

## Gary Van Den Heuvel-Anthony Flood Correspondence 47,255 words

Sun, Mar 01, 2009 04:08 PM

Dear Anthony,

This is the second time I stumbled upon your site. I write to you because of your goal for re-visioning three areas. One is A. N. Whitehead's philosophy of organism. On your site, you include Susanne K. Langer, and commented you are not sure how she connects to Whitehead because she used Cassirer as her springboard. Her most profound connection comes from Whitehead's idea of "extensive continuum."

I abridged Langer's *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* in the 1980's. I studied Whitehead, esp. *Process and Reality*, and Cassirer to get the abridgment right. I discovered her in 1967. She is my intellectual mentor. In your "Snapshot of a Philosopher," you say you discovered her in 2004 and feel she is "someone who seems able to make sense of man's symbol-making nature in general and promises to do the same for art in particular." Yes, and she found the organic basis of art in biology. She succeeded in constructing "a conceptual framework for biological thinking that will connect its several departments, from biochemistry to neuropsychology, in one scientific system." Recent biology (since 1995) has further corroborated her findings. I brought her to the attention of neurologist, Antonio R. Damasio, who tipped his hat to her in two of his books.

I do not consider myself a philosopher, per se. My interest is epistemology, which requires the liberated imagination of philosophy.

I believe you and I might find collaboration beneficial.

Your web site is filled with profound sources and personal musings, without the clutter of ads or links. It is not interactive. And you as a mind come into focus, but you as a person remain opaque. Is that your rationalist credo?

Consider this email an opener, if you like. Ignore me if you must!

Gary van den Heuvel

Wed, Mar 04, 2009 07:03 PM

Dear Gary,

Your visits to my site honor it, and I repay you poorly by responding so late. Hearing from *Mind's* abridger was a "big deal" for me, and so like the centipede counting his feet, I got immobilized thinking of how to reply. The result was intolerable procrastination, which you understandably may have interpreted (until now) as ignoring you.

Since writing "My Philosophical Workshop," I have posted many hard-to-find goodies by your intellectual mentor (I especially love her *Fortune* pieces), but unfortunately I have not read her *magnum opus*, not even your abridgment, which I have borrowed from the public library more than once. The library of the college where I

work has all three unabridged volumes in the open stacks, whenever I'm ready to take the plunge (again).

My avoidance-behavior has nothing to do with her style, which in terms of pleasure I rank below Blanshard (a "10"), but near Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Bertocci. (Not bad for someone for whom English was a second language!) It has everything to do with the sustained reading that would be involved for this eclectic reader. My interest in Langer arose from my study of Lonergan, who once raved about her aesthetic theory. When about five years ago I finally got around to absorbing every page of my old Mentor paperback copy of *Philosophy in a New Key*, a world of meaning opened up. That she had been one of Whitehead's first American students and an early admirer (and interpreter and translator) of Cassirer (neither of them influenced Lonergan) fascinated me. For help I turned to the writings of Richard Liddy, SJ (several of which I've posted), who had studied under Lonergan and chose Langer's aesthetics as his dissertation topic. I have not read his dissertation (I certainly won't do *that* before reading *Mind*), but I was struck by his ultimate rejection of Langer as a materialist—not surprising, perhaps, given his vocation, but unfair, I think. The evaluation of the effort to root man's artistic drive in biology depends on one's view of biology! A Whiteheadian's will be quite different a Thomist's. Thus, in reply to a question about the notion of thought's having a "biological basis," Lonergan the neo-Thomist wrote:

The biological basis of thought, I should say, is like the rubber-tire basis of the motor car. It conditions and sets limits to functioning, but under the conditions and within the limits the driver directs operations. [Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, 35.]

With this Liddy concurs. He continued to admire Langer despite his criticism, but he felt that there was no getting around what he believed were the reductionist import of many of her statements. (There's one early on in *Mind* that I can't put my finger on at the moment.)

Writing *Mind* took the rest of Langer's life, and so its significance for metaphysics was left for others to interpret. That, however, was *not* due to her having devalued metaphysics as so many of her colleagues did in the last century, but rather that she took it so seriously that she knew she could not do it well *and* do the work that she felt it was uniquely in her power to do. As she wrote:

This study of mind should culminate, of course, in a well-constructed epistemological and possibly even metaphysical theory, at least as firmly founded on other people's knowledge and hypotheses as any earlier parts of this essay which have been written in preparation for such a reflective conclusion. But the hindrances of age—especially increasing blindness—make it necessary to curtail the work at what should be its height . . . . [*Mind* III 201]

I respect the choice she made. Unless, however, we understand the physical basis of biology in terms that do not make the presence of subjectivity a cosmic anomaly, the emergence of man the symbol-making, free idea-spinning mammal is unintelligible. (I'm compressing my undefended insight here!) There is also the technical matter, which I have not explored in Langer, of the status of the act of understanding, which

Liddy, following Lonergan, has argued is *intrinsically* incapable of being assimilated to biology and its physical substrate.

As you may have noticed, I have posted criticism of Langer (besides [Liddy's](#)) by [Beryl Lang](#), [Randall Auxier](#) (following Lang in part) and [Peter Bertocci](#). I am interested in knowing whether their criticisms have been addressed by Langer's "disciples" like Donald Dryden (five of whose papers I have also posted). (Do you know him?)

I wonder whether your comment on my site preceded or followed your reading my "About Links" note in the home page's lower right corner. Becoming less "opaque" is a possible consequence of personal communication, but I see no reason why a web site devoted to ideas should resemble MySpace. My favorite correspondents have been people who were looking, *not* for me, but for more information on the "heroes" in my [gallery](#). The only personal touch I'll allow is the mug shot. (All right, [this page](#) and [this page](#) show me playing my guitar, but you really have to *dig* for them! By the way, not the least important fact about Langer, for me, is that she was devoted to making music on her cello.)

I must bring this overlong message to a close, but not without first thanking you for mentioning Antonio Demasio's hat tip to Langer and her "extensive continuum" debt to Whitehead. Please elaborate upon your epistemology/philosophy distinction. (Have you read Lonergan's *Insight*?)

Your suggestion of collaboration flatters me, and I would understand were you to have second thoughts after wading through the above. I am sure I will be the beneficiary of any correspondence I may enjoy with someone who has studied devoted Langer's life and thought for over 40 years, but I fail to see how I could carry my weight in a joint venture.

Thanks for your patience. Please write again soon.

Yours truly,  
Tony

Fri, Mar 06, 2009 04:53 PM

Dear Tony,

You are much too modest. Likely you have read more philosophy than I. I have a good analytical mind but make a poor philosopher, *per se*. I don't like reading most of it! You, on the other hand, are a treasure trove of sources. You have Langer sources I haven't seen before. And you fail to see how you could carry your weight in a joint venture? Your discussion below demonstrates exactly the type of questions I hope for. I believe we both will be beneficiaries if we interact through ideas. Persons who are passionate about ideas are rare today!! (And becoming immobilized in a way that caused you to respond to me "so late"? Relax. It was only 3 days to respond. I consider that lightning speed turnaround, especially given the thoughtfulness of your response. You responded faster and with more depth than I expected).

