problem in that whatever entities emerged following the so-called “Big Bang” enjoyed some form of experience, however slight and primitive. As William James has said, “If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things.”

A Dipolar Universe

Another feature that Whitehead found in his analysis of experience was its essential dipolarity.

Imagine pausing for a moment to look at yourself in a mirror, and become aware of the double perspective—you see your body as others see you, but you are also aware of your own inner experience. Your body, from without, is what you are as you appear to the sensory perception of others. Your mind, or inner experience, are what you are for yourself. Griffin reminds us that this provides the basis for a distinction between mind and matter: “What we call matter is then the outer appearance of something that is, from within, analogous to our own experience.” (FC, 203)

The French paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin said that “coextensive with their Without, there is a Within of things.” And physicist David Bohm is thinking along the same lines in his distinction of two orders in nature: the *implicate* and the *explicate*.

Whitehead called these two aspects of experience the *mental pole* and the *physical pole*; hence, the word “dipolar.”

He then generalized this dipolarity to be ingredient in all actualities all the way down to the most fundamental units of nature.

Though many have tried to describe what subatomic particles look like as matter, that is, as seen from without, Whitehead was perhaps the first to try to imagine what an electron feels like from inside. To Newton's inert mass particles, he thus resuscitated not only some interiority, but a lively inner experience with each pulsation of actuality. And thus philosopher Charles Hartshorne came to speak of how an electron can "enjoy its almost incredibly lively career of rhythmic and not too rigidly rhythmic adventures." (BH 202)

Whitehead's anatomy of a single pulsation reveals a beginning, a momentary phase of creative development toward a completion that ends with a thrust beyond itself into the next new pulsation. As an electron flashes along its quantum way, each tiny pulsation throbs its own actuality into existence, just as quickly fades away, and is immediately followed by another.

At the deepest level, in electromagnetic wave propagation, this same polarity is vividly exemplified in that such waves are propagated by a sheer reversal of field as a pulsation of negative charge begets positive and positive begets negative in a segue of polar reversals. In this perpetual rhythm of vivid contrasts, nature can be seen as dipolar through and through.

The strange, charmed, beautiful, and truly upside-down microworld of quantum physics reveals the presence of this same dipolarity, for there are two types of elementary particles, quarks and leptons, and the individual particles themselves are linked in pairs—the six quarks: up-down, charmed-strange, truth-beauty (or top-bottom in more prosaic terms), and the six leptons: electron neutrino-electron, muon neutrino-muon, tau neutrino-tau. To extend this biphasal omnipresence ever further, each particle also has an antiparticle, such as the neutrino-antineutrino pair.

Charles Hartshorne proposed that "in basic contrasts or polarities, both poles must be asserted if either is." If this is true, and if there is life after death, as some of us believe, then we can look forward not to lives of pure spirit but to post-terrestrial careers of *dipolar immortality*.

Change, or the oscillation between two phases, operates at every level of reality—from subatomic particles and atoms to planets and galaxies. If dipolarity is so fundamental to the very nature of reality, what does this suggest about the nature of God?

THE DIVINE DIPOLARITY

Process proposes what at first glance may appear to be an apparent paradox: that God both changes and does not change. Can any sense be made of this paradoxical proposal? The process answer is that a coherent explanation can be made by conceiving God as dipolar.

Indeed, if dipolarity is a fundamental principle, and if Whitehead is correct in holding that God can be no exception to such principles, then the divine nature *must* be dipolar. Moreover, not only is God conceived as dipolar, but as doubly dipolar.

One dipolarity is in terms of a distinction between two aspects of God: God's concrete actuality and God's abstract essence. God's abstract essence does not change, is timeless, necessary . . . in fact, all the mostly negative characteristics attributed to God by classical theism. But as a concrete actuality, God does change, through increase of experience and value, and is temporal, contingent, and relative. Hartshorne emphasizes just how relative God is by proposing that God is the most relative of all actualities and coins the term "surrelative" to describe this. God is super-relative.

In sharp distinction to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, God is also dipolar in how God relates to the world: both exerting influence *upon*, and receiving influence *from*.

Some critics charge that the God of process theism is not transcendent enough. To this charge Hartshorne has made a sagaciously witty reply: he said that the God of process is *twice* as transcendent as the God of classical theism. He was able to make this reply through his doctrine of *dual transcendence*. By dual transcendence, Hartshorne means that only God has uniquely excellent ways of being both absolute and relative, necessary and contingent, immutable and capable of change, and so on.

IDEAL OPPOSITES

Dipolarity is only one of many variations on a twofold metaphysical theme that weaves its way through Whitehead's work: the unification of contrasting pairs such as the many and the one, order and novelty, permanence and change. The last pair, permanence and change, is maybe the most general expression of the underlying rhythms of process in nature. Whitehead calls these contrasting pairs *ideal opposites*. The point to be noticed is, that in all of these contrasting pairs, one *requires* the other. They cannot, in Whitehead's words, "be torn apart." There is an ultimate complementarity in the very nature of things, including the nature—the dipolar nature—of God.

In Whitehead's words, "Opposed elements stand to each other in mutual requirement. In their unity, they inhibit or contrast. God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement." (PR 348)

Not only do God and the world stand in mutual requirement, either one is the source of novelty, and adventure, for the other. This is the basis for Whitehead's statement that "It is as true to say that God creates the world, as that the world creates God." (PR 348)

In Whitehead's scheme what appears as an opposition, or self-contradiction, is converted to a vivifying contrast. Since "all the 'opposites' are elements in the nature of things, and are incorrigibly there," (PR 350) there can be no final reconciliation of permanence and change in a process universe. The world will never reach a state of static completion, and neither will God. Creation continues, forevermore and everlastingly, and so: adventure!

GETTING IT EXACTLY BACKWARDS

Charles Hartshorne has taken Whitehead's idea of "ideal opposites" and developed it considerably into what he calls a logic of ultimate contrasts. Consider for a moment pairs of contrasting terms such as absolute and relative, cause and effect, object and subject, being and becoming—Hartshorne calls these ultimate contrasts, or contraries. For many centuries it has been customary in theology to exalt one side of these contraries at the expense of the other—to such an extent that one side has been used exclusively as names or designations of deity. Thus we have God as Absolute, Universal, Cause, Infinite . . .

In thus exalting the absolute over the relative, being over becoming, Hartshorne argues that the medieval theologians did not get it right once and for all, but, on the contrary, they got it exactly backwards.

To illustrate his idea, Hartshorne has constructed a logical matrix (a square containing sixteen smaller squares) that reveals the structure and implications of this logic. If Hartshorne is right, then to exalt the abstract over the concrete implies that we should value objects over subjects, the possible more than the actual, and that the movement from cause through effect is a descent from better to worse, from more to less. As Hartshorne says, if this is indeed the case, then "pessimism is a metaphysical axiom." (ZF 116)

One of the many surprising adventures of reading Whitehead is to discover what to some may seem an outrageous claim: that much of our received wisdom is not only wrong but that some of our most venerated thinkers got it exactly backwards. Whitehead reminds us that "the doctrines which best repay critical examination are those which for the longest period have remained unquestioned." (AI 177) In his book *Process and Reality*, time and time again he will cite an established idea only to say, "but the converse is true." And then proceed to show why this is so. Is this not reminiscent of Jesus' saying, "It has been said . . . but I say unto you."

An example of how this works can be seen in how Religious Science explains the creative process. According to Ernest Holmes, and *The Science of Mind* textbook, God, as the creative principle, receives the impress of our thought and makes it a reality. In other words, God completes what we initiate. And here is where Whitehead would insist that "the converse is true," and that Holmes has it exactly backwards. According to a process understanding of the creative process, it is our job to complete what God begins. The compelling reason behind this is that only God can provide relevant aims or possibilities.

In every new moment God prehends the entire universe—every atom, every molecule, every living form, all the billions of moments of our human occasions of experience—and integrates these countless moments in the divine concrescence, and then, with the knowledge of this as reference, provides every single actual entity with a relevant range of possibilities for its best future.

Given the staggering complexity of the universe, given the breathtaking background of its 15-billion-year history, given our fragmentary understanding of things—what Whitehead

sometimes calls “the dim recesses of [our] apelike consciousness”(AI 295)—surely only God has the inclusive vision and all-encompassing wisdom to know the range of possibilities that are relevant to initiate a particular creative act. Ponder, if you will, the first four words of the Bible: “In the beginning, God . . .”

Can we suppose, hypothetically, that the founder of Religious Science might agree with this? Consider the following: in his later years, as a guest speaker at a Fort Lauderdale church, Ernest Holmes began his talk with a thought that may surprise some of you. His opening statement was:

Someday, not too many years from now, *The Science of Mind* book will be filed away on a dusty old bookshelf and forgotten because so much new knowledge and information will be available that the book will become archaic.

To me, this makes one thing abundantly clear: that the mind of Ernest Holmes was ever adventurous and looking to the future.

Two Types of Process: Concrescence and Transition

In Whitehead’s system of thought there are two types of process: *concrescence* and *transition*. What he means by these two terms can be shown by drawing a distinction between two types of causation: efficient and final. Efficient causation is how one thing, or occasion, influences another. It is the causal influence *between* two occasions, and is objective, or physical. Final causation is self-determination. This is how an entity influences its own self-formation, or self-completion. As such, it is the causal influence exerted *within* one occasion on itself, and is subjective, or mental. Final causation, with its glimpse of possibilities beyond what is given by the past, is how determinism is transcended and novelty enters the world.

An analysis of our own experience reveals that we are not completely determined by the past, but are constantly deciding how to react to circumstances. For example, if I feel hunger while working at my computer, I’m not thereby compelled to make a mad dash for the refrigerator, but can decide to wait until later to have a slice of apple pie.

From this analysis, Whitehead generalizes that the same sort of process, different in degree but not in kind, occurs in other individuals, all the way down. Although they differ in richness and complexity, the momentary experiences of a molecule and a Mozart all share the same basic structure.

Here’s how Whitehead analyzes a moment in the life of an actual entity:

Remember, all experience comes in quantum pulsations.

Each pulse of experience begins physically by receiving the efficient causation of the past, followed by a mental, or subjective, phase wherein it feels not only this influence but also

a range of possibilities for deciding how to respond. Once this decision and response is made, the subjectivity comes to an end, and the objective datum of what has thus been achieved is then passed on to the succeeding pulse of experience. The ending of subjective experience is the beginning of objective existence as efficient causal influence.

New possibilities for an actual entity are felt as contrasts between what *now is* and what *might be*. What “might be” are a range of possibilities, provided by God in terms of an initial aim. The initial aim both initiates the occasion and aims at its best outcome, given all the myriad factors that make up the present concrete situation. Through an initial aim that is relevant to the context, God provides “particular providence for particular situations.”(PR 351) This is how God is present, and participates in, every concrescence and transition in the entire universe.

Simply put, *concrescence* is how an entity achieves actuality and *transition* is how it passes on what it has thus achieved to future subjects that follow.

Underlying every reality is the cosmic rhythm wherein transition follows concrescence to beget yet another concrescence. Note the beautiful symmetry of this interweaving of transition and concrescence, efficient and final causality, objectivity and subjectivity, permanence and change.

And so all the enduring entities of nature, including all humans, are biphasal in nature with two modes of existence: subjective and objective. As David Griffin observes, to be an enduring entity is to be in “*perpetual oscillation* between the two kinds of process, concrescence and transition. The creative advance of the world, therefore, involves a perpetual oscillation between efficient and final causation.” (RS 115)

Perpetual oscillation: is this not reminiscent of the reversal of field, from negative to positive, seen in wave propagation as described by quantum theory? Whitehead’s two kinds of process, concrescence and transition, reveals another instance of the twofold theme.

The whole point of this twofold process is to achieve actuality, over and over and over again, and to each time introduce the possibility for change, for novelty, for adventure.

Our God is an adventurous God!

A Holographic Universe

For Whitehead the universe is not a competitive arena for rugged individualists but a close-knit web of intimate social relationships, so close-knit, in fact, that every item in the universe is involved in the concrescence of each actual entity. In the initial phase of concrescence, an actual entity takes account of, or prehends, all other actual entities in its immediate past. As Whitehead says,

In fact if we allow for degrees of relevance, and for negligible relevance, we must say that every actual entity is present in every other actual entity. The philosophy of organism is mainly devoted to the task of making clear the notion of ‘being present in another entity.’ (PR 50)

Actual entities are internally related, which means that the relations are essential and constitutive of what each actual entity becomes. To the question, what are actual entities made of—the reply is that they are made of other actual entities, *plus* what they achieve by self-completion. And so, another aspect of what is meant by the word “process” is to say that reality is a *social* process.

Whitehead repeatedly insists that the *entire universe* conspires to create each new actual entity:

The whole world conspires to produce a new creation. It presents to the creative process its opportunities and its limitations. (RM 113)

In the first place, no event can be wholly and solely the cause of another event. The whole antecedent world conspires to produce a new occasion. (MT 164)

Each task of creation is a social effort, employing the whole universe. (PR 223)

If Whitehead is right about this, and also about saying that every actual entity prehends all other actual entities in its immediate past, and this entails that they be present, in their objectified state, in that actual entity, this has a startling implication.

Indeed, philosopher Jorge Luis Nobo takes us for a quantum leap by pointing out that Whitehead’s adventurous thinking along these lines anticipates the holographic paradigm. In this light, every actual entity is revealed to contain a “metaphysical hologram” of the entire universe; and thus Nobo says:

“. . . the metaphysical chronology and topology of the universe are forever captured and enshrined in . . . its actual occasions.”

Noting that the universe is never at a standstill, Nobo qualifies what he means:

[The universe so captured], it must be noted, is a fleeting momentary state of the universe, which, nevertheless, is permanently captured in the crystallized modal structure of [an actual entity’s] own extensive standpoint.

Thus, the holographic conception of reality—the conception which physicist David Bohm, psychologist Karl Pribram, and other contemporary scientists are beginning to find so illuminating in their respective disciplines—has been an essential, but generally unacknowledged, ingredient of Whitehead’s metaphysical thought since 1924, if not earlier. (WM 327)

Nobo pushes the envelope even further:

. . . the causal objectification of each occasion in [an actual entity's] immediate past presents for [that actual entity] the entire history of the universe up to the birth of the occasion in question, thereby leaving out only some of the information concerning the complete determinateness of its own contemporaries. (WM 328)

And so each momentary throb of actuality constellates within itself a replication, in marvelous miniature, of the entire universe, showing how all things are interdependent, interwoven together in a wonderful pattern of connectedness, a pattern linking all things together in dynamic relatedness.

Not only does an actual entity contain the whole of the past universe, it pervades the whole of the future by passing on what it achieves, an achievement that will be taken account of, or prehended, by all subsequent entities. As a holographic entity, each fleeting pulse of experience is Alpha and Omega, with prehensive roots stretching all the way back to the primordial flaring forth of the universe fifteen billion years ago, and branches of influence reaching forward into the future . . . for as long as forever is.

Of course, some of our poets, especially those of a mystical turn of mind, have been telling us this all along. For example, William Blake begins one of his poems with these lines:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

But even though some mystical poets have glimpsed this, it was left to Whitehead to formulate this penetrating insight into a rigorous metaphysical system that stands up to the rational criteria of consistency, coherence, applicability, and adequacy.

Our Buddhist friends have a wonderful image of the holographic universe. They call it The Jewel Net of Indra.

It pictures the cosmos as an infinite network of glittering jewels, all different. In each one we can see the images of all the others reflected. Each image contains an image of all the other jewels; and also the image of the images of the images, and so ad infinitum. The myriad reflections within each jewel are the essence of the jewel itself, without which it cannot exist. Thus, every part of the cosmos reflects, and brings into existence, every other part.

And thus an actual entity is a *holographic* entity whose datum is the boundless universe itself, stretching to the farthest reaches of intergalactic space and back to the beginning of time. If this is true of an actual entity, then it must also be true of our own momentary

occasions of experience. This means that the entire universe, as a metaphysical hologram, flashes forth in our unconscious experience a dozen or so times every second.

