

THE WHITEHEAD COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT. *When universities were open to questions about humanity, its relation to the natural world, and its destiny, Whitehead's thought was recognized as relevant and important. The shift of universities from centers of intellectual reflection to collections of narrowly-focused value-free research has excluded it. A few thinkers have kept it alive and developed its implications at the fringes of higher education and public discussion. Since it is unlikely that a livable planet will be reclaimed with the pattern of thinking that is now working against that goal, the need for an organic, nondual neo-naturalism is greater than ever.*

KEYWORDS: *value-free scholarship, neo-naturalism, radical empiricism, causality, prehension, Rene Descartes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, William James, Alfred North Whitehead, University of Chicago, Buddhism, Christianity, ecological economics, eco-feminism, industrial agriculture, perennial grain*

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Alfred North Whitehead was a revered teacher at Harvard University from 1924-37. During that period and for some years thereafter he was regarded as one of the leading philosophers in the United States. A good many people would have listed him as the most important. His role in the United States extended beyond the university to a segment of the general public.

Today there is no interest in his thought at Harvard or, indeed, at the great majority of American universities. Those of us who appraise Whitehead as one of the great philosophers of all time constitute a tiny ghetto with few participants in major academic centers. Why has this change occurred?

1. The Roles and Fortunes of Whitehead's Thought

I think I can say without fear of contradiction that the change did not result from the refutation of Whitehead or by improvement on his work. If that were the case, the small ghetto of which I wrote would not exist. The change has been in the nature of philosophy and of the university as a whole.

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When Whitehead flourished, universities understood themselves to be places for intellectual reflection and conversation about the issues of concern in the wider culture. Among the most important such issues were those stimulated by developments in biology and physics. In different ways these developments raised questions about the relation of human beings to the rest of the world and the place of values and of religious ideas including the reality of God. Cartesian dualism was disrupted by evolutionary theory. Kant offered an epistemological dualism to replace it, but many Americans were not satisfied. Other options were considered. Whitehead directly addressed all of these issues in original ways. This conversation seemed relevant to much of the university community, but it had its home in philosophy.

Already there were other philosophers who wanted to redefine their task. Some followed Kant in assuming that “knowledge” is limited to what is empirically known. This can give us only a phenomenal and deterministic world. They disagreed with Kant’s talk of another kind of reflection, one about practical affairs. They were not interested in the inevitably uncertain speculations that played a large role in the discussion in which Whitehead took part. For them philosophy’s task is largely limited to showing why that kind of talk is useless and meaningless. The growing edge of philosophy limited it to analysis. The sort of synthesis that Whitehead sought was no longer considered a proper goal. In the forties and fifties many philosophy departments were still somewhat open to including those who sought synthesis, but by the sixties analytic philosophy was clearly dominant and often exclusive, and it remains so today.

In fact Whitehead made contributions to analysis as well as synthesis, and a few philosophers, such as his students, Bertrand Russell and Willard Quine, appreciated that. But in general the new school simply ignored or dismissed Whitehead. As philosophy had been newly defined, Whitehead was not a philosopher.

The victory of this type of philosophy was supported by changes in the university as a whole. It ceased to be a place for intellectual activity and focused instead on scholarly research. Most universities now define themselves as “research universities”. They judge that research is best done when one approaches the task within the confines of a narrowly defined academic discipline and without any judgments of better and worse. So they describe themselves as “value-free.” Since most of the questions raised by the culture cross all such disciplinary boundaries and concern the relation of facts and values, the research contributes only information to the discussion of action or policy or humanistic understanding. Clearly there is no place for traditional philosophy in a value free research university. Philosophical analysis can have a small claim to a role in the research university by supposedly bringing greater clarity to the issues. But whereas Whitehead’s type of synthetic philosophy was central to the intellectually-oriented university, it has no place in the research university. Even analytic philosophy is marginal.

