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## “THE END OF HUMAN LIFE”: BUDDHIST, PROCESS, AND OPEN THEIST PERSPECTIVES

A human life has an ending, a terminus. Many of us believe that human life also has a goal, an inherent telos. The conflation of the two notions in the expression, “the end of human life,” is possible because, according to both Buddhism and Christianity, the telos of human existence is fully achieved, if at all, only in the ending of a person’s life. Needless to say, however, the conceptions of this telos differ radically in the two faiths. The purpose of this essay is to explore these issues as they appear from the perspectives of Buddhism, process theism, and what has come to be called open theism. In each case we will begin with a brief discussion of the metaphysical nature postulated for human persons, followed by an account of the transition to the final state in which the telos is achieved, and of the value-perspectives inherent in the designation of such an “end” for human life. Of necessity, what is offered here is a pencil-sketch in bold strokes, leaving to one side the multiple pathways available in the various traditions. Even so, it is hoped that some insights of value may emerge.

### BUDDHISM

It is clear at the outset that, for Buddhism, persons are ontologically fragile. The notion of a permanent, continuing mental substance is emphatically rejected—as is, indeed, any permanent substance of any kind whatever. A human individual consists of five “aggregates” (*skandhas*) of bodily form, perception, feelings, predispositions, and reasoning. Still more basically, a person is identical with a causally connected continuum of momentary events (*dharmas*); the impression that there is more to one’s existence than this is one of the great illusions from which we need to be delivered. Students of Western philosophy will be reminded of Hume, and of the perplexities into which Hume and his followers were led by similar doctrines.<sup>1</sup> Even

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within the scope of a normal lifetime, the problem of personal identity over time becomes perplexing: how can we secure the individuation of these “continua,” and their distinctness from one another, without introducing a permanent substance of some kind? But the problem becomes especially acute if it is postulated that there is some sort of identity that persists beyond death, carrying on into afterlife or rebirth. The most natural conclusion from the fragility of the person, as postulated by Buddhism, would seem to be that the person simply dissipates at the time of death: the *skandhas* no longer cohere; the series of events ceases. But this conclusion is unacceptable, given the doctrines of *karma* and rebirth that are fundamental to the Indian tradition of which Buddhism is a branch. There is also the need to give some account, or at least to leave room for the possibility, of the continued existence (in some sense) of the person, or of something intimately connected with the person, in the final state of Nirvana. On the other hand, the ontological fragility of the person, as described above, cannot be abandoned. For the realization of this fragility is an integral part of the realization of the transitoriness and illusoriness of “the good things of life” (as they are ordinarily viewed)—a realization that is an essential part of Buddhist salvation. The perplexities arising from this constellation of doctrines have occasioned intensive and long-lasting discussion within the Buddhist tradition, a discussion going far beyond the scope of this brief article. For present purposes we will assume that the puzzles have some adequate solution, without inquiring further into the precise nature of the solution.

It remains to say something about the nature of the telos to be achieved, if not after one’s present life, then after an indefinite series of lives in which one approaches the final perfection of Nirvana. But the nature of Nirvana is not easy to specify; indeed, there are Buddhists who hold that nothing can be said about it at all, except that there is a total absence of suffering. No doubt peace is also involved, but who or what enjoys this peace is obscure. It is significant, too, that authoritative Buddhist thinkers have identified with Nirvana the state of “cessation of consciousness”—a state, attained by some adepts after long training in meditation, in which all mental life ceases entirely for a period of time, with the person remaining in a trance-like condition that has been compared to a coma or hibernation.<sup>2</sup> When challenged to say how such a state, absent all consciousness, can be said to be one of happiness, the answer given is that it is so in virtue of the complete lack of suffering!

According to Ninian Smart, these difficulties arose because the Buddha had refused to give any answer to the question whether the Arhat continues to exist in the state of Nirvana.<sup>3</sup> Evidently the psycho-physical individual that we know as the person does *not*

persist: since the cravings that keep one spinning in the cycle of rebirth have been overcome, the need that impels the existence of such an individual is no more. Still, it seems that *something* remains; Nirvana, though “empty,” is not sheer nothingness. Beyond this, it is difficult to say more.

But if the nature of Nirvana remains obscure, the value-perspective that guides the quest for it is somewhat clearer. Evidently the entire path of purification is based on a progressive disengagement from all of the affections, desires, and emotions of everyday life. All attachments are to be left behind completely; this is illustrated by the praise given to the monk who, having left home to seek spiritual purity, lived for three months unrecognized in a hut outside his mother’s house without ever identifying himself to her or acknowledging the relationship. The Buddhist commentator states, “For such a one, mother and father are no hindrances.”<sup>4</sup> Desire, or craving, is identified as the source of suffering—so far, one might think, not implausibly. But a distinction is not made between good and bad desires, or between proper and inordinate desires; the goal is not emotion rightly directed but an entire absence of emotion. The spiritual exercises prescribed for the aspiring adept emphasize withdrawing oneself from the world of society, from attachment to the natural world, and from one’s own senses, until even conceptual thought ceases entirely. There is no escaping the fact that this program involves a sharply negative valuation of the ordinary lives of people, even though the rigors of Buddhist discipline are of necessity reserved for a spiritual elite. From a Christian perspective, this approach would be seen as an unacceptable denial of the goodness of divine creation. But what to a Christian is the good creation of God is for Buddhists a realm of illusions that need to be overcome. At this point, then, there is a difference in values that is equally as profound as the metaphysical differences between the two faiths.

#### PROCESS THEISM

The fragility of the person, as found in Buddhism, has a partial but not a complete echo in the metaphysics of the process theism founded upon the thought of Alfred North Whitehead. Gone is the multiplicity of *skandhas*, with the implicit potential for dissolution. For process thought, all the events that take place belong to a single, basic ontological category—that of the “actual occasion,” or “occasion of experience.” Actual occasions are described in a rich and complex way that in principle makes them capable of serving as explanation for all of the multiplicity of phenomena in the world. The existence of an actual

occasion begins with the “prehension” (derived from “apprehension”), in which it, so to speak, “takes in” information from its environment in the immediate past. Also included in the first stage of an actual occasion is the “initial aim” supplied by God, which amounts to God’s “ideal intention” for that particular occasion, the way in which it may best promote the harmony in the world that is God’s intention. There then follows the process of “concrecence” in which the occasion resolves the possibilities open to it so as to become definite and concrete. In doing so, the occasion forms its “subjective aim,” which may either follow the divinely given initial aim or deviate from it. Thus God “lures” the world in the direction of ultimate harmony, but has no power to compel; the freedom, and the choice of the direction of events, lies ultimately with the finite actual occasions. Once concrecence has occurred, the subjective moment of the occasion’s existence is complete; the occasion becomes “object,” and is “prehended” by subsequent occasions—and so the story goes on.

This account, then, disagrees with the Buddhist view in that all the events of which the world is composed are fundamentally of the same kind—though to be sure, they occur on many different levels; the occasions that make up the history of an electron are quite different, and far less complex, than those in the mind of, say, an orangutan. But an element of ontological fragility remains, in the momentary (very short-lived) nature of the occasions. We are not usually told exactly how much clock time is occupied by the concrecence of an occasion, but they surely succeed one another with great rapidity. Persons, and other continuing entities, are “serially ordered societies” of actual occasions; each occasion in the series has its dominant influence in the immediately preceding occasion, in that the “superject” of that occasion is the major component in what the new occasion prehends as it begins its concrecence. Nevertheless, the rock bottom of existence, in this view, is found in the occasions themselves; persons, and other continuing entities, are in a sense “constructed” out of the occasions. This situation gives rise to questions about personal identity over time that parallel those asked of Buddhism and of Humeanism. As before, we will assume for present purposes that these questions have satisfactory answers.

Given this metaphysical context, what can be said about the telos, the aim, of human life? For the individual actual occasions, the aim is said to be “enjoyment”—already a striking contrast with the Buddhist emphasis on the avoidance of suffering. But enjoyment by itself cannot be the full answer. Whitehead found that “The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a ‘perpetual perishing.’”<sup>5</sup> John Cobb and David Griffin state eloquently what this means for human existence:

The desire that this ultimate evil be overcome is part of that love for all things toward which we are lured by God. If the last word is perishing, then the call to love all things cannot be part of a message of good news. With the conviction that the existence of all things is ultimately futile, that their triumphs are finally meaningless, love for them would heighten suffering to a humanly unendurable point. We would have to recognize the superior wisdom of those in the West who have seen happiness only in apathy and those in the East who have called for cessation of desire in perfect detachment.<sup>6</sup>

The key to avoiding this consequence, and to affirming love and commitment rather than entire detachment as the proper attitude toward our fellow creatures, is found in God. Specifically, it is found in the fact that God incorporates into his “Consequent Nature” everything that occurs. According to Whitehead, the Consequent Nature “prehends every actuality for what it can be in such a perfected system—its suffering, its sorrows, its failures, its triumphs, its immediacies of joy—woven by rightness of feeling into the harmony of universal feeling.”<sup>7</sup> God not only remembers our lives and experiences, but they enrich God’s own life. In the end, nothing is lost; everything is preserved, and given its true valuation, in the divine life. In the words of Charles Hartshorne,

To live everlastingly, as God does, can scarcely be our privilege; but we may earn everlasting places as lives well lived within the one life that not only evermore will have been lived, but evermore and inexhaustibly will be lived in ever new ways.<sup>8</sup>

This preservation of one’s life by its incorporation into God’s life is for many reasons more satisfying than its preservation merely by the memory of a human community. It is truly lasting, for one thing, and it is universal in scope, not limited in its application to a small number of the famous or infamous. And the valuations it involves are accurate and truthful, not subject as human memory is to error and distortion. But is this enough? Is one’s incorporation in this way into the life of God, enough to impart true meaning to our transient lives? To test this, consider Hartshorne’s phrase, “lives well lived.” For those who are able to view their own lives as “well lived,” as intrinsically satisfying and also making some contribution to the good of the human community—for at least some such persons, what is offered may be enough. They may have convinced themselves that anything more would be superfluous, or in any case not essential for a fulfilled life.

But not nearly all lives are of this sort. Many lives are *not* “well lived,” and while for some this may be their own fault, others are blasted by sickness or premature death, or imprisoned by oppressive social systems, or caught up in the natural or self-imposed disasters to which our species is prone. For lives such as these, the consolation

offered by Whitehead and Hartshorne may ring hollow, if indeed it can be grasped at all. Considerations of this sort have led some process thinkers to explore the possibilities of “subjective immortality,” as a complement to the “objective immortality” of an occasion postulated by Whitehead, in the occasion’s influence on subsequent worldly events as well as in the mind of God. (Whitehead acknowledged that his system left open the possibility of subjective immortality, though he did not himself affirm it.) An especially striking effort along these lines is found in Marjorie Suchocki’s book, *The End of Evil*.<sup>9</sup>

Suchocki’s strategy is to reconceive the manner in which actual occasions enjoy “immortality” in the Consequent Nature of God. God’s apprehension of a past occasion, she proposes, grasps the occasion not only “objectively,” in terms of its outcome, but “subjectively,” in terms of the experience in which the occasion generates that outcome. She does not mean by this merely that God remembers the occasion in both its objective and subjective aspects. Rather the occasion as caught up in the divine life *continues to enjoy subjective experience*: “Not the remembrance of accomplished intensities but the presentness of experienced intensity is indicated as the continuous aim of God in the creative advance.”<sup>10</sup> And thus,

The occasion is twice-born: first through its own self-creation, and second through God’s total prehension of this self-creation. Its temporal birth is as fleeting as the concrescence that generated it; its divine birth, grounded in God’s own concrescence, is as everlasting as God. The occasion is therefore reborn to subjective immortality.<sup>11</sup>

But the solution is not yet complete. If the occasion’s incorporation into the divine life involves no change in the occasion itself, “there is the danger that whatever has been experienced in finitude as unmitigated evil will continue to be experienced in such a fashion through all eternity. Such an eschatological ‘heaven’ might well be described as ‘hell.’”<sup>12</sup> In order to avoid this, Suchocki postulates that the occasion experiences both itself and “God’s evaluative transformation of itself within the divine nature.”<sup>13</sup> This transformation is the way in which God incorporates all of finite experience in the ultimate harmony of God’s life.

This proposal by Suchocki is a bold one, and has met with a variety of critical responses.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Bracken points out with approval that the proposal introduces a subject–subject interaction between God and the world, differing from the subject–object relation that is characteristic of Whitehead’s own thought.<sup>15</sup> An especially interesting criticism comes from Catharine Keller. Keller points out that, while process thought places great importance on the freedom of finite

individuals, once the finite occasions are incorporated into God the only freedom left is God’s freedom, as God decides how the occasion should be harmonized in the ultimate divine fulfillment.<sup>16</sup> Suchocki agrees that this follows from her view, as stated in *The End of Evil*. However, she suggests an alternative:

But what if every occasion, prehended into God, generates yet another series, now within the context of the divine concrescence? The multiplicity involved would be mind-boggling—but since when does infinite complexity within God require rejection of the concept?<sup>17</sup>

On this view (which Suchocki discusses sympathetically but does not fully endorse), each occasion from a person’s temporal life would generate a whole new series of occasions in God, exercising freedom in doing so as it responded to God’s evaluation and placement of it within the divine life. A “mind-boggling multiplicity” indeed!

This suggestion, if accepted, would exacerbate what is already a serious problem for Suchocki’s view, namely, the problem of the “million Marjories.”<sup>18</sup> As she states the matter, “how can an immortality of *all* occasions of a person’s experience be unified in such a way as to still make sense of the notion of ‘personal’ immortality?”<sup>19</sup> For she is quite explicit that in her view it is primarily the *individual occasions* that are preserved: “We are discussing a metaphysics whereby occasions of experience, not substantial persons, are resurrected into the life of God.”<sup>20</sup> In taking this line, Suchocki is being true to process metaphysics, in which the basic unit is the occasion rather than the organism or the person. But one might reply that, from the standpoint of the actual religions, Suchocki is saving the wrong thing. Clearly from a Buddhist perspective such “salvation” would be unwelcome, in preserving all those moments of passionate attachment and illusory belief that need to be left behind in the progress toward Nirvana. But biblical religion also has issues with such an approach. When the prophet offers eschatological comfort, he has God “wipe away tears from all faces” (Isaiah 25:8); there is no thought that the tear-streaked faces will be endlessly preserved in that condition, but somehow consoled for their everlasting tears!

#### OPEN THEISM

Since some readers may be unfamiliar with open theism, it may be helpful to include here a brief characterization of this position.<sup>21</sup> Open theism is closer to the Christian theological mainstream than is process theism, but it dissents from important elements in the tradi-

tion. In disagreement with much (but not all) traditional theology, open theism holds that God is temporal rather than timeless. It holds that God is changeless in his underlying nature and character, but changeable in his particular intentions: as creatures respond to God's actions, God in turn responds to the creatures' responses. This is possible (and indeed necessary) because, contrary to some strands in the tradition, God does not unilaterally determine everything that occurs in the world, but in his generosity extends to creatures the gift of genuine freedom. In common with the tradition, this view holds that God is both omnipotent and omniscient. Omnipotence may be defined as God's power to do anything that is neither logically incoherent nor inconsistent with God's moral perfection. A singular exercise of divine omnipotence is found in the divine creation of the universe *ex nihilo*, out of nothing; omnipotence also entails the ability to perform miracles, actions that lie beyond the natural potentialities of created beings. Omniscience, similarly, means that God knows everything that is capable of being known. In contrast with the majority of the tradition, open theism holds that contingent future events are inherently unknowable and thus do not fall within the scope of omniscience, any more than it falls within the scope of omnipotence to create a square circle. Chief among the reasons why some future events are inherently unknowable is that they will come about through the free actions of creatures, where freedom is understood in the libertarian sense such that the agent is fully able, under the existing circumstances, to perform some other action in place of the one that is actually done. To be sure, God retains the power to "overrule" creaturely actions, but for the most part he graciously refrains from doing so, preferring to grant to the creatures a genuine, though limited, power of self-determination.

Traditional Christian theology is not as committed to a particular metaphysical perspective on human beings as are, in their different ways, Buddhism and process theism. It is well known that much theology has embraced a view of persons as possessing (or as being) divinely created, inherently immortal "souls" or mental substances—a view that is currently in widespread disfavor, not always for good reasons. At this point, I will introduce an alternative view on the metaphysics of human persons, a view that is fully consonant with open theism although not entailed by it.<sup>22</sup> This view, known as *emergent dualism*, recognizes in a certain way the ontological fragility of human persons that we have seen featured in both Buddhist and process theist views. Yet it avoids some of the difficulties of these views, especially the difficulty concerning personal identity over time.

We begin by assuming that an animal or human brain consists of ordinary atoms and molecules, which are subject to the ordinary laws



of physics and chemistry. Suppose, however, that given the particular, complex arrangements of these atoms and molecules of the brain new laws, new systems of interaction between the atoms, etc., come into play. These new laws, furthermore, play an essential role in such characteristic mental activities as rational thought and decision-making. The new laws are not detectable in any simpler configuration of matter; in such configurations the behavior of the atoms and molecules is adequately explained by the ordinary laws of physics and chemistry. These, then, are *emergent laws*, and the powers that the brain has in virtue of the emergent laws may be termed *emergent causal powers*. It is arguable that such emergent powers are essential in order to account for important animal and human activities such as goal-seeking behavior, agency, and rational thought.

But now let us suppose also that, as a result of the structure and functioning of the brain, there appear not merely new *modes of behavior* of the fundamental constituents (as in the case of emergent causal powers), but also a *new entity*, the *mind*, which *does not consist* of atoms and molecules, or of any other physical constituents. If this were the case, we would have an *emergent individual*, an individual that *comes into existence* as the result of a certain configuration of the brain and nervous system, but which is *not composed of* the matter which makes up that physical system. It is in virtue of this emergent individual that the view overall is best described as emergent dualism.

The reasons supporting this view are complex and cannot be discussed here, any more than we could review the considerations supporting the views of Buddhism and process theism. It can readily be seen that this view recognizes a certain fragility or precariousness in the existence of persons, in that their existence is intimately dependent on the existence and functional integrity of the biological organism. Thus, emergent dualism readily accommodates the extensive data showing the dependence of various forms of mental processing on the integrity and functioning of highly specific regions of the brain and nervous system—data which traditional substance dualism has difficulty accounting for in a natural and plausible way. On the other hand, difficulties about identity over time are minimal. Here we do not have a loose conjunction of *skandhas*, or a bundle of ownerless mental states (Hume), or a succession of discrete “actual occasions.” The mind on this view is a single, continuing individual, whose existence is logically separable from that of the organism that sustains it. (Thus, the mind qualifies as a “mental substance,” in one sense of that term.)<sup>23</sup>

And now what of the transition to the final state, named by the Christian tradition as *resurrection*? The conception is not of loss of individual identity, as in Nirvana, nor of an “immortality” within the

divine mind (whether merely objective or also subjective), but of a real, embodied human existence, under conditions recognizably similar to those of our present lives (though no doubt also very different from them). In the tradition, stress has rightly been laid on the “beatific vision,” the enjoyment of the knowledge and presence of God. But the resurrection state is also thought of as a continuation and fulfillment of the best that our present lives have to offer. Such a view affirms the value of the best in earthly existence, as does process theism, but it offers a continuation and enrichment of that existence, and not merely a “frozen” preservation of what has already occurred. In the words of Jesus, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The transition to this final state is somewhat complicated. If we are to survive bodily death, then our minds must be capable of existing without the bodies that, since the beginning of our lives, have generated and sustained them. Almost certainly this requires a divine miracle, though not any violation of logical coherence. Since the emergent mind is ontologically distinct from the supporting organism, it is logically coherent to suppose it existing without the organism. But absent the organism, what it needs to sustain it must come from somewhere else, and only a miraculous intervention by God is a plausible candidate. A resurrection body for such a mind could not be selected at random; it would have to be “tailored” precisely for the needs of the particular mind/soul it will sustain—and again, a fresh divine act of creation is what seems to be required. By why should we suppose resurrection to be anything less than a miracle?<sup>24</sup>

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

In the nature of the case, a comparative study such as this one does not allow for categorical conclusions. Instead, I will add a few additional thoughts by way of comparing the value-perspectives of the different views. To begin with, note the sharp contrast between the perspectives of Buddhism and process theism. For process theism, the ultimate divine aim is for enjoyment—by the creatures, and by God himself. Enjoyment requires both order and novelty. Without order, chaos reigns and significant enjoyment is impossible, but without the constant infusion of novelty, order stagnates and enjoyment remains at a stage of unnecessary triviality. Thus, according to Cobb and Griffin, “Process theology understands God precisely as the basic source of unrest in the universe.”<sup>25</sup> It is hard to imagine a sentiment more alien to Buddhism! Whereas process thought is willing

to embrace tension, and a degree of conflict, in the interest of a richer enjoyment, the aim of Buddhism is steadfastly to eliminate tension, and the engagement with the world that produces tension, in the interest of a peace from which intense emotion is completely excluded.

Open theism takes the side of process theism in this disagreement, though there are differences between the views. In ethics, for instance, open theists are likely to insist on the need for a deontological component to counterbalance process theism’s quasi-utilitarian emphasis on enjoyment. But both of these views are basically life-affirming, and both recognize the value of tension and complexity in preference to a simple, unbroken (and boring!) harmony.

A significant difference between open theism and process theism is the relative lack of emphasis in process theism on the direct relationship of the person to God. Rather little seems to be said, for instance, about the teaching of the catechism that our “chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” This could be due in part to the conception we are offered of the final state. In Whitehead’s “objective immortality” of occasions in God, the pious occasions remain forever pious, the secular occasions remain secular, and the godless occasions remain godless. In Suchocki’s view the occasions are in a way transformed, but this amounts only to their appreciating and accepting God’s verdict on them, of affirmation and/or judgment. The intrinsic nature of the occasions remains unchanged.

What seems to be needed, however, is a *continuation* of a person’s life and experiences, not merely the preservation of the life that has already been lived. In this way, we who know only “in part” may at last come to “understand fully, even as [we] have been fully understood” (I Corinthians 13:12). And this is what is promised in the doctrine of resurrection. To be sure, it must be recognized that the resurrection life really cannot be described by us. But the biblical writers, in depicting the final state, do not hesitate to fill it with concrete detail, speaking of cities, their streets and gates and walls, of trees and their fruit, and of food and drink. Perhaps it is descriptions such as these that led Cobb and Griffin to protest that the idea of personal life after death is “difficult to formulate in a way that is not ‘shocking and profane.’”<sup>26</sup> Be that as it may, we close with a fuller citation of the passage already mentioned from Isaiah:

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the

Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:6–8)<sup>27</sup>

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#### ENDNOTES

1. It should be noted, however, that Buddhism enjoys a certain advantage over Hume in that it recognizes real causal connections between the events that compose a person.
2. See Paul J. Griffiths, *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986), pp. 29–31. Among the thinkers who identified cessation with Nirvana are Buddhaghosa and Dhammapala.
3. Ninian Smart, “Nirvana,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), Vol. V, pp. 517–518.
4. See Henry Clark Warren, *Buddhism in Translation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), p. 436 (from Visuddhi Magga 3).
5. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 517.
6. John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 120–121.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
8. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection and Other Essays in Neoclassical Metaphysics* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1962), p. 262.
9. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
14. It would be misleading to suggest that Suchocki’s proposal represents the only way in which subjective immortality could be affirmed by a Whiteheadian. In a volume of essays devoted to Suchocki’s eschatology (Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., editor, *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005]), both Joseph Bracken and Lewis S. Ford develop alternative conceptions of subjective immortality, in each case from a modified Whiteheadian perspective. And David Ray Griffin, relying in part on evidence from parapsychology, contends that “the idea that a discarnate mind might be able to perceive (prehend) other realities is . . . not unthinkable,” and is, indeed, supported by a significant amount of evidence (David Ray Griffin, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts* [Albany: SUNY Press, 2000], p. 238). These lines of thought lie beyond the scope of the present essay.
15. See Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., “The End of Evil,” in *World without End*, p. 7.
16. See Catharine Keller, “The Mystery of Insoluble Evil: Violence and Evil in Marjorie Suchocki,” in *World without End*, pp. 59–62.
17. “‘Afterwords,’” in *World without End*, p. 204.
18. The phrase is Joseph Bracken’s; see his “Subjective Immortality in a Neo-Whiteheadian Context,” in *World without End*, p. 87.
19. “‘Afterwords,’” p. 198.
20. *The End of Evil*, p. 107.
21. Representative books presenting this position include Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.:

InterVarsity Press, 1994); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998); and Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2001). See also John B. Cobb, Jr., and Clark Pinnock, eds., *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000).

22. The view in question is fully displayed, and argued for, in William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).
23. Professor Chung-ying Cheng has pointed out a certain similarity between emergent dualism, as portrayed here, and the view of the self taken in the Chinese Tiantai tradition of Buddhism. The relationship between these two bodies of thought could be a rewarding topic for further study.
24. Could process theism support a “realistic” model of the resurrection such as is postulated here? I am not sure, but it seems doubtful; this kind of resurrection seems inseparable from miracle and the supernatural, concepts with which process theism is not at all comfortable.
25. *Process Theology*, p. 59.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 123–124. This assertion does not, however, represent their final word on the topic, as we have already seen in the case of Griffin.
27. My thanks to Pan-chiu Lai and James Keller for valuable comments on an earlier version of this essay.

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