God and the World

To discuss how God and the world interact, in Whitehead's view, it may be helpful to first say a few words about creativity.

Creativity is so fundamental an idea in process thought that David Griffin argues that there are two ultimates: God *and* creativity.

Process denies the idea that only God is creative, or that the creativity of the creatures comes from God. In no way does this deny God's all-surpassing eminence in the creative process, for without God no process would even be possible, creative or otherwise.

Just as there are no actual entities without some degree of creativity, there is no creativity without, or apart from, some actual entity. Apart from God and actual entities, creativity has no actuality of its own, and yet it transcends them both. Whitehead reveals just how interconnected are his three fundamental ideas:

But, of course, there is no meaning to 'creativity' apart from its 'creatures,' and no meaning to 'God' apart from the 'creativity' and the 'temporal creatures,' and no meaning to the 'temporal creatures' apart from 'creativity' and 'God.' (PR 225)

Again, this is Whitehead's "ontological principle," according to which "there is nothing which floats into the world from nowhere."

For Whitehead the ultimate metaphysical category is creativity, the form of forms, and universal of universals. In *Process and Reality*, he writes,

Neither God, nor the World, reaches static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty. Either of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other. (PR 349)

Creativity is pervasive, spanning the entire spectrum of reality, from God all the way down to atoms, electrons, and quarks, though in these elementary particles the degree of creativity is so minimal as to be almost (but not quite) negligible. This is an aspect of the idea of panexperientialism—that all actual entities or dynamic singulars (units of process that act and feel as one) enjoy experience to some degree.

To be a creature, any creature, is to be creative, is to be a creator, though not of course *the* Creator. And rather than claiming that God is the only Power, process proposes that all creation is co-creation, and that the creative process is just that: a process involving both God and creatures. God does not unilaterally provide any finished products. Jesus made essentially the same point when he said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

First, God provides the ultimate ground and order necessary for any experience whatsoever to occur. God also begets the subjective immediacy of each beginning actual entity, endows it with possibilities, the freedom to choose among those possibilities, and an aim towards its own self-completion.

From a process perspective, God is always present in the very midst of our becoming, offering perfect possibilities in every new moment for each individual's highest good. Such possibilities Whitehead calls *initial aims*, and these aims are directive and persuasive, but never coercive. And so every becoming occasion begins with God as creative love: everlastingly leading, luring, urging all actualities to new heights of fulfillment and enjoyment.

Whitehead puts it eloquently:

Every event on its finer side introduces God into the world. . . . The power by which God sustains the world is the power of himself as the ideal. He adds himself to the actual ground from which every creative act takes its rise. The world lives by its incarnation of God in itself. (RM 155-56)

The point to be noticed here is that all creation is co-creation—the co-creation of God *and* the world.

* * *

In the closing pages of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead presents a litany to this ultimate complementarity of God and the world:

It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.

It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many.

It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.

It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World.

It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.

It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.

When I first read this it sounded like a paragon of paradox. I thought to myself, this cannot be! But then Whitehead gives an intriguing clue: “The concept of ‘God’ is the way in which we understand this incredible fact—that what cannot be, yet is.” (PR 350) Remember, in Whitehead's view God is dipolar with both an abstract essence and concrete actuality. With this in mind, let's take another look at the second sentence:

It is as true to say that God is one [as abstract essence] and the World many [the many becoming actualities], as that the World is one [unified in God's concrete actuality]

and God many [the many actual entities as they are initially prehended into God's concrete actuality].

The conclusion to be drawn from this I'll phrase in Whiteheadian terms:

It is as true to say that the world requires God, as that God requires the world. It is as true to say that the World cannot exist without God, as that God cannot exist without the world. It is as true to say that God contributes to the World, as that the World contributes to God.

What God contributes to the world are possibilities for actualization; what the world contributes to God is the actualization of those possibilities, possibilities that hitherto God, as abstract essence, had only known abstractly and conceptually.

In the everlasting cosmic rhythm of the many and the one, the many creatures are the source of actualized adventures for the one God just as the one God is the source of possibilities for adventures and novelty for the many creatures. In Whitehead's words:

The theme of Cosmology, which is the basis of all religions, is the story of the dynamic effort of the World passing into everlasting unity, and of the static majesty of God's vision, accomplishing its purpose of completion by absorption of the World's multiplicity of effort. (PR 349)

A Kalogenic Universe

In his book *Being and Value*, philosopher Frederick Ferré acquaints us with a beautiful idea that he names with a beautiful word: *kalogenesis*.

“Kalós” (καλός) is the Greek word for “beauty” and “genesis” of course refers to “generating” or “bringing into existence.” And so kalogenesis means the creation or coming to be of beauty. The adjectival form of this word is “kalogenic.”

According to Ferré, beauty is omnipresent, everlasting, and present in every momentary flash of actuality. The becoming of any actuality is also the becoming of beauty. In short we live in a kalogenic universe populated by kalogenic entities. To be, on whatever level, from protons to people, is to be a begetter of beauty.

It seems Whitehead is in accord with this, for he says:

The metaphysical doctrine, here expounded, finds the foundations of the world in the aesthetic experience . . . All order is therefore aesthetic order, and the moral order is merely certain aspects of aesthetic order. The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order, and the aesthetic order is derived from the immanence of God. (RM 104-05)

God is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness. (PR 346)

In co-creation with God, the fundamental cosmic process, the coming to be of each momentary flash of actuality, represents a real achievement, a flicker of originality, arising out of a feeling, however vague, for a range of possibilities that might have made its existential path otherwise. Adventure is inherent in the very structure of reality.

If, on this hypothesis, the coming to be of every actual entity involves at least some measure of self-completion and, therefore, real freedom, it follows that every occasion is of intrinsic value. Value is inherent in the very texture of reality.

Coming to be always involves the many and the one. In Whitehead's pithy phrase, "The many become one, and are increased by one." This describes a process whereby diversity is made one in a prehensive unification of experience. Probably the most general definition of beauty is "unity in diversity." The culmination of coming to be is a feeling of "satisfaction" upon achieving this accomplishment. It follows that every momentary flash of actuality not only produces beauty, but also "enjoys" the experience of beauty. Beauty is inherent in the most basic dynamics of reality.

The most fundamental process in the universe, the process whereby actuality is attained in each momentary pulse of experience, is a kalogenic process. To be an actual entity is to be a kalogenic entity. The "process" of process philosophy is a *kalogenic* process.

Beauty also has to do with contrasts held together in harmony. The wider the contrast, the more intense the expression and the experience of beauty. In the becoming of every individual there is always, however slight, some feeling of contrast between what is actual and what is possible.

Ferré observes that:

. . . in its process of becoming actual every fundamental entity must result in a unified harmony of definite elements held together in experience. In this way, every pulse of actualizing energy represents in itself an act of kalogenesis. The universe comprised of kalogenic entities and their combinations is therefore, strictly speaking, the by-product of beauty. (BV 358)

With the advent of sexual reproduction new experiences and expressions of beauty became possible. In Ferré's words:

Sexual reproduction makes the search for beauty even more intense and gives advantage to decorations, iridescent fins and fine feathers, prowess at dance, attractive odors, and the like, throughout the sexually animated kingdoms, botanical as well as zoological. The universal quest for satisfactory experience, for subjectively enjoyed beauty, draws organisms whether or not their experience (compared to ours) is dim

and unselfconscious. At the biological level, we find ourselves within an intensely kalogenic universe. (BV 361-62)

PRIMORDIAL TRAILBLAZERS

From a process perspective, even pre-biotic evolution tells a tale of high adventure. In the beginning of our universe, what science rather unpoetically calls the Big Bang, electrons and protons emerged in a fraction of a second.

Over the course of about 300,000 years these two types of entities enjoyed their own careers, their own individualities, if you will, as they flashed along their solitary quantum ways. But then something exciting happened. For these primordial individuals somehow managed to suddenly weave themselves together into new more complex entities called atoms. The simplest, and probably first to emerge, is the hydrogen atom with a nucleus of one proton and its single orbiting electron.

The path leading from electrons and protons to atoms is a creative path, and the ontological principle requires that creativity be explained in terms of actual entities, in this case: electrons and protons.

In short, this means that these two were not mere inert particles but throbs of adventurous actuality. It was somehow through their creative interaction, their “decision” for novelty, that a new creature, a new atomic entity, came into being.

This is the first social interplay, a romance if you will, between two opposites who continue to attract each other by one of the strongest forces in the universe.

This is an astonishing achievement. The leap from electrons and protons to atoms is a quantum leap of breathtaking beauty, and these two worthy pioneers may be seen as the first trailblazers.

In *The Universe Story*, a book that can be described as deeply kalogenic, cosmologist Brian Swimme and geologist Thomas Berry describe the adventure story of hydrogen in much the same way:

The universe bloomed into existence, settled on its fundamental laws, and stabilized itself as baryons and simple nuclei. For several hundred thousand years it expanded and cooled and then, in an instant, at the very end of the fireball, the universe transformed itself into the primordial atoms of hydrogen and helium. Our wandering proton snapped into a new relationship with one of the erstwhile freely interacting electrons. These bonded relationships were impossible during the violent former eras, but now they became the predominant mode of reality.

The creation of the atoms is as stunning as the creation of the universe. Nothing in the previous several hundred thousand years presaged their emergence. These dynamic

twists of being leapt out of the originating mystery and immediately organized the universe in a fresh way. Is it the electron trapping a proton? Or vice versa?

It is rather an event initiated by the universe, and completed by the mysterious emergent being we call hydrogen, a new identity that has the power to seal a proton and an electron into a seamless community. (US 29)

In a creative explosion, other new atomic entities quickly followed, bringing forth all the basic atoms, the elements that make up the periodic table. And from these arose molecules and macromolecules, one of stunning beauty and complexity we now call DNA.

A hydrogen atom, with its union of one electron and one proton, is perhaps the simplest exemplification of unity and diversity, and shows forth a simple beauty. And thus it can be readily seen that kalogenic entities were present, and prolific, at the very birth of the universe.

The scientists of today no longer see atoms as inert bits of matter. For example, here's how Swimme and Berry describe the simple helium atom.

In actuality each helium atom roars with activity. In the time it takes a human to sneeze, a single helium atom has had to organize a billion different evanescent events to establish its helium presence in the world. Just one of its accomplishments is to keep its electrons free from interacting with most of the photons rushing at it. To exist as an invisible gas is a major achievement, one requiring instant-by-instant action, an accomplishment that transformed the universe. (US 33)

Mozartian Moments

And, speaking of accomplishments that transform the universe—

The musical genius of Mozart is legendary . . . astonishing . . . breathtaking.

When creating his music, Mozart never wrote rough drafts that he later polished to perfection. All who observed him at work agree that he could sit down and dash off a musical composition, in its final form, as easily as we might sit down and dash off a grocery list.

He was able to do this because he sometimes conceived an entire movement of a symphony in one single creative thought. Like a beautiful orchid springing into full bloom all at once, in the twinkling of an eye, the whole movement came to him as a unity of experience “in one magnificent moment of musical meaning.”

We all have experienced magnificent moments, though probably to a lesser degree than this, and Frederick Ferré calls such experiences “Mozartian moments.” These moments have an intrinsic value in themselves; they glow, as Ferré says, with their own worth.

When they come to us, in their flashes of momentary splendor, we know truly that our “cups runneth over.”

Although they can aspire to intense elevation, Mozartian moments are grounded in the body, for they come charged with deep feeling, and are made possible by the human brain which, as Ferré reminds us, is “the most complex system in the known universe.”

Mozartian moments are integrative—not only do contrasting elements come together, but they are held together in a momentary embrace revealing aesthetic richness and intensity of experience: a unity of diversity, a unity of contrasts. The greater the contrast, the more the intensity.

They are adventures of novelty, revealing exciting new vistas, or breakthrough insights, evoking feelings of freshness, zest, and vitality.

Mozartian moments are among our highest experiences of beauty . . . and thus intensely kalogenic. Their beauty sparkles. They come “trailing clouds of glory” and are part of what make us unique as humans.

And so in conclusion, I make this wish: may your Mozartian moments be many, and may there be one that stands out above all. And may that one be an adventure of the spirit, of such breathtaking beauty that it transforms the universe!

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

- SC** Chardin, Teilhard de. *Science and Christ*.
- CN** Cobb, John B. *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*
- RE** Cooper, Robert M. “God as Poet and Person at Prayer,” *Religious Experience and Process Theology*, Ed. Harry James Cargas and Bernard Lee
- BV** Ferré, Frederick. *Being and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Metaphysics*.
- FC** Griffin, David Ray, John B. Cobb, Marcus P. Ford, Pete A. Gunter, and Peter Ochs. *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy: Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne*.
- RS** Griffin, David Ray. *Religion Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*.
- UW** Griffin, David Ray. *Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem*.

- BH** Hartshorne, Charles. *Beyond Humanism*.
- ZF** Hartshorne, Charles. *The Zero Fallacy*. ed. Mohammad Valady.
- WM** Nobo, Jorge Luis. *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Extension and Solidarity*.
- US** Swimme, Brian & Thomas Berry. *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*.
- AI** Whitehead, Alfred North. *Adventures of Ideas*.
- MT** Whitehead, Alfred North. *Modes of Thought*.
- PR** Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality*. Corrected Edition. Ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne.
- RM** Whitehead, Alfred North. *Religion in the Making*.

APPENDIX A

Whitehead's Six Main Principles

In his Harvard lectures of 1926-27, Whitehead announced “the six main principles of my metaphysics”:

1. The principle of solidarity. Every actual entity requires all other entities, actual or ideal, in order to exist.
2. The principle of creative individuality. Every actual entity is a process which is its own result, depending on its own limitations.
3. The principle of efficient causation. Every actual entity by the fact of its own individuality contributes to the character of processes which are actual entities superseding itself.
4. The ontological principle. The character of creativity is derived from its own creatures and expressed by its own creatures.
5. The principle of esthetic individuality. Every actual entity is an end in itself for itself, involving its measure of self-satisfaction individual to itself and constituting the result of itself-as-process.
6. The principle of ideal comparison. Every creature involves in its own constitution an ideal reference to ideal creatures: (1) in ideal relationship to each other, and (2) in comparison with its own self-satisfaction [cf. RM 155].

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APPENDIX B

Books by Whitehead and Hartshorne

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (1861-1947)

- The Aims of Education*. 1929. New York: Free Press, 1967.
Adventures of Ideas. 1933. New York: Free Press, 1967.
The Concept of Nature. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1920.
Essays in Science and Philosophy. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
The Function of Reason. 1929. Boston: Beacon, 1958.
Interpretation of Science. Ed. A. H. Johnson. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.
Modes of Thought. 1938. New York: Free Press, 1968.
The Organisation of Thought. London: Williams and Norgate, 1917.
Principia Mathematica with Bertrand Russell. 2 ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1929.
An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Natural Knowledge. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1919.
Process and Reality. 1929. Corrected Edition. Ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne. New York: Free Press, 1978.
The Principle of Relativity. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922.
Religion in the Making. 1926. New York: Fordham UP, 1996.
Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect. New York: Macmillan, 1927.
Science and the Modern World. 1925. New York: Free Press, 1967.

CHARLES HARTSHORNE (1897-2000)

- Anselm's Discovery*. La Salle: Open Court, 1965.
Aquinas to Whitehead: Seven Centuries of Metaphysics of Religion. Milwaukee: Marquette University Publications, 1976.
Beyond Humanism: Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature. 1937. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1975.
Born to Sing: An Interpretation and World Survey of Bird Song. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1973.
Creativity in American Philosophy. Albany: State U of New York P, 1984.
Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method. 1970. Lanham: UP of America, 1983.
The Darkness and the Light. Albany: State U of New York P, 1990.
The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God. New Haven: Yale UP, 1983.
Insights and Oversights of Great Thinkers: An Evaluation of Western Philosophy. Albany: State U of New York P, 1983.
The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics. La Salle: Open Court, 1962.
Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism. 1941. Hamden: Archon, 1964.
A Natural Theology for Our Time. La Salle: Open Court, 1967.
Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes. Albany: State U of New York P, 1984.
The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation. 1934. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat,

1968.

