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MAC Arrow

Unitarian Universalist

Multiracial Unity Action Council
(UUMUAC)

“For the Unity of the
light and dark skinned
people of the world.”

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Preamble

Racism and related forms of prejudice are revealed when someone treats another person differently due to their perceived race or ethnicity. These prejudices affect people around the world. Such disrespectful conduct is especially harmful in religious communities because of their commitment to strong ethical and moral standards.

Vision Statement

We envision our congregations, associations, and communities as being not color blind but color appreciative; as judging and treating people by the content of their character, not the color of their skin, their cultural heritage, or other identity; and as treasuring all forms of diversity in the context of Martin Luther King's Jr's "Beloved Community." We call this vision Multiracial Unity.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Unitarian Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council to foster activities for multiracial unity and to counter racism and neo-racism through worship, education, bearing witness, and other actions, and to find and engage like-minded individuals and groups.

We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and strive to defend freedom, reason, and tolerance as articulated in the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism adopted in 1985. This includes promoting their use in individual congregations, through congregational autonomy, and in



Making Racism Wrong Again

A Convocation, held via Zoom, of the Unitarian

Universalist Multiracial Unity Action Council

Saturday, Oct. 17, 2026, 11 a.m.-1 pm Central time

(Starts at Noon Eastern, 10:00 am Mtn, 9:00 am Pacific)

3 Featured Speakers address aspects of this issue

How best to use law to fight racism at this time. **Melissa Staas** has spent her legal career fighting against the racial and economic inequity that families experience in the family regulation (“child protection”) system. As a managing attorney at the ACLU of Illinois, Melissa’s current practice focuses on systems reform through litigation and related advocacy, including disability and family justice issues that disproportionately harm Black and brown people. Melissa has engaged in systems-based litigation reform, including class action lawsuits and individual civil rights cases against the state child welfare agency. Melissa is a 2007 graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the Children’s Legal Rights Journal.

Best political strategies to fight racism at this time. **Alex Zamalin** is a Professor of Africana Studies and Political Science at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. He is the author of numerous books, *African American Political Thought and American Culture: The Nation’s Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), *Struggle on their Minds: The Political Thought of African American Resistance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) and many more. Zamalin is also co-editor of *Revolutionary Hope in a Time of Crisis* (Routledge: 2024) and *American Political Thought: An Alternative View* (New York: Routledge, 2017). His scholarly essays have appeared in various edited book collections and journals.

How people of faith can best fight racism at this time. **Dr. Kenneth Christiansen** has been active with race issues since participating in a Lutheran volunteer ministry serving residents of the Robert Taylor Homes public housing project in Chicago, 1965-67. He taught religion and sociology classes, including Cultural Diversity and Business Ethics, at Defiance College in Ohio from 1974 to 2008. From 2014 – 2021 Dr. Christiansen held leadership positions with ICARE, the Interfaith Coalition for Action, Reconciliation and Empowerment, a Church Based Community Organization in Jacksonville, Florida.

There will be time for questions and comments by those in attendance

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UUA Disfellowships Me

Rev. Richard Trudeau

Former UUMUAC Chair

There were two charges. The first was, "un-collegial behavior towards colleagues who have sought to engage you in conversation around your understandings of race and racism," where "colleagues" meant members of the UU Ministers' Association, and "un-collegial behavior" meant that colleagues "have reached out to you for covenantal conversations and you have refused to engage."

This is ludicrous. For 30 years, whenever I have expressed my concern at a ministers' meeting that the UUA's "anti-racism" program was wrong-headed and would only make racism worse, the other ministers would look around at each other, then someone would break the silence by changing the subject. I have been reaching out to colleagues, and they are the ones who have refused to engage.

The second change was that the questions I ask—including questions about the UUA's "anti-racism" program—cause "harm." I believe the "harm" referred to is the discomfort most people feel when someone disagrees with them, which many college students over the last 20-30 years have learned to experience as harmful—as if they were toddlers—but which I, and most older people, have learned to appreciate. In a discussion of an issue, I want to be correct, and arrive at the best solution; when someone challenges me, they are doing me a favor, by helping me come to a firmer understanding.

The hearing was by Zoom with the Ministerial Fellowship Committee's Executive Committee—10 people, not a single straight white man, or anyone of my generation, among them.

I found the hearing to be surprisingly unfair.

What the Committee called the "evidence" against me was pp. 14-60 of a PDF which had been sent to me a few weeks before, consisting of my own social-media posts and videos, most accompanied with an interpretation: "this is racist"; "this is anti-trans";

"this is misogynistic"; "this is anti-collegial"; etc. The author(s)' name(s), and pp. 1-13, which I assume was a statement indicting me, were not shared with me. I guessed who the principal author was—and this was confirmed by the chair of the hearing—and she is someone who "knows" me from social-media exchanges, but who does not know me at all personally—we have never met; we have never spoken.

I began the hearing by asking to be allowed to speak for 20 minutes, in which I proposed to address the charges against me, referring to some of the "evidence," which would allow the remaining 40 minutes of the one-hour meeting proposed by the Committee for Committee members to ask questions. I was told, curtly, by the Chair, "you have 2 minutes for an opening statement, no more." In the letter I later received from the Committee, my request was made to sound exorbitant: "We invited to offer our standard two minutes for an opening statement, which you declined because you were only interested in twenty minutes for an opening statement." They had never given me any information whatever about their "standard" procedure. Silly me—I thought that, since this was a hearing, they would want to hear from me.

The Chair ended the hearing after only 30 minutes.

When I addressed the first charge—being unresponsive to colleagues reaching out to discuss my views on racism—by sharing my contrary experience, the Chair assured me that "many" of my colleagues—who knew me very well, he emphasized—had testified to the correctness of the charge. Since the only accuser I knew—the principal author of the "evidence" document—didn't know me at all, as I stated above, I can only wonder: How would he know if these unnamed accusers knew me well or not?

On reflection, the hearing was a formality necessitated by the Committee's desire to appear fair. Their initial letter to me said that the "evidence" DEMONSTRATED the truth of the charges. Not, "raised suspicion about," but "demonstrated." They were telling me in advance that my guilt was already decided.

I am not surprised by the disfellowshipping. I have been making public statements for 30 years telling the UUA that they have it wrong on fighting racism; for 10 years that they are betraying the fundamental UU values of free speech, open discussion, and democracy; and for 2 years that they have it wrong on transgender issues. That last issue is radioactive, not only in society at large but especially among the UU national leadership, because many of the leaders are either transgender themselves or have family members who are.

To be disfellowshipped by an organization that has so badly lost its way is actually a compliment, I feel. It is a badge I will wear proudly into the future.

A CULTURAL REVOLUTION BETRAYED: RECONSTRUCTION'S BOLD EXPERIMENT

Finley C. Campbell

The Bloody Chasm: A Descriptive Analysis of the First Reconstruction Period in U.S. American Literature: 1865-1885. Dorrance. 2024. 445 pages.

Book Review by Roger Marheine

Introduction

The neo-didactic function of this book is threefold: to supplement the work of Revisionist historians past and present; to bring the attention of the literate reader the complex, hidden history of this literature as a major part of the Reconstruction Period; and most of all, through the critical analysis used in this book, to celebrate imaginative works that dealt with the Irrepressible Conflict and the characters representing opposing sides in the conflict. (Finley C. Campbell)

Finley Campbell's *Bloody Chasm* is an academic text, dense in detail and substantive references, as well as being tightly structured. Campbell assesses both non-fiction and fiction though his deconstruction of fiction is particularly impressive. Reconstruction is usually understood to have ended in 1877, the date when northern elites withdrew militarily and gave back power to the former slave owners. (1) Campbell's study seeks a wider swath of material (1865-1885) by addressing writers who responded *after* the defeat of 1877. The book's compelling title echoes a Reconstruction era work by the same name. (2)

Campbell categorizes the Reconstruction's cultural combatants into three groups: racist accommodationist commentators, liberal proponents of reconciliation, and most importantly, radical advocates who sought to sustain what Marx had called the Second American Revolution (the American Civil War).

Reconstruction after the Civil War was itself a war, strikingly similar to other battles in a different century. Campbell's work invites us to see that Reconstruction compares with the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s/70s and the era after the Soviet Revolution of the 1920s. As Lenin noted, winning a revolution is extraordinarily difficult; sustaining it may be even more difficult. Campbell's nuanced study is specific to an era, but his insights can be usefully applied to our own times. Contested cultural terrains reveal much about class struggle. (3)

Campbell posits the written word as "symbolic action," in which we learn how to act through a creative piece of writing. (4) He stresses, the "use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents...using words to encourage

action.” In this regard, Campbell joins the ranks of the German anti-fascist Bertolt Brecht, the Palestinian Ghassan Kanafani, the Salvadoran poet, Roque Dalton, Kenya’s Ngugi wa Thiongo, and others who produced anti-capitalist ideas to activate practice.

Bloody Chasm deserves our close reading as it speaks to our moment when divergent ideologies undermine a lucid grasp of political and economic realities. We live in a reactionary historical period. We are haunted by debilitating platitudes (e.g. “end of history,” “there is no alternative,” “MAGA” etc.) that serve only to obfuscate our vision and stifle our will. The post-Reconstruction period suffered a horrific defeat for progressive forces. *Bloody Chasm* interrogates the literature of that defeat.

Background: Activism Came First

As a black Marxist activist, Finley Campbell *practiced* history for decades.

He passed away in 2023, just shy of his 89th birthday, and *Bloody Chasm* was published posthumously. The work’s core originates as his University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation, all but finished in 1969. In his Prologue, subtitled, “what took so long,” he reveals he was organizing a conference with the campus Black Student Union and the John Brown Society. Campbell declares that sellout black thugs, led by Ron Karenga (a possible police agent), threatened the meetings; that threat was neutralized. However, within hours, news emerged of the killing of Chicago Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago Police. It was a turning point.

Campbell perceived that the historical moment demanded he devote his energies to anti-racist struggle, and what would become decades of profound activism, especially his extraordinary work within the Unitarian Church. He constantly wrote pamphlets, polemical articles, and editorials as part of that activism. His formal academic scholarship, however, including the publication of *Bloody Chasm* would be put on hold for over fifty years.

Four Phases of Reconstruction

Campbell divides the era into four brief historical periods.

Restoration (1863-1868) begins with Lincoln’s Emancipation proclamation (1863). Following Lincoln’s assassination, ex-confederates with aid of President Johnson attempt to *restore* class inequality in the Old South. Black Codes are established to put ex-slaves in a kind of peonage. A period of much contention.

Reconstitution (1868-1872) is a brief “golden age” in which the 14th and 15th amendments are passed, free schools are established, former slaves achieve political office. A radical reconstitution of the South is looming. There is some optimism that Southern elites would support rights of freed slaves. The period ends violently.

Redemption (1872-1877) entails “Bourbon” elites (what Campbell calls the “slavocracy”) organizing violent vigilante groups (e.g. the Ku Klux Klan) against freed blacks and northern Carpetbaggers. Northern political leaders withdraw federal troops, thus paving the way for a full-scale dictatorship of the slave owner class.

Reconciliation (1877-1885) involves the aftermath of the great defeat. Agreements reconcile northern capitalists and southern elites who achieve political, social, and most importantly economic control over four million former slaves. A very dark time for progressive forces.

Ideological Conflict: Three sets of Literary Combatants

Campbell identifies three primary ideologies that dominate Reconstruction’s cultural expression and reflect the pulse of the period. He focuses on writers who are rarely read today except by specialists; they are considered secondary voices. Campbell, however, is most interested in how history shapes literary creativity. He is less interested in “great” works than in the imaginative responses to a major historical upheaval—the Irrepressible Conflict.

First, the Southern Bourbon Apologists Group.

Campbell deconstructs literature that championed old racist pathologies and attempted to restore what he labels “Cavalier Culture,” a perverted set of non-rational and nostalgic myths rooted in Edenic symbols and feudalistic imagery. In many respects, this study is analogous to a twentieth-century analysis of fascist culture. Recall the mythology and symbols of Nazi Germany and the Italian fascist myths celebrating the glories of ancient Rome; of course, our own current toxic MAGA nostalgia falls into this category.

Campbell identifies these works as reflecting the Dunning school of history named after William M. Dunning. Reactionary authors ignored the cruelties of slavery, but depicted particularly melodramatic images of former slave owners facing financial ruin but showing dignity and composure. Freedmen were depicted as excessive, crude, and often violent. Carpetbaggers were a plague on humanity.

Campbell reviews the archetypal symbol of industrialization--that noisy, massive, vulgar monstrosity, the steam locomotive. **(5).** During Reconstruction, it represented the hostile force bursting into the garden and established with pitiless clarity the North’s superiority.

The Southern Bourbon apologists were the ideological descendants of slave owners, who Campbell notes, “could neither forget their past glories nor learn from their mistakes.” They were bitterly hostile to equality but politically impotent without Northern support.

Campbell is particularly astute at deconstructing outrageous premises.

The slaveowner as chivalrous knight and his lady projected a romantic ideology that masked a kind of psychosis. Before his fall, the patriarchal slaveowner enjoyed enormous psycho-

-sexual privileges, indulging in the casual rape of his slave women, while at the same time, giving credence to his wife's superior status. The Southern Belle suffered the indignity of her husband's debauchery, yet resided over the well-decorated mansion, her domain. Campbell asserts that "Cavalier Culture," the southern "way of life," left the slavocracy untroubled by its atrocities. Various Reconstruction authors romanticized this period.

Eden was lost. How could the voices of the South not have foreseen their demise? Economics reveals much. While there were productivity problems on the eastern seaboard from over tilling the land, in 1860, many Southern plantation owners were making record profits. (6)

The cherished agrarian way of life, projected as a pastoral of permanence, ironically fostered a paralysis. Campbell astutely perceives that the essence of the antebellum South was stasis, an inertness, even a laziness that was disguised as stability. A society so at ease with itself, it *could not imagine* something different.

In this regard, Campbell implies we too should examine the stasis in our own thinking, our failure to imagine something different from ruthless capitalism—the paralyzing sense that gross injury in pursuit of profit is the inevitable human condition.

Reconstruction's depravities brought to light what Campbell, in one of his most astute commentaries, calls "interracial symbiosis," a complex relationship between former master and freed slave. In simplest terms—cruelty and eroticism.

He eloquently states the paradox: "From the Southron's point of view, it is a complex coupling of love and lust with hate and disgust, a fusing of paternalism and *noblesse oblige* with sadism and contempt, polarized toward racial violence and the Cult of Racio-sexuality."

As late as 1939, the Hollywood film *Gone with the Wind* paraded the myth of the lost Eden. Campbell cites southern regionalist author and Nobel Prize winner, William Faulkner, who devoted much of his career to the tragedy of a fallen culture. The South's defeat in the Civil War transformed into a cultural war *against any progressive* path for Reconstruction. Ultimately, Campbell notes three phenomena arose—the Booker T. Washington's acceptance of inequality, the Supreme Court ruling in the Plessy V. Ferguson case that ruled "separate equal,"--the legalized apartheid, known colloquially as Jim Crow. The Ku Klux Klan flourished in its unchallenged assault on the black working class and its allies. Within a few years, Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905) was made into the infamous film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) by D.W. Griffith.

It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the defeat.

Myths overlay and obscure the bloody chasm between factual existence and our ability to live the lies. That is one of Campbell's great themes. He traces the ideological contradictions that mire a population in its paralyzing mythologies.

Second, the Liberal/Non-Radical/Neutral School.

Campbell cites what he calls “neutral,” or “non-radical” proponents who often supported reconciliation of North and South (with some appeals to national unity—itsself a mythology). He does not use the term “liberal” perhaps because his decades-long activism involved working with individuals who perceived themselves as “liberal.”

Campbell sums up the neutral position that will be familiar to those acquainted with the liberal humanist tradition. Writing on *Wild Work: The Story of the Red River Massacre* (1881), a novel by Mary E. Bryant, Campbell states, “her...strategy is to shift the causes of... Reconstruction...away from the intrinsic political nature of the Irrepressible Conflict between Bourbon and Carpetbagger. Instead, these causes reside either in the realm of purely human passions—ambition, envy, personal vindictiveness—or in the historical flux of the period.”

The neutral/liberal author is ultimately reductionist. Individual characters are caught up in social forces they hardly grasp, and pursue a self-centered, doomed purpose. Their social, historical context—Reconstruction and the cultural revolution pitting specific class forces in opposition—is merely a backdrop. Campbell’s historical materialist insight is particularly compelling here. The limits of literary liberalism are laid bare.

Taking the critique further, the massive disappointment in Barak Obama’s presidency might be attributed to his quest for power as the first black president. Other than that, he had no vision to implement significant social change which disappointed so many of his followers; thus, he is perceived either as a tragic figure or perhaps a sellout—a liberal humanist individualist view.

Or, a more historical materialist, Marxist view, posits that neo-liberalism required a credible figure to carry out its agenda, particularly the bank bailouts, while allowing millions of people to lose their homes. Obama’s charismatic persona curtailed protests and uprisings even as the imperialist wars continued to be waged. He carried out precisely what U.S. capitalism needed at that historical moment. (7)

Campbell establishes characteristics for identifying Reconstruction’s liberal/neutral literature. First is violence, perpetrated by *both* sides in Reconstruction’s fundamental conflict, and thus cancelling each out. Commenting on the pattern, Campbell states, “The Carpetbagger faces death at the hands of Bourbon villains: the Bourbon faces rape at the hands of radical villains.” The violent rebel rises up, but that violence is viewed as *equally wrong* to that committed by the ruling class. Ruling elites are cruel and exploitative, but the rebels are guilty of excesses.

Second, Campbell analyzes the fictional portrayal of the Carpetbagger. The slavocracy ideologues portray the Carpetbagger in blindly neutral terms--as enemy to the southern "way of life." The liberal/neutral writers depict a more complex figure with the Carpetbagger as perhaps well-meaning, but personally flawed.

In many respects, the liberal/neutral school suffers from one major error that neither the reactionary authors nor progressive thinkers fall victim to. The neutralists seek conflict resolution of the Irrepressible Conflict. They seek a middle ground that doesn't exist. Or, even worse they undermine a revolutionary advancement because they assert the eternal human condition with its flaws and frailties precludes genuine progress.

Third, the Progressive/Radical School.

Campbell cites progressive authors who refused to capitulate to the North's facile accommodation with the South's slave owning class. These novelists and short story writers celebrate the Carpetbagger figure, and feature white characters who sought multiracial alliances with freed slaves.

In particular, Campbell notes Albion Tourgée, a prominent legal authority in his day, but sadly not as well known in our era. Tourgée maintained a progressive vision after 1877, the extraordinary defeat. He pursued a legal career and stood as the lead attorney in the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case (1896), in which he defended Homer Plessy, a man of mixed racial background who attempted to board a white only train car.

Tourgée attempted to shine a light into the literary darkness. Campbell singles out two novels. The first, ironically titled *A Fool's Errand* (1879), became a literary phenomenon, and was compared to Harriet Beecher Stowe's pre-Civil War abolitionist work, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Another novel, *Bricks Without Straw* chronicles the four periods of Reconstruction itself—a lucid and instructive historical work.

Campbell declares that Tourgée's work is the "fullest exemplification of the presence of 'The Tragic Era,' in 19th century U.S. American literature." He cites four major contributions.

First, by reaching a wider audience, Tourgée helped northerners grasp the historical importance of Reconstruction, its values and its purpose.

Second, Tourgée's prose style surpassed much romantic-sentimental fiction of the old South. He helped readers to empathize with the defeated Carpetbagger, and the defeat of Reconstruction itself.

Third, his rhetorical fiction presented serious political arguments that stood out against other authors of the period who either could not or would not grapple with Reconstruction's contradictions. Note Mark Twain's now famous but facile novels, mostly comic

creations, fall somewhat between the conservative tradition but are usually understood to be liberal. Twain's *Huck Finn* published in 1885 shows a strikingly inept depiction of the era, and a particularly insulting depiction the black man, Jim.

Finally, and what Campbell sees as most important, Tourgée clarified the abandonment of the country's supposed commitment to liberty and justice. The North was undergoing the Second Industrial Revolution. While some technological innovations were impressive, financial speculations led to the Economic Panic of 1873 which in turn led to the Great Railroad Strike of 1877. He argued that the North's capitalist crisis at least partly caused the withdrawal of federal troops from the South.

Campbell admires the scope and substance of Tourgée's vision which attempted a dialectical assessment of the broader context to Reconstruction's defeat. By implication, Campbell views Tourgée's literary output as a kind of template for literature of our own era.

The Carpetbagger: Summary of a Symbolic Figure

Ask anyone what they think or know of the Carpetbagger as a figure in history. Chances are you will hear strong negative opinions. Campbell examines the character as depicted in the era's literature.

The reactionary authors emphasized the Carpetbagger as a northern intruder, a scoundrel, a rogue opportunist, and corrupt vagabond—an image that prevails today! Campbell argues that hatred for Carpetbaggers was rooted in their alliance with freed slaves, especially the militant "Black Jacobins." For Campbell, racial equality as in multiracial unity was a massive psycho-cultural obsession for perpetrators of the lost Eden—and was to be opposed at all costs.

Neutral Liberal humanist writers depicted Carpetbaggers often as well-intentioned, but out of their league and simplistic in their understanding of southern cultural complexities. In some cases, the white woman as northern schoolmarm naively attempts to educate the poor negro. In this view, Carpetbaggers were not bad people, but merely limited, and prone to errors in judgement.

The radical view projects Carpetbaggers as in the tradition of French Revolutionaries (1789-1798). (8) They followed in the footsteps of abolitionists before the war. Rarely will you hear that the masses of 1960s college students going south to join in sit-ins and Freedom Rides described as Carpetbaggers. Campbell implies analogy is appropriate.

Conclusion

Finley C. Campbell understood that *Bloody Chasm* was a final achievement of his life's work, a culmination of thought inspired by over fifty years of activism. His dedication to his subject is impressive. *Bloody Chasm* examines works in exceptional depth and specificity; there are 955 Endnotes!

Campbell analyzes the Reconstruction's political indecencies coupled with racist cultural rationalizations bordering on psycho pathologies; in today's terms—fascism. He also deconstructs the impotent neutrality which doesn't actually condone but does nothing of substance to curtail the injustices.

Reconstruction as a cultural revolution was defeated. Such defeats are horrific for those who live through them.

We too live during a time of Irrepressible Conflict.

Just as a kinder, gentler slavery was a contradiction in terms, so was agrarian slave labor capitalism in contradiction with industrial wage labor capitalism. Compromise and conflict resolution were but futile gestures that only perpetuated the dilemma.

A massive defeat has darkened our psyche and pummeled our imaginations. Corruption and capitulation surround us. We should remember Campbell's firm command of his material, an absorption, the historical materialist probe. The slave owners were overthrown. However, there is never a *final* conflict.

Clearly capitalism is unsustainable for humanity and for the earth itself. Mythologies of capitalism strive to prevent our imagining a better world—one without a system that seeks profit at whatever horrendous human cost. We can surmise what despair must have plagued slaves and abolitionists before the Civil War. From *Bloody Chasm* we can grasp what Reconstruction's defeat must have also meant. Raised expectations were followed by dashed hopes.

Finley Campbell by implication declares in modern parlance, that our political situation is unsustainable. We must engage the Irrepressible Conflict. *Bloody Chasm* insists on this premise. It is rich in historical lessons, a text for our time.

Notes:

- 1) Campbell states he works firmly within the radical ("Revisionist") tradition of William E.B. Dubois' *Black Reconstruction in America*, Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, and John Hope Franklin's *Reconstruction After the Civil War*. Franklin was Campbell's dissertation advisor.
- 2) Note *The Bloody Chasm* (1881) by John William De Forest, a Northerner, who served as a Civil War officer in the Union army. During Reconstruction, De Forest wrote extensively and sought a liberal vision of reconciliation between North and South.
- 3) Campbell cites the informed work of Barbara Foley, as a significant influence. Note especially her recent *Marxist Literary Criticism Today*.
- 4) "Symbolic Action," is term originating from American literary theorist Kenneth Burke. Burke articulated it as an academic term. However, Campbell deepens and expands the concept by emphasizing his Marxist didactic approach directed toward

- 5) See Leo Marx (no relation to the German communist) in his *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) had noted the intrusion of industrialization on the state of nature, *in the North*. Thoreau and others had wondered at the loss of peace and quiet when a train whistle interrupts natural stillness. Campbell articulates skillfully the same feeling in the South, but because for southerners the North became the intruder who threatened the southern slaveowner's way of life.
 - 6) Cotton was king. As of 1790, one thousand tons of cotton were produced annually in the South. By 1860, production was a million tons—a thousand-fold increase. The number of slaves increased from 500,000 in 1790 to four million in 1860. See Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, chapter nine, "Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom." See also, Paul Gombert, *Anti-Racism as Communism*. Cotton represented 60% of *total* U.S. export wealth.
 - 7) See Campbell's recent *Neo-Racism* that assesses the rise of a black middle class whose interests coincide with the elite neo-liberal capitalist agenda.
 - 8) In a lengthy endnote, Campbell spells out an analogy of French Revolutionary figures as they would relate to the Reconstruction combatants. The Carpetbagger, would be in the camp of Robespierre Jacobins, along with Jean Paul Marat and St. Just.
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Reality as Creative Process

An Introduction to Process Theology
by David Organ

A Different Way of Seeing

I want to begin with something simple. Please look at your hand, or feel it with your other hand.

Most of us think of a hand as a thing — solid, stable, the same hand we had yesterday. But here is what is actually going on. The atoms in your hand are vibrating. Cells are being born and dying, right now, by the thousands. Blood is moving. Nerves are firing. What we call "a hand" is really an event — billions of tiny happenings, working together in a steady pattern.

In this article I want to explore a way of seeing the whole world like that. It comes from Alfred North Whitehead, an English mathematician who turned to philosophy late in life, and from the theologians who found in his ideas a fresh way to think about the sacred. It is called process theology, and I believe it offers insights you will find intriguing.

A World Made of Moments

A little over a century ago, physicists made an astonishing discovery. Energy does not flow smoothly, like water from a tap. It arrives in tiny, separate packets. They called each packet a quantum — a Latin word that just means "how much." Nature, it turns out, works in droplets.

Whitehead took that discovery seriously, and took it further. He suggested that reality itself comes in droplets. Not droplets of stuff — droplets of happening. Each one arises, becomes something, and finishes, handing itself on to whatever comes next. He called each droplet an occasion of experience. The universe, he said, is not a collection of things. It is a stream of moments.

That sounds abstract. So let me offer you a picture — one you can try for yourself the next time you are washing dishes, or the next time a child hands you a bubble wand.

Blow a slow stream of soap bubbles and follow just one of them with your eyes. It is born out of breath and soapy water — out of what came before it. For a moment it is a complete little world: whole, round, shimmering. And then — there — it finishes. It pops. But notice that nothing is destroyed. The air and the soap simply move forward into the next moment, ready to become something else.

Whitehead would say: that is what everything is like, all the way down. A moment of experience arises out of its past, becomes exactly what it becomes, and passes itself forward.

But what about rocks and trees and people — things that seem to last? Think of a movie. A movie looks like continuous motion, but it is really thousands of still frames, each one slightly different, shown one after another. In the same way, the lasting things around us are patterns of moments, each moment inheriting from the one before. A rock is a very repetitive pattern — the same simple moment repeated over and over, which is why rocks are so dependable. A living cell is a more adventurous pattern. And a human mind is one of the most adventurous patterns we know: able to take in its past and do something genuinely new with it.

A word about that phrase "occasion of experience," because it can startle people. Whitehead did not mean that rocks think, or that electrons have feelings the way we do. He meant something more modest and more radical at once: that every event, at every scale, takes in the world around it and responds. An electron responds to a field. A cell responds to its chemistry. A person responds to a lifetime. The responses differ enormously in richness, but the basic shape — receiving a world, answering it, passing the answer on — runs all the way down. Experience, in this view, is not a rare late arrival in the universe. It is what the universe has been made of from the start.

Here is the part I find beautiful. In this picture, every moment of experience — however small — counts for something. Not just human moments. Not just animal moments. Every drop of experience adds its bit to the world. If you have ever felt that our seventh Principle — respect for the interdependent web of all existence — is more than a lovely slogan, process thought agrees with you. It says the web goes all the way down to the very nature of existence.

Connected All the Way Down

Look closely at a soap bubble sometime, while it is still resting on the wand. You will see the whole room curved across its surface — the windows, the lights, your own face leaning in. Each bubble, tiny as it is, gathers in its entire world.

Whitehead said every moment of experience does the same. Each new moment begins by taking in — feeling — the world behind it and around it. Which means nothing exists alone. You are made of your relationships: your memories, your ancestors, the people you love, the food you ate this morning. Even the sunlight on your face — light that left the sun about eight minutes ago — is now part of the event that is you.

In this way of seeing, connection is the plain structure of reality. The old counsel to care for your neighbour as yourself stops being a mere moral rule and becomes a plain description: your neighbour is partly what makes you — you. Their flourishing enriches your world. Their suffering thins it.

Once you see this, ecology and justice stop being separate causes. Damaging an ecosystem is not harming something "out there" — it is unravelling the web we are made of. Injustice does not wound only the people it targets; it makes the whole shared world poorer. The naturalist John Muir put it memorably: try to pick out anything by itself, and you find it "hitched to everything else in the Universe." Process theology adds: that is not only a poet-naturalist's intuition. It is a description of how things really are.

God: In Everything, and More Than Everything

Now we come to the theological heart of it. What about God?

Many of us grew up with one of two pictures. In the first, God is outside the universe — a ruler on a distant throne, directing events from beyond. In the second, God simply is the universe — "God" and "nature" are two names for one thing.

Process theology offers a third picture. The world is in God, and God is in the world — and God is also more than the world. There is a long word for this: panentheism. It just means "all-in-God." Every event happens within the divine life, and the divine life is greater

than the sum of all events.

Here is a way to picture it, using nothing more than your kitchen sink. Fill a clear bowl with water and push a dry sponge under the surface. Lift it out, dripping, and squeeze it gently. The water is in the sponge — soaked through every part of it. The sponge is in the water. And the water is more than the sponge — it surrounds it and goes beyond it. That is the process picture of God and the world: God soaking through every moment, every moment held within God, and God always more than everything held.

An old image says the same thing more simply still: each of us is in the divine life the way a fish is in the sea — and the sea, in turn, is in the fish.

One caution about pictures like these. Be wary of images in which God simply dissolves into the world — food colouring stirred into water, a drop returning to the ocean. Those describe pantheism, where God and world collapse into one thing. The sponge and the fish both keep the crucial "and more": the world in God, God in the world, and God exceeding the world.

But there is more, and this is where process theology becomes truly distinctive. Whitehead said God relates to the world in two ways at once — two sides of one divine life.

The first is God's giving side. Imagine the storehouse of everything possible: every act of kindness not yet done, every song not yet written, every healing not yet begun. Whitehead said all of that lives in God's vision, and that in every moment God offers each of us the best real possibility open to us, right where we are. Not a command. Not a shove. An invitation. Whitehead called it the lure. I think of it like the GPS in your car. When you take a wrong turn, the GPS does not scold you, and it does not grab the wheel. It recalculates, and offers the best route from where you now are. In this view, that is how God works with every creature, in every moment: given everything that has happened — even the worst of it — here is the best next step.

Another picture of the giving side sits in any sunlit window that happens to hold a prism, or a piece of cut glass, or even a glass of water at the right angle. One beam of white light enters — a single beam, holding every colour there is. The prism spreads it open, and every surface in the room receives its own shade: red on this wall, green on that book, violet on the floor. One storehouse of possibility, offered differently to each thing, according to where it sits and what it can receive. That is how process theology pictures the divine offer: not one command issued to all, but the right colour of possibility for each occasion, exactly where it is.

The second is God's receiving side. God does not only offer; God takes in. Every joy, every sorrow, every experience in the universe is felt by God and kept. Nothing is lost. Your grief

registers — permanently. The pain of the smallest creature registers — permanently. Whitehead called God "the fellow-sufferer who understands."

You can feel these two sides in your own body, right where you are sitting. Breathe out, slowly. That is God's giving — possibility breathed out into the world. Now breathe in, just as slowly. That is God's receiving — the world gathered back into the divine life. It is worth remembering how many languages join breath and life in a single word — prana in Sanskrit, pneuma in Greek, spiritus in Latin. Giving and receiving, out-breath and in-breath: one continuous life.

Notice what kind of power this is. It is persuasion, not force. God cannot make us choose the good — forced goodness would not be goodness, and puppets are not partners. So God invites, calls, draws — and we are free to answer or to resist.

Music teachers keep a lovely demonstration of this kind of power in their classrooms. Take two matched tuning forks — the same pitch — and set them a little apart. Strike one, then silence it with your hand. The second fork is now singing, softly, though nothing ever touched it. It was not pushed into sound; it was called into sound, by a vibration it was tuned to answer. That, process theology says, is the only kind of power God uses: resonance, call and answer.

Aesop told the same truth as a story. The wind and the sun argued about which was stronger, and chose a test: make the traveller below take off his coat. The wind blasted with all its might — and the traveller only clutched the coat tighter. Then the sun simply shone, warm and steady, and the traveller took the coat off himself. Force tightens the grip. Warmth opens it.

If you sing in a congregation or a choir, you already know both of these ideas — the all-in-God picture and the gentle power — from the inside. Think of the last hymn you sang with other people. The song was in every singer. Every singer was inside the song. And the song was more than any one voice — more, even, than all the voices added together, because it was also the harmony among them. And notice: nobody was forced to sing. Every voice joined freely, or it would not have been singing at all.

Whitehead's own image for this gathers it all up: God is "the poet of the world," leading it with tender patience by a vision of what is true and beautiful and good. A poet does not compel a reader; a poet offers words so right that the reader is moved. That, in this vision, is how God leads the universe.

For many of us who have wrestled with the old question — how could an all-controlling God allow so much suffering? — this comes as a liberation. That question assumes God holds every lever and chose not to pull the one that would have spared us. Process theology denies the assumption. A world of genuinely free creatures is, necessarily, a world where things can go wrong — where cells mutate, storms strike, and people choose cruelty. God did not send your loss. It was not a test, and it was not a punishment. In the process picture, God is at work inside every situation, including the terrible ones, drawing out whatever good is still possible — feeling it all with us, and never, ever giving up. The philosopher Charles Hartshorne, Whitehead's greatest successor, spent a long career arguing that "all-powerful," as usually imagined, was never a compliment to God in the first place; a God who wins partners by invitation is greater than one who moves puppets by decree.

The Future Is Open

One more piece, and it may be the most hopeful of all. In process thought, time is real, and the future is genuinely open.

The past is settled. What has been done cannot be undone — the bubbles that popped have popped. But the future has not been written. Each new moment is a fresh act of creation, and every choice you make adds something to reality that was never there before — and that will belong to the universe forever.

This may sound obvious — of course the future hasn't happened yet — but a great deal of traditional theology, and a fair amount of modern science, has quietly denied it. If God already knows every detail of what will happen, or if physics fixed every event at the moment of the Big Bang, then the future is only the past that hasn't been shown to us yet, like the reels of a film already in the can. Process thought says no. The film is still being shot. Even God, in this view, knows the future only as a field of possibilities, not as a settled fact — because there is no settled fact there to know. Your next choice is not written anywhere until you make it.

So the universe is not a finished building we happen to live in. It is a work in progress — Whitehead called it a "creative advance" — and we are among the workers. We are not the audience for a completed show. We are improvisers in an unfolding drama, with God as the companion who keeps offering us our best lines, and then waits, with real suspense, to see what we do with them.

Living in a World of Becoming

First, every moment matters. The way you speak to a stranger. The attention you give a piece of music. How you answer someone's pain. None of it is trivial. Each is a small act of creation, added permanently to what the universe becomes.

Second, you are never alone. You are woven into a web of relationships that reach to the farthest stars, and at the heart of that web is a presence that feels what you feel, hopes for your flourishing, and does not abandon you.

Third, beauty matters. The divine invitation always points toward richer harmony and deeper feeling — toward beauty. To live well is to make more beauty possible: creating it, noticing it, protecting it.

So here is my invitation for the week. Try seeing the world as process instead of stuff. Notice the becoming all around you — in the weather, in your relationships, in your own shifting thoughts. And in any given moment, ask: What beauty is possible right here? What is the universe inviting me to make?

And the next time you find yourself near soap and water, blow one last, slow stream of bubbles, and watch them drift. Each of us is like one of those: brief, shining, made from what came before us, reflecting the whole world, and handing ourselves on to what comes next.

The universe is unfinished. You are helping to create what it becomes.

Let's make it beautiful.

Further Reading

The friendliest introduction for a general reader is C. Robert Mesle's *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction* (Chalice Press, 1993).

The standard fuller treatment is John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin's *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Westminster Press, 1976).

Readers who want Whitehead in his own words will find *Adventures of Ideas* (Macmillan, 1933) the most approachable place to start; the images quoted in this article — the "poet of the world," the "fellow-sufferer who understands," the "creative advance" — come from his *Process and Reality* (1929; corrected edition, Free Press, 1978).

Charles Hartshorne's short, readable *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (SUNY Press, 1984) takes up the question of divine power directly.

Thomas Sowell on the history of slavery

A global perspective – reviewed by David Cycleback



Ancient Egyptian slaves

Thomas Sowell, a prominent American economist, historian, and social philosopher at Stanford University, and a descendant of African slaves, has written extensively about the history of slavery, including in his books *"Race and Culture"* and *"Conquests and Cultures."*

Sowell says that most Americans are misinformed about slavery due to being taught a narrow American-centric view, rather than a global history. Alex Haley said that, with his novel *Roots*, he was "[t]rying to make a myth for my people to live by," and his narrative is how most Americans primarily see the whole of slavery. Sowell's work emphasizes the widespread nature of slavery throughout human societies.



Thomas Sowell

One of Sowell's main points is that slavery was a universal institution throughout human history, found in nearly every civilization. At the time of Jesus, one-third to one-half of people were slaves, with slaves of wealthy people sometimes owning their own slaves. Evolutionary psychologist Julian Jaynes, author of the seminal book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, wrote that early hierarchical societal structures involving slavery, such as in Ancient Egyptian and Greek societies, were innate to pre-conscious human psychology and society.

Sowell writes, "Of all the tragic facts about the history of slavery, the most astonishing to an American today is that, although slavery was a worldwide institution for thousands of years, nowhere in the world was slavery a controversial issue prior to the 18th century. People of every race and color were enslaved—and enslaved others. White people were still being bought and sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire, decades after American blacks were freed."



Many American Indian tribes, such as the pictured Chickasaw, owned slaves, mostly members from other tribes, but sometimes also blacks. Slave ownership was an integral part of some tribal social structures

Sowell writes that the racialization of slavery was a later development. For most of history, slavery was not based on race but stemmed from war, conquest, or economic necessity. Europeans enslaved other Europeans, Asians enslaved fellow Asians, American Indians enslaved other American Indians, and Africans enslaved and traded other Africans. The word "slavery" itself is derived from the term "Slav," which refers to a North Euro-Asian ethnic group.



Slavic slaves in Eastern Europe

It was only with the rise of the transatlantic slave trade that slavery became racialized, specifically targeting Africans, with their enslavement justified through ideas of racial inferiority.

Another point in Sowell's analysis is the role of African societies in the transatlantic slave trade. African kingdoms and societies played significant roles in capturing and selling slaves to European and Arab traders. Sowell challenges the notion that Europeans were solely responsible for the trade, emphasizing that without African cooperation, the scale of the transatlantic slave trade would have been much smaller.



Slave trade in Africa

Sowell also explores the unique role of Western nations in the abolition of slavery. While slavery was a global institution, it was Western nations, particularly Britain, that led the charge to end it, often at great economic and military cost. He praises Britain's Royal Navy for its efforts to suppress the transatlantic slave trade, patrolling the seas and enforcing abolitionist policies.

According to Sowell, the abolition of slavery required a significant moral shift, driven in large part by religious and cultural changes. He credits the Judeo-Christian ethic in Western societies for providing the moral framework that eventually led to the abolitionist movement. Most slavery today exists in non-Western countries, with India, China, North Korea, and Pakistan having the most slaves.



Korean slaves of the Japanese during World War II

While Sowell's work is praised for its global perspective some critics argue that he downplays the unique racial dimensions and harshness of chattel slavery in the Americas and its long-term social consequences. Despite these critiques, Sowell's analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the history of slavery within a global context that many Americans don't know.