

SEIZING AN ALTERNATIVE

Toward an Ecological Civilization

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Section IX: Reimagining and Reinventing Bodily-Spiritual Health

Section Plenary: John Sweeney

Do Ideas Matter?

This Section Plenary will deal with “conceptual” and “hybrid feelings.” The main reason that the kind of thinking to which this section is devoted is largely excluded from the university is that it assumes that ideas have consequences, that subjective experience has effects in the objective world. The central dogma of the dominant Cartesian science is that the objective world is a closed system. The standard model has no way of conceptualizing the causal efficacy of subjective experience such as thought on what is understood as “nature.”

Whereas physical feelings are feelings of the feelings of others, conceptual feelings are feelings of forms or potentialities. Hybrid feelings are feelings of the conceptual feelings of others. It is by means of this analysis of various types of feelings that Whitehead works out the mutual relations of what Cartesians think of as “mind” and “matter.” A special contribution of Whitehead is that by his discussion of hybrid feelings he shows that continuity is not necessary for influence. Telepathy and other phenomena considered “anomalous” by those shaped by the dominant metaphysics are fully intelligible” (Cobb, “Seizing,” pp. 39-40).

So, Do Ideas Matter?

Of course, or at least most of us attending this conference think so. Otherwise, I suspect, we would not be here, except, perhaps, for the socializing and the networking that often occurs at such events.

Whitehead, eventually, believed that Ideas Matter; in one of his later books, Adventures of Ideas, Whitehead shows how Ideas have mattered, how ideas have made a significant difference in history. For example, Whitehead notes the Idea of “the humanitarian ideal,” that is, the Idea that humans have souls and demonstrates how the growth of this Idea contributed to the rise of the abolition movement and the battles against slavery. As the continued existence of slavery shows, the effect of Ideas need not be immediately successful. Also, any such any dramatic change, such as the effort to value all human beings and to eliminate slavery, Whitehead suggests, rarely occurs without trauma; the Civil War in the U.S.A. being but one example. Another example of the ongoing influence of an Idea comes from the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, PA. Within the Constitution Center, one of the themes noted throughout a number of displays is how “all men are created equal” is constantly being interpreted and

reinterpreted—perhaps another sign that “the humanitarian ideal” still is at work. (Please see Kuhn, Structures, 1970, regarding the difficulties in changing paradigms.)

In exploring Ideas and how they Matter, the remainder of this paper is organized as follows:

(1) a short section regarding why Whitehead was initially opposed to using “ideas” (hence the “eventually” reference in the preceding paragraph); (2) a brief discussion of the Idea of Cartesian Dualism, including its role in the development of modern paradigms and how that development has affected the track topics in this section; (3) a presentation of some aspects of Whitehead philosophy of organism, including the notions of hybrid physical feelings and conceptual feelings, and some commentary as to how these “ideas” (hybrid physical feelings and conceptual feelings) provide openings for revising the various track topics; and (4) concluding remarks.

Regarding Ideas

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead suggests that he had some qualms about the notion of “idea” due to its use, perhaps abuse, in philosophy. Whitehead specifically points out that Locke uses the word in at least two ways—one way referring to traditional universals or abstractions and the other way in referring to particular objects in consciousness (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 52 & 149). Whitehead also notes that “. . . the term ‘idea’ has a subjective suggestion in modern philosophy, which is very misleading for my purposes; and in any case it has been used in many senses and has become ambiguous” (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 44).

Accordingly, Whitehead notes that instead of using the term “idea” he is using a variety of other terms and phrases, such as “objectification of eternal objects” and “ingression of actual entities” (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 149). For Whitehead “ideas” occur throughout this World. Further, since most of what happens in this World occurs unconsciously, that would mean that most Ideas also occur unconsciously. Since our general use of Ideas involves consciousness and since Whitehead was expanding that use, hence the need for a more technical language.

So, “Do Ideas Matter?” Despite the misgivings expressed in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead came to believe that Ideas do indeed matter. “For the vitality of thought is in adventure. *Ideas won’t keep*. Something must be done about them. When the idea is new, its custodians have fervor, live for it, and, if need be, die for it” (Price, *Dialogues*, p. 100). Ideas are important: “The novel hybrid feelings derived from God, with the derivative sympathetic conceptual valuations, are the foundations of progress” (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 247).

Regarding Cartesian Dualism:

As John Cobb indicates in the Foundational Document for this conference (Cobb, “Seizing”), Cartesian Dualism is a complex Idea that has had a profound effect on the development of modern worldviews. Examples of these effects can be found in the tracks of this section, “Reimaging and Reinventing Bodily-Spiritual Health.” The Idea of Cartesian Dualism, aided and abetted by other Ideas--Newtonian physics, Kantian metaphysics, misinterpretations of Adam Smith’s economic/ethical theories, and assorted co-conspirators--is a prime factor in the current situations involving the issues being addressed by this conference. The Idea of Cartesian Dualism, along with all its ‘accessories after the fact,’ also reveals itself as a key factor in a variety of bifurcations: male-female, machine-organism, simplicity-complexity, straight-queer, external relations-internal relations, mental health-physical health, and so on. In the realm of Cartesian Dualism, there are no continuums; there are only either-or-but-not-both options.

To refresh our memories, Cartesian Dualism divides the world, metaphysically, into two kinds of stuff, two substances. A substance is by definition “that which needs nothing but itself to exist.” The two substances are (1) a physical/material/extensional substance and (2) a mental/spiritual/-psychic substance. Hence, there is a spiritual substance that needs nothing but itself to exist, and there is a physical substance that needs nothing but itself to exist.

Dualism, or at least a dualistic tendency, has been around for a long time—cf. Zoroaster, Plato, Gnostics, Buddhism (Loy, “Awakening”), et al. Descartes was not the first dualist, but, for whatever reasons, Cartesian dualism “stuck.” Perhaps Newtonian physics, with its notions of absolute space and absolute time, further contributed both to the development of dualism and to the emergence of the body as a machine (see next paragraph). Cartesian dualism also appears to have been reinforced by Kantian metaphysics, especially the phenomenal-noumenal distinction.

Further, Descartes described the body as a machine, and a machine cannot feel. On the other hand, the spiritual substance is the home of emotions, thought, imagination, feeling, and the like, and a soul is composed of this spiritual substance. Descartes provided reasons for his contentions that human beings had souls and that animals did not have souls. These reasons included the human abilities to use language in non-imitative ways and to solve complex problems. Animals, according to Descartes, can neither use language appropriately nor solve complex problems. Also, please note that without a soul animals cannot feel, neither pain nor any other feeling. When an animal appears to be feeling, that appearance is merely the “gears in the machine” doing what they do. Hence, Cartesian Dualism provides support for the practice of vivisection.

One of the ripples from the considerations above occurs in describing how these two substances interact with each other, given that the spiritual and the material are completely independent of each other, each needing only itself to exist. Descartes was aware of the problem and suggested the Pineal Gland as the location of, and mechanism for, all the interaction that occurs; this suggestion has been rejected. In Western thought a variety of Ideas have been suggested to deal with the problem of interaction between two completely independent substances; some of the proposed solutions include double-aspect theory, parallelism, dualistic interactionism, epiphenomenalism, idealism, and, most importantly, materialism, that is, the view that only matter/physical substance exists. Both “idealism” and “materialism” are responses that give up the notion of real interaction. There are only Ideas or there is only the Material; any appearance of interaction between them is just that, appearance.

“Materialism” is most important because “materialism” became, and remains, at the core of the modern paradigm. Materialism, along with the body-as-machine metaphor, has become the most influential ripple from Cartesian dualism. The Scientific Enterprise is based upon materialism; and if “it” cannot be measured according to current materialistic, reductionistic scientific criteria, then “it” does not exist, whatever “it” may be. For example, parapsychological phenomena are ruled out “a priori” as is the placebo effect. In both cases the evidence for each is not measurable in modern, scientific ways.

Yet, the Scientific Enterprise is not completely dominant. Many folks are wary of science, or at least of some aspects of science. In *Bad Faith*, Paul Offit discusses how this wariness of science shows itself in medical circles, for example, in the persistent belief that vaccines contribute to autism. Joel Achenbach notes a variety of issues in which the results of scientific investigation are doubted; for example, a majority of Americans still do not accept “that human activity is the dominant cause of global warming” (“Why Do Many,” 2015). Process thought may doubt some of the results of science, but the process critique stems from the claim that science is not empirical enough, ignoring evidence that does not fit the modern, materialistic paradigm.

Perhaps the main debate going on in this conference and in society concerns a serious paradigm conflict. That is, given the success in many areas of the modern, materialistic scientific, body-as-machine paradigm, aided and abetted as indicated above, how can such a paradigm be wrong, or at least so limited that this successful paradigm is now leading human beings into such dire circumstances? As Kuhn has demonstrated, paradigm change can be quite difficult.

An example of this paradigm issue is discussed by Charles Eisenstein in “Climate Change: The Bigger Picture.” As Eisenstein notes, the “climate-change alarm sits so comfortably within our culture’s familiar way of thinking.” And that familiar way of thinking involves “the sacrifice of the immediate, the human, or the personal in service

to some overarching ulterior goal that trumps all.” Further, that familiar way of thinking is found in, and demonstrated by, the human institutions involving money, war, and mainstream religion. Climate Change is important, but the modern way of dealing with it tends to repeat the modern problems.

For each of the track topics in this section, an effect or two of Cartesian dualism is noted. Again, the main ripple from Cartesian Dualism is the rise of materialism in conjunction with the rise of science.

1. **Bodies Count: Embodiment and the Effects of Bodily Activity:** From a materialist perspective bodies, and only bodies, count. The reason is because that is all there is—bodies are composed of matter, more specifically matter in motion following universal, natural laws. The Cartesian view that the body is a machine has had, and continues to have, such great influence on Western culture. Please recall that a machine cannot think, feel, emote, imagine, dream, etc. For consistent materialists, there is only matter, in the form of material particles, in motion, and that is all. Hence, there is no free will.

Much of academia reflects a bit of schizophrenia in that both dualism, which values the mind, and materialism, which does not value the mind, are valued. “Mind” academics are paid well, yet the better paid fields of study are the more materialistic fields. So, both the mind and the body are important, yet in different, sometimes contradictory, ways.

A further complication occurs for materialists in their claim that only matter, following natural laws, exists, and yet materialists act as if they have the free will associated with mind. They choose to publish books, debate with others, and generally act in ways that seem at odds with their body-as-machine paradigm. On the other hand, perhaps all those activities are merely the results of matter in motion following universal laws, and free will truly is merely appearance.

Another ripple, in response to the materialism associated with the rise of science, gives rise to some forms of idealism, those worldviews in which the mind/soul/spirit is all that exists, or at least is much more important than the body and, in some cases, controls the body to some extent. Examples of modern idealism include Christian Science, Science of Mind, and some forms of New Thought.

2. **Rethinking “Sexuality:”** Cartesian Dualism and its effects give substantial support to the idea that there are only two sexes—male and female, as well as only two sexual orientations—queer and straight. Any other physical manifestations of sexuality are anomalies, aberrations to be ignored, or perhaps

even ruled out “a priori;” they cannot count, even should their anomalous existence be acknowledged.

Further complicating both 1 and 2, as well as the following tracks, is a patriarchal paradigm: (1) mind/soul is better than body (for dualists); (2) male is closely associated with the mind/soul; (3) female is even more closely associated with the body; (4) the mind/soul involves degrees of freedom; (5) the body is causally determined. Accordingly, within this patriarchal paradigm, males are better and freer than females. Please note that this paradigm places mind/soul “above” body, which would seem to conflict with the materialism of science, but no one said we humans are, or need to be, really consistent.

3. **The Quest for Wholeness: East and West:** The dominance of the body-as-machine idea in the West, especially in the medical fields, including psychology—note psychiatry’s emphasis on the use of medication—is obvious, common knowledge, as it were. Since Norman Cousins laughed his way to health, the role of emotions, beliefs, and other not obviously material factors, has become slowly acknowledged. (Cousins was diagnosed with *ankylosing spondylitis*, or reactive arthritis, in 1964; was given a short time to live; and responded, in part, by laughing his way to health.) Still, the body-as-machine idea continues to dominate; perhaps this is to be expected given the success of this idea in dealing with diseases, broken bones, and the like. And yet, the body-as-machine idea cannot explain the success of belief in aiding recovery, alleviating pain, and the like.
4. **Extraordinary Challenges to the Modern Paradigm:** The modern materialist paradigm rules out parapsychological phenomena, “a priori;” the body-as-machine worldview ripple from Cartesian Dualism rules out all parapsychological phenomena since “action at a distance” is not possible, as are any phenomena that cannot be explained by strict, natural, mathematical laws. On the theistic, dualistic side, some parapsychological phenomena are possible, but only as directed, caused by some Divine mind; these violations of the natural law, such as biblical miracles, may then be in need of explanation, such as why did the Divine perform this violation and not some other; why are some folks are saved and others allowed to die. The problem of evil is close.
5. **Mystical Disciplines, Ritual, and Worship:** The materialism ripple out of Cartesian Dualism shows itself in at least two ways: (1) religious experiences of ecstasy, of the Divine, of enlightenment, etc. are explained away as merely chemical reactions in the body-machine--chemical reactions to music, to chanting, to whatever is happening in both the body and the larger environment, and, relatedly, (2) that whatever happens in mystical disciplines, ritual, and

worship is merely the result of molecules in motion following universal laws, matter just does what it does, and no freewill is involved.

6. **Eco-Feminism:** Part of the rise of eco-feminism is in response to Cartesian dualism, to the body-as-machine ripple, and especially in response, as per the patriarchal paradigm, to the identification of the female with the body and the male with the soul. As mentioned above, in one of those weird twists that occurs in academia: the world is divided into body and soul/mind, and with science focusing on the body, and the soul/mind being, in part, relegated to the humanities. The male remains better than the female, and this attitude ripples through all variations of patriarchy. At the same time, with science gaining more and more influence, the rise of eco-feminism reveals the odd combination of materialism with dualism in which this materialism is controlled by male souls, which themselves are brain-based, if not brain-identified; the patriarchal dualism emerging from Descartes metaphysics doesn't even know its own paradigm. So, eco-feminism is responding to both Cartesian thought and patriarchy.

Regarding Process Thought, Hybrid Physical Feelings, and Conceptual Feelings

In response to Cartesian Dualism and the various Ideas which ripple therefrom—the body-as-machine, materialism, idealism, and assorted dualisms, Whitehead suggests a complex of Ideas, frequently known as Process Thought or Process Philosophy, among which are “ideas” concerning metaphysics, the power of the past, novelty, conceptual feelings, and hybrid physical feelings. As opposed to the distinct substances proposed by Cartesian Dualism, Process Thought suggests an event-based metaphysics within which both the mental and the physical are found, integrated into each and every event, or set of events, as these events occur and as they influence future events. These Ideas are shorthand ways of describing an ever-changing, complex reality.

For the purposes of this paper, elaborating on the full complexity of a Process Metaphysics is not necessary. The Ideas mentioned above are discussed in the following paragraphs, in the order listed: metaphysics; the power of the past; novelty; conceptual feelings; and hybrid physical feelings. Of course, there are interrelationships among these Ideas, but the focus in each section is on one Idea, though other Ideas are brought into the discussion. The final slice of this portion of the paper indicates a few of the ways in which adopting a Whiteheadian metaphysics may begin to adjust how the track topics in this section are viewed.

Metaphysics

As mentioned above, a process metaphysics is an event based metaphysics. The basic events are called “actual entities” or “actual occasions” or “occasions of experience.” These basic events combine in various ways, resulting in all that exists—quarks, redwoods, dirt, chairs, humans, etc.

These occasions of experience are composed of an integrated complex of feelings—both physical feelings and mental feelings. Physical feelings are influences from the past, pushing for their repetition, wanting to happen again. Mental feelings, of which there are varieties, are the sources of such novelty as may occur—from minimal novelty to much novelty. All occasions of experience, no matter how simple or how complex, are composed of an integration of both physical and mental feelings. There always is an element of repetition from the immediate past, and there is always some element of novelty.

Physical feelings are feelings by a current actual occasion of past actual occasions, via what Whitehead calls the physical pole. Conceptual feelings are feelings by a current actual occasion of eternal object(s) or forms, via what Whitehead terms the mental pole. Hybrid physical feelings are feelings by a current actual occasion of a novelty (form, potentiality, eternal object, Idea) that is found in a past actual occasion that need not be either contiguous or immediately continuous with the current occasion, and that is chosen by the current actual occasion for use in the emergence of that current occasion. “The universe, thus disclosed, is through and through inter-dependent. The body pollutes the mind, the mind pollutes the body (Whitehead, Religion, 85).

(The following discussions of the power of the past and of novelty are based upon Sweeney, *I'd Rather Be Dead*, 20-24.)

The Power of the Past

In Process Philosophy, the past exercises a powerful influence on the present. The past insists on having itself repeated in the present, and into the future. One of the sources of this power of the past is in the sameness that occurs between previous events and subsequent events; sameness increases influence. The “power of the past” is especially evident in the notion of repetition. Repetition involves patterns of thought and patterns of behavior—including linguistic behavior—being repeated and repeated. Repetition involves individuals incorporating only minimal change into themselves. With ongoing repetition, the power and influence of the pattern being repeated builds. With sufficient repetition, the pattern becomes a habit and correspondingly more difficult to alter; the more intense the repetition, the more difficult it becomes to alter that habit.