Philosophers Speak of God with William Reese 1953. Chicago: Midway Reprints, 1976.

Reality as Social Process: Studies in Metaphysics and Religion. 1953. New York:

Hafner, 1971.

The Unity of Being. Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University. 1923. Ed. Randall E.

Auxier and Hyatt Carter. Forthcoming. La Salle: Open Court, 2006.

Something New in New Thought

By Alan Anderson & Deborah Whitehouse

God's Job Description and Yours

Have you ever wondered what is in God's job description? The divine job description provides for God to start everything, to finish nothing, and to keep everything. Your job description calls for you to start nothing, to finish very quickly what God starts for you, and to realize that you can't keep anything for more than a moment. If this seems to violate common sense, keep reading.

Not-So-Common Sense

It is lamentably true that common sense is uncommon. It is also lamentably true (sorry to ruin your day) that even common sense, much as we trust and respect it, is no longer adequate by itself for understanding our universe. As British scientist J. B. S. Haldane remarked, "The universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we can imagine."

The relationship of a philosopher and a psychologist can get prickly at times. At first, we attributed it to lack of a common language between disciplines: we were being jarred by jargon. If the only interdisciplinary language were mathematics, both of us would be reduced to communicating with grunts, gestures, and perhaps smoke signals. But we persevered, and it finally dawned on us that psychology was attempting to use common sense, whereas philosophy was running on insight and pure reasoning ability. Well, you already knew that psychology is unreasonable and philosophy makes no common sense. Still, although you don't have to be able to take the engine apart in order to drive a car, at least a few of us need to be able to tell a distributor cap from a hubcap, and a few of us need to be philosophers.

Emmet Fox said that upon entering church, you should not check your common sense at the door with your hat. He should have suggested at least occasionally checking your common sense, but not your reasoning ability or your intuitive ability.

Several decades ago, newspaper readers of Don Marquis were entertained by the antics of Archy and Mehitabel: a *vers libre* poet transmigrated into the body of a cockroach, and an Egyptian queen who similarly ended up as an alley cat, though always a lady. Archy, the cockroach, did the typing--and most of the serious philosophizing for the pair. And so, in the interest of reasoning ability and understanding the universe, we shall turn things over to the philosopher. As Mehitabel would say, "Whatthehell, whatthehell."

New Thought has advanced far enough beyond the limitations of common sense to recognize that the world is mind rather than matter, but most of New Thought has yet to progress to the point of understanding that a mind is not a *thing*, but a succession of interrelated, fleeting *events* or *happenings* or *experiences*.

The great hope for New Thought is that it will be able to do something practically unheard of for religious, or even spiritual, organizations: to continue to grow and to adapt itself to changing ideas in a changing world. Ernest Holmes characterized Religious Science as "open at the top," and a Unity pamphlet refers to Unity as "an open-ended religion." But many New Thinkers declare that there is nothing new in New Thought, that it is a rediscovery of ancient truths and practices. Until now, New Thought has turned largely to ancient sources of inspiration and ideology, but that need not continue to be exclusively the case. New Thought has a revolutionary past and equally revolutionary possibilities for the future.

Paradigm Shifts: Revolutions of Thought

The most important revolutions in human history are *revolutions of understanding*, which, in turn produce *revolutions in ways of living*. Thomas Kuhn called scientific and other major intellectual revolutions *paradigm shifts*. Probably the best known of these is the Copernican revolution, which led us to realize that our planet is not the center of the universe, nor even of the solar system; sometimes any major shift of understanding is called a Copernican revolution. In some respects an even more far-reaching revolution was the shift from mythological explanations to literal ones at the start of Western philosophy and science. We could call this the *literalism revolution*.

Of greatest relevance to this book is the spiritual revolution that includes New Thought, the latest in a long line of spiritual revolutions, extending over several thousand years. Spiritual revolutions have brought significant advances in our understanding of what God is like and how to relate to God in our daily living. They have involved shifts from belief in a multiplicity of supernatural powers to a single divinity, from sacrifice to ethical living, and from fear to love. The revolution involving New Thought includes the final breakdown of the distinction drawn between sacred and secular and the practice of the presence of God for practical purposes. The first phase of this revolution began with Quimby and was expressed in terms of traditional substance philosophy, generally with a

pantheistic outlook. The second phase is beginning with a rethinking of the metaphysical foundation of New Thought, centering on process philosophy and its panentheism.

In order to understand this new spiritual revolution, we need to look back at what it is replacing. It is helpful to glance briefly at the *ancient* and *medieval* outlooks and to contrast *modern* and *postmodern* outlooks.

The ancient and medieval outlooks had various competing elements, but they shared a basic approach to reality. They (and the later periods) stand in contrast to the earlier mythological, poetic, non-literal approach to reality. This touched the heart and gave people a way of placing themselves into the context of a meaningful universe, but it was of little help in discovering literal truth. Although Christianity retains some mythological components, it employs rational thought in its theology.

Around 600 B.C., Western philosophy started asking for rational answers to basic questions. Wherever we choose to go, we carry with us this heritage of rationality. We may appreciate the mythological approach to the world, but we must enter into it as outsiders. We are no longer people born into it and taking it for granted, unnoticed, much as a deep-water fish probably is unaware that it is in water, since it knows no other environment.

The first question that philosophy asked was: What does everything comes from? What is the original or underlying reality? The philosopher Thales proposed the first answer: water. Not long afterward, philosophers suggested the other three traditional elements: air, fire, and earth, as well as the boundless or infinite, and numbers.

Soon, philosophers became concerned with the problem of how anything could become anything that it previously had not been. Heraclitus said that all is in a balanced state of flux, that change is basic, that you cannot step into the same river twice. On the other hand, Parmenides and his followers (known as Eleatics, named for the Italian city where they lived) maintained that we cannot consistently think change, so change is illusory. Strange as it may seem, changelessness won the day. The Christians, when they came along, applied changelessness to their conception of God, and it was only in the twentieth century that many of us realized that Heraclitus was correct. We might even say that the major scientific and philosophical theme of the past century has been the rediscovery and development of the thought of Heraclitus.

Huston Smith, in *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, presents the Christian, modern, and postmodern worldviews. We have summarized and largely quoted from Smith in the following table.

Christian, Modern, and Postmodern Views

Christian View	Modern View	Postmodern View
Reality is focused in a	That reality may be	Many are no longer sure

person.	personal is less certain and less important than that it is ordered.	that reality is ordered and orderly. The sense of the cosmos has been shaken by an encyclopedic skepticism.
The mechanics of the physical world exceed our comprehension.	Human reason can discern this order as it manifests itself in the laws of nature.	If reality is orderly, many are not sure that the human mind is capable of grasping its order.
The way to our salvation lies not in conquering nature but in following the commandments that God has revealed to us.	The path to human fulfillment consists primarily in discovering the laws of nature, utilizing them where it is possible, and complying with them where it is not.	Perhaps there is no way of salvation or fulfillment, except for our own idiosyncratic satisfactions in the midst of a world of intellectual deconstruction.

Reality is focused in a person .That reality may be personal is less certain and less important than that it is ordered .Many are no longer sure that reality is ordered and orderly. The sense of the cosmos has been shaken by an encyclopedic skepticism. The mechanics of the physical world exceed our comprehension.

Human reason can discern this order as it manifests itself in the laws of nature. If reality is orderly, many are not sure that the human mind is capable of grasping its order. The way to our salvation lies not in conquering nature but in following the commandments that God has revealed to us.

The path to human fulfillment consists primarily in discovering the laws of nature, utilizing them where it is possible and complying with them where it is not. Perhaps there is no way of salvation or fulfillment, except for our own idiosyncratic satisfactions in the midst of a world of intellectual deconstruction.

In sum, postmodernism is a downer. Perhaps the most devastating statement about a postmodern outlook is Smith’s observation: “For twenty-five hundred years philosophers have argued over which metaphysical system is true. For them to agree that none is, is a new departure.”

Alternatives to Postmodernism: Primordialism/Perennialism

Are we left with nothing but despair in this postmodern world? Far from it! There are at least two alternatives to choose from. The first is a return to what is called by such names as the *primordial tradition* or the *perennial philosophy* or the *ancient wisdom*, which is part of the foundation of transpersonal psychology and other New Age thinking, and is adopted by much of New Thought. Smith summarizes it in terms of:

1. a *metaphysics* maintaining that reality is arranged in tiers, with the higher levels more full of being—more real—than the lower ones. In other words, there are gradations of reality, a little bit like different grades of automotive oil, ranging from thick to thin;
2. a philosophical *psychology* claiming a similarity or identity of the soul and divine Reality. We are divine, although most of us have little or no realization of it; and
3. an *ethics* emphasizing human purpose as the discovery of our place in God, with the goal not simply knowledge but a new state of being. This means that we should be aiming at personal transformation that makes the presence of the divine a living reality, rather than simply something that we affirm intellectually.

Perhaps the best known repository of such an outlook is Hinduism, and we have seen that this outlook is commonly accepted in New Age circles, and in much of New Thought.

A noted expositor of primordialism, Ken Wilber, emphasizes the paradoxicality of the Ultimate: it is and is not whatever one may say about it. He stresses that “all propositions about reality are void and invalid.” This is very convenient if one wishes to discredit the views of one’s opponents. If we were to take primordialism with full seriousness and accept the Ultimate as beyond words and reason, we would discard philosophy, and say nothing about the Ultimate. But the eloquent supporters of primordialism ignore this and press on to claim that the Ultimate is impersonal, which probably tells us more about supporters of primordialism than it does about the Ultimate. From the standpoint of traditional Western thought, this is the most objectionable claim of primordialism. Theism takes a personal God to be ultimate, but primordialism claims that a personal God could be no more than an emanation or outflowing from the Ultimate. Like other overflowings from the superabundance of the One, a personal God, subordinate to the Ultimate, never really becomes separated from the One, and is only a muddled notion of human beings who picture the Ultimate as somewhat like themselves, according to primordialism. Well, when it comes to muddled notions, they ought to know.

The Ultimate Reality of primordialism is the World Woofers, whom we have already met in the Divine Kennel. The major objection to this view of God is that it robs us of the reality our very existence as unique, permanent perspectives within the Whole and of the significance of our choices of all sorts, especially in ethics. As part of his unsuccessful attempt to wean New Thought from pantheistic tendencies, Horatio W. Dresser wrote in *The Arena* in 1899 about the form of primordialism known as the Vedanta:

If we say with Vivekananda, “you are all God . . . Is not the whole universe you?” what ground is left for righteous conduct, the basis of which is responsibility to a superior Power, to a high moral ideal or sense of duty? The Vedanta replies that one ought not to injure one’s neighbor, because one would be injuring one’s self. . . . But this is egoism. The essence, the beauty of love is *to love another*, to deny one’s self for another, . . . to rise above myself. It is a duty, an obligation. The existence of the moral law implies that there are at least two beings in the world. It implies that individual, ethical man really exists, not merely seems to exist; that he possesses powers of choice

and will; that he acts separately; that his acts are right or wrong, not in maya, but as judged by an eternal law, or by the higher Being who imposes the obligation.

Albert C. Knudson similarly emphasized the importance of our understanding of the ethical nature of God. He maintained that religion is “primarily interested in his ethical character”:

The bare absoluteness of God might awaken the sense of wonder and his metaphysical personality might elicit a spirit of inquiry with reference to the ultimate meaning of life; but these mental states belong only to the ante-chamber of religion. In its essence religion is trust in the goodness of God. If God were a nonmoral Being, either intelligent or nonintelligent, he would not be a proper object of religious faith. It is only insofar as he is morally good, and so worthy of being trusted, that he is truly God in the religious sense of the term. . . .

Faith in the responsiveness of the superworld to human need has always been the heart of religion, and the development of religion through the ages has consisted largely in the increasing clearness and thoroughness with which men have moralized this responsiveness. . . . The biblical revelation was in its essential and distinctive nature a revelation of the moral character of God, a revelation of his righteousness and love, or, in the broader sense of the term, a revelation of his goodness.

Getting Personal

Many major philosophers and religionists regard personhood as the key to understanding everything. Personalism is a major form of idealism, associated primarily with Borden Parker Bowne (1845-1910) and his successors. Charles Hartshorne, who is not usually classified as a personalist, says that “personality is the only principle of wholeness, of integration, on a complex level such as the universe must involve, of which we have any experience.”

Person does not always mean *human being*. As personalist philosopher Edgar S. Brightman puts it,

A *person* is a self that is potentially self-conscious, rational, and ideal. That is to say, when a self is able at times to reflect on itself as a self, to reason, and to acknowledge ideal goals by which it can judge its actual achievements, then we call it a person.

All normal human beings are persons, but not all persons are human beings. If certain animals, such as dolphins and whales, are as advanced as we are led to believe, they may be persons; if there are angels, presumably they are persons. There may be many kinds of non-human persons inhabiting planets throughout the universe. Above all other persons is the ultimate Person, God, personal not only in relation to us, but in him/herself. God is the only complete person; we are fragmentary persons. There is no impersonal Ultimate beyond or underlying the personal God.

We emphasize that *person* and *personal* as used here do not refer to one's more or less superficial mask (what the words literally refer to) or guise or public role covering one's deeper character or individuality, but to that basic individuality itself.

To some it seems conceited and unduly human-being-centered (anthropocentric) to think that something more like us than like a rock (which is about as impersonal a thing as you can imagine) could be the highest reality. But ask yourself whether you can conceive of the highest, most basic, originating reality as something lacking in individuality (unity), self-consciousness, self-control, rationality, wisdom, love, ethical sensitivity, sense of humor, ability to choose one course of action rather than another, appreciation of beauty. Can you believe that a reality having such qualities is dependent on anything lacking them, or arose out of such a dull existence? To believe that it, or we, could have done so is to embrace a materialism that dispenses with anything worthy of being called God. Albert C. Knudson corrected a common misplacement of God and ourselves when he noted, "In emphasizing the personality of God we affirm, not the likeness of God to man, but rather the likeness of man to God." Borden Parker Bowne maintains that "complete and perfect personality can be found only in the Infinite and Absolute Being, as only in Him can we find that complete and perfect selfhood and self-possession which are necessary to the fullness of personality." Bowne warns against

transferring to [the Supreme Person] the limitations and accidents of our human personality, which are no necessary part of the notion of personality, and think only of the fullness of power, knowledge, and selfhood which alone are the essential factors of the conception.

Alternatives to Postmodernism: What's Behind Door #2

If we find *person* to be the ultimate explanatory category, where shall we turn to understand most adequately how reality works? We can, of course, turn back to old notions of a God fashioned anthropomorphically as including most, if not all, human shortcomings. However, we don't recommend it. Instead, we can look ahead to something relatively new and splendid, sophisticated enough to satisfy anyone, yet simple enough in its broad outlines to be understood by most questing people.

We are betting on the basic insights of what is known as *process philosophy* (or *process thought* or *process theology*—or *process-relational philosophy*, to emphasize the interrelatedness of everything in the universe), or panexperientialism or positive postmodernism (in contrast to most of postmodernism, which is decidedly negative). By whatever name we call it, it is the major alternative to the primordial tradition, while sharing with primordialism recognition of the centrality of a spiritual approach to life. Process philosophy has become so important that there has been established a Center for Process Studies affiliated with the Claremont Graduate School and the School of Theology at Claremont, California, as well as other process centers around the world; there is also much process material on the Web.

Process philosophy is based on a few obvious facts: (1) the world is changing, developing; (2) everything is related to everything else; (3) we can live only in the moment, and have to deal with everything in little chunks of time and space. If we also believe (4) that there is a divine guiding intelligence that enters into our lives, and that (5) memories and other influences from the past also play important roles in contributing to what we are, we have practically embraced process thought, although we may never have heard of it.

Although process philosophy has ancient and nineteenth-century roots, it is primarily the product of the insights of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000). One important source on which they drew is twentieth-century science, which had abandoned belief in enduring substance. Whitehead recognized that although physics was correct in explaining the world in terms of bursts of energy, physics was missing an essential ingredient by considering energy to be lifeless. Process philosophy emphasizes that living events, happenings, bursts of energy, experiences are the only actualities; these terms are names for momentarily-developing minds. Whitehead points out:

A dead nature can give no reasons. All ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value. A dead nature aims at nothing. It is the essence of life that it exists for its own sake, as the intrinsic reaping of value. Apart from the experiences of subjects [occasions of experience] there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.

It is because of this emphasis on experiences that process philosophy sometimes is called *panexperientialism*.

What we call things are really collections of momentarily-existing experiences. We are streams of highly complex one-at-a-time experiences that have self-consciousness. Most experiences lack self-consciousness, and vast numbers of this kind of experience, existing many at a time, make up our bodies. However, all experiences, even those that constitute the subatomic particles of a steel beam or a stone, have some feeling and a bit of freedom to select what they enjoy in some rudimentary way. Whitehead maintains that all life has creative activity, aim, and enjoyment. Since all experiences have these, all experiences are alive.

God begins each experience by giving it a tailor-made offer of the perfect plan for it, based on what is possible in the situation at hand. This perfect plan may seem too good to be true, but it is too good not to be true, and deserves full acceptance. Whitehead refers to God as “the lure for feeling” and “the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.” All past experiences are present in every new experience, though some are far more relevant and in effect more powerful than others. The task of each experience is to choose between the competing influences of God’s perfect offer (called *initial aim*—which is what we often refer to as the indwelling Christ or spark of divinity) and past happenings. Once this choice is made, within a fraction of a second, the experience goes from being a *subject*—a unit of current awareness—to an object that no longer experiences, but which God perfectly and permanently keeps and appreciates. All later experiences are in some degree aware of all previous experiences,

which are the background in relation to which each new experience chooses in blending influences of the past and the divine possible. The continuing influence of past experiences on later ones in their lines of development is what in New Thought we refer to as the *law of mind* or simply the *law of cause and effect*, or *karma* (which last term generally refers to the influence of events considerably in the past).

The underlying awareness of the feelings of others, of mind within mind by virtue of feeling, is what is known in Whiteheadian philosophy as prehension, and in parapsychology as *extrasensory perception*. Sensory perception is a more specialized form of the feeling of other feeling. Self-consciousness is a still more complex step in the continuum of awareness, a variation on the same theme. Cosmic (mystical) consciousness is a higher yet stage of awareness. Since all the past is within every experience, then, theoretically, anyone who sufficiently concentrates on it should be able to know anything by plugging into this remarkable database. This ought not to be surprising to anyone who has come upon the work of Karl Pribram on the universe as holographic or the work of David Bohm on morphic resonance.

Pantheism and Panentheism

This universal arrangement is not *pantheism* (all is God), but *panentheism*, a term devised by Karl C. F. Krause (1781-1832) to describe his thought. It is best known for its use by Charles Hartshorne and recently by Matthew Fox. Panentheism says that all is in God, somewhat as if God were the ocean and we were fish. Of course, the ocean also is in much of the fish; panentheism similarly recognizes that God is in us—even as we are in our bodies. The universe is God's body, but God's awareness or personality is greater than, and distinct from, the sum of all the parts of the universe. God's body is no more the person who is God than our bodies are the persons who are ourselves.

The most practical value of pantheism is that it recognizes the presence of God everywhere, but it does this at an enormous cost. It resorts to quasi-mythical picture thinking—perhaps unconsciously drawing on tales such as Zeus's transforming himself into a bull. Pantheism speaks of such assumed occurrences as emanation and individuation, without any clear understanding of how they could take place. How could the One become the many? To be consistent, pantheism must suppose God to be the only actor, and all appearance of multiplicity to be mere appearance, a divine dream, and some pantheists do recognize this to be the price that they must pay. For pantheism, God's presence is an overriding presence that cancels the possibility of the existence of anything else, of any genuine beloved, of any loving or unloving response to God. In pantheism, human existence or any other finite existence is at best a mystery. Explanation in any satisfying sense is impossible. There can be affirmation that there is nothing but God, but where that leaves the affirmer is unclear; his or her existence is no more than appearance, and enlightenment brings recognition of one's illusory status.

It is not necessary to go to pantheism, with a god that acts as a universal wet blanket, smothering the possibilities of everything else's genuine existence. Panentheism gives all that one could want: an all-encompassing, growing, morally perfect God, everywhere

present and containing (by means of prehension) everywhere within himself; and the reality of oneself and others, freely deciding, responding to God's overtures in the process of co-creation. Traditional theism denies that the world (including us) shares in God's being. Panentheism recognizes that everything shares in God's being (or becoming) but that God's being operates from innumerable relatively freely-choosing centers or perspectives of existence. God and the world, which is God's body, are interdependent. Having becoming is to be free, to be choosing, and to be enjoying (slightly or greatly, positively or negatively) the process of selecting from among competing influences. To be doing this is to be alive. To be doing it with the complexity of performing these tasks self-consciously, rationally, purposefully in accordance with values is to be doing it as a person. To have perfect awareness of all this, perfect memory, love, and preservation of it, and to be giving perfect guidance to the others who are involved in the process is to be the only perfect person, God.

Santiago Sia summarizes Hartshorne's panentheism:

Panentheism . . . holds that God includes the world. But it sets itself apart from pantheism in that it does not maintain that God and the world are identical. . . . Hartshorne explains that God is a whole whose whole-properties are distinct from the properties of the constituents. While this is true of every whole, it is more so of God as the supreme whole. . . . The part is distinguishable from the whole although within it. The power of the parts is something suffered by the whole, not enacted by it. The whole has properties too which are not shared by the parts. Similarly, God as whole possesses attributes which are not shared by his creatures. . . . We perpetually create content not only in ourselves but also in God. And this gives significance to our presence in this world.

If we continue to say, as New Thinkers often do, that there is only one Presence and only one Power, God, the Good omnipotent, we should state it with an awareness of what it could mean in a panentheistic perspective. This affirmation may be made as a recognition that there is no devil, no unified negative cosmic force in opposition to God. When we say that there is only one Power and Presence, we could be saying that the whole and the part are present in each other. God is present not like a lump of clay or a piece of plastic that can have different shapes at different times yet remain exactly what it was originally. God is present as dynamic, loving, alluring divine purpose, as guidance uniquely offered to each of the innumerable many units of freely deciding experience. God's power—the attracting power of perfection—is exercised from within these innumerable centers of choice. In each of these is the dual power of divine offer and human or other response, neither of which could operate without the other. This is a contracting or covenanting process.

Our linguistic or temperamental preference may determine whether or not we use the term *divine* for the power of response—and the responders, including ourselves. We refer to God and ourselves, for we are free to decide how much we accept of what God offers to us. In mystical moments we emphasize unity, which is the complete or relatively complete acceptance of God's offers. When we consider the divine character of the whole

creative process, we may be justified in referring to it as only one Power and only one Presence. All unity is a unification of the many, and the many are meaningful only in relation to unity. In Hebrew, the word *achad* means *united one*, and is used to refer to God. The alternation of the one and the many is essential to the process of co-creation. *E pluribus unum* (out of many, one) appears on the Great Seal of the United States; it is not only a political truth, but a metaphysical truth, referring to each unit of reality.

All this cocreating happens so quickly that we are unaware of the separate experiences, which are like the separate frames of a motion picture. Similarly, we are unaware of the separate cells of our bodies, to say nothing of the molecules and atoms that constitute them. We are unaware of most of what is going on within and around us, let alone throughout the universe. We don't need to know the subatomic structure of a kitchen table in order to put groceries onto it, but that doesn't mean that there is no such structure. So it is with the experiential nature of the world. Although we may not be able to focus on the individual frames of our lives, God does; and it is only in relation to them, one by one, that God can give or receive anything. We call this moment-by-moment, cumulative, personal existence *serial selfhood*.

Process New Thought

What we call Process New Thought is New Thought that uses traditional New Thought techniques, but substitutes insights of process philosophy for the traditional substance approaches to philosophy commonly employed in New Thought. In other words, the Process New Thinker does essentially the same things that the Substance New Thinker does, but has a different understanding of what is going on. The use of process thought also provides New Thought with new connections to the academic world. Of great importance, a process understanding can cut New Thought's Gordian knot of thinking about the creative process, especially the role of Law in it.

Laws

New Thought places great emphasis on the *lawfulness* of the universe. New Thinkers, like most people, tend to believe that the laws of nature are changeless. However, Whitehead tells us that natural laws are *habits of interaction* of the innumerable many experiences that make up the universe. (More exactly, we can say that laws are descriptions or formulations of the habits in question.) He notes that there is no evidence that the laws of nature are changeless, and indeed that to judge by all analogy, after a sufficient span of existence our present laws will fade into unimportance. New interests will dominate. In our present sense of the term, our spatio-temporal epoch will pass into the background of the past, which conditions all things dimly and without evident effect . . .

None of this is to say that the habits that we call laws are unreliable; it is just that they probably are not truly permanent. However, the pattern of co-creativity sketched here is permanent, since it allows for any changes that eventually might produce different laws. Nor should anything we say about the centrality of experiences as the building blocks of

reality suggest unreliability of the great collections of them with which we are familiar. God is still utterly dependable, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea and substance notions be replaced by process thought.

Apart from the changeableness of laws, there is the more pressing problem of the power of laws. It is understandable that after a few centuries of dramatic scientific discovery of natural laws, people almost worshipped these laws. Most unfortunately, they *reified* laws. *Reification* (from the Latin *res*, thing, and *facere*, to make) is a philosophical term that means to understand a mental entity as if it were a thing. We might call it “thingification.” Whitehead referred to it as the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness,” mistaking the abstract for the concrete. In this pervasive error, people fail to realize that laws are just descriptions of how reality works, rather than some power that makes things happen. In truth, considering laws as descriptions, *no law ever did anything to or for anyone or anything*. This is not to deny the powerfulness of the states of affairs described, summarized, by laws; those described habits, like our own habits, can be extremely powerful before they are changed.

The Golden Calf of Active Law

Part of New Thought subscribes to the belief that the creative process involves a roundabout, back-and-forth (albeit within God) movement involving an impersonal, automatically responsive side of God called Law, in addition to the side called Love. This alleged Law should not be confused with the general notion of law. Instead, this Law is like a genie or robot, obediently carrying out our commands. In contrast, Quimby’s conception of creativity as a direct process of choosing between divine Wisdom and human misconceptions and thereupon directly receiving the result of the choice is consistent with process thought. Quimby’s view can be likened to Polaroid photography, in which one chooses the thing to be photographed, presses the shutter release, and the image is developed directly on the film. The later New Thought idea—that one thinks and feels into Law and that Law returns the selected product—is like turning the film over to a photofinisher who processes the film and then returns the pictures. What actually happens is explained below in relation to healing.

A scientist or philosopher would say that the photofinisher view of creativity is not parsimonious, for it introduces an unnecessary middle step into our relationship with God. This violates Occam’s Razor or law of parsimony, which says that from rival explanations, one should choose the simplest and most direct.

The notion of active, responsive Law is something like the golden calf that the Children of Israel worshipped, to the chagrin of Moses. Regardless of whether the word law is used, there is no adequate reason to believe that there is any such side of God. In Process New Thought, supremely wise Love is seen as all that is needed to explain God’s activity in the world.

Why God Cannot Be Law

Why can't there be a responsive God-as-Law such as many New Thinkers believe in? God does respond in the sense that he gives to *later* experiences initial aims adjusted to the situations produced by the choices of their predecessors. But this response does not shape substance, since there is no enduring substance to shape. Everything is new, moment by moment, however much it may be like what preceded it. We frequently fail to recognize that only the experience of the moment can act. Past experiences continue—without additional action—to be powerful influences, but what they are is fixed forever. Regardless of whether we accept process philosophy, we should realize that we can live only in the moment; process philosophy explains why. We identify ourselves with past and future experiences in our lines of development when we should be concentrating on the question of what God can do for the experience of the moment, for us *right now*. The answer is that all that God can do—and it is plenty—is to give initial aim, the perfect plan for the experience to deal with the situation in which it arises and to move onward to something at least a little better than the situation in which it arose.

Here are the main considerations against the existence of Law as an impersonal, automatically responsive mental substance:

1. *A common-sense view of reality is inadequate*, particularly the assumption that there is thing-like substance. A thing-like responsive universal Mind or Law may seem natural, even as God in the form of an old man sitting on a cloud may seem natural. One is as incorrect as the other.
2. *A thingified Law is inconsistent with the known nature of the physical world*. Physicists now know that the physical world is thoroughly processive at bottom. In order to maintain belief in a substantive universal Mind, there would have to be a great dichotomy between the natures of God and the world, a dichotomy that would prevent an overall unity. There would be a house of totality divided against itself.
3. *God is supremely good*. God wants the very best for every experience, not just for its successors. An experience chooses and enjoys for only a fraction of a second. This choosing is a response to what God already has done for it in giving it the very best plan that could be offered. Whatever is given to an experience must be given to it at the start of its moment of developing. God could do nothing greater for it, even if God under the curious name of Law were able to respond to it during its extremely brief career. An experience experiences only once, and it must be in that moment that it receives and gives.
4. *Each experience is isolated*. Although an experience contains all of the past, once an experience is started on its way of momentary development, it receives no more input. When it has finished its rapid co-creation, it itself becomes its gift to later experiences, even as all earlier experiences were gifts to it. (If it seems strange that an experience knows only the past and not what currently is developing around it, consider that all well-educated people know that physically we receive only information coming from the past: light emitted by stars centuries ago, from our sun about eight minutes ago, sounds produced perhaps a second ago, the pain of being struck by an object a fraction of a

second before the message reaches the brain.) What God does not do by acting within the experience as its alluring initial aim God never can do for that experience.

5. *The supposed Law lacks freedom* in having to respond mechanically, “mathematically” to what is fed into it. That is inconsistent with freedom in all experiences, including the divine experience, and there are only experiences.

6. *God can’t give a completed product.* Those who believe in Law hold that Law gives people completed products, material or nonmaterial. Process thought maintains that the only gifts that God can give to an experience (in addition to the harmonious arrangement of the past in the Divine Mind) is the experience’s initial aim. God cannot give a completed product, such as believers in Law envision.

7. *Finite entities aren’t able to come up with perfect plans.* We usually assume that it is up to us to discover what possibilities are open to us and to select from them. We seldom consider what a monumental task this is, since the possibilities are endless. If it is difficult for human beings, what must it be for animals lacking self-consciousness, to say nothing of lower levels of reality? We may speak of the instincts of animals, but seldom attempt to say exactly what instinct is. Process philosophy recognizes that nothing less than infinite, loving, willing, personal Intelligence is adequate to do the job of selecting from among the infinite possibilities for realization, and this philosophy maintains that God offers the perfect plan to each experience. It is God who makes possible the departure from the pattern of the past; in other words, without God there could be no newness, only endless repetition, if even that were possible, which it is not, since all creation is co-creation with God.

8. *Only personal Love-Wisdom is all-sufficient, not the implied mechanistic materialism of the impersonal Ultimate.* When Law is conceived as an impersonal yet intelligent responsive reality, it is asked to perform a function that only the supremely personal is adequate to exercise. Leading, luring, orchestrating the universe (of however many dimensions, planes, or whatever there may be) is a job that only the perfectly personal Reality can do. Belief in an Ultimate that is even partly impersonal in essence (as distinguished from the many impersonal parts of God’s all-inclusive body) is hardly different from belief in materialism. To resort to the belief that Divine Mind (as distinguished from God’s body, the universe) is in any degree impersonal, or that the ultimately personal is in any degree unreliable or lacking in impartiality, is simply to fail to understand how gloriously adequate the personal God of love-intelligence is to guide every experience throughout the universe.

As Emmet Fox used to say, the Lord is my Shepherd, not my bellhop.

Don’t Ride the Epicycles

Any of our conclusions about what God and the world are like should be tentative; but some of us believe that the process interpretation of New Thought is a much closer approximation of the truth than is the old substance interpretation. The notion of an active,

responsive, impersonal Law is as antiquated and needless as the old theories of phlogiston to explain combustion and epicycles (circles within circles) to explain the paths of heavenly bodies assumed to be moving around an immobile Earth at the center of the universe. Such theories did provide a helpful orderliness to the universe for anyone who believed them, but one scarcely can imagine anyone's resorting to them after encountering more adequate explanations.

Demythologize or Die, at Least Intellectually

Belief in a fully personal (self-conscious, rational, purposeful) God of unimaginably wondrously wise Love, initiating—but never compelling—all that goes on, may be challenging, but it is the best explanation that anyone has offered yet for how the universe works. Nevertheless, the old view of an impersonal active Law can continue to be a useful myth for those who find it helpful, who have no taste for demythologizing, and who are too set in their ways to change. We hope that Process New Thought will come naturally to people who are new to New Thought and carry with them few, if any, substance assumptions. It is not so much that people who are firmly committed to theories change their minds as it is that progress is made funeral by funeral, as quantum discoverer Max Planck observed about science.

A Doctrinal Updating Through the Open Top

Although an emphasis on supposedly active, responsive Law is not limited to any one New Thought group, it may be most notably found in Religious Science. The famous Holmes "What I [now 'We'] Believe" statement, presented in Chapter 2 requires only minimal change to be compatible with both substance and process understandings. "We believe that God is personal to all who feel this Indwelling Presence" could become . *We believe that God is personal and is experienced as such by all who feel this Indwelling Presence.* "We believe that the Universal Spirit, which is God, operates through a Universal Mind, which is the Law of God; and that we are surrounded by this Creative Mind which receives the direct impress of our thought and acts upon it," could become *We believe that the Universal Spirit, the Creative Mind, which is God, operates in a completely impartial and orderly way and, through co-creation with us, brings about results in exact proportion to the degree that we accept the perfection offered by God.* It also would be helpful to substitute everlasting for "eternal" in the statement of belief, in order to avoid the problem of which definition of "eternal" is intended. Holmes's comment that Religious Science is "open at the top" allows for such updating.

A perennial task of religions and philosophies for living is to express themselves in terms that are most understandable and acceptable in the times and places in which they operate. In order to spread its gospel throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, Christianity had to speak in terms of Greek philosophy. It selected the philosophy of Plato, and remained with it until switching to the philosophy of Aristotle in the Middle Ages; later, leaders of the Protestant Reformation largely turned back to Plato. Now various philosophies, including process philosophy, compete in conceptualizing the essence of Christianity. In

some respects, process philosophy, which has made progress in both Protestant and Catholic circles, is an updating of Plato.

Similarly, Holmes and the other pioneers of New Thought faced the task of explaining the *fact* of spiritual healing by some *theory*. Understandably, they used forms of metaphysics then available to them. At the time, opting for a substantialist, emanationist, impersonalist outlook may have been justified in order to break free of the notion of an anthropomorphic God, but that old substance metaphysics certainly no longer can be taken for granted.

Our greatest tribute to the founders of New Thought is to use their efforts as helps on the way to greater understanding and use of divine gifts than any of us has yet achieved. New Thought began with bodily healing, and it is appropriate to express the most significant new understanding of New Thought in relation to the movement's original and continuing concern with healing.

Healing

A process understanding of reality has great implications in relation to healing. The cumulative nature of experience is vital to understanding healing, of any sort. The current past cannot be changed, but moment by moment the past grows larger. It is modified by the character of each new experience that becomes part of the past. To the extent that we make ourselves more rather than less like what God offers to us, we enrich the positive nature of the past. In this way, we reduce the contrast between the past and the initial aims offered by God. This reduction of contrast is what we do in any treatment, whether by prayer, surgery, medicine, or whatever. The less the contrast between past and perfect, the easier it is for upcoming experiences to accept the perfect, and the perfect always is healing—whole-making—in some sense. This is why we can promote the healing of others by healing our own consciousness in recognizing them as perfect expressions of God. Conversely, negative thinking, contrary to God's offers, increases the contrast between past and perfect and makes acceptance of God's offers proportionately more difficult, although never impossible.

Other Advantages of Process New Thought

In addition to this new understanding of healing, Process New Thought has numerous other advantages; 18 are given in Alan's *A Guide to the Selection and Care of Your Personal God*. Here we shall restrain ourselves and mention only a few. Primarily, there is a tremendous freeing psychological power that you get when you realize that you are new every moment in God's love, as a song written by Deb puts it. You didn't make all those errors of the past; your ancestors did it! You exist for only a moment, and you can afford to go completely with God and risk all for the greatest divine reward of fully accepting God as your life. None of your efforts ever is lost; each one is preserved in full clarity forever in God and helps to shape all of reality forevermore.

Recapitulation

Now it should be clear why the *divine* job description provides for God to *start everything*, to *finish nothing*, and to *keep everything*, while *your* job description calls for you to *start nothing*, to *finish very quickly* what God starts for you, and to realize that *you can't keep anything* for more than a moment.

Reconceptualizing New Thought in process terms includes the substitution of *impartial* for *impersonal* and *constant* for *changeless* in speaking of God, and abandoning Law in favor of the all-sufficiency of divine Love. We are left totally, thrillingly, dancingly dependent on the completely reliable, persistent, dynamic ultimate Love that offers only the best to everyone and everything. This Love forever cherishes the completed experiences from all visible and invisible dimensions of the universe. God inspires and lovingly preserves everything. Each freely choosing burst of life produces a unique perspective that forever enriches the always-growing God.

Below we have summed up the cocreative process (all creation is, and always has been, co-creation) of continuing, ever-new divine contracting or covenanting in a formula. We have thrown in a table of some major differences between conventional Christianity and substance and process versions of New Thought. Then, in the next chapter, recognizing that very few subatomic particles in steel beams will decide to enjoy themselves by reading this book, we shall turn our attention from a discussion of the subatomic structure of everything, including the kitchen table, to the highly complex experiences who are more interested in unpacking the groceries and starting to fix dinner.

Creativity Formula

Past + Divine Offer + Choice = Co-Creation

Some Contrasts of Old and New Outlooks:

Old Christian Thought	Substance New Thought	Process New Thought
Reality is enduring substance	Reality is enduring substance	Reality is a creative process
Being is basic	Being is basic	Becoming is basic
You <i>have</i> experience	You <i>have</i> experience	You <i>are</i> experience
Soul is mortal substance	Soul is immortal substance	Soul is a succession of momentarily existing selves (serial selfhood)
Resurrection	Subjective immortality	Objective and subjective immortality
God is largely transcendent (classical theism)	God is essentially immanent (pantheism)	God is immanent and transcendent (panentheism)

God creates out of nothing (<i>ex nihilo</i>)	God emanates from divine fullness	God co-creates by participating in blending of past and possible
God created the universe	God created the universe	God always has had a universe of some sort; all creation is co-creation; this always has been so.
Universe is not part of God; it is matter and mind created by God	Universe is part (in some interpretations, all) of God's being, is God's body	Universe is part of God's becoming, is God's body
Matter is lifeless stuff created by God	Matter is appearance of one mind (God)	Matter is a collection of many relatively lowly minds (experiences)
God is changeless in theory, if not in practice	God is changeless, except as responsive	God is growing experientially, yet constant morally
God is love, yet is forcing	God is Love-Law	God is wise, alluring, persuasive Love
God is personal and perhaps somewhat arbitrary	God is partly impersonal, and acts as Law	God is personal, impartial, and acts by giving initial aims
God gives orders	God gives general possibilities	God gives tailor-made possibilities (initial aims)
God creates and sustains, yet often seems inactive in one's life	The burden of initiation in creation in our lives is on us; God guides and responds	God initiates; we must respond to Gods guiding initiation of each moment
Prayer sometimes changes God, who may give what is requested	Prayer changes us; we receive according to our beliefs, working through divine Law shaping unformed substance	Prayer (a form of acceptance of God's offerings) helps create momentary self, giving immediate enjoyment and enriching the next self's past by becoming part of it, thereby making it easier for the next self to accept God's initial aim
Christ is identified solely with Jesus	Christ is the presence of God permanently in each of us equally	Christ is the presence of God, understood as initial aim of each momentary self (occasion of experience)

Law is divine command	Law is active, divine, impersonal, automatic, intelligent, unconscious part of God	Law is an abstraction describing habits of interaction of occasions of experience
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(Adapted from C. Alan Anderson, *Healing Hypotheses*)

Towards a Sustainable Metaphysic of Faith

by Arthur Preston Smith, Ph.D.

"Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now!"
(Furthermore, let it continue from there!)

1. Introduction

One of the major principles embraced (explicitly or implicitly) by all New Thought philosophies is that you can achieve what you can believe. However, New Thought is strangely silent (and maybe a little confused) on what you can believe. In this essay, I argue that a major thesis in New Thought philosophy, the notion that thought or consciousness is omnipotent, is simply not believable. What we should do is to expand our notion of the Real to embrace God as *Experience*. This world-view is just as empowering and much more believable than the model of God as Mind or Consciousness. Moreover, because it is more believable, it might also serve to keep those people we lose to disillusionment involved in New Thought much longer. The remainder of this essay has six parts:

- *Some Working Definitions*: I clarify what I mean by terms such as philosophy and faith, and distinguish experience from mind or consciousness.
- *Can Faith and Philosophy Peacefully Co-exist?* I argue not only that they can, but that they must.
- *Criteria for Sustainable Faith*: I outline at least some of the characteristics that beliefs must have to serve as a desirable and sustainable foundation for faith.
- *Whitehead's Process Model: An Ontology of Experience*: I briefly outline Whitehead's metaphysics as an alternative to idealism.
- *Why Include the Process Ontology in New Thought?* I explain why New Thought should consider including Whitehead's model in its teachings.

- *Objections and Replies*: I review and answer anticipated objections from New Thought philosophers.

2. Some Working Definitions

Because this essay is about the philosophy and faith, I define the two terms as they are used here.

Philosophy

For purposes of this essay, philosophy means an attempt to understand ourselves and our experiences with intellectual honesty. It can take two basic forms, analytic and synthetic. Analytic philosophy seeks to ensure that our ideas are internally consistent and descriptive of what people actually experience. Synthetic philosophy seeks to discover new ways of understanding the world, which are, hopefully, also internally consistent and descriptive of experience. In Western culture, philosophy has largely emphasized speculation and logic. Although philosophy itself is a Western concept, non-European cultures have also attempted to be honest in understanding the world. However, they focus less on logic and intellectual activity than Western philosophy and pay more attention to experiential practices such as meditation.

Faith

It might be helpful to define what faith is not first. Faith is not knowledge. While I cannot precisely define knowledge in this essay, let alone get a consensus on my definition, knowledge entails some sort of certainty, as in the case of empirical facts or logical inferences. Faith pertains to the unknown, usually the future. (Knowledge of the future, if it exists, is not faith but precognition.) Faith is the willingness to act on the belief that something is so and will remain so, but faith is also different from belief. To believe means to hold a proposition, which can be expressed by a sentence, as true or false. Faith depends on belief, but it involves much more. Faith is always "in" something, in that to have faith means sincerely believing that certain propositions, e.g., that God exists and God is benevolent, are true. Faith in nothing is the same as no faith. However, unlike belief, it also entails decision, commitment, and action consistent with belief. To believe in a proposition is to accept it as true intellectually. To have faith in it is to be willing to act on the presumption of its truth, or presuppose its truth in practice.¹ Faith is a decision to trust something, some one, or some principle.

Differentiating Experience from Consciousness and Mind

We also need to differentiate "experience" from "mind" or "consciousness." Both experience and mind involve subjectivity, i.e., existence *for itself*, as opposed to the mere existence *for another*. It is being in the form of "I am." Mind and consciousness are sophisticated forms of experience but only a small part of it. Even for humans, it is possible to have subconscious or even unconscious experiences. Experience can include any number of subliminal events, feelings, emotions, and body sensations that are not

experienced consciously. Comatose people may still have experiences. Furthermore, consciousness is not ordinarily ascribed to plants, lower animals, and bacteria, but we do ascribe experience to these creatures, because they respond to their environment.

Finally, if we look at Descartes's philosophy, from which the modern concept of mind developed, we find that mind is a *substance*, a self-existent entity that need not be part of anything else in order to exist. Experiences need not consist of substances. They can also be conceived in terms of *events*. This point becomes very important later.

3. Can Faith and Philosophy Peacefully Co-exist?

Some say faith and philosophy are intractable if not mortal enemies. One could easily argue few philosophers, especially those in Western culture, know anything about faith. Philosophy is about suspending judgment, reaching conclusions only after carefully considering all the ramifications and implications, to ensure that we are not deceiving ourselves. Contrast this with the following passage from the New Testament: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2, KJV).

This passage, like many others, is subject to interpretation. If 'as little children' means naïve or gullible, then it suggests a potential conflict between philosophy and faith. However, 'as little children' could also connote innocence, a willingness to learn, and an openness to new ideas. None of the major paths of faith I have studied, be they Eastern or Western, advocate either naiveté or gullibility. To be truly incompatible with philosophy, faith would have to entail some form of self-deceit. Although self-deceit makes some ideas easier to believe, experience eventually repudiates them. The ensuing disillusionment, often accompanied by feelings of betrayal, then makes the next leap of faith even more difficult. Today's sucker is tomorrow's cynic, and deceit in any form is no friend of faith.

Although faith and philosophy are compatible, formal study of philosophy is certainly not necessary to have faith. Philosophers should leave people who already have faith well enough alone. I personally am reluctant to burst people's bubbles, because I prefer to avoid breaking things I can't easily fix. The last thing I would want to do is educate the faith out of someone who can simply read the Bible, believe it, and thereby heal himself. That would be just plain cruel. However, such men of faith are usually not interested in philosophy in the first place. Philosophy appeals more to the disillusioned, the sick souls, and prodigal sons that have lost their faith and would like to reestablish it on a firmer foundation. It is for yesterday's suckers who have come to realize that cynicism doesn't work any better, if as well, as naiveté.

Eventually, even philosophers must stop philosophizing and embrace faith. The world is too complex for us to base all our decisions on knowledge alone, and nothing is guaranteed. Everybody has faith in *something* unknown, if only in the power of their own ego or intellect. Some become religious; others act on the assumption that skepticism is the safest way to go. Whatever their faith commitment may be, honest philosophers admit it when they are acting on faith — and we all do it.

Unfortunately, some of us would like to think that philosophy can be a substitute for faith, and philosophers are some of the worst offenders here. People who have developed a fondness for certainty sometimes hope that philosophy can provide the knowledge they need in order to avoid having to operate on faith. This project inevitably fails. As philosophy is not faith, neither is it knowledge. Philosophy deals with models or theories. Its subject matter is not experience itself, but the ways in which we think about experience. It deals with menus, not meals, maps, not journeys. Eventually we have to order the food, or hit the road, and when we do, faith takes over. The philosopher may understand all the major ethical theories ever written, but he becomes a man of faith when he treats others as he would have them treat himself. However, faith is based on philosophy whenever the underlying beliefs are metaphysical or ethical. We commit to treating others as we would have them treat us *precisely because* we have decided to trust that certain religious or philosophical propositions are true, be they the teachings of the New Testament, the Ten Commandments, the *Bhagvad Gita*, utilitarianism, or Kant's Categorical Imperative.

Furthermore, to be a power, faith must be sincere. Placebos don't work when the subject knows he's taking a sugar pill. Nor can faith commitments be random. They involve the willingness to act on *sincere beliefs*. Because the sincerity of the believer varies directly with the credibility of the belief, credibility is an essential element of faith. The best foundation for credibility, in turn, is intellectual integrity, and this is where philosophy can prove its worth. The proper relationship between philosophy and faith is one in which philosophy assists the believer in finding that point on the precipice from which he can sincerely take his leap of faith. Logic and analytical philosophy can verify the integrity of our faith. Religion and synthetic philosophy can help us find a suitable place to jump. In either case, however, philosophy is ultimately the servant of faith.