That Whitehead survived at all in higher education is because it includes professional schools. These have to pay some attention to real world issues. They did not immediately or wholeheartedly subscribe to value-free research in narrowly define disciplines. Schools of education, that is, those that prepared teachers took

some interest in ideas excluded from the research university. When one thinks of how to teach children, it is hard to exclude questions of better and worse altogether. Whitehead wrote a book about education that had some influence among educators even after philosophy departments excluded his work.

Theological schools are given the task of preparing people to serve the churches. Here too it was not possible to be completely free from questions of better or worse. Also the sorts of questions that Whitehead dealt with were asked by people in the pew. Whitehead continued to play a role in a few schools of theology, especially at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

However, even in the professional schools, most courses came to be taught according to the model of the academic disciplines created for specialized valued free research. The Divinity School at Chicago now prides itself on the excellence of its work in these disciplines. Whether they serve the needs of pastors is not a major concern. Whitehead has disappeared from the curriculum.

This means that to maintain an interest in Whitehead is to be a critic of higher education, particularly of the abandonment of any effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of human life and its place in the natural world. We believe that the university has structured itself and understood its purpose based on bad philosophical assumptions that it is incapable of discussing. We believe that we must witness to a different possibility. This requires us to build on a movement that flourished briefly in universities and then was excluded.

When I studied at Chicago 1947-49 this movement was called neo-naturalism. My faculty in the Divinity School believed that it was clear that since we now knew that human beings are fully natural, we could not continue to think of nature in purely objective terms. Nature includes subjects as well as objects. In the previously dominant understanding of nature, building on Descartes, nature is exhaustively understood as a material mechanism. Human beings know ourselves as something more than that. Re-thinking nature so that we could understand ourselves as part of it seemed to be the central intellectual task posed by the new evolutionary understanding.

The faculty was especially interested in scientists who shared this view and made helpful suggestions. They recognized Whitehead, the mathematician, logician, and physicist, as one who was doing this. They appreciated the work of Charles Hartshorne, who was teaching in the philosophy department at Chicago. Hartshorne had been an assistant of Whitehead and was inspired by him as well as by C.S. Peirce, whose collected writings he co-edited with Paul Weiss. A few of the neo-naturalists became serious Whiteheadians. Most of the followers of Whitehead in my generation were students of this faculty.

One reason that intellectual activity flourished in Chicago during those years was that it was strongly favored by the chancellor, Robert Maynard Hutchins. However, Hutchins left Chicago a few years later, surrendering to the rising tide of scholarly research through self-enclosed academic disciplines. Our professors at Chicago, of course, continued to teach neo-naturalism for some years under the leadership of Bernard Loomer. However, after Hutchins left, the neo-naturalist

faculty dispersed and retired, and the University of Chicago ceased to be a center for this kind of thinking. Indeed, the issues with which this faculty had dealt ceased being discussed in North American universities. They did not fit into any of the academic disciplines developed for research purposes. The term “neo-naturalism” has also largely disappeared.

However, before the dispersal, Loomer had introduced another label used especially for the neo-naturalist thinking influenced by Whitehead. He called it “process thought.” Loomer’s leadership was such that this term was quickly picked up and adopted. The word “process” was already prominent in this community since the title of Whitehead’s *magnum opus* was “Process and Reality.”

Those of us who, while studying at Chicago, learned the importance of intellectual life were distressed that the Chicago Divinity School faculty was no longer providing the leadership we had appreciated. Whitehead’s own students kept some interest alive quite independent of Chicago, and in their diaspora some of the Chicago neo-naturalists continued to influence students. But these rather isolated influences were barely keeping the memory of Whitehead alive.

To resist the continuing decline of what some of us considered a crucial dimension of thought, we created a journal, *Process Studies*, and (in 1973) a Center for Process Studies in Claremont, California. The Whiteheadian process movement has not recovered the status in the United States that it had during Whitehead’s life or for a decade after his death, but it has survived, developed, and achieved some international visibility.

In Europe interest in Whitehead developed largely independently of what we had done in the United States. Isabelle Stengers, in her work with Prigogine, became interested in Whitehead’s contribution to science, and she was joined in this regard by Bruno Latour. Stengers’ *Thinking with Whitehead* is one of the most important studies of his philosophy. However, the opening of European universities to Whitehead resulted chiefly from his importance being recognized by Deleuze.

What is appreciated in European universities is primarily the early, less speculative, and less radical Whitehead. For secular European intellectuals to take Whitehead seriously requires the denial of his theism, whereas *Process and Reality* gives a major role to what Whitehead calls “God.” The fact that the Center for Process Studies is located at a school of theology makes Whitehead suspect on both sides of the Atlantic. That it does not prevent the Chinese from being uniquely receptive is an ironic twist.

However, there has been a third strand of interest among Catholic philosophers, who have a center in Leuven. This has been connected closely with the Claremont center. Leuven has attracted students from around the world and its graduates have taken process theology to Congo, India, and the Philippines. The Catholic strand has been influential in creating some interest in Poland and perhaps also in Romania and Bulgaria. The International Whitehead Network, which grew out of a CPS conference, keeps this global reality alive and visible through international conferences every other year.

2. Some Major Ideas of Whitehead

To deal with questions raised by scientific and intellectual developments of the nineteenth century, Whitehead actually broke with the dominant Western tradition. He developed a metaphysics and cosmology more similar to classical Buddhism than to any preceding Western thinker. But he developed this vision in dialogue with Western science, philosophy, and religion far beyond what any Buddhist has done.

The great majority of Western thinkers from the Greeks to the present time have thought that our basic relation to the world was mediated through the sense organs, and most have focused on vision. Hume made clear for all time that if we begin with this assumption we are limited to a phenomenal world. The phenomena are all given as objects. That is we have no direct relation to subjects, and their existence cannot be “known” in the Kantian sense.

Whitehead rejected this starting point. Obviously the senses are very important in giving us clear conscious knowledge, but this is not primitive. The experience of sight begins with the world impinging on our eyes and brain. This is prior to our projecting patterns of color. It is true that we are far more clearly conscious of the colors we project than of the primitive experience of being impacted by the world. But that we experience this relationship also, even if only at the largely non-conscious level, is evidenced throughout. We do not really doubt the existence of a world. Babies are convinced very early. Indeed, we do not doubt the existence of other subjects. It is foolish to suppose that we arrive at these conclusions by reasoning from sense experience.

William James taught us radical empiricism, that is, that we should examine experience radically to bring out elements other than sense data. For example we all know that our experience in the present moment is affected by past experience, most of all by immediately preceding experience. We do not infer that this is the case from sense data. In each moment we experience the causal efficacy of the past experience. Similarly we do not arrive at the idea that we are embodied through examining sense experience. We experience our bodies apart from any sense experience.

Whitehead thus analyzes two dimensions of human experience. There are perceptions in the mode of “causal efficacy.” I have been discussing these. There are also perceptions in the mode of “presentational immediacy.” These include touch and vision. Most philosophers have begun with the latter, and if they are fully consistent, they are thereby led in the direction of solipsism of the present moment. However, if we actually analyze our experience, we will find that perceptions in the mode of causal efficacy ground the perceptions in the mode of presentational immediacy. We begin in a social world, not an individual one.

Whitehead goes to some trouble to explain how presentational immediacy arises out of causal efficacy. To deal with these in detail he invents a new word, “prehension.” A prehension makes something given a participant in a new instance of becoming. Perception in the mode of causal efficacy makes an aspect of some preceding event a participant in the new becoming. So there are prehensions in the mode of causal efficacy. These are called physical, because their data are already actual and are felt as such.

But clearly the patches of color presented to us immediately are not objectively there before we see them. Their reality is bestowed on them in the seeing by the new occasion. Therefore, the prehensions of these shapes and colors are not physical in this sense. These data are felt as potentials for actualization. These potentials are not limited to visual data or even to sensory data as a whole. They may be emotional tones and urges and anticipations. Whereas the potentials actualized in vision are largely determined by what happens physically in the sense organs and the brain, some of the potentials are what we call ideas and ideals that shape our action. Whitehead calls all of these prehensions of potentials “conceptual.” They constitute the mental aspect of each moment of becoming. Every instance of becoming has both a “physical pole” and a “mental pole.” This polarity replaces a dualism of physical and mental substances without minimizing the importance of either physicality or mentality.

Using the term “causal” in naming the most primal perceptions is an indication that Whitehead rejects both the Humean and the Kantian view of causality. We know what a cause is because we experience ourselves as deriving what we become from others. In a causal feeling the present reenacts what is given in the past or incorporates that past within itself. The simplest feelings are deterministic. The present necessarily prehends and in some part reenacts what it prehends. This is why the world holds together and so much can be predicted with confidence. It is why so much has been accomplished by Cartesian science employing a mechanistic model.

It is important to see that in order to understand causality, we must distinguish subjects from objects. Every event in the process of its own becoming is subjective. It subjectively prehends past events. These were subjects, but they have now become data or objects for the new event. Here, too, dualism is rejected. There is not one kind of thing that is inherently subjective and another that is inherently objective. In its moment of becoming everything is subjective. As soon as it has become, it is an object for its successors. We cannot have any understanding of causality if we abstract the world from its moment of subjectivity as science insists that we do.

If the physical feelings that I have described were all there is, then the scientific model would work for everything. But Whitehead is analyzing subjects rather than objects as primary. The subjects do reenact what they receive. But they also integrate the many things they receive into a new unity. This integration is quite simple for simple occasions but very complex for complex ones such as human experiences. It always involves potentials as well as what is actual. It actualizes some potentials but not others. Whitehead calls this a “decision” which means a cutting off. Not all potentials can be actualized. This role of potentials constitutes the germ, in even the simplest occasion, of what becomes mentality in complex occasions.

I will take this discussion one step further. Causal feelings are feelings of the physical feelings of antecedent occasions. The causality of the past is mediated through contiguous experience. But there are other influences on the coming to be of an experience that are not as scientists anticipate. The mental aspect of earlier experiences can also be prehended. Whitehead calls this the physical feeling of a feeling of what is potential. The feeling of these past “conceptual feelings” is not

limited to contiguous events. There is, therefore, action at a distance both at the quantum level and in animal experience. At the quantum level physicists call it “entanglement”. At the human level we are talking about our sense of the feeling tone of a whole group of people or memory of past experiences or telepathic communications.

Rather than eliminating purpose from nature, Whitehead affirms that every event arises out of the aim to become and to become whatever value is possible in the given situation. This aim is derived from the ordering of potentials relevant to the situation. This is the way God enters into every event. In every moment of our experience, we are called to actualize those potentials that provide the greatest value in the momentary event and in its relevant future. In fact we often fall short and this leaves us humans with the sense that we often “miss the mark.”

My formulations have assumed some things that need to be made explicit. For Whitehead, actuality consists of events rather than substances. The quanta of which the world is made up are not substances. They happen. Whitehead applies the same notion to human experience. There is no underlying experiencer who remains the same while experience changes. Nor can experiences be viewed as substances. They are events.

Like William James, Whitehead thinks that the flow of our experience is not continuous. Instead it consists in successive experiences. The descriptions above presupposed this. They talked about the becoming of a single moment of experience. The most important contributor to this event is almost always the previous moment of experience, the one that we identify as the same person’s. But in each moment we take account of data that were not available in the preceding moment. A person is not absolutely self-identical through time. A person is a process. Whitehead calls this kind of process a macro-process.

This macro-process can be analyzed into the micro-processes that make it up. It is these micro-processes that are the “atomic” units that ultimately make up the world. These units are atomic because they cannot be broken up into smaller events. Their analysis is the account of the process through which they came into being as an indivisible whole. For Whitehead, each of these indivisible actualities is an “actual entity” or an “occasion of experience.”

I began by referring to similarity to Buddhism. The Buddhist analysis of what we are likely to consider enduring substances is similar. Also, in Nagarjuna we have a clear account of what he calls *pratityasamutpada*. Every entity is an instance of this, and this is the way all things come together to constitute us in each moment. Whitehead’s formulation is that each actual entity is an instance of creativity, and creativity is the many becoming one and being increased by one. Most of what takes part in constituting me now also takes part in constituting other people.

Of course, we cannot live without discrimination, and we need to identify, with regard to every decision, what is most important. But Whitehead reminds us that this is always an abstraction. In fact everything is relevant to everything. We cannot avoid ignoring a great deal, but decisions to ignore need to be open to constant revision. Again, this points in exactly the opposite direction from the organization of the

university in more or less airtight academic disciplines. Whitehead shares this with Buddhists although he emphasizes the positive role of concepts, with all their limitations, more than most Buddhists.

Whitehead emphasizes, much more than Buddhists, two things. First, every actual entity “decides” just how it will synthesize all the elements that the world contributes to it. Most of what it will be is decided for it, but it participates in its own creation. Second, every entity aims to actualize value. It organizes around that aim. The aim is to achieve the most value possible in itself and in its effect on the future. It may decide accordingly, but it may refuse to fully accord with that aim. It derives that aim from the divine ordering of potentialities.

In other words, Whitehead’s metaphysics is Buddhist, but his theology is Christian. In Japan process thought plays its most important role in the Buddhist/Christian dialog – a conversation in which Japanese intellectuals are often interested. This discussion is also increasingly important in the United States.

In the Abrahamic scriptures, clearly, God is an actual entity. However, most philosophers assume that God must be “ultimate.” Thomism has tried to identify God both as Supreme Being and as Being Itself. Whitehead regards creativity as the ultimate, that is, what plays the role of Being Itself in the West. But he agrees with the scriptures that God is an actual entity, not creativity as such. Thus whereas Buddhists aim to realize their true nature, called Buddha nature, Christians want to respond fully to the call of God. For a Whiteheadian these goals, oriented respectively to creativity and to God, can be viewed as complementary.

3. Relevance to Saving the World

For us, the need to keep this kind of thinking alive was intensified by the global environmental crisis. The victory of value-free research disciplines has rendered universities more part of the problem than part of the solution. With few exceptions, they have not addressed the issues facing humanity or even recognized that they should try to contribute to saving the world. An influential book is directed to faculties, entitled “Save the world on your own time.” It makes clear that professors are hired to teach and do research on whatever they can get the money to investigate. They are not hired to work for bettering the human condition.

We in the Whiteheadian community feel the need to muster thinkers to the task of considering how the biosphere can be preserved and how the earth can be kept habitable for humans. These questions are, of course, shaped by our valuing of life. The refusal to acknowledge such values seems to us to be absurd and even demonic. We believe that most people in universities agree, but that their graduate studies have socialized them to prioritize research and through their teaching to socialize the next generation of teachers to avoid allowing their values to influence their academic work. Few can even imagine another way to teach and learn. To some of us it seems quite clear that the dominant Western philosophy has contributed extensively to bad actions and bad policy. It is difficult to have much hope for the needed changes being made while these ideas remain unchallenged.

The most obvious example is economic theory. Economists are extensively consulted by governments and corporations, and over recent decades their advice has generally supported moves in the wrong direction. There is now much more self-criticism among economists than there has been in the past. Many realize that the extreme gap between the very rich and the very poor, to which the policies they have encouraged contributed, is not desirable. But the even more serious problems resulting from their encouragement of increasing market activity have barely been acknowledged. Almost all economists continue to encourage governments to work for economic growth. At best they seek to balance economic considerations, assuming this focus on growth, with questions of sustainability.