One more facet of the power of the past, implicit in the discussion above and important for the discussion below, is that each experience that occurs then becomes part of the past that, in turn, influences the present, and whose influence carries into the future: “the many become one, and are increased by one” (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 21). All that an individual does, thinks, feels, says becomes part of the past and of potential use for that individual and for others in their future development.

The power of the past is neither completely deterministic nor completely detrimental. The power of the past is responsible for the stability of the world in which we live. For

example, the chairs and tables that we are using today and the building in which we are meeting maintain their stability due to the power of the past, due to the events that compose these tables, chairs, and this building repeating themselves with little novelty. Individuals with less freedom, or less awareness of freedom, are more likely to repeat the patterns of the past. However, eventually, in time, the chairs, the tables, and the building would deteriorate and collapse, unless there are novel interventions to keep the chairs, the tables and the building stable.

For human beings, consider the various habits that we develop. There are habits that we would like to change, for example, those habits which affect one's health, such as overeating. There are habits of which we humans tend to be unaware, such as breathing or the use of language, unless those habits are interrupted in some way. Only then do we become aware of them. The ongoing repetition of previous patterns can be, and often is, such that changing those patterns in any significant way is very difficult.

Novelty

Alongside the power of the past, Process Philosophy affirms the possibility of "novelty." One of the primary ways by which novelty occurs involves the role of individual freedom. Some philosophies, such as scientific materialism, suggest that the power of the past, as found in efficient causality, automatically results in a complete determinism. In contrast, Process Philosophy integrates the self-creative role of the individual within the network of connections that constitute reality. As part of the description of "freedom," Whitehead suggests that each individual has the ability to contribute something, - however minimal, to its own creation as well as to the future creation and self-creation of other individuals. This self-creative aspect is complicated; feelings and relationships are integrated in various ways with varying degrees of complexity. Despite the power of the past, individuals have the ability to affect themselves and future individuals. Freedom also involves the individual's being able to select from among the various repetitive and novel experiences that are flowing into the developing individual. Complex individuals, such as human beings and orangutans, have more potential freedom than less complex individuals, such as sea slugs and subatomic particles, in choosing from among the available options.

One of the benefits of a process view of novelty and freedom is that it allows that human beings are, in varying degrees, morally responsible beings. A complication of the process view of novelty and freedom is that moral responsibility, in varying degrees, also occurs in non-human creatures. In a completely deterministic system, no matter the source of the determinism, there can be no moral responsibility, since there is no real self-determination.

Process Philosophy balances the power of the past, which is the basis of order and permanence, with novelty, as it occurs through an individual's choosing from among the possibilities presented in their experience. While the past provides an inhibiting context, the individual's own inherent freedom provides for opportunities for change. These

opportunities come from two basic sources, each of which is discussed below: (1) conceptual feelings of forms (please see immediately below), and (2) hybrid physical feelings of the previous occasions of experience (please see second portion below).

Conceptual Feelings (for additional information please see Appendix)

Whereas physical feelings are feelings of the feelings of other past events, conceptual feelings are feelings of forms or potentialities. Whitehead suggests that physical feelings refer to the influence of past events on the current occasion of experience, and that influence is most direct from the immediately preceding occasion(s) of experience. However, physical feelings from a more distant past also can exert influence through the continuous transmission of influence, of energy from past occasions, through intervening occasions, and into the current occasion of experience.

For each occasion of experience, in addition to the physical feelings from the past, there is a conceptual or mental aspect. This mental aspect involves the current occasion's own self-determination involving its opportunities for novelty. The sources for novelty include a realm of forms or possibilities from which the developing occasion can select some new way of actually modifying the past influences with which the occasion began.

For theists, including Whitehead himself, the source of novelty involves the primordial nature of the Divine and the ideals presented in each occasion of experience by God. In feeling the Divine feeling of an ideal, a creature feels it, at least initially, with a desire to realize that suggestion in this world. However, the finite subject, as constituted by its feelings of the Divine and of the past world, then decides, mostly unconsciously, how to form its own becoming, deciding what to make of its endowments. "It is our freedom to depart from the divine ideal (as well as past finite causation) that explains why we have the experience not only of "ideals aimed at" and "ideals achieved," as Whitehead put it, but also of "ideals defaced" (Griffin, *Panentheism*, pp. 232-233).

Hybrid Physical Feelings (for additional information please see Appendix)

Whitehead suggests that, in addition to physical feelings and conceptual feelings, there also are hybrid physical feelings. A physical feeling feels the physical feelings of antecedent occasions of experience, that is, the vector transmission of energy for repetition. Hybrid physical feelings involve the feeling of the mental pole, or of the conceptual feeling, of a previous occasion of experience by a current occasion of experience. Whitehead further suggested that this feeling can occur contiguously or at a distance (Class Notes, Griffin, Fall 1985). That is, it is possible for hybrid feelings to convey the conceptual feelings of noncontiguous events, and to feel these conceptual feelings directly, without transmission through intervening events.

Sometimes this “noncontiguous feeling” has been called “action at a distance” and has been ruled out, “a priori,” by the Cartesian metaphysics that supports modern science. However, some quantum phenomena, such as quantum entanglement, seem to call for modifying, to some degree, the modern paradigm. Whitehead’s suggestion of hybrid physical feelings can explain quantum phenomena quite well, as well as providing a way of understanding of psychic phenomena such as mental telepathy. For example, feeling the death of a loved one without conscious awareness of the death and from a distance becomes possible. In the modern paradigms, such experiences are not possible.

Conceptual Feelings and Hybrid Physical Feelings—A Summary. Within individuals, and the occasions of experience of which individuals are composed, (1) physical feelings are the feelings from the past, especially the immediate past, that push for their repetition; (2) conceptual feelings are feelings of forms or potentialities, a source of Ideas, of novelty for that individual; (3) hybrid physical feelings are feelings that come from conceptual feelings of other past occasions, both the immediately past and the more distantly past. Hybrid physical feelings are then another source of Ideas, of novelty for that occasion, in addition to the feeling of forms. Further, hybrid physical feelings need not be either contiguous or continuous with past actual occasion(s) from which the new Idea is being drawn. Hence, the Idea of hybrid physical feelings provides a paradigm that allows for the possibility of extraordinary experiences.

Adjusting the Track Topics

The preceding discussions, regarding conceptual feelings and hybrid physical feelings, suggest a number of adjustments that can be made with respect to how these Ideas can begin to provide ways of re-conceptualizing the tracks within this section. A few of these possible adjustments are indicated in the following items: (More detail and discussion regarding the ways in which process thought can affect each track can be found during the particular sessions for that track.)

1. **Bodies Count: Embodiment and the Effects of Bodily Activity:** To point out the obvious, a Process Paradigm allows for a more wholistic view of the body. Within a Process approach, the “racialized, speciated, gendered, abled, and sexually-oriented bodies” that currently are emphasized in the modern paradigms (dualistic or materialistic or idealistic) are able to be re-conceptualized (see description of **Bodies Count** on the conference website). The influence of Cartesian Dualism, bifurcating the world as it does into white and black, humans and animals, male and female, abled and disabled, straight and gay, and so on, is changed by Process Thought into continuums with many so-called “races,” with gradations of genetic overlap among all animals, and so on.

With respect to the materialistic aspect of the modern paradigm, and its emphasis on casually determined matter in motion, Process Thought provides an alternative paradigm within which explanations for elements of experience that are difficult, if not impossible, to explain using materialism. Such elements include creaturely freedom, consciousness, the power of belief as found for example in bio-feedback, and emotional displays by both human and nonhuman animals.

2. **Rethinking “Sexuality”:** Rather than dividing humans into only two sexes (male-female) and only two sexual orientations (queer-straight), Process Thought promotes being open to all of science and the ongoing increase in knowledge, within which there appear to be more than two sexes. (I have heard of the possibility of dozens of biological sexes based upon how the XY(Y) chromosomes really intermingle with each other.) Further, the variety in sexual orientations is becoming more and more evident.
3. **The Quest for Wholeness: East and West:** The body-as-machine image has dominated Western medicine, including psychiatry, and is a prime example of the materialistic modern paradigm. While the success of body-as-machine model is unquestioned, there have been areas in which this primarily materialistic has not been helpful, such as in explaining the placebo effect, the Norman Cousins’ situation (see above), and the success of acupuncture, to name a few such areas. The slowly increasing role of wholistic, a.k.a. complementary, medicine indicates that the body-as-machine paradigm is limited and that the Process Paradigm is inclusive enough to provide the opportunities for explaining how those areas in which the body-as-machine idea is limited.
4. **Extraordinary Challenges to the Modern Paradigm:** As noted above, in the modern paradigms, it is difficult, sometimes impossible, for transpersonal psychology and parapsychology to be explained. Within a Process Paradigm, transpersonal and parapsychological phenomena are possible, are not ruled out “a priori.” These extraordinary phenomena are possible because the incorporation of past conceptual feelings is not solely dependent upon the directly contiguous and continuous incorporation of feelings from the immediately preceding occasions of experience. Hybrid physical feelings from occasions of experience that are neither contiguous nor continuous can be felt by current occasions of experience; that is, there can be “action at a distance;” there can be extrasensory perception, shamanic healing, and so on.
5. **Mystical Disciplines, Ritual, and Worship:**
In a Process Paradigm, the contact with the Divine that is reported throughout the types of religious experience is explainable. This contact can occur via either conceptual feelings (sometimes referred to as Divine lures) or hybrid physical

feelings (Divine lures, once removed). Developing spiritual disciplines, including rituals and worship, can help one feel the Divine lures, as well as help the individual feel novel, at least to the individual, ideas whatever the source.

6. **Eco-Feminism:** Perhaps the most encompassing, most inclusive response to the modern paradigms, Eco-Feminism, especially when combined with Process Thought, responds directly to materialism, dualism, and patriarchy. A Process Eco-Feminism notes that there is much more to life than merely matter in motion; emotions and spirit are ever-present throughout all of Nature. Cartesian Dualism is challenged by a Process Eco-Feminism that challenges the strict divisions of male-female, queer-straight, human-nature, etc. and that proposes an intimate interrelatedness among all that exists. A Process Eco-Feminism also counters, in a variety of ways, the patriarchal paradigm that continues to dominate the world by challenging the assumptions and the myths that support patriarchy, myths such as men are identified with mind, women with body, and so on.

Concluding Remarks

So, “Do Ideas Matter?” Given all the information above, Yes. Within a Process Metaphysics, Ideas are important since Ideas can serve as a spur to action, whether that action is more immediate or farther down the road. Also, as a part of a past that is ever-present and ever-expanding, Ideas are always available as an influence in a wide variety of experiences.

Even in paradigms that devalue the notion that Ideas matter, Ideas matter. The Ideas of which modern scientific materialism is composed emerged out of the Ideas proposed by Descartes, Newton, Kant, et al. and that are incorporated into Cartesian dualism, as noted, have had significant influence.

Whether it be the Idea of a billiard ball universe within a space-time container, or the Idea of a Deity controlled cosmos, or the body-as-machine idea, Ideas have been and continue to be powerful ways to influence behavior. Further, such powerful Ideas need not be conscious; in fact, most Ideas are not brought to creaturely consciousness. Still the Ideas that have dominated can be altered, though to what degree and how quickly is hard to know. Given the power of the past, changeability would seem more difficult the longer the Ideas and the paradigm of which the Ideas are a part has been in place. However, most Ideas, like most experiences, are unconscious, which leads to difficulty in dealing with and in changing the paradigms.

For the purposes of this conference, one concern is whether the Ideas herein generated and discussed can have enough influence (however much that is), soon enough (however soon that is), to delay, prevent, ameliorate the oncoming environmental disasters that inspired this conference and the Ideas that led to this inspiration. Clearly,

most of us hope that the Ideas promoted by and generated out of this conference, along with their various ripples, will become as influential as Cartesian Dualism and its ripples have been, and sooner rather than later.

Buddhist Postlude

As demonstrated throughout this conference and in the history of Process Thought (please see the extensive Buddhist Thought bibliography on the Center for Process Studies website), there is much that is compatible between process thought and Buddhism. Following are three examples of this overlap:

“At stake here is not just our own well-being. We live in a time when our narratives are increasingly about what is broken in our world: how the institutions charged with running it are brokers of self-interest and power; how modern governments work for corporations and the wealthy; how media is in an ever-increasing arms race for control of our preferences. Look for the root of these problems and we end up at the mind—its greed, fear, and craving. If the mind is the root of the problem, then solving the problem—crafting a humanity in which our leaders are stewards of a peaceful, noble, and just world; in which individuals give full expression to their talents and creativity; and in which each person feels relevant and important to the whole—will only come from a change in mind. For this, we have to do the dance that will move us inwardly.

These ideas are not new. A long time ago the Buddha realized the immeasurable benefits to be gained from refining the mind. He also implored his followers not to turn his teachings into dogma but to have the courage to examine the reality we are in right now and to become the best we can be in it.

So we invite you to dance. To do the dance where East meets West, where the best of both worlds come together to forge a positive, hopeful vision for humanity, where we work on ourselves to be of greatest service to one another. This is not about fixing the world. It is about freeing our minds to build a better one.” (Levy, *Let's Dance*, pp. 30-31).

In “Brain Karma: Is Delusion Hardwired?” Wendy Hasenkamp discusses recent developments in neuroscience which show, among many new discoveries, that the plasticity of the brain is more than previously believed. Hasenkamp also notes how patterns of neural circuitry can lead to habitual behavior and notes the importance of concepts in the brain development. “What’s essential in this process is that each of our experiences—thoughts and ideas, emotions and sensations, behavior in the world—is reflected at a cellular level (*Brain Karma*, p. 66).

Finally,

“The chain of cause and effect in a web, a Buddhist might have told me, is not always linear or easy to predict. The ‘butterfly effect’—so often spoken of by leaders like (Vaclav) Havel—whereby an insect shaking its wings leads to a tornado many continents away took many forms, it seemed. An idea over here and a sudden effect over there. Every word and tiny act has consequences, the Dalai Lama might have been reminding us, though often they are consequences we cannot and will not ever see.” (Iyer, *Open Road*, p. 240)

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Appendix

from David Ray Griffin, Panentheism, pp. 232-233

“But this doctrine of necessary conformation applies only to the first phase of an occasion of experience, which is its *physical* pole. Each occasion's physical pole is followed by a *mental* pole, which involves self-determination. In this pole, the subjective forms of the inherited feelings can be modified. . . . Rather than total conformation, there is only “initial confirmation.

. . . Following this initial conformation, the occasion, in its mental or conceptual pole, determines the final subjective forms of its various feelings in the process of determining its overall aim, called the “subjective aim.” This subjective aim may diverge drastically from the ideal presented to it by God, which Whitehead calls the “initial subjective aim,” or simply the “initial aim.”

In feeling the divine feeling of an ideal, a creature feels it, at least initially, with a conformal subjective form—that is, with appetite to realize it. This divinely derived feeling is only the *initial* subjective aim, rather than the subjective aim as such, because the causality from God, like the causality from other actual entities, is not all-determining. The finite subject, once constituted by its prehension of God and the past world, is then “autonomous master” of its own becoming, deciding precisely what to make of its endowments. The subject, therefore, “is conditioned, though not determined, by [the] initial subjective aim.” It is our freedom to depart from the divine ideal (as well as past finite causation) that explains why we have the experience not only of “ideals aimed at” and “ideals achieved,” as Whitehead put it, but also of “ideals defaced.”

From John B. Cobb, Jr., “Process Theology & Buddhism,” 2011

“In Whitehead's view every past event plays some role, however trivial, in the constitution of present events. The ‘pure physical feelings’ of event that are not contiguous are mediated by contiguous ones. That is, the purely physical effects of events that occurred in a distant star many years ago are mediated to my eyes by vast numbers of intervening light waves. The physical effects of an experience that I had as

a child are mediated to me now by myriads of intervening neuronal events. In other words, one event has a physical impact directly only on its immediate successors, and so forth. That is the way pure physical feelings work and energy is transmitted.

However, Whitehead teaches that in addition to pure physical feelings there are also 'hybrid physical feelings.' Pure physical feeling feel(s) the physical feelings of antecedent events. Hybrid physical feelings feel the conceptual, propositional, and intellectual feelings of antecedent events. Whitehead speculated that these hybrid feelings could feel the conceptual feelings of noncontiguous events directly, that is, without mediation by intervening events. Historically this is called 'action at a distance,' and for a long time scientists inclined to deny that there can be any such thing. However, today there are quantum phenomena that seem to require this doctrine, so that Cartesian metaphysics to which scientists have allied themselves in the modern period has to be modified. Whitehead's speculation fits the known facts quite well. It also provides an understanding of psychic phenomena such as mental telepathy."

About the history of hybrid physical feelings:

The notion of hybrid physical feelings is one of the few examples of a Whiteheadian notion that simplifies the metaphysics; the simplification occurs due to the elimination of the Category of Conceptual Reversion (*Process and Reality (Corrected Edition)*, p. 250). Whitehead rarely revised previous material after hitting upon a helpful, new notion, and such is the case in this situation (Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book*, 6-7). Despite Whitehead's elimination of Conceptual Reversion, some commentators on *Process and Reality* continue to explain and use Conceptual Reversion—cf. Krauss, *Metaphysics of Experience*, and Cobb, *Whitehead Word Book*.