4. Criteria for Sustainable Faith

Different people have different capacities for sincere belief. Some need only the word of an authority, be it scientific, scriptural, or a respected individual. Others remain skeptical to the point of paralysis. However, there are those propositions that are by their very nature impossible to believe and therefore cannot possibly sustain faith. Incoherent or inconsistent beliefs are one example. We may claim to believe in round squares, but whatever belief we may have in them disintegrates when we have to explain what we mean by them. Likewise, most people cannot believe things that clearly contradict facts they already know. If I am looking at a red car, I cannot believe it is green. I may redefine red so that it denotes a range of colors broad enough to include green, or vice versa, but I cannot trust a red car to be green in the ordinary sense.

There is at least one other factor that limits our capacity for sincere belief: what we are willing, or not willing, to presuppose in practice. No belief that is impossible to presuppose in practice can sustain faith — at least for very long. Taking a cue from Thomas Reid, my teacher and mentor David Griffin argues that humanity has developed a certain set of beliefs, which he calls "hard-core commonsense beliefs," which we must

necessarily presuppose in practice in order to survive. Hard-core commonsense beliefs can be denied only in hypocrisy or in self-contradiction. Some examples of hard-core commonsense beliefs are the existence of both the mind and the material world, as well as causation. We cannot presuppose in practice that these things do not exist and survive.

Not all commonsense beliefs are "hard-core." When my mother was growing up, common sense said that going to the moon was impossible. Earlier it seemed impossible to sail around the earth. Griffin calls these "soft-core" common sense beliefs.² "Soft-core" commonsense beliefs, such as the flatness of the earth or the impossibility of going to the moon, may be widely or universally held, and even universally presupposed in practice. Nevertheless, it is still possible to deny them in practice, as both Ferdinand Magellan and the Apollo space program demonstrated.

From the foregoing, we can formulate some criteria defining what kinds of propositions are believable and therefore can sustain faith. Theoretically, a belief can sustain faith only if:

- It does not directly contradict facts that the believer knows.
- It is internally coherent, i.e., it does not include contradictions.
- It can be presupposed in practice.

Beyond these restrictions, almost anything is believable by some one, and what is and is not believable will depend largely on the individual.

In taking the principle of the self-fulfilling prophesy seriously, New Thought philosophy itself adds another dimension to the discussion. The self-fulfilling prophesy is the tendency for beliefs to become true. If the principle of the self-fulfilling prophesy principle is true — as a very large and growing body of evidence suggests — then faith needs to be more than sustainable. It must also be optimistic and lead to a general sense of well-being. Pessimistic and cynical world-views, although sustainable, are not desirable foundations of faith. They can make life more predictable, and thereby give us some feelings of security, but they make it unhappily predictable. Accordingly, we should reject them whenever we can find sustainable, uplifting alternatives.

5. Whitehead's Process Model: An Ontology of Experience

Considering the foregoing discussion, the New Thought movement would benefit from reinterpreting God as "Experience," as opposed to "Mind" or "Consciousness." The alternative I present here is the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, but he is not the only philosopher to hold this view. Spinoza and Leibniz, two of the great seventeenth-century rationalists, held similar views, as did more the recent philosophers William James and Henri Bergson in this century. However, I find Whitehead's metaphysic to be the most useful, because it directly addresses the two most critical concepts that define the power of faith: the mind-body relationship and efficient causation. Whitehead offers a metaphysic that is both sustainable and optimistic, whereas the idealist model may be optimistic, but not sustainable. Although I focus here on Whitehead's philosophy, I also

draw extensively on David Griffin's work, as well as my own doctoral dissertation, *The Power of Thought to Heal*.³

The Way It Works

I regard Whitehead's thought not so much as the last word, but more the first word, in the development of the ontology of experience.⁴ His genius lies not so much in what he saw, which was significant in itself, as in *what he was able to see beyond*. Moreover, he developed his metaphysical system for the purpose of explaining two phenomena that are near and dear to New Thought: efficient causation and mind-matter interaction.

What I present here is but a thumbnail sketch of Whitehead's highly complex philosophy. At its heart is the ontological doctrine of *panpsychism*, in William James's words, or *panexperientialism* in David Griffin's. I use Griffin's term for his reasons:

"Panpsychism" is the term that has generally been used for this position. I find the term "panexperientialism" preferable for two reasons: (1) The term "psyche" suggests that the basic units endure through long stretches of time, whereas they may be momentary experiences; and (2) the term "psyche" inevitably suggests a higher form of experience than would be appropriate for the most elementary units of nature.⁵

Panexperientialism is the view that the Universe is alive, consisting entirely of the experiences of experiencing entities. That which has no experience, which Whitehead calls "vacuous actuality," does not exist. Non-living matter appears to us to be vacuous actuality, but that is how it appears *for another*. To use Sartre's terminology, it is *in itself* what it is *for itself*, the collective experiences of many experiencing entities, the same kind of entities that comprise ourselves.

It might seem, at first, that panexperientialists think you can have a two-way conversation with a fire hydrant. Were that the case, panexperientialism would appeal only to schizophrenics and possibly some mystics. However, this is not what it means. Panexperientialism neither says nor implies that fire hydrants can talk, think, or even feel pain. What it does claim is that what we know as a fire hydrant is composed of entities that have experience. Of course, this experience is probably much more primitive than ours. We don't know for sure. It is here where Griffin's distinction between "panpsychism" and "panexperientialism" becomes important.

Panexperientialism says everything consists of entities that have at least *some* subjectivity, as well as some degree of self-determination. This does involve a leap of faith, but it is *no more* a leap of faith than the idealist claim that matter is a fantasy, or the materialist and dualist view of matter as vacuous actuality. In fact, we can never know what matter is in itself. We can only know what it is *for us*. It is equally an act of faith to believe it has experience as it is to believe it doesn't.⁶ It therefore makes just as much sense, if not more, to project our own form of reality onto the material universe that it does to deny it.

The other two key concepts in Whitehead's philosophy are "prehension" and "actual occasion," with the latter term often interchanged with "actual entity." (The exception is God, who is an actual entity but not an actual occasion.) The best way to define an actual

occasion is to call it an instant or moment in experience that includes the development and completion of a definite *feeling*. In that sense, it is more than a time slice or time segment. Whitehead never specified exactly how long actual occasions last. It varies. However, when I asked David Griffin this question, he speculated that for humans it is probably about a tenth of a second. For an electron, it would be much shorter. For Whitehead, each actual occasion is an entity that is whole and complete in itself.

As Whitehead uses the term, "toprehend" means to feel or to be affected by something. An occasion can prehend or feel other past occasions, and it can also feel what he calls "eternal objects" or universals, such as ideas or values. Whitehead defines the relationship between actual occasions and prehensions as follows:

An actual entity is a process, and is not describable in terms of the morphology of a 'stuff'.... In Cartesian language, the essence of an actual entity consists solely in the fact that it is a prehendng thing (i.e., a substance whose whole essence or nature is to prehend).⁷

The process involved in each actual occasion is the unification of various prehensions into a final complex feeling, which Whitehead called "satisfaction." It is an act of unification reminiscent of the inscription found on U.S. coins: *E pluribus unum* (Out of many [emerges] one). All prehension must take place within an occasion of experience. Within any occasion, there are prehensions of both prior occasions and of meanings, values, or significance. A single occasion includes many prehensions of both types.

An occasion exists first as a subject, during which it prehends prior occasions (physical prehensions) and possibilities (conceptual prehensions) and then unifies these prehensions into a single feeling of "satisfaction." The physical and conceptual prehensions constitute the physical and mental "poles" of the occasion respectively. Satisfaction, in this context, does not necessarily mean satiation or pleasure, in the Rolling Stones' sense. A more accurate term might be "degree or level of satisfaction," which could also include levels of dissatisfaction as well. In any case, the satisfaction is a feeling of some level of *value*. Upon determining its level of satisfaction, the occasion ceases to be an experiencing subject per se and becomes a superject, an object or datum for subsequent occasions. In this way, its nature moves forward in time, and it continues to exist forever as a datum for subsequent occasions, in a state that Whitehead called "objective immortality." It is this aspect of actual occasions, i.e., inclusion in the experience of subsequent ones, that causes history to repeat itself.

Because his entire theory of causation rests on it, the dipolar nature of an actual occasion needs further explanation. Efficient causation comes entirely from the physical pole. It is nothing more than the present occasion's prehension of the past. It involves no self-determination whatsoever. As Griffin says:

The physical phase is the phase of compulsion, as it is the effect of the efficient causes from the past, which impose their in-formed energy upon the present occasion, which will in turn impose itself with compulsive force upon subsequent events.⁸

In this regard, physical does *not* mean having mass and taking up space. Ideas, beliefs, and many other notions normally regarded as "mental" can indeed exert efficient causation in the physical pole, in virtue of their inclusion in past occasions.

The mental pole, in the act of prehending non-actualized possibilities, can introduce novelty in determining what the occasion will finally become. The mental pole is therefore the self-determining aspect of the occasion. As Griffin puts it, "To attribute mentality to all actual entities is to attribute at least an iota of spontaneity to them, a germ of what becomes conscious self-determination in us."⁹ The mental pole begins by prehending abstract notions of what is possible, which Whitehead calls "eternal objects," such as universals and values, and then integrates them with the physical pole. By relating occasions in the physical pole to possibilities lying outside time, the mental pole can inject novelty into the occasion. Its capacity to inject novelty varies directly with its complexity, i.e., the size and complexity of the set of available eternal objects, as well as the number and complexity of occasions it prehends from the physical pole. The more complex the occasion, the more novelty it can introduce, and the greater its degree of self-determination. Even the lowliest occasions — those that comprise molecules, subatomic particles, and even events in "empty space" — have a "mental" pole. However, this does not mean they make conscious choices or that we can converse with them. These primitive occasions exercise only minimal self-determination, with little more freedom than to pass what they experience on to the next occasion.¹⁰

Interestingly enough, in this model God exerts no efficient or physical causation whatsoever, because God dwells in Eternity, not the past. Although God knows the past, God is not *in* the past. Accordingly, Whitehead called the creative power of God "persuasive" instead of "coercive."

Whitehead's definition of the terms "mental" and "physical" is completely novel. However, he also explains how minds and bodies, what we ordinarily call mental and physical substances, consist of actual occasions. *The difference between a mental substance (enduring individual) and a body (aggregate) in Whitehead's philosophy is not that they consist of different kinds of things, but that they are different configurations of the same kind of things.*¹¹ In other words, minds and bodies differ only because they are organized differently. An enduring individual, or what we traditionally have called a mind, is a purely temporal series occasions, in which each successive occasion prehends its predecessor, and, in turn, is prehended by its successor. The distinguishing feature of these societies is their purely temporal connection. Thus, Whitehead says:

Societies of the [enduring individual] general type ... are purely temporal and continuous, will be termed 'personal'. Any society of this type may be termed a 'person'. Thus, as defined above, a man is a person.¹²

It follows that not all persons are persons in the sense of being human. By this definition, any linear series of occasions in this configuration, even an atom or a molecule, is a "person." Because only one occasion in the series is active at any given moment, the power of self-determination in these societies is much more visible. It takes only one choice in one occasion to transform the entire subsequent series.

What we understand as physical objects or bodies are called "aggregates," or, more precisely, "aggregational societies." Unlike enduring individuals, aggregates are multi-dimensional societies and include simultaneous occasions. They appear to us as solid physical objects because their constituent occasions all operate according to the same dynamic forces, not because a dominant occasion in the society directs all the others. Says Griffin:

[A] rock appears to be a single actuality, but modern science has taught us that it is comprised of billions of distinct individuals.... The gravitational force causing the rock to fall operates on its individual atoms, not upon the rock as such.... But now we know that the apparent unity of action is an illusion generated by the behavior of billions of constituents.¹³

The society as a whole has no self-determination because the individual members' exercise of self-determination tends to cancel each other out. Thus, it is easier to describe the behavior of these societies in terms of the laws of averages than by individual choices. The laws of physics and chemistry are abstracted empirically from their collective behaviors. They appear to be "vacuous actualities" to us precisely because it is easier to understand and predict their behavior in terms of these macrocosmic laws than as individual experiencing subjects.¹⁴

Western Philosophy's Wrong Turn

Actually, the commonsense understanding of the world as physical objects and minds or spirits is not wrong, just incomplete. When I look at the hill outside my window, I see rocks, cacti, grass, and bushes browning in the California summer sun. However, I can identify really only a very small part of my experience of the hillside. Many things pass unnoticed, especially if I include subliminal perceptions. The experience of a tree involves more than its tree-ness, a hill more than its hill-ness, etc. An actual experience of things involves much more than its essential or distinguishing characteristics, or even its accidental (non-essential) characteristics. When we see the world in terms of things and characteristics, or substances and attributes, we consider only what we understand to be there, not what actually is. We confuse our abstractions with the experience itself. This confusion of the menu with the meal, of the abstract with the concrete, is what Whitehead called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness."

This fallacy led Western philosophy to see substances and attributes, as opposed to processes and events, as the basic components of experience. It is what led Descartes to conclude that there were two kinds of entities, those with essential attributes of mass and extension (matter) and those with essential attributes of thought and feeling (mind or spirit). Understood in these terms, the interaction of these two kinds of substance is at least enigmatic and maybe completely unintelligible. Yet, it happens. The mystery of mind-matter interaction arose from asking the wrong questions. If minds consisted only of thoughts and feelings, and bodies only mass and extension, interaction between them would indeed be impossible. However, thought and extension, or even substance and attribute in general, tell only part of story. As soon as we look beyond these abstractions into actual, concrete existence, we can reinterpret what appears to be interaction between

two completely different kinds of things as interaction among things of the same kind. Whitehead speculates how the interaction between mind and body might happen in terms of actual occasions and prehensions. Occasions that comprise the enduring individual (i.e., the mind) act upon, or are prehended by, other occasions in the aggregational society we call the body, or vice versa.

All efficient causation, including that of mind-body interaction, is of this form. At the level of actual occasions, perception and causation are identical. Causation is really nothing more than perception in the passive voice, and vice versa. To cause is to be perceived by another. To perceive is to be affected by another. The attempt to understand causation and mind-body interaction in terms of substances and attributes, as opposed to processes and events, is where modern philosophy missed its cue on causation.

And What About God ... ?

No discussion of New Thought is complete without God. In the language of Ernest Holmes, Whitehead understood God as the Love but not the Law. From the foregoing discussion, we found that God's power is only "persuasive." All "coercive" power comes from the past, and God, though aware of the past, is in Eternity and outside of it. Moreover, Whitehead did not believe the laws governing the way occasions prehend were part of God or even authored by God. In fact, God, like the rest of us, is bound by both the laws arising from occasions' incapacity for novelty and their capacity for freedom and self-determination. God is not omnipotent, nor is the universe perfect. In each moment, God offers everything and forces nothing. God cannot override the decisions of the occasions, either individually or collectively. What God offers each occasion is Infinite possibility, but what the individual occasion will accept determines and limits what it becomes. What may surprise some people in New Thought is that very few Whiteheadians have a problem with their weak God. Imperfection, though costly, is a relatively small price to pay for freedom. However, New Thought people may find this price to high, an issue I address later in "Objections and Replies."

In Whitehead's world, God, the actual entity that experiences the total of all the experiences of all actual occasions, has two natures: the primordial and the consequent. The primordial nature of God is the seat of Infinite Possibility. It is pure love, beauty, and eternal truth, but only as possibility. It is the part of God that persuasively influences each occasion to be its best. Nothing is actual in the primordial nature of God. Only through creativity in actual occasions can God's ideas and values become actual in real things. God, after creativity, reflects on creation, and, in Whitehead's universe, says, "That's good — at least to some degree." The consequent nature of God is the experience of all occasions that have occurred to date and the satisfaction, at whatever level, that has resulted from them.

Spiritual Mind Treatment in the Process Model

For the Religious Scientists in the audience, [[Note foregoing]]no discussion of Process metaphysics and New Thought would be complete without explaining how Spiritual

Mind Treatment would work under it. Actually, a Whiteheadian would treat in the same way as Ernest Holmes would. The five-step model and one-step models would both apply.¹⁵ Likewise, Whiteheadians would see treatment as a form of mental rehearsal, which works through changing the mind of the practitioner.

The primary differences between Whitehead's and Holmes's model of prayer treatment, is that treatment in Whitehead's model is *transformation*, and under Holmes's it is *revelation*. In Whitehead's model, the practitioner is attempting to bring the Law, which is acting blindly, into alignment with the Love. The mental rehearsal builds a series of past occasions that resemble those of the demonstration. The perfection of Eternity is thereby deliberately brought into the past, usually in the form of affirmation and visualization, and the forces of coercion are harnessed to aid those of persuasion. It is an exercise of the Camelot principle, of invoking might to aid right. In Holmes's model, in which both God and Creator are already perfect, nothing needs to be redirected but the thinking of the practitioner and maybe the patient. The practitioner's job is to realize the perfection of what already is.

Secondly, in Holmes's model, there is a process *in* healing, but not a process *of* healing, whereas in Whitehead's model there would be both. Says Holmes:

Healing is not a process, it is a revelation, through the thought of the practitioner to the thought of the patient. There may be a process in healing, but not a process of healing. The process in healing is the mental work and the time it takes the practitioner to convince himself of the perfectness of his patient; and the length of time it takes the patient to realize this perfectness.¹⁶

In Holmes's terms, the process in healing is the revelation of God to the practitioner's and patient's lesser minds, which Whitehead would readily acknowledge as necessary to effect the demonstration. However, for Whitehead the process in healing would not be sufficient by itself, unless the demonstration itself consisted solely of a change in thoughts and feelings. For Holmes, faith need move only the mountains in the mind. For Whitehead it must also move real mountains that not only exist outside the mind of both the practitioner and the patient, but which also consist of entities that have wills of their own. A Whiteheadian practitioner is actually trying to change things.

Another area where Whitehead and Holmes would differ is in the certainty and timing of the demonstration. This follows from the difference between treatment as transformation and treatment as revelation. If treatment is revelation, then treatment can never fail. The demonstration itself, as part of Eternal Truth, is already actualized. The only failure in a treatment is the practitioner's inability or unwillingness to behold its success. In Holmes's metaphysics, the demonstration must necessarily follow, or more accurately, coincide, with a properly given treatment. For Whitehead, the demonstration might come much later or maybe not at all. The occasions that constitute the practitioner might not have sufficient influence on their surroundings, or the surrounding occasions, in having self-determination of their own, might do their own will in spite of the practitioner's best efforts. In Whitehead's model, even properly given treatments could fail without a sufficiently strong ripple effect on adjacent occasions. (This, incidentally, could explain

why certain adepts are better at performing miracles than the rest of us. They may have somehow learned how to create more powerful ripple effects.)

6. Why Include the Process Ontology in New Thought

Many followers of New Thought would argue — and with some justification — that Process metaphysics carries too high a price. To accept limitations on God, let alone ourselves, would disempower us. As Richard Bach said, "Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they're yours."¹⁷ However, I do not believe that Process philosophy involves unnecessary resignation to limitations. In fact, I believe it is much more empowering to have limited power over real events than unlimited power over imaginary ones — especially if there are real events.

In the following paragraphs, I outline what I believe Process philosophy can contribute to New Thought. As I see it, there are five such contributions:

- It is a better metaphysical model than the prevailing idealist paradigm, because it offers more coherent theories of both mind-matter interaction and efficient causation.
- It describes the power of thought to shape our future as it actually works in real life much better than the idealist model, in that it explains the non-linear causal relationship between thoughts and things, and it takes the distinction between fantasy and reality into account.
- In granting causal efficacy to other things besides thoughts and beliefs, it is in some ways more inclusive than idealism. Not only is it more consistent with New Thought pantheism than the idealist model, it also more balanced and complete, in that attributes power to feelings and actions, along thoughts and beliefs.
- It removes the problem of a conflict between ideology and experience, and thereby renders New Thought more "scientific" in the contemporary sense. It would also help make New Thought more "grounded" and less prone to degenerate into hypocrisy.
- It explains some of New Thought's best ideas better, notably the relationship between the lesser and Greater selves, the notion of the "God within," the importance of believing in one's prayers, and the location of power in the here and now.

A Better Metaphysical Model

I believe it was Einstein who said you cannot solve a problem at the level of thinking that is creating the problem. With respect to efficient causation and mind-body interaction, substance-attribute thinking is that kind of trap. As I suggested earlier, Whitehead's greatest contribution was his ability to see beyond the substance-attribute paradigm. Although this paradigm has been extremely useful in some ways, giving rise to logic, modern science, and common sense, it has left causation and mind-matter interaction as ineffable mysteries. The danger of substance-attribute thinking is not that it doesn't work, but that it works so well so much of the time. The categories of substance and attribute

are absolutely indispensable for most human activities, including all meaningful conversation and rational thought. Deny them, and you have taken leave of your sanity.

It is only when we ask philosophical questions such as: how, exactly, *are* substances and attributes given to us in experience,¹⁸ how causes bring about their effects, or how do mind and matter interact, that the substance model breaks down. In short, substance-attribute thinking tells us almost everything we need to know about the world.

Whitehead's genius, if anything, was his ability to see beyond a paradigm that has been so supremely useful. Many people can look beyond a bad model. It takes real imagination to see beyond a good one.

A Better Theory of Mind-Matter Interaction

Modern philosophy has offered four basic theories of the mind-matter relationship: dualism and the three monistic alternatives of panexperientialism, materialism, and idealism. Dualism, the most popular ontology among people who never studied philosophy, is actually the position of common sense. Common sense tells us that there are two kinds of things in the world: experiencing entities or minds, and bodies or physical objects. In one sense, dualism is even *hard-core* common sense. In fact, the greatest challenge facing monists is to explain how we coherently deny either mind or matter. However, dualism cannot explain some very ordinary but important phenomena, the most important of which is mind-matter interaction, which is involved in things as important and as common as feeling pain or raising your right hand.

As a systems engineer, I was trained to fix problems, not remove them. Although removing a troublesome component can eliminate a problem, the component is usually there for a reason that soon becomes apparent when the component is missing. Nevertheless, removing the problem can be very tempting — to philosophers as well as systems engineers — and the monists have yielded to this temptation. They avoid having to explain mind-matter interaction by denying it. Mind and matter, they contend, are ultimately identical, and their apparent interaction, illusory. With materialism, mind becomes an illusion generated by matter, and with idealism, matter is reduced, in Mary Baker Eddy's terms, to an illusion of mortal mind. For the materialist, all is ultimately matter or a figment thereof, and, for the idealist, everything is ultimately mind. Either way, one of Descartes's two substances is reduced to the other, and only one is real.

However, like the engineer who first installed the troublesome component, Descartes included mind-matter interaction in his philosophy for a good reason. *It happens*, and our inability to explain it does not change that fact. By removing the problem, instead of solving it, the materialists and idealists create worse problems than the one they think they have solved, because their reductionism contradicts hard-core common sense. How could anyone presuppose in practice that either mind or matter is illusory? The denial itself immediately refutes the argument. If one denies mind, he denies his own ability to say anything intelligent — including his denial of the mind. On the other hand, should he deny matter, then he denies the existence of his mouth, hands, pencil, or whatever device he is using to make the statement. Neither works, and their troubles just get worse. The

very idea, that one substance, which is so different from the other that their interaction is unintelligible, can actually *produce* that other substance — or even the illusion of it — is even more mysterious than their interaction.

I doubt that many materialists would read a journal on metaphysical religions, (Those that are must be spies!) so I will limit my critique to the idealist model. However, idealism suffers from many of the same problems as materialism, and for the same reason. Both attempt to take one of Descartes's two substances and reduce it to a figment of the other. Idealism and materialism are not really opposites. In addition to conflicting with hard-core common sense, the idealist model, like its materialist counterpart, introduces a new mystery that is even more enigmatic than mind-matter interaction: mind-matter *creation*. If it is impossible to explain how mind and matter interact, it is even harder to explain how mind can *create* matter. One could argue that the mind produces material things in the same way that it produces fantasies, dreams, and hallucinations. However, this begs the question. We don't really know how the mind creates dreams and fantasies. Moreover, if the mind creates matter and fantasy by the same means, then the same thing, using the same process, is producing different results, which makes no sense. If mind really does create matter, then its means of doing so must be different from the one used to create fantasies, or it would produce the same results, in which case fantasy and reality would be indistinguishable.¹⁹ I can't speak for everyone, but I can usually tell the difference.

Much has been said about the accuracy of first instincts, and it is not surprising that some of Descartes's immediate successors, notably Spinoza and Leibniz, were panexperientialists. Panexperientialism has some major advantages over both materialism and idealism, in that it does not try to reduce the whole to one of its parts. Instead, it seeks to incorporate both wholes into a larger one. Panexperientialism does not limit us to the Cartesian notions of mind and matter alone. Instead, it includes both, as aspects of experience or ways of understanding it. Mind and matter give up their status as substances that exist on their own, and take on the role of aspects or attributes of something that is both mental and physical.

However, panexperientialism is not without its problems. Like dualists and idealists, panexperientialists are still subject to the temptation of removing the problem instead of solving it. Panexperientialism says that mind and matter per se do not interact, but that experiencing body-minds do, and this is what gives rise to apparent mind-matter interaction. Because dualism is the position of common sense, panexperientialists face the daunting task of re-inventing the universe in panexperientialist terms — and then trying to sell their re-invention. The three most comprehensive panexperientialists to date, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Whitehead, all developed highly complex, technical theories, none of which would be likely to hold a congregation spellbound in a Sunday sermon.

In the final analysis, no theory of mind-body interaction is complete without a theory of causation, and it was their failure to address this issue that led to the demise of Leibniz's and Spinoza's systems. Moreover, as I will argue in the next section on causation, no theory of causation is complete without a theory of creation or creativity, or how the things that are come to be. To address this issue, we must look outside of not only

Descartes but Aristotle as well. We can no longer work within the categories of substance and attribute, which describe things as they are, but begin thinking in terms of processes and events, i.e., the way things come to be. It is here where Whitehead's model is unique in Western philosophy.

A Better Theory of Causation

The problem of efficient causation itself was first uncovered by Hume, when he found he could not explain how prior events could predictably bring about subsequent ones. The analysis of a moving cue ball on a pool table yielded no information whatsoever about what the 8-ball would do when the cue ball struck it. Hume's answer, which he himself admitted was weak, was to attribute apparent efficient causation to the thinking habits of the observer, a view not inconsistent with much of New Thought. For Kant, the very nature of the observer determines the conditions it can accept as intelligible, and existence in a causal series is one of those conditions. Christian Science and New Thought attribute it primarily to the belief systems of the observer, although habits also play a major part. However, all these explanations attribute the power of a cause to something outside the cause itself. The cause itself has no real influence. The real influence is a power outside the cause-effect relationship altogether, usually the mind or consciousness.

Within the context of substance and attribute, the external power explanation is probably the best that has ever been offered, and New Thought's version is as good as any. Unfortunately, the external power theory conflicts with hard-core common sense. It is impossible not to presuppose the reality of physical causation in practice. Even Hume's skeptic-hero Philo admitted that he planned to leave the building via the door and not an upper story window. One can argue that we can presuppose physical causation in practice without knowing how it works. The human race does seem to have survived the Humean race. I have no quarrel with this position. My disagreement is with those who believe external power theory is adequate. I recently saw a television documentary on the *Titanic*. As the rumors of the vessel's sinking trickled in, there were people who refused to believe the tragedy had happened. One of them argued that the *Titanic* could not have sunk — not because it had watertight compartments, or that the hole in the hull was really not that big, but because the power of mind, the most powerful force in the universe, would easily keep the ship afloat. In case you haven't seen the movie, he was wrong. We know the ship could sink because it did.

The problem with causation for philosophers, including Hume, is that we have been trying to understand it in the wrong context. That wrong context is in the analysis of *the way things are*. By the time any event has occurred, it is too late to observe causal influence in action. Causes, almost by definition, do their work in the moment of the effect's creation, neither sooner nor later. They exert their influence at the moment when the effect *comes to be*.

Whitehead's model is unique in explaining the influence of causes as part of the effect's creation, or coming to be. It includes the roles played by not only physical causes, but

also those of thoughts and belief systems, and even God. It is more than a general theory of causation; it is a theory of causation integrated into a larger theory of creation or creativity. It may be, and probably is, possible to formulate a better general theory of this type, but Whitehead has taken a giant first step in the right direction.

It Describes the Power of Thought the Way We Observe It

New Thought philosophy has found some allies in pop psychology and New Age writings. In some of these other writings, we can read that thoughts are like tractor beams, either attracting or repelling actual things. As bizarre as these ideas might seem in theory, they nevertheless described the influence of thoughts on things better than the idealist model. According to the latter, the effect of our thoughts on our experiences is direct and immediate. Facts are not stubborn; we are stubborn in hanging onto our belief systems. A good treatment will therefore produce an immediate demonstration. However, in doing spiritual mind treatments, I found that the relationship between treatment and demonstration was neither immediate nor linear. I could treat for days, months, or even years before anything happened. Then, suddenly and often at random, the demonstration would occur. Other times, the demonstration would be immediate. However, its timing was never predictable.

Things don't respond to thinking in the same way thoughts do. Were that the case, it would be almost impossible to distinguish thoughts from things. Whitehead's model explains the non-linear relationship between my present thoughts and my future experiences. Between the two is the ripple effect, a whole series of causal events, each of which consists of actual occasions that have, in their own right, some degree of freedom and self-determination, as well as their own tendency to repeat the past. This ripple effect is also subject to outside interference, which makes both the results even more unpredictable. In actual experience, there does seem to be a process *of* healing as well as *in* healing.

A More Inclusive Ontology

More things count in the panexperientialist model. According to idealism, matter is in mind, but not vice versa. Idealism denies vacuous actuality, not by denying the vacuity of matter, but by denying its actuality. The figments of the mind, i.e., material objects, are just as dead and devoid of experience as matter was for Descartes. The view that there are two kinds of entities, fully developed, conscious mind and vacuous phantasms ignores many important aspects of experience. Where do feelings, emotions, and matters of aesthetics fit? Was Descartes's dog, though not a machine, a mere fantasy? The panexperientialist model recognizes the causal significance of other kinds of things, such as emotions, sensations, and physical activity, giving us more complete explanations of events.

New Thought pantheism is more consistent with the panexperientialist view. An axiom of New Thought is that God is everywhere. However, under the idealist model, it would be more appropriate to say everywhere is in God, but not the converse. God is only in those

entities that possess consciousness. On the other hand, were we to say that experience, the process of creativity itself, exists in all events throughout the Universe, then God really is everywhere.

Finally, a foundation in experience would definitely help prevent New Thought from degenerating into an exercise in hypocrisy and denial. As with any other religious philosophy, it is tempting not to walk the talk. One of the most troublesome aspects of New Thought philosophy is that it allows us to escape responsibility through denial. I know of no way to assume responsibility for a condition whose existence I deny. The mere claim that one is omnipotent over the problem is not the same as actually attempting to solve it. A metaphysical view that allows me to acknowledge the reality of my experience takes me one step closer to taking responsibility for it, and, in assuming responsibility for it, I can begin to assert whatever real power I have.

A More Scientific Perspective

Both New Thought and Christian Science have claimed that their philosophical views are "scientific." However, their use of the term comes from a seventeenth-century or even medieval understanding of science, especially when it is construed to mean governed by immutable laws. Science itself abandoned the notion immutable laws centuries ago, along with the notion that scientific laws even "govern" the universe at all. Scientific laws are not immutable, nor do they govern the universe. In their modern sense, scientific laws merely describe what we observe. Whenever and wherever they cease to describe experience, it is the laws, not the experience, that are denied. To argue ideology over experience in any form is completely unscientific.

If we assume that experience is Reality, that *samsara* really is *Nirvana*, then the tension between theory and fact disappears. Fact wins, end of story. That is how things work, or at least, how they should work, in science. However, it is sometimes hard to avoid confusing experience with our interpretation of it. The distinction between hard-core and soft-core common sense might help here. If we must necessarily presuppose the truth of a proposition in practice, then it is safe to assume that the proposition really is something given to us in experience. If we can behave under the presupposition that it is false, it is probably an interpretation. *Other than that, the ontology of experience gives us the intellectual authority to adopt any coherent belief system that we can effectively and beneficially presuppose in practice.* We still have much leeway in choosing our belief systems.

Better Explanations of Some Existing New Thought Principles

In some ways, Whitehead explains the principles of New Thought better than the New Thought writers themselves. Specifically, it offers clearer, more complete explanations of the following ideas of New Thought:

- The relationship of the Greater and lesser selves
- The notion of the "God Within"

- The point of power in the here-and-now
- The importance of believing in one's prayers

The Greater and Lesser Selves

Whitehead's model provides a ready-made distinction between the greater and lesser selves. The lesser self is the temporally-ordered series of occasions Whitehead called the "enduring individual." The Greater Self would be the eternal presence of God in all individual actual occasions. Orthodox Whiteheadians would stop there. However, one could also argue that the creative process itself, as it takes place within any actual occasion in the making, might also be the Greater Self. Whitehead and his more loyal followers would reject this position, on the grounds that God and creativity are not the same. My suggestion here is a major departure from Whitehead's model, and it could be the subject of another paper in itself. I return to it again, briefly, in the "Objections and Replies" section.

The Notion of the God Within

The notion of the God within did not originate with New Thought. It has existed in the mystical branches of all major religions for millennia. Nevertheless, New Thought writers have done much to popularize the idea. In Whitehead's model, God exists within every occasion, at least as the grounds for the introduction of newness and possibility, if not as the Creative process itself. Accordingly, God is truly Zen — here, now, myself.

The Point of Power in the Here and Now

One of the principles that all Religious Science students learn about prayer treatment is that one always treats in the present tense and speaks as if the desired condition is already present. Although in one sense, this involves reciting some false propositions, present tense affirmations are presumed to be more powerful than those stated in the future. Whitehead's philosophy offers a very clear explanation why the point of power is always in the present. *The present moment is where all creativity occurs.* There is no creativity in the past, and the future does not exist and therefore cannot be the seat of creation. Treatment is rehearsal in the present tense, because creation occurs only in the present.

The Importance of Believing in One's Prayers

In Whiteheadian terms, the discussion of the importance of praying while believing could become quite technical, and I only offer a very cursory explanation of it here. An individual occasion can turn towards, or turn away from, any given possibility. A turn towards involves, to a greater or lesser degree, the inclusion of that possibility into itself as actual. Likewise, a turning away involves excluding the possibility as not actual. In the case of propositions, i.e., the kinds of declarative statements that comprise beliefs, belief systems, and affirmations, a turn towards would involve some degree of acceptance of the proposition as true and be accompanied by a feeling of truth. Likewise, a turning

away would involve rejecting the proposition and a corresponding feeling of falsity. (For Whitehead, truth and falsity are experienced with particular feelings.)

Prayer treatment is rehearsal. We must practice believing, as well as conceptualizing, the desired events. We want to create, as Ernest Holmes said, a mental equivalent that is as close as possible to the real thing. That includes not only the idea or possibility of the demonstration, but all the feelings that would accompany its realization, including the feelings of its truth. Per the discussion of treatment given above, the more familiar this mental equivalent is, the more we can use the principle of efficient causation to bring the actual demonstration about.

7. Objections and Replies

Here I address only objections that I would anticipate from people in New Thought. I make no attempt to answer objections from materialists and dualists, because I have done so elsewhere.²⁰ From that, and my general knowledge of both New Thought and Process philosophy, I would expect New Thought philosophers to object to the following aspects of Whitehead's philosophy:

- Radical pluralism
- The existence of genuine evil
- The limitations of a God's power [[?]]
- The omission of alternatives in Eastern philosophy
- The sheer difficulty in understanding what Whitehead wrote

Radical Pluralism

The first objection would be to Whitehead's pluralism. Much of the problem here is one of semantics. The term "mind" for Whitehead means an enduring individual; it does not mean the Creative Power of the Universe. In Whitehead's ontology there are obviously many minds and many more actual occasions. However, there is only one principle of creativity that expresses itself in all actual occasions, and even in God. As long as that Creative Power is identified with God, the multiplicity of enduring individuals should not prove objectionable to people in New Thought. Only solipsists claim there is only one small self.

However, Whitehead himself was very clear about the distinction between God and creativity. They are definitely not the same. However, this difference alone should not justify rejecting Whitehead's whole philosophy. Moreover, I believe I can construct a Process ontology that is less radically pluralistic than Whitehead's, but still views experience as the ultimate nature of Reality. Such a philosophy would begin with a theory that holds that actual occasions, like substances, are also abstract. Once we take actual occasions to be abstractions, then an *E pluribus unum* ontology emerges, in which there are many actual occasions, but ultimately only one Actual Entity, i.e., God.²¹

The Existence of Genuine Evil

New Thought theology faces the same challenges as traditional theology with respect to the problem of evil and God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. If creation is imperfect, then so must be the Creator. In response to this problem, traditional theologians have attempted to reduce genuine evil to apparent evil. Apparent evil is suffering or immorality that is ultimately redeemed when seen from a wider perspective. Genuine evil is a real, unredeemed, flaw in the Cosmos. Traditional theology has attempted to reduce genuine evil to apparent evil by arguing along either of two lines: 1) that evil is a necessary by-product of genuine freedom, or 2) that it is a necessary process in the perfection of the world. From a Cosmic perspective, all evil is ultimately redeemed and therefore not genuine. These arguments are the "theodicies" of Saints Augustine and Irenaeus respectively. New Thought, on the other hand, offers a theodicy, in that denies the reality of evil at least in part by denying the ultimate reality of the material world in which evil is said to exist. While traditional theology attempts to deny genuine evil by justification, New Thought attempts to deny it by elimination. Both seek the same result for the same reason: God's Perfection precludes the possibility of genuine evil.

Process thought, on the other hand, blatantly accepts the reality of genuine evil. Poverty, disease, and loneliness are all real. True, they are neither person, place, nor thing, nor are they permanent or necessary conditions, but they are processes. Although we are not powerless over them, they are both evil and real.

Process theologians offer no guarantees of a happy ending. *In fact there is no ending at all!* We don't know if the Nazi holocaust, the paradigm of evil used today in most theology classes, will ever be redeemed. Instead, it has initiated a causal chain of events that is ultimately unpredictable and will continue throughout eternity, some of which will be good and others, not so good. Apparent evil is therefore the same as genuine evil, because there is no Cosmic perspective from which one can see the final result. The last card has not been played, nor will it ever be.

The problem here is really one of conflicting values, reminiscent of the debates between William James and Josiah Royce a century ago. Royce was the champion of peace, serenity, and perfection. James was the champion of excitement, adventure, and the richness of life. I see the same tension here between Process and New Thought.²² New Thought philosophy says simply, "Fear not, for all is well." Process philosophy says, "Feel the fear, in fact, feel everything — and do the right thing anyway. As Helen Keller once said, 'Life is a daring adventure or it's nothing.'" These values are not easily reconciled and reflect the temperament of the individual as much as anything. However, I do not see this conflict of values as irreconcilable. In fact, the reality of their ultimate reconciliation makes a very good article of faith.

The Limited Power of God

New Thought practitioners might find the idea of a God whose power is so limited hard to accept. In Whitehead's model, the Love and the Law are not the same. God, the source of Love, is not the Creative Power described in New Thought theology as the Law.

Creativity, the power that drives the Universe, is in the individual occasions themselves and the way they prehend both the past and eternity. God neither controls the creative process nor did God invent it. And it gets worse. Most Process theologians even think God suffers.

Having been trained as a Religious Science practitioner, I personally found this notion of God more than a little hard to take. Who would put one's life in the hands of this hand-wringing wimp, a God that really has no more power than a good car salesman or a well-trained orator? What is the alcoholic supposed to do? Turn his life over to a higher power that is just another victim like himself? This seemed like an abdication of faith of the worst kind, but I did get some laughs for naming Process theology "the Church of the Marginally Competent God."

Obviously, my views have changed some since then, and I have reached a middle ground, in which the aims of New Thought and the metaphysics of Process theology can be at least partially compatible. I have conceded one point to the Process thinkers, and that is on God's inability to foresee the future. God cannot see the future because there's nothing there to see. The future per se is nothing but an anticipated fantasy. God sees Eternity, which is outside time altogether, as well as the past, but God does not see the unreal as real. To say that God either sees or pre-determines something that does not, and cannot, exist is sheer nonsense. Moreover, if God did see the future, there could be no freedom for individuals.

However, on the other side, I reject Whitehead's complete separation of God from creativity. Once an occasion is complete, what gives rise to its successors, if not the inspiration of Eternity in the Primordial Nature of God? I believe the influence of Eternity is what perpetuates the generation of time. Without novelty, all occasions would be identical and indistinguishable, and would therefore cease to exist as individuals. Also, I cannot accept the Process notion that God does not create. God may not be omnipotent, but that does not mean God is a mere observer of the creative process. In fact, if by "persuasion" one means "persuasion to come into existence," then persuasion sounds strikingly similar to creation. In short, I believe there is room to develop a doctrine of continuous Divine creation in Whitehead's overall model.

"Go East, Young Man..."

...was Prof. Paul Laughlin's advice to me at the 1999 SSMR meeting, after reading *The Power of Thought to Heal*. Laughlin argued that my use of Whitehead's philosophy as a model for mental healing reminded him of training circus bears to ride bicycles — all while ignoring the many trained cyclists among Eastern thinkers. His point, that I neglected Eastern approaches to mental healing, is well taken, and any major treatise on the subject should include them.

Nevertheless, a review of Eastern philosophies healing was beyond the scope of both the dissertation and this paper. My main purpose in writing both documents is to suggest that we need to look beyond Cartesian dualism, along with the crypto-dualist alternatives of

materialism and idealism, to understand the power of thought to shape our destinies. Prof. Laughlin agreed with me on these points, as I agree with him that it is time we Westerners take the wisdom of other cultures more seriously.

However, I would also like to offer two additional responses to Laughlin's critique. The first is that Whitehead's metaphysic itself may serve as a link between East and West. In my own experience, it was only during my practice of Buddhist meditation that I actually experienced first hand what Whitehead called actual occasions themselves, although what I experienced were more like waves than particles. Moreover, Whitehead's model may also be helpful in relating certain Eastern concepts, such as the Chinese notion of *chi* or material force, with Western science. If the Universe really does consist of entities that are both mental and physical, we may yet find a place for *chi* in physics. Exactly how this might happen, however, is not my area of expertise. I am not a physicist.

Secondly, with respect to Indian philosophy, I have had the privilege of working with many Indians in the technology industry. When I described my dissertation to them, their response was universal. That the mind can both heal and shape our destinies is something every Indian child learns on his mother's knee, and they were surprised to learn that Western culture ever came to doubt it. However, they also had the same general critique of their own culture's philosophy: It listens well, but it does not pay the bills. I cannot speak for everyone in New Thought, but I want something that pays the bills. As we should not neglect the wisdom of the East, neither should we neglect that of the West.

The Difficulty in Teaching and Understanding Whitehead's Philosophy

Laughlin's analogy of a bear trying to learning to ride a bicycle aptly describes most students' experience of studying Whitehead, including my own. It is both a complex and highly unnatural thing to learn. It is therefore unfair and unrealistic to ask most parishioners in New Thought churches to study and understand Whitehead. (For you ministers, I can't think of a faster way to empty a church than to give sermons on subjects like physical purposes, propositional feelings, and the Reformed Subjectivist Principle.)

His writing is challenging in two ways. The fact that he wrote in the language of academic philosophy is only half, or perhaps less than half, of the problem. As soon as you have broken the language barrier, your immediately confront the challenge of the paradigm shift — and that's the really hard part. Substance-attribute thinking is an extremely difficult box to see outside. If you practice meditation for any length of time, you may (pardon the pun) actually experience actual occasions of experience, but not in ordinary waking life. Substance-attribute thinking is so useful that it is easy to confuse it with the all of experience itself. This is what Western philosophy itself did for over two millennia. It is also what makes Process thought a difficult sale to any audience.

The challenge of translating the philosophical jargon into intelligible English is one I have decided to take on myself, and I hope to have taken at least a step in that direction with this paper. The job is not easy, but by the grace of God, it will be done and done

right. Accordingly, I ask for your prayers of support. And please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet.

The paradigm shift, however, challenges both one's intelligence and one's courage, and requires both inspiration and perspiration to grasp. This is where I ask for the help of New Thought ministers. However, what I ask of you is not to accept Whitehead's ideas, or even my own, without question. What I do ask is that you continue to teach a brand of New Thought that is "open at the top" and resist the temptation to cling to dogma. With God's grace, the sermons from New Thought pulpits will continue to inspire us to see outside boxes, to face confusion, doubt, and uncertainty with courage, faith, and inspiration. Should you succeed in doing that, I am confident that Process thought will find its rightful place in the New Thought movement, whatever that place may be.

Notes

¹ One could also argue that the definition of faith here is synonymous with sincere belief, in that beliefs that we are unwilling to presuppose in practice are not sincerely held. I personally would agree with this argument, but it is not my purpose to debate this question here.

² David Ray Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom, and the Mind-Body Problem* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998) 15–21.

³ Arthur Preston Smith, *The Power of Thought to Heal: An Ontology of Personal Faith*, (Ann Arbor: Bell & Howell Information, 1998). The dissertation is also available on the Internet at Alan Anderson's web site: www.websyte.com/alan/dissert.htm. Hardcopy is available from Bell & Howell Information and Learning, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, www.umi.com.

⁴ By "first word" here I do not mean the *very* first word. He actually picks up where William James left off in this area.

⁵ Griffin, 78.

⁶ I will not belabor this issue further; I and others have done so elsewhere. For more information, see Griffin, especially pp. 77–92, or my own dissertation, especially chs. 9–11.

⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, Corrected Edition, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1978) 40–1.

⁸ Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot*, Unpublished Manuscript, Appendix A, 196. Passages omitted in published work.

⁹ Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot*, Unpublished Manuscript, Appendix A, 196.

¹⁰ This is why Griffin prefers the term "panexperientialism" to describe Whitehead's philosophy over William James's term "panpsychism." The latter suggests that the world is composed of fully developed psyches, which endure over time and are capable of conscious experience. See Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot*, published version, 77–78.

¹¹ I use the term "mental substance" here instead of "mind" deliberately. What Descartes considered a "mind" would for Whitehead consist of a temporally ordered society of highly complex occasions. For Descartes, these sophisticated mental substances were the only form of mental substance in existence. (Even his dog lived without one.) However, for Whitehead there are temporally ordered societies of much simpler occasions as well, which would be present not only in dogs, but also, to varying degrees of complexity, in molecules and atoms as well.

¹² Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 205.

¹³ Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot*, 173.

¹⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 29.

¹⁵ I prefer a seven step model, in which there is a Step 0, quieting the mind, a the beginning, and a Step 6, acting in ways that are congruent with the treatment, added on to the end as a seventh step.

¹⁶ Ernest Holmes, *The Science of Mind*, Second Edition, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1938) 212.

¹⁷ Richard Bach, *Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1977) 100.

¹⁸ Here I agree with William James in saying that they are indeed *given* in experience.

¹⁹ I know that there are some people who have trouble distinguishing fantasy from reality. There are several terms for this disorder, the most politically correct of which is schizophrenia. Nevertheless, the fact that some people are delusional does not imply that fantasy and reality are indistinguishable in themselves, and therefore must be so for the rest of us.

²⁰ Smith, ch. 11.

²¹ This is one of the central theses I advocate in the philosophical portion of my upcoming book, *The Power of Faith in a Real World*.

²² This is no coincidence. Royce was an Hegelian idealist, and James was one of the early, pre-Whiteheadian advocates of Process thought.

Abstract

One of the major principles embraced (explicitly or implicitly) by all New Thought philosophies is that you can achieve what you can believe. However, New Thought is strangely silent (and maybe a little confused) on what you can believe. In this essay, I argue that a major thesis in New Thought philosophy, the notion that thought or consciousness is omnipotent, is simply not believable. What we should do is to expand our notion of the Real to embrace God as Experience. This world-view is just as empowering and much more believable than the model of God as Mind or Consciousness.