You may wonder what type of collaboration I had in mind. I have been doing independent, transdisciplinary scholarly work for years. I am just preparing materials to

pull together a multidisciplinary knowledge consortium. I don't even have a web site yet. The domain name will be [www.mindzact.net](http://www.mindzact.net) (it is not up yet so don't look for it!). I will have several features including a wiki, blogs, etc. The discussion you started below will be transferred to it (if you agree to engage).

I am ready not only to promote Langer's unrecognized and misunderstood later art-as-biology conceptual system, but to advance it. Langer created a new image of the domain I study: the domain bounded by the human body and human culture. Biology is not the old reductionist science we grew up with. That's 19<sup>th</sup> century biology. I usually agree with philosophers who make their arguments against that biology, but they are talking old school. Are you familiar with Antonio Damasio?

I will attach a .PDF document that demonstrates what I am up to, if you like. It will be put into my wiki when I can get to it. It is a paper submitted to the Tenth Annual Media Ecology Convention in June 2009. I am just beginning to interact with them, so submitted a paper. The Media Ecology Association (MEA) is doing their best to ignore my ideas, so I am not going to continue with them. I wouldn't mind if they disagreed, but when individuals and institutions seek out ways to secure their values either by disguising or eliminating the possibilities for change, then I move on.

Thanks for responding! I will make some further comments between your text below.

Sincerely,

Gary van den Heuvel

## **Liddy's Criticism of Langer**

Sat, Mar 07, 2009 11:51 AM

Hi Tony,

I am rested again, so will proceed to address critics of Langer that you kindly provided me. I will begin with [Liddy1](#). His analysis of her *Mind Essay* was written in 1967, the year Volume I was published. He did an excellent job of summarizing her intent and to a much lesser degree her methodology. Liddy framed her as *res extensa* versus *res cogitans*. That's his old school framework, not hers. She said there is no such "Ass's Bridge" to cross.

His conclusion is interesting:

If we would fault Langer for the inadequacy of her conclusions, chiefly, the reduction of "mind" to feeling and electro-chemical events, we would also point out the root of that inadequacy in her methodology. Thus, although her ultimate explicit court of appeal is "science," she never analyzes differentiated scientific activity. She assumes that it is a merely imaginative enterprise; for human mentality is at most a fusion of images under the pressures of underlying processes. The only introspective evidence she supplies for such a reduction is her analysis of undifferentiated artistic and mythic consciousness in terms of vision and visual imagination: thus, we "see" forms of feeling in works of art; and in metaphorical activity we "see one thing in another," life in the candle flame, death in sleep, etc. This, she notes, is the basis of all "higher" differentiated symbolic activity.

I would suggest, however, that a more sophisticated introspective technique, *beginning* with an analysis of the exigent processes of scientific consciousness, would show the impossibility of reducing such consciousness to elements, such as vision, imagination and feeling, easily identifiable in undifferentiated consciousness. It would seem that only a maieutic tool—such as is found in the first five chapters of Bernard Lonergan’s *Insight*—could assist in such a philosophical conversion needed to conceive “mind,” not visually or imaginatively, but in terms of its own (one’s own) intellectual and rational processes. Such a construction would succeed where *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* fails: it would provide an adequate philosophical ground for Langer’s previous fine work on art.

Neurobiology, perhaps to the chagrin of Liddy, has corroborated Langer. I recommend Antonio Damasio’s *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (1994). He does give a neurophysiological fact-based [theory?] of mind based on feeling. It may be an affront to some historical religions, but I am more interested in wisdom and truth than traditions of the old Era of Religion (see your page [Make Your Own World](#))

Liddy was incorrect to say “her ultimate explicit court of appeal is ‘science.’” He is incorrect to assume hers was not a “sophisticated introspective technique.” She did say introspection was necessary but not sufficient. And she found that “intellectual” and “rational” processes are not adequate, for most of cognitive activity is neither intellectual nor rational. She does not reduce mind to *res extensa*. She concluded that there are two cognitive modes: “generalizing mode,” which leads to hierarchical abstractions and whose most mature form is mathematics. The other cognitive mode is the immediacy of Presence (she called it “presentational immediacy”). That mode is expressed in ritual, magic, and religion, and its most mature form is Art (in any of its forms). The two modes are not reducible one into another. The two modes can be oversimplified as left brain and right brain processes.

To put it in my words, not Langer’s, she created a conceptual framework that shows that quantum complementarity exists on the level where we live. Quantum physics says that subatomic particles must be treated as both particles and waves. Langer said that the study of mind must incorporate both particulate material events and wholes held together solely through activity. Mind is not a material entity, nor is feeling. They are acts.

Liddy’s objection to mind and physics being incompatible leads me to suspect he never read Langer’s *Practice of Philosophy* (1929), in which she said all philosophical concepts must be re-evaluated in the light of the then new physics of relativity and quantum mechanics. They are mind-blowing awesome. That is the physics she referred to, not Newtonian physics. Liddy did not comment on Langer’s several chapters on “The Act Concept and Its Principal Derivatives,” “On Individuation and Involvement,” “The Evolution of Acts,” and “The Growth of Acts.” Those chapters compose Part Three of her *Essay: Natura Naturans*, meaning “nature naturing,” a term coined by Spinoza, who used the term to describe an active, alive, and changing God that at the same time does not lose its reality. For Langer the universe is a living intelligence, indivisible. But as the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, has said, “Discussing God is not the best

use of my energies.” Langer and Buddhists look to existential experience for the Presence of spirit.

Liddy’s critique rested solely on her opening chapters, and he was thus misleading. Her “On Individuation and Involvement” chapter (Abridged Edition) ends with,

Though we have no physical model of this endless rhythm of individuation and involvement, we do have its image in the world of art, most purely in the dance; for this dialectic of vital continuity is the very essence of the classical ballet. Think only of that perfect example, *Les Sylphides*: individual figures emerge and submerge, *pas de deux* develop and melt back into the web of choric movement, divisions form only to close over what was, for a moment, the path of an advancing stream. And not only in dance but in all choric works of wide range this largest rhythm appears: the “tide in the affairs of men, that, taken at the full, leads on to fortune”; or, in the highest musical form that has yet been developed, the sonata, which is choric in structure whether scored for the keyboard or the full symphonic orchestra: a scarcely discernible new theme may begin a history, but even if it rises to apotheosis it can never transcend the stream, which may finally integrate it with another individual form or even simply engulf it. Individuation and involvement are the extremes of the great rhythm of evolution, which moves between them in a direction of its own, always toward more intense activity and gradually increasing ambients of the generic lines that survive. A degenerating activity is usually making way for the upsetting impetus of another kind of action; under such conditions the organism can persist only by being involved with others of its own kind or of alien kinds that vicariously perform its waning function. Thus, the stock itself, which has evolved its own vital activities, may give up one or another of them in the course of its own expanding life.

Like a child from the womb,  
Like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

Those mysterious final words of the chapter remind me of what Langer wrote in the *Fortune* essay in 1944:

We are fighting a war of fictions, from which a new vision of the order of nature will someday emerge. The future, just now, lies wide open—open and dark, like interstellar space; but in that emptiness there is room for new gods, new cultures, mysterious now and nameless as an unborn child.

That does not sound like reductionism to me!

(And she provides an excellent critique of the problems of the way we conceive evolution)

More to follow!

Gary van den Heuvel

## Liddy's Criticism of Langer, Part II

Sat, Mar 07, 2009 01:03 PM

Hi Tony,

I just read Liddy on Langer's Symbolic Consciousness, written in 1971 ([Liddy2](#)). His analysis of her aesthetic philosophy is excellent. His conclusions repeat his 1967 criticisms of Langer's "empiricism." I will try to keep this short. He wrote,

Although, in this writer's opinion Langer has never successfully determined "the meaning of meaning," nevertheless she was insistent on the human and "meaningful" character of these presentational symbols [sic].

Again, Liddy has not read Langer's *Practice of Philosophy*, where she spent a whole chapter on it. See Chapter V, "The Logical Basis of Meaning." Don't let the title fool you; her logic is not in the least Aristotelian. I don't know if the chapter would satisfy Liddy, but I find it the clearest, most articulate analysis of the meaning of meaning I have ever encountered. Without that analysis she would have never intellectually come to her aesthetics and her interest in what Liddy called the "unlogicized" areas of mental life."

Liddy does not like Langer's empiricism, and seems to assume her acknowledgement of the empirical and its proper role in knowledge (versus belief) is positivist.

*Mind Essay*, Chapter 3:

Knowledge begins, then, with the formulation of experience in many haphazard ways, by the imposition of available images on new experiences as fast as they arise; it is a process of imagining not fictitious things, but reality, the making of reality out of impressions which would otherwise pass without record. The depth and reach of the imaginative functions in the making of human mentality will be discussed in a later part of this essay, but their very early occurrence is important here. The imposition of imagery on all materials that present themselves for perception, whether peripheral or intraorganic, enters into the most naive experience, and into the making of our "empirical" world.

*Mind Essay*, Chapter 14:

all theory that goes beyond *ad hoc* explanation of gross empirical fact--it involves some speculation and indirect evidence where direct verification is impossible.

What we perceive *makes* what we call the empirical. It is not a simple matter of a world "out there," *res extensa*. Langer did value empirical facts, but said that we lodge our facts into a conceptual system. It is a logical iterative process between concept and empirics that separates the wheat from the chafe, the illusion from the "real."

Gary van den Heuvel

## Liddy, Lonergan, Langer

Sat, Mar 07, 2009 04:09 PM

Hi Tony! Tired of me yet??? :-o This is the last for today. I will read Donald Dryden next, whom you also mentioned in your response to my initial email. I will see if he

prompts anything for me to write to you. This exercise with Liddy has been a wonderful experience.

Comments on [Liddy on Lonergan learning from Langer and what Langer might have learned from Lonergan](#)

I conclude that Liddy, and through Liddy's analysis, Lonergan (for I have not yet read him), understand Langer's aesthetic theory very well, indeed. In fact, Liddy's paper cuts to the chase with masterful articulation. The best critique of her aesthetics I have ever read. I am inspired by this paper. Yet, Liddy objects to Langer's "empiricism." Langer was non-theist (distinct from "atheist") in the tone and method of her writings. Still, unfortunate to those who find the idea an affront,

art is the image of biology and biology is the context of spirit.

As an intellectual descendent of Langer, I am now prepared to model that in non-metaphoric terms. The primary properties of Whitehead's Extensive Continuum, described not in terms of his "Atomistic Epoch" (old school) but in terms of Langer's "Act Epoch" (new school). We as humans interface the unknowable unknown unknown—emptiness—through seven active nodes of the human body's instinctive geometry extensive: kinetic, kinesthetic, esthetic, ethic, synesthetic, cinematic, kinematic. The words are too small to read in this picture. The smallest circle, the initial extensivity, is the kinetic universe, which comprises the whole universe as reductionists know it.



Liddy wrote,

Finally, we can conclude by noting what Langer might have learned from Lonergan. First of all, she might have learned a more accurate and explanatory account of human interiority that would have set her fine work on art into a wider context.

For example, because of what became evident in her later writings, an inadequate insight into insight, Langer fails, it seems to me, to note the intentional character of human feelings. Not only do our human feelings reflect their organic



depths, but they also involve awarenesses of human values: vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious.

Langer was neither inaccurate and [*sic*] insufficient in her explanatory account of “human interiority,” nor did she have “inadequate insight into insight.” She merely approached the matter with a different tack, which somehow affronts Liddy. Langer’s student, Arthur Danto, in the Foreword to my Abridged Edition, said her context was the “domain bounded by the human body and human culture.” I don’t know how one can widen that context.

Liddy feels that the deeper insight she lacked was

what in *Insight* Lonergan called the operator on the level of our sensitive being: corresponding to the notion of being on the intellectual level. There is, then, in Lonergan there is a wider significance to the theme of art as liberation. For the question can be asked: liberation for what? In *A Second Collection* he speaks of it as the liberation of the ordinary person’s ordinary experience into the known unknown, the realm of mystery.

Langer’s *Mind Essay* goes deep into “the known unknown, the realm of mystery,” and comes out with mystery intact. In fact, the mystery becomes more awesome. This quote is not found in Langer, but suits the matter well. The British geneticist, evolutionary biologist, and one of the three founders of population genetics, J. B. S. Haldane said, “Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.”

Does Lonergan mean by the “operator” the mathematical meaning of the word, or the religious/philosophical (Soul/homunculus)? If the meaning is mathematical, I would say that Langer was sensitive to two operators: right and left brain. The twist of the two is the realm of mystery. Emptiness even of Soul, the idea of which is old school proxy for the realm of mystery.

Quoting Saint Augustine, Liddy concludes:

Art can be the viewing this world and looking for the something more that this world reveals, and reveals, so to speak, in silent speech, reveals by a presence that cannot be defined or got hold of.

It seems to me that in Susanne K. Langer’s *Feeling and Form* Bernard Lonergan grasped in a fuller way what the experience of art could mean.

“A presence that cannot be defined or got hold of.” Langer grasped that fully. The affront becomes a matter of differences in temperament. What is the proper method and language by which one addresses that Presence. Liddy holds to the Era of Religion, it seems to me, and Langer looked to, and beyond the early reductionist fits and starts of, the Era of Science. Does Liddy hold onto Essentialism.[?]

Am I mistaken in my understanding, do you think?

Sincerely,  
Gary van den Heuvel

Sat, Mar 07, 2009 04:45 PM

Dear Gary,

It's been worthwhile to have my site up for five years just to see it receive the attention you alone have given some of its content. I shift gears slowly, so I will need time to reciprocate in the attention-giving department, which I promise to do. I must re-read much of what I posted, which will re-acclimate me to Langer's world, and then study closely what you written so I can engage your creative thought (especially on how you addressed Liddy's "old school" criticisms).

One reason why I tend to "drift" among thinkers is that it's not clear to me what I can *do* with any one of them, but you seem to be offering a "live hypothesis" emerging on the horizon. I must re-borrow and re-read *The Practice of Philosophy*, so I can pay more attention this time to the sections you have emphasized. And I will find a copy of Damasio's *Descartes' Error*, whether in the library or via Amazon.

This has just been a note to acknowledge receipt of your stimulating (not at all "tiring") messages, to which I will simply need some time to do justice. If, in the meantime, if you have not gotten tired of writing to me without a fuller response, you could sketch how you discovered Langer—in 1967 did you say?—I would read it with the keenest interest. Thanks.

All the best,

Tony

Sat, Mar 07, 2009 05:27 PM

Tony,

No pressure to respond! And thanks for your patience with my ideas. Most eyes glaze over much more quickly! I *love* your web site. It is such a treasure trove for me. I can't begin to express my appreciation. I've pictures of Langer I never seen. I've seen writings (her *Fortune* articles) I've never seen. I've seen coherent defenses and criticisms that rise to a level of rigor I have never seen. You have some rare stuff on your site.

Spring Semester, 1968 (I incorrectly told you 1967), I was a 20-year-old sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The course that was all the rage on campus that semester was titled, "Speech and Human Behavior." My friends and I took it because of the fashion. It had something to push anyone's buttons. For example, we had to write a paper on the communication function of soft porn books! During those wild times, authenticity was the question of the day. The professor tore down the need of "authenticity" by showing it didn't mean what we all thought it did! One of the required books was Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key*. I was awestruck by its lucidity and whole new approach to seeing my world. At the time, I was an art major.

In June 1968, I started to read Langer's sources, but decided she analyzed them better than I could, and that I should focus on building upon her insight. And I got distracted by Marshall McLuhan. It was the "McLuhan Age." It would be years before I returned to Langer. I dropped out of school and returned to get a B.A. in Communication Arts, Emphasis in Film. In a film history class, I discovered the father of

the French New Wave Cinema, Robert Bresson. There was no film theory that could handle his unique style. I decided to write a film theory. A gut feeling said return to Langer. Then I discovered her *Mind Essay*. It was 1981, and Volume III was yet to be published. I realized that it was the basis for a film theory that could handle Bresson.

So I bought an old Kaypro PC with a 9" screen to type the core of *Mind* into the computer. I found it so mindboggling challenging that I thought I'd have to manipulate it to get it. It took me a year to enter all of it as I read. My marginalia protested several points, but she'd take 50 pages to argue one point, such as the nature of elephant intelligence, and persuaded me of her argument each time!

As an afterthought, I figured I might as well do something with it. I called The Johns Hopkins University Press and told the director they needed an Abridged Edition. He told me to send a proposal. I did, which he gave to Jack Goellner. Goellner was Langer's editor there for 25 years. He liked it. Because Langer was in poor health and nearly blind, they sent it to her son, Walter, the executor of her estate. He liked it. He went to his mother with the proposal. She responded, "If I could have written it in fewer words, I would have done so!"

The director of the press called to say that authors are often protective of their work as children. In the future, "when the time is appropriate" and if the family still was interested, the Press would proceed. She died a few months later. Nine months after the phone call, I received a letter from the Press saying they wished to proceed. If I were no longer interested, they would find someone else. Of course I was interested. My life has not been the same. I turned into a thinker, researcher, and writer, rather than a filmmaker. What I pictured was virtual immersive technology, anyway. And it didn't exist yet. I worked on updating the scientific empirical. To a degree, Langer's thought was held hostage to the empirics of her time. However, she anticipated the revolution in biology that started in the 1990's and she anticipated Chaos Theory, with its "sensitive dependence on initial conditions." Langer said an act is prefigured in the impulse phase. And now the immersive technology is ready, too. So I am turning from being an "urban hermit" to becoming a promoter of a robust new rationalism that doesn't burst in the presence of mind and spirit. The new rationalism, based in the needs of the Age of Science, will be an affront to some of the Age of Religion (see your page [Make Your Own World](#)). It will also be an affront to fundamentalist reductionists like Richard Dawkins. It looks like it is also an affront to Media Ecologists, the descendents of McLuhan. I'm not a popular guy.

Sincerely,

Gary van den Heuvel

Sun, Mar 08, 2009 02:09 PM

Tony,

Given the barrage of ideas I have delivered to you in a matter of days, I feel obligated to clarify my intent in regard to what I want from you. The short answer is nothing more than you desire to give. And if you want to disengage, I will respect that.

Also, a couple of remarks in separate emails leads me to suspect that you may feel you are not my intellectual equal. I may be projecting that into you (and if so, please forgive me). Frankly, I have met few equals when it comes to the *creativity* of my intellect. There are others with high IQ who don't have a creative thought in their head. I'm not overly impressed by intelligence! I value other virtues more highly. You do have creative thoughts. I don't care if you cannot address the new ideas I present with equal assurance as I.

What I hope for from you, if you choose to participate, is to engage in *ideas that engage you*. Clearly, you are a lover of ideas. In your "Philosophical Workshop," you name three goals. The first involves Whitehead, the third involves Langer. It seems to me we have much to agree and to disagree on. You say "the supreme reality is creative experience." I agree. You say "the supreme actuality, God." I neither agree nor disagree. I see that matter as semantic, and I don't engage in theological arguments. I am nontheist and feel discussing God is less than fruitful, though I am not opposed to engage any idea you have about it that you wish to bring one up. The source of moral authority seems to be central for you; it is for me as well.

Politically, we may agree or disagree. I am more pragmatist than idealist. My idealism rests in the dream of mythic revival, a mythos that stands up to, but does not oppose, the Age of Science. I just read your letters to Murray Rothbard and went to Wikipedia to learn more about him. And finally have learned the context of your header that includes "Anarchocapitalism." Personally, I believe neither Keynesian economics nor the Austrian (and Chicago) Schools of economics have it right. They are antagonistic forces that have now each shown their Achilles Heel.

Based on the Wikipedia page, I understand anarchocapitalism as a subset of the science of emergent self-organizing structures, found at every level of phenomena. My "Instinctive Geometry Extensive" model, once fully "instantiated," shows the domain of the human body and human culture as emergent self-organizing structures. Anarchocapitalism is one possible structure on the *ethic continuum* of the model. I don't vest too much of my energies in political activism to promote one socio-political-economic model over another. Compassion is the answer to everything.

Langer called economics the "science of values" in her *Mind Essay*. That puzzled me for a long time. I have come around to agreeing with her. Such a science must be deeply rooted in what Langer called the "Ethnic Balance" [III, Chapter 22]. The ethnic balance is the individual impulse to express freely versus the claims a group makes on the individual. The group does have legitimate claims to protect the weak from the ruthlessness of power.

First paragraph of chapter [Abridged Edition]:

Ethos is the fundamental quality of acts in human conception. It is wider than their evaluation as right or wrong or even as good or bad; it includes the spontaneous perception of acts as important or trivial, holy or profane, instrumental, obstructive, intentional or not, dangerous or not, noble or base—all elements that modify our estimate of their ethos, by virtue of which they enter into the human scene. An act may be good without being noble, as ordinary peaceable behavior usually is, or terrible, like many religious sacrifices, without

being base, and even without being received as evil. The finer gradations of value are made with increasing intellectuality in the course of mental life; the two primary reactions, approval and disapproval, may rest on moral or various other grounds. These grounds—often tacit, unformulated assumptions and beliefs—and the traditional pattern of accepted action against which specific acts are seen and evaluated by any given community constitute its ethos.

Last paragraph of chapter [Abridged Edition]:

Wherever the balance between man and the greater powers that surround him has been established by some fundamental religious expression, as it has largely been today, it fills the background rather than the foreground of conscious thought. But no balance holds itself passively for very long in the course of evolution. A state of equilibrium in nature generally indicates a fulcrum between two antagonistic forces. Even though we may be in the midst of an eon of cerebral elaboration rather than radical mutation, intellectual drives and cultural checks are always shifting the ethnic balance, and its present direction seems to be toward internalization, i.e., toward a centering of the fulcrum of social equilibrium not between men and Supernaturals, but in society itself. We may be at the very bottom of a new ladder of mental and moral ascent, in a human world stunned by civilization, and in a moment of pause in its otherworldly concerns, meeting the challenge of its own technical and economic construction of a world-wide civilized society.

The last sentence remains one of my favorite Langer statements. It is the closest she came to be prophetic rather than analytic (except for her *Fortune* essay [Make Your Own World](#) that I had not seen before reading it on your site.

I agree with your Cassirer quote that:

Scientific knowledge and technical mastery of nature daily win new and unprecedented victories. But in man's practical and social life the defeat of rational thought seems to be complete and irrevocable. In this domain modern man is supposed to forget everything he has learned in the development of his intellectual life. He is admonished to go back to the first rudimentary stages of human culture. Here rational and scientific thought openly confess their breakdown; they surrender to their most dangerous enemy.

Marshall McLuhan, not a philosopher, has written some interesting books about that, especially, *The mechanical bride: folklore of industrial man* [1951]. He said ours is the first age in which myth is industrially manufactured.

Ours is the first age in which many thousands of the best-trained individual minds have made it a full-time business to get inside the collective public mind. To get inside in order to manipulate, exploit, control is the object now. And to generate heat not light is the intention. To keep everybody in the helpless state engendered by prolonged mental rutting is the effect of many ads and much entertainment alike.

The great moral question of the day, it seems to me, is what to do with all the people who go about their lives doing what they have learned is the right thing to do, played by the rules, and are being manipulated. This transformative age we live in right now

requires we re-evaluate the ethnic balance between power groups and individuals. [Wikipedia](#) states:

In an anarcho-capitalist society, law enforcement, courts, and all other security services are provided by voluntarily-funded competitors such as private defense agencies rather than through compulsory taxation. Because personal and economic activities are regulated by the natural laws of the market through private law rather than through politics, victimless crimes and crimes against the state would be rendered moot.

I believe order will be rendered moot is true only if the voluntarily-funded competitors are compassionate towards all living beings. Snowball's chance in hell! We are in a period of such anarchy right now. The religious ethic of serving the poor is being replaced by an animal-spirit ethic of letting the weak just die or killing them out of indifference or misplaced sense of mercy. For an example of such an animal-spirit ethic, see the video [Juan Enriquez: Beyond the crisis, mindboggling science and the arrival of Homo evolutis](#) (18:50 minutes).

Anyway, back to the point of why I am writing you today. In addition, to making clear that I want nothing more from you than you desire to or feel you can give, I have not answered a couple of questions you have asked of me.

- 1) Do I know Donald Dryden? No, and am looking forward to reading your posts.
- 2) Have you read Lonergan's *Insight*? No. I read very little theology. Paul Tillich's *The Courage To Be* stands out in my heart. After reading Liddy on Lonergan, I am interested in checking him out. You called him Thomist. I am too Buddhist in thought to go too far with theology. Though I believe a theological perspective on Langer's aesthetics might prove interesting.
- 3) I wonder whether your comment on my site preceded or followed your reading my "About Links" note in the home page's lower right corner? Yes, and I share the sentiment. You followed the question with "I see no reason why a web site devoted to ideas should resemble MySpace." I agree, however, I like to know the person with whom I devote myself to the exchange of ideas. All ideas have embodied context. I don't want to presume I understand the nature of your embodiment. My web site, once set up, will have links, but will focus strictly on ideas and not personalities. Still, we are human beings.

Sincerely,  
Gary

Sun, Mar 08, 2009 08:01 PM

Dear Gary,

I am happy to receive, and soon engage, every one of your thoughts, and thoughts upon thoughts, but I just need a little time to process it all (in a very pedestrian, non-Whiteheadian way). You've made it abundantly clear that you understand that, for which I am also grateful.

Will write again soon, if not on everything you've responded to, at least some of it (and eventually all of it).

Sincerely,  
Tony

Wed, Mar 11, 2009 09:59 AM

Dear Gary,

This is not the promised full response, but a note to let you know of a "prior commitment" to an equally "heavy" correspondence that enveloped me even as we were exchanging messages. As soon as I fire my next volley in that friendly skirmish I will eagerly turn to your letters, which I have printed out as one document and now carry with me. As my grasp of some of my favorite essays of Langer has languished (assonance unintended!), I must refresh it. I have also ordered a copy of *Descartes' Error*.

*Ad interim*, here's a stray thought I can share only with you: while glancing at the page for "Make Your Own World," I was struck by the irony of the last line of *Fortune's* caption for that rare photo of her: "One of her sons is fighting in Europe, the other is a Navy pilot." Ponder for a moment, if you would, the vastly different circumstances that would have constrained the channeling of Susanne Knauth's great capacities into her famous specific capabilities had Antonio and Else Knauth decided to stay in Germany in the 1880s. And how much poorer we would be. Would she have tried to emigrate in the early '30s (in her late 30s) and would she have been successful? It is unlikely she would have been invited to teach at any American university. Her sons, if she would go on to have any, may also have gone on to fight in Europe or fly for a navy, but on which side? William Langer—who gave her the name that now brings *Mind* to mind at least a thousand times before it does his historical tomes—was convinced that her heart was simply not in family life. (What short shrift he gives his intellectual superior in his memoir!) She almost certainly would never have become Whitehead's or Sheffer's student or authored *The Practice of Philosophy*. She might, of course, have read each volume of Cassirer's *PSF* in Germany as it rolled off the press, and maybe even have met him, but what would her scholarly prospects have been? Indeed, what would have been her general *life* prospects post-WWI and post-WWII? Just some cheerful thoughts.

I appreciate your continued good-natured patience with me.

Best wishes,  
Tony

### **Actions move at their own organic pace**

Wed, Mar 11, 2009 11:02 AM

Dear Tony,

You need not worry about the speed with which you return correspondence. In your first email response to my initial inquiry, you linked several references to essays on your

web site. I began reading them and responded immediately after each. Therefore, you received a barrage of ideas seemingly all at once. I have made it less than halfway through the links you provided, so expect more emails as I read them. The last few days I have been giving both of us a break. Respond in your own time and as you will.

I am moved and grateful for our correspondence. Your meditations below on the circumstances of SKL's writing, "Make Your Own World," reveal aspects of her life that I have not contemplated or known. Where do you come up with these details? Her papers are at Harvard, so my guess is you have not gone there to study them. Much of her personal life has remained scant to me. In the acknowledgments section of Volume I of her *Mind Essay* she thanked her long-time research assistant, Mr. Bruno R. Neumann, of whom she wrote, "More important than any practical help, however, was the intellectual spur of discussions with him, the give and take of ideas between a political economist and a much less socially or historically oriented thinker; so that his taking a government post in the far-off Virgin Islands has left me with a loss that cannot be made up." Therefore, I was surprised to read her social and historical (and political) essays in *Fortune* some twenty years prior to Volume I.

You continue to be a treasure trove of information for me. I thank you.

Is your web site custom built, or is it based on a template? I like its structure and feel. If it is a template, please share with me which one it is?

I contacted Donald Dryden at Duke University through email, but have not heard back.

Most sincerely,  
Gary

Wed, Mar 11, 2009 11:48 AM

Dear Gary,

Thank you for your reassuring and understanding reply.

I've not had the privilege of pouring over her papers. After mining nuggets of biography from Dryden's indispensable [monograph](#), linked on my Langer page, James Lord's "[A Lady Seeking Answers](#)" for the *Times* (wonderful, albeit grainy, shot of her at her desk), her ex's *In and Out of the Ivory Tower*, etc., I've formed a picture of her, which you should easily be able to match.

I'm pleased you're pleased with my site's look. It's a "quiet" site, but quiet doesn't have to be boring. Any excitement must come from the texts. Page-to-page consistency of look is also helpful. I swiped my "template" from the site of color specialists, trusting that they had gotten it right with those "pastels." I use FrontPage, because whatever I use must be fool-proof (I know virtually no html). I recently expanded the width of the home page (whose layout I'm always revising) and gave the masthead a black background. All other pages will remain "narrow" so that the focus is on the column of text, also narrow. How I *hate* long cornrows of thin-serifed text burned out by the direct light of the PC! Verdana 10-pt bold makes text easy to read on the screen. Feel free to



swipe my “template”: Ctrl + A to select all, Ctrl + C to copy, Ctrl + V to past onto a blank page of FrontPage (or whatever you would use). Then replace my text with yours.

Dryden must be away from his computer, as I cannot imagine his not wanting to respond ASAP to *Mind's* abridger. Don't miss his papers on my site, especially [this](#).

The feeling of gratitude is mutual.

All the best,  
Tony

Wed, Mar 11, 2009 06:36 PM

Thanks, again, Tony. One more question about your site. You use FrontPage (Microsoft changed it to Publisher). Do you have a host server, or do you have your own server. I assume you pay for a hosting service.

I'm just trying to gather as much as I can for my site.

Gary

Wed, Mar 11, 2009 10:32 PM

Gary, for my needs, FrontPage has been sufficient (it can still be bought, but no longer supported by Microsoft); you will be able to do more with Publisher if you can climb its learning curve. My host server is [Gate.com](#) at \$9.95 a month. Once in a blue moon they need to shut things down, briefly, to fix something, for which they apologize profusely. I get through to them quickly when I call (I rarely do). No trouble to speak of in five years.—Tony

## **Randall Auxier and Misplaced Concreteness**

Sat, Mar 14, 2009 12:50 PM

Tony,

My plan was to hold off further emails to you, since I gave you much to think about already and certainly my posts are not the only activities you attend to. I have read [Randall Auxier's criticism of Langer](#). You introduced it saying, “Auxier's criticism of Langer, from a philosophical foundation not very different from my own. . . .” Since you share to some degree the criticism, I will briefly address Auxier's core criticism, which is:

Whether [Langer's] will to generality was a giving of herself overly to abstraction, or misplaced concreteness, is open to debate, but I will mince no words in saying that in my view it amounts to that. Generality and abstractness are not always the same, but in Langer's case, the will to generality lands her in a pernicious abstractness she mistakes for concreteness.

He cites Arthur Danto's criticism. Danto wrote the "Foreword" to my *Abridged Edition*, in which he referred to "the will-to-system of every original philosopher." He called her *Mind Essay*

an unwieldy book and one, moreover, in hostage to its empirical materials, which in the nature of scientific advance went out of date without her thought going out of date with it. So the supporting material obscures the philosophical architecture, like a dense scaffolding, and renders inaccessible to the philosophical scrutiny one of the most audacious philosophical visions of recent times. Whether as architecture it will stand on its own can hardly be answered until it is made available to criticism by philosophers understandably impatient with so intimidating a text. It was an inspiration to undertake an abridged version of a work inadequate in its original execution to the vision it sought symbolically to express."

Sort of a backhanded compliment, heh? Philosophers are intimidated and impatient because they want to forego understanding the scientific sources Langer more and more relied upon as she progressed through her career. Thus, one might find subtle shifts in her definitions, as did [Berel Lang](#).

Both Auxier and Danto fail to understand Langer completely because, in a sense, her concept of presentational symbol is, indeed, "misplaced concreteness" from the normal tradition of philosophical thinking. Feelings are not concrete in that tradition; they aren't even cognitive; they are in opposition to cognition. If Langer finds the "object" symbolized by the art symbol to be feeling, then traditional philosophy finds itself in an abstract loop it cannot extract itself from. I find it interesting that scientists received her *Mind Essay* more favorably than philosophers did.

Langer's discussion of the Russian biochemist, A. P. Oparin, is an example of her supporting scientific materials being a dated. However, that is a minor flaw, for she admitted it was still in the realm of speculation. Yet her discussions of W. R. Brain, T. H. Bullock, Klaus Conrad, J. J. Gibson, D. O. Hebb (who at the time she wrote was controversial, but is now considered a great forerunner of recent biological thought), and the great D'Arcy Thompson, stand solid today.

The current understanding of the neurobiology of feeling (best summed up by Damasio) concurs with Langer. If feeling is allowed to be not a "thing" as Langer argued, but an "act," an actual event in this spacetime world of ours, then there is no misplaced concreteness. Feeling is the basis of mind and mind is not a material event, either. Those wanting to reduce it, rather than seeing emergent hierarchies of self-organizing activities, held together solely by activity, misplace the idea of concreteness. A hurricane is not concrete. Atmospheric low-pressure centers swirl invisibly all around us. Only in certain cases do those swirls become visible to the eye to be treated as a "thing," such as a hurricane. It occurs through heat differentials. Heat is not a thing, but an agitation of molecules.

Unconscious reliance on 3D focal vision is the culprit that prompts some to see Langer's discussion as misplaced concreteness. There are actual events that we cannot see. Feeling is among them, but who doubts we feel? And if we feel (and feeling is something we "do," not something we "have"), can there be some cognitive symbol

system that is analogous to the forms that feeling might take. If feeling is an activity pattern (which it is) then discursive description of the event becomes cumbersome.

Anyhoos, this is jotted off quickly, without considered philosophical reflection to state the case with exactness.

Gary van den Heuvel

Sat, Mar 14, 2009 03:25 PM

Again, Gary, you have given me much that I wish I could evade my current obligation to give my full attention to. Thanks for the insights. I would underscore that Auxier's process-philosophical *basis* was not very different from my own, not that I followed him in his use of it to criticize Langer. I had been hoping that I didn't have to so follow him, for I did not want to have to choose between Whitehead and Langer. You have just given that hope bouyancy. I liked your "hurricane" reference: I've often referred to the objects of our experience as "slow-motion hurricanes." I would also follow Thomas Szasz (and others) in encouraging us to use "mind" more as a noun than a verb. *Minding*, then, would be a high-grade species of feeling, if I understand you correctly, something we do rather than have.

As I really must be going, all I have left is a very un-McArthurian "I shall return!"

Best,  
Tony

### **Re-engaging!**

Mon, Apr 27, 2009 04:16 PM

Dear Gary,

Has it really been only six weeks? It seems much longer, because I've been aching to return to our hopeful collaboration about Langer and related thinkers and learn more from you about your provocative architectonic. I have re-read our correspondence to date, and I will expand on ideas as the spirit moves me, but feel free to interrupt me with your own eagerly awaited updates. It will take time for me to switch gears, but I'm sure everything will come rushing back.

I appreciate equally both the frankness and irenic spirit with which you expressed disagreement with aspects of my outlook. In no way did you make me feel that my self-respect now depends upon my responding to your every point. Should any of the latter prove germane to the topic at hand, it will resurface naturally and I will address it then.

(The rationalist in me used to think that my job was to make myself perfectly understood because when I've achieved that there will be *agreement*! I've come to realize that a person can (a) understand me perfectly and still sincerely disagree and, furthermore, (b) be right.)

Damasio's *Descartes' Error* stimulated many thoughts, but I confess that, not due to any literary fault of his, I cannot retain the technical "meat" of his SMH. I now feel a

strong need to reacquaint myself with *Langer*, and so I've reborrowed *Mind* and do what I should have done years ago.

Our "competitive collaboration" will, I think, express itself when I try to understand Langer in terms of Whitehead's framework. We may dispute the very possibility of being metaphysically "agnostic" while entertaining the soundness of Langer's argument(s). I feel the need to take things panexperientially "all the way down," but she did not (or, to put it another way, she did not think she was up to that task in addition to her chosen one). I want both to understand Langer's thought for its own sake *and* understand how it fits into my broader project, which draws upon other thinkers. As they are mutually incompatible on one point or another, my incorporation of their insights requires me to be critical of other points. I may also discover that the points I favor are not externally related "modules" that can be screwed off at will like salt-shaker tops and screwed on to other receptacles, but more like organs that require delicate surgery and readaptive rehabilitation to function in a new theoretical environment.

Another point of great interest to me, on which I have no doubt you can shed light—you may have already done so when I was wearing lead-based goggles—is the nature of the act of understanding itself that you and I are seeking as we read and write, and the *a priori* truths that are among the objects of human understanding. Where do these truths ontologically enjoy "lodgement," if you will, and how do we understand our own (however humanly) mammalian grasp of them? (We can also ask about the "residence" of numbers.)

NB: I'm *not* asking you to answer these questions in your next reply because (a) they are longer term queries that (b) may not be of interest to you because not strictly epistemological (although I find that I cannot address either the ontological or the epistemological apart from the other for very long).

As I've said before, an understanding of the physical basis of thought is not necessarily reductionist, but only one's understanding of the physical can settle whether it is or not. Criticism of Langer need not spring from some "vitalist" presupposition or the "postulation of an immaterial entity in an active organism" (I 11). Certainly Whitehead postulated no such thing. For him the physical refers to an occasion's receptive "pole" to which the mental is related as magnetic poles are to each other. Langer did not embrace this speculative option. Why not? (Another thinking-out-loud question.)

Anyway, Gary, it's good to be back in touch with you. Thank you for the very thing for which you insist no thanks is needed. All practiced virtues merit praise, and patience is no exception.

All the best,  
Tony

Wed, Apr 29, 2009 03:29 PM

Tony,

Nice hearing from you. I will keep this short for now. See below for interspersed comments [between mine]

Gary van den Heuvel

Glad you didn't take anything personally. In our initial emails, I responded to your many links after reading the papers. I responded immediately to a wide range of ideas. I would need to reread them to even remember them all. I do tend to be frank and ironic [Gary misread "irenic"; see my comment below—A.F.] and am happy you take it in the proper spirit. Nothing was ever meant as a personal attack. If you ever wonder otherwise (email is a narrow band for communicating) let me know, instead of assuming.

I used to suffer from the same [rationalist] need. I gave it up and am happier for it.

I am not sure what the acronym SMH means. [[Somatic Marker Hypothesis](#)] Damasio does write well, but I have found by recommending it to others, that a certain level of biological basics is necessary to understand *Descartes' Error*. A book I just started to read, which you might find fruitful is Evan Thompson's *Mind and Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. He is a philosopher and will likely be easier to understand. He worked closely with the biologist Francisco Varela, who coined the *enactive approach*, which is Langer's *act concept*. John Powers, a Langer scholar, wrote a paper assessing Langer, saying the neglect of her is partly her own fault. He makes very good points; the impeccable logician in her went into more detail and more tangents than most readers can or will sustain. Evan Thompson is the closest thing to Langer to date. She is being corroborated without anyone reading her or citing her (Thompson does not). I can't speak definitively about Thompson's book yet, for I just began it yesterday. So far, excellent. Though from the introduction, I suspect Langer logically expanded the enactive approach further than he (and 25 years prior).

True. I may have said that Langer borrowed Whitehead's concept of "extensive continuum." Donald Dryden convincingly says that she borrowed his concept "actual event." Donald and I have been in communication and he connected me to other Langer scholars (including John Powers). The *becoming* of an "actual event" is an extensive continuum, so Donald's and my distinction is subtle, though I think his better.

Concerning the soundness of Langer's argument(s). I remember first reading her. She unsettled many of my sacred cows. I wrote my objections as marginalia. Eventually, with careful reading and thought, she won me over in every case. That may not be true for you.

I never heard the term "panexperiential" until reading it on your web site, and now reading it here. I looked it up and it appears to be a coined term not yet in the dictionary. It sounds like you are looking for a "theory of everything." The logical implications of Langer's system lead in that direction. She would have gone further, if her health and eyesight had not failed her. Evan Thompson might address your interest. Please define what you mean by panexperiential, so I am sure we are talking about the same thing.

One system will appear incomplete or contradictory from the view of another system. That is a limitation of human cognition. We each need to struggle with putting our own

cognitive system together, realizing even it will either be incomplete or internally contradictory. Kurt Gödel proved that any knowledge system has those inherent limitations. Which indicates that wisdom is beyond concepts.

“lead-based goggles” lol. Personally, I do not believe in *a priori* truths in any philosophical or theological sense. The Western tradition has long sought them out and we have inherited, almost genetically, the belief they must be somewhere. That doesn’t mean we hopelessly cannot know and understand. Nature and knowledge are self-recursive in a beautiful way. “Beauty is truth; truth beauty.” The elegance of it is satisfying and leads to wisdom.

As I’ve said before, an understanding of the physical basis of thought is not necessarily reductionist, but only one’s understanding of the physical can settle whether it is or not. Criticism of Langer need not spring from some “vitalist” presupposition or the “postulation of an immaterial entity in an active organism” (I 11). Certainly Whitehead postulated no such thing. For him the physical refers to an occasion’s receptive “pole” to which the mental is related as magnetic poles are to each other. Langer did not embrace this speculative option. Why not? (Another thinking-out-loud question.)

Langer had no objection to Whitehead’s metaphysical thinking. She found it valuable. She felt, however, that knowledge-seeking does not begin in metaphysics; it ends there. And she felt that physics makes a poor image of human reality; she found her image of mind and life in art. And because in all art, in all epochs, in all cultures (“primitive” and “civilized”), the standard for a work of art that is successful is that it has a quality of “livingness” or “organicity,” she presumed there must be a biological basis for it. So in her masterwork, she turned her attention away from art to biology, and came up not only with a revolutionary image of mind and life (which neuroscience, phenomenology, and the sciences of complexity (chaos theory) are only now coming to via their own pasts). Langer’s system ended up being very much like Whitehead’s metaphysics, but she sought a way to say it in literally meant (not reductionist) terms adequate to mind and life, rather than say it metaphorically. Instead of a metaphor of magnetic poles, she has the dialectic of actual and virtual events, where both are carefully defined and where both actual and virtual mirror each other. Ultimately, she accepted the mystery of mind and life and sought to describe its active patterns, rather than trying to prove *a priori* existence of anything. I like its elegance.

A wise man once told me that patience is the first virtue. There is no hurry in our dialoguing.

And the best to you, Tony,  
Gary

Wed, Apr 29, 2009 04:44 PM

Dear Gary,

You may have also been *ironic*, but I wrote (and intended) *irenic* to praise the non-irritating way you express perceived difference. It’s from the Greek for “peace.”

**Somatic Marker Hypothesis:** sorry for using Damasio's abbreviation without warning!

To cover a number of points, I'll think I'll write up my thoughts on the first chapter of Volume I so I can pinpoint where my thinking might diverge from hers (and, for all I know, be the poorer for it). In this concrete way I can explain (a) *panexperientialism* (traditionally known as *panpsychism*) and (b) why I think we might have to acknowledge, if not also provisionally decide, metaphysical questions in advance of working out a metaphysical *system*. I can then also express my wonderment at her bypassing of Whitehead's philosophy of organism with which she was familiar first-hand. (It is hard, of course, not to at least *try* to correlate her "act" with his "event.") As I go through the book, I will acquaint myself with the scholars you cited. As critical of her as my stance may sound, it is driven by the prospect of immersing myself in her late thought, especially the aesthetic theory that illuminates an important part of my life and which you compellingly summarized in your message.

Whenever and if you're so inclined, consider this paper by Griffin on [panexperientialism](#) and this older one by Hartshorne on [panpsychism](#). (Better to read the latter first, I think.) It's up to you. No pop quizzes.

As for "no *a priori* truths" (which has to be grounded in more than your personal belief), I will hold off until I've read her treatment of mathematical knowledge. As David Ray Griffin noted somewhere, numbers pose three interrelated problems: a [Paul Benacerraf](#) problem (what are they?), a Plato problem ("where" are they?), and [Kurt Gödel](#) problem (how do we know them?). Langer's answers will hold my attention.

Referring to a previous message: Lonergan's *Insight* addresses theological issues *only* in its last two chapters (19 and 20)—which almost didn't get written, as he was being hurriedly "shipped off to Rome" to teach in 1953. The first eighteen are about insight into insight in the sciences, physical and social. I think you're in for a treat whenever you get around to it. It was from Lonergan that I first came upon the name of Susanne Langer.

I'll be in touch.

Best,  
Tony

Wed, Apr 29, 2009 05:31 PM

Tony,

So I learned a new word, *irenic*. Thank you for the praise for the "non-irritating way [I] express perceived difference." That is my intention. Too often, it seems, others do get irritated with their perceived difference from me. So, praises to you!

Damasio's SMH is the same as Langer's idea that organic biological events reach a certain level of complexity and intensity to emerge into psychical awareness. Both Damasio and Langer say that emergence is the basis for all mind.

I will read the Griffin, Hartshorne, and Lonergan papers as you suggest. It will not be in the next several days. I do look forward to it.

Yes, my saying that *personally* I do not believe in *a priori* truths, was simply a semantic device to own my statement. Gödel demonstrated that truth is a greater concept than provability. Also, I adhere to the Buddhist idea that mystery and wonder will always be with us regardless how much we push the envelope of knowledge. As J. B. S. Haldane, the British geneticist, evolutionary biologist, and one of the three founders of population genetics, said, “Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.” If so, how could we possibly determine *a priori* truths in a philosophical or theological sense? Now there is transcendent intuitive understanding that is beyond all concepts, but *a priori* is a concept.

Langer doesn't really get into numbers until Volume III. She believes their origin is distinct from the origin of words. She argued they come from our feet, the source of rudimentary measure! I will postpone that discussion! If she is right, what numbers are, are virtual experience with elegant correspondence with phenomenological experience; I believe Plato positing an Ideal Realm that is more true than our experiential realm is reification, so numbers aren't anywhere! How we know them is as mysterious as the ability to know anything, the mystery of consciousness. The universe seems to be self-aware and we are indivisible from the patterns of the universe.

Ciao, Gary

Wed, Apr 29, 2009 07:08 PM

Thanks for the further comments, Gary, but my “meta-comments,” too, must be postponed [except to warn you that Lonergan's *Insight* is a 750+-page *book!* (:^D)] I must now train my attention on what I specifically want to say about Langer's first chapter, which I hope will merit your criticism. – Tony

**Gary, I lift my nose out of Mind, Volume I to ask you . . .**

Mon, May 11, 2009 11:25 AM

. . . whether you have read Robert E. Innis *Susanne Langer in Focus* and, if so, whether you recommend it. I noticed on [Innis' CV](#) that he will have contributions on both Langer and Cassirer in the [Routledge Companion to Semiotics](#), which is not out until the end of July. – Tony

Mon, May 11, 2009 11:53 AM

Hi Tony,

I am about half through with *Susanne Langer in Focus*. Innis does a good job; it is meant for philosophers and so far a little dry, though he does put her in focus.



I stopped it to read Evan Thompson's *Mind in Life* (2007). He never cites Langer, but he is the closest contemporary thought to corroborate Langer. Very readable as philosophy, though Langer sidestepped several issues Thompson tangles with, such as the boundary between nonliving and living. That's like asking when heat becomes hot. It's a gradient with arbitrary boundaries.

I hope to dialogue with both Innis and Thompson once I finish their books. I recommend them both.

Nice hearing from you Tony,  
Gary

Mon, May 11, 2009 12:31 PM

Dry philosophy. Yum.

Mon, May 11, 2009 02:10 PM

:-)

**Breaking "radio silence"**

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 11:37 AM

Dear Gary,

I'm holding you to your generous extension of patience to me as I work through what I call "Volume -1" of *Mind*, namely, *Feeling and Form*, which I'm enjoying tremendