

Process . Perspectives



Volume 24 Number 3

ISSN 0360-618X

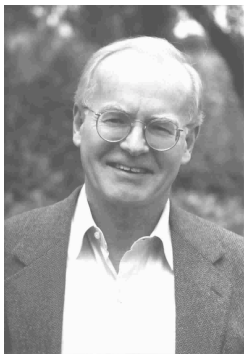
Fall 2001

Seminar Summaries

Julie Nelson

Kang Ouyang

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

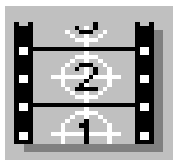


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David Ray Griffin**
by Siri C. Dale



What Process Means to Me
by Freddy Moreau

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Whitehead Film Festival**
by Alan Van Wyk



China Trip
by Ron Phipps and Zhihe Wang

a relational worldview for the common good

Process Perspectives

The Newsletter of
the Center for Process Studies

a relational worldview for the common good

Volume 24.3 Fall 2001

Editor

Siri C. Dale

Published three times per year
by the Center for Process Studies
1325 N. College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-3154

Individual Annual Subscriptions

USA: \$15

Elsewhere: \$22

US Funds

(Institutions please call or visit Web site)

Membership Rates

Subscriptions are included with
membership, along with a subscription
to *Process Studies*—the academic
journal devoted primarily to
Whiteheadian thought.

More information on
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Response to September 11th Attacks

by John B. Cobb, Jr.

The first response to the Sept. 11 tragedy must be one of shock, anger, horror, and, especially, of the deepest sympathy for those who have lost friends and relatives. We grieve with them. We respect and admire the courage and sacrifice of the many who work to find the bodies of the dead and to restore such order and normalcy as is possible where the greatest damage was done. We rejoice in the spirit of solidarity with the sufferers that has been shown across the nation.

The attack has been a wake-up call to our whole nation. It has shattered our sense of security and made us aware of our vulnerability. It gives concreteness to our understanding that all parts of the world are interconnected. We may hope that it will make Americans, who have been among the most parochial of peoples, more concerned about events all over the earth. For the present, however, our responses to the disaster are taking two sharply different forms.

For some, the response is one of aggrieved innocence and the need for vengeance. We have been led to believe that our global actions have been basically for the sake of all humanity, so that anyone who hates us for them is ignorant or evil. Our president has encouraged this interpretation by telling us that "America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world." This self-righteous interpretation justifies us in trying to exterminate our enemies. The excessive retaliation, which is only too likely, will not only escalate violence but also intensify the anger against us and provoke more attacks in the future. Down that path there is no security.

Others agree that those who are specifically responsible for this horrendous destruction should be brought to justice and hope this can be done through legal channels. But we know that the recent history of the Near East has not left us innocent. In pursuing the Cold War we stirred up Muslim hatred of Communism and exploited Muslim extremists in destroying the Communist government of Afghanistan. The CIA trained Osama bin Laden in that context, and our policies led indirectly to the victory of the Taliban, not for the well-being of the people of Afghanistan. Our subsequent economic policies against the Taliban have led to widespread misery among their subjects. This may all be understandable in the context of global geopolitics, but it should not surprise us that many, including persons of whose services we once made use, hate us for what we have done to their countries and their people.

Saddam Hussein is another CIA trainee whom we used

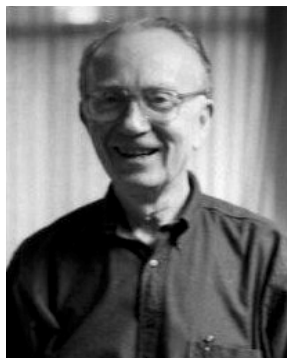
to weaken Iran. When he ceased to obey our commands and attacked Kuwait, we overwhelmed him on the battlefield. Subsequently we have instituted economic sanctions intended to compel his cooperation, but whose actual effects are the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children. We should not be surprised that the parents of dying children hate us.

In Israel, our policy has been one of support of Israel. This support has expressed our collective sense of owing the Jewish people a chance at nationhood after all they have suffered at our hands. But we have not been equally sensitive to what this has meant to the non-Jewish people who had to be displaced in order to build a Jewish homeland. We have regarded the resistance by Palestinian people to removal from their homes and reduction to second-class status as "terrorism," and we have financed the harsh reprisals they have suffered from the state of Israel. We have supported Israel also in building settlements throughout Palestinian lands in defiance of the United Nations. We should not be surprised that many Palestinians hate us.