Around the edges, people who are not part of the guild have proposed that we should seek to develop economies that aim at meeting human needs without increasing the pressure we place on the natural environment. To Whiteheadians this seems to be a question economists should be asking but refuse to ask. If we reflect as to why economists cannot consider changing their discipline to fit the needs of the time, we quickly run into deeply entrenched commitments of a sort historically discussed by philosophers. The economists' descriptions of the nature of the human being qua economic actor fit the individualism and indifference to values that the university as a whole encourages.

Before 1970 a Whiteheadian economist, Herman Daly, proposed that, given the location of human activity in the context of a larger natural system, growth economics should be replaced by steady-state economics. He is now recognized as the father of ecological economics. He was, of course, excommunicated by the economics guild and has not been allowed to teach. But among environmentalists and church people he is widely recognized and admired. There is, I think, only one university in which ecological economics is taught, but the topic is widely discussed outside the university.

Let me make it clear that ecological economics *could* have been developed by someone who knew nothing of Whitehead's thought. If so, we Whiteheadians would still support it wholeheartedly. We are not sectarian in the sense of only wanting to promote our own work. But I think it is not an accident that Daly was influenced by Whitehead and is part of our circle. This is also true of Mark Anielski who has published a book on "The Economics of Happiness." The only country that aims at human happiness rather than enlargement of the market is Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom.

Our habit of critiquing the dominant economic and political practices has made us highly critical of the increasing takeover of American democracy by corporations and especially by Wall Street. We are strongly opposed to American imperialism. On the whole we are less taken in by American propaganda than most academics, religious leaders, and political pundits. The world leader in exposing the government's lies about what happened on 9/11 was a process theologian, David Griffin.

I hardly need to say at this point that a Whiteheadian view of education calls for drastic changes. There are a few liberal arts colleges that have developed the sort of

curricula for which a Whiteheadian hopes. There has been some influence of Whitehead's thought, but our support for such experiments does not depend on that. In Beijing there is a Whitehead kindergarten, indeed, a group of kindergartens that go by that name. In Korea there is a grade school being developed on Whiteheadian lines. Whiteheadians have developed a few programs in American universities. But we support also many other experiments that are taking place. I keep hoping that the absurdity of value-free education and research in a desperately needy world will soon be widely recognized.

Agriculture is an area in which many people recognize that we have gone in the wrong direction. There has been very little truly sustainable agriculture in human history, and many regions that once were fertile are no longer productive. Now we are dealing with the whole planet and the need for sustainability is global and urgent. But our actual practice is becoming worse as we continue to shift from small farms to industrial agriculture.

This shift is the result of the influence of economics on agricultural policy and practice. Increasing "productivity" is now the key goal, and this is measured in terms of output divided by labor. Slow loss of soil is not considered a problem because of the habit of economists to discount the future. Social costs are not factored in, nor are the consequences of increasing the dependence on oil products. Since the calculations of economists are favorable to the interests of agricultural corporations, they support one another. The schools of agriculture in the United States teach nothing else. Governmental departments of agriculture at state and national levels join the schools in serving the corporations.

Outside of these schools there is interesting work being done. Wes Jackson has devoted his career to creating perennial grains that are as productive as annuals. He has had significant success, now recognized even by schools of agriculture. If a polyculture of perennials can succeed the monoculture of annuals, the production of food can be accompanied by the maintenance and even improvement of the soil. We would, of course support such moves regardless of the philosophy of the leaders, but I do not think it an accident that Jackson is a Whiteheadian.

China has been particularly receptive to our initiatives. In the area of agriculture, most of the professors were educated in the United States, and China was on its way to replacing thousands of villages with industrial agriculture. A few Chinese, mainly those affirming traditional Chinese values, were opposing this and seeking village development instead. We threw ourselves in with these, especially with Sheri Liao, begging the Chinese not to make the mistakes that have done so much harm in the United States. We have been surprisingly successful. President Xi now supports the development of eco-villages rather than replacing villages with industrial plantations. Of course, the project may yet fail, but it stands a much better chance than once seemed possible. In China this change is associated with the goal of "ecological civilization" that has been written into the Chinese Communist Party constitution. Both the goal of eco-villages and that of the broader "ecological civilization" are associated in China with Whitehead, partly because many Chinese have come to Claremont to the conferences we have held on these topics.

For our contribution to healthy change in American society, the most important development has been eco-feminism. A good many eco-feminists are consciously Whiteheadian. The teaching of the others is so congenial to Whitehead that it matters little to us whether those who teach these ideas are interested in Whitehead's thought. Because of the pressure on universities to include more women, eco-feminists have penetrated universities more successfully than any other spokespersons for Whitehead-type thinking. They are under enormous pressure to conform to the disciplinary norms, and to a large extent departments of "women's studies" have done so. One leading feminist, Mary Daly, complained of "methodicide." But many of the women who do the teaching still constitute a potentially subversive group inside the university walls. In business, government, and churches the effects of feminism have been enormous, and much of this has included rethinking the relation of human beings to nature.

A relatively bright spot is the status we now have in the old-line Protestant churches. Of course, they are aging and dying, so that success within them does not mean a great deal. In the first decades of my career, these churches considered continental neo-Reformation theology, especially that of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, to be the norm. Obviously process theology was not taken seriously. Those theologians who wanted to do philosophical theology, despite the opposition of the dominant school, turned to Paul Tillich, who was also regarded as part of the serious theological dialogue. He was much less uncongenial to Whitehead, but he dealt very little with the issues of neo-naturalism. Those who looked for other philosophies as partners in their work usually wanted to relate to philosophies that had prestige in universities. Whitehead was, of course, excluded.

The situation began to change when Black theology and Latin American liberation theology captured North American theological attention. We joined in supporting these, but we were treated with suspicion because of our commitment to a philosophy that was seen, with some justification, as responding to the intellectual problems of the North American white bourgeois, rather than to the suffering of the oppressed. We gradually overcame the suspicion and now work closely with the heirs of liberation theology in Latin America. We have been helped by the fact that one of the major biblical scholars of the liberation movement, George Pixley, identified with process theology.

Gradually, issues of science and religion and of the relation of Christianity to other wisdom traditions reasserted themselves. Feminist critique of patriarchal institutions and culture were typically quite similar to ours. And in ecological theology, we were recognized as leaders. A little book I wrote in 1970, entitled "Is It Too Late?" is recognized as the first book on ecological philosophy and theology. The theologies that once marginalized process theology have faded, and in a sense we are the "last man left standing" in the rather small and largely ignored field of progressive theology. This is not a great achievement, but it puts some responsibility on our shoulders.

I fear that celebrating what success we have had may give the impression that I think we are significantly affecting the fate of the planet. I know all too clearly that

we are not. Except in China, I realize that the decision-makers do not know or care about our existence. In the university and in the media the issues are not posed in a way that makes our contribution even relevant.

If there is a real cultural awakening to the need for drastic change, we stand ready to make proposals and enter into the very different discussions that would then take place. I look with hope to the remarkable leadership of Pope Francis. But thus far our efforts, and the more important efforts of many others, have not prepared people even to consider the changes that are needed. American political life is irrelevant or worse – much, much worse. When I get up in the morning, it often seems foolish to continue the effort. But not trying seems worse.

Conclusion

To mobilize thinkers and academics to help guide the world away from self-destruction, we need a deep understanding of the intricate interrelationship of “facts” and “values.” We need also a deep and widely agreed on commitment to gaining and sharing wisdom. This requires overthrowing or undercutting the models and images derived from Descartes and Kant and the prejudice against synthetic thinking. Our best hope is to be found in the neo-naturalist movement and especially in the form given the new naturalism by Alfred North Whitehead.