For us now to respond to the deaths of innocent Americans by inflicting death on equally innocent Arabs may temporarily reduce the ability of our enemies to injure us. It will not reduce their hatred. Sooner or later that hatred will find expression in other destructive acts against us that will only lead to greater ferocity on our part. There must be a better way.

The Near East is not the only part of the world in which we have evoked hatred. What is remarkable is that, in spite of actions on our part that have hurt so many in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, there remains in the Near East and throughout the world a vast reservoir of goodwill toward us that has found expression again in response to this attack upon us. It is this goodwill, rather than our status as the world's only "superpower," that is our true and enduring strength. Let us build on that goodwill and adopt policies of friendship and cooperation with other peoples rather than manipulating them to our short-term advantage.

The realization that we are part of a world community such that we cannot escape the consequences of suffering that we cause elsewhere could be the occasion of the maturing of the American mind. It could be the occasion of an abandonment of the effort to force others to bow to our superior might and a shift to leading by presenting a vision of a better world, which is in the long-term interest of all. Present indications are that the immediate response will not be of this sort. But there are millions who want change, and we are among them.



What Process Means to Me:

All That You Would Like To Know About God But Would Not Dare Ask

by Freddy Moreau

Translated from the French by Krista Duttonhaver

Process Perspectives encourages readers to send in personal statements about what process means to them. Freddy Moreau is President of the Association of Liberal Protestants in Belgium. Should you wish to learn more about this association and its relation to process theology, visit his Web site at <http://www.protestantisme.be> or e-mail him at freddy.moreau@skynet.be.

Initially urged on by a curiosity about the universe, I quickly realized that astronomy was insufficient for answering all of my questions. Wanting to know more, I thought metaphysics would fill in the gaps!

Unfortunately, my desire to align my knowledge of religion (which mainly derived from Catholic dogmatics) with my scientific knowledge led me from deception to hope and back again. This can be explained first by my immaturity, and then by my overconfidence in the doctrines of these two, often conflicting, disciplines. Becoming Protestant made it possible for me to begin quenching my thirst for knowledge. To assuage this thirst, I have made profound but difficult choices among the paths that offered themselves to me. These choices were neither offered nor allowed me when I was a Catholic.

I have quenched this thirst only after finally realizing that:

1) The dogmatic approach to belief is absurd and even dangerous. In fact, dogma demands that believers “sacrifice their intelligence as soon as they enter the religious domain.” *One must be aware that in many cases, the recourse to God represents a laziness and an abdication of the thinking that puts a name or a word on ignorance and brings a purely verbal solution to problems that it cannot resolve.*

2) The nature of reality and the necessity of God are two things that absolutely must be defined clearly in order to serve as the basis of process theology (which has delivered me from all taboos and freed me of all my questions).

3) “Reality consists of a continuous current of actions and not of a conglomerate of things or of substances. The world is not a collection of objects or of juxtaposed bodies,

but a flow of events that succeed one another, interpenetrating and interfering with each other.” These events are actual entities, or occasions, upon which process thought is based. These actual entities indicate that God and God’s creative dynamism are responsible for the full concreteness of being and for its well-being. They perish afterwards, entering into the past, without for that reason being annihilated. New actual entities integrate the past events into themselves: simultaneously going through a process of agony and of birth. In perishing but at the same time participating in something that is creating itself, they experience a kind of immortality.

With neither reluctance nor lapse, Jesus fully incarnates in himself the will of God. In him, there is no tension between the divine vision and his own. For many process theologians, the unique character of Jesus is found in the fact that he perfectly plays his part and completely fulfills the expectations of the conductor of the orchestra.

I asked myself how to comprehend this life after death: reaching immortality by the grace of God’s action. *God preserves and saves the totality of what has existed and exists. God takes back and embraces our actions, our works, our thoughts, our emotions, our impressions, our pain and our joys, enacting a creative synthesis that neither forgets nor neglects anything, and in which the least element finds its place and its utility. This is an important aspect of our salvation, which comes to us from God.*

The necessity of God: the problem, in its perpetual and tormenting presence, is not really the rational necessity of a “divine,” transcendent presence that will explain the inexplicable, but surely, more prosaically: *Why does life have an end? Why, for example, must the love that one has for me or that I have for others cease, in one way or another? Why does everything have an end?*

From that, must one assume the necessity of a God and, of course, the necessity of pleasing God? The “great” spirits have quickly understood that the Supreme Being logically could be encountered only in faith!

Does a religion, as a human phenomenon, offer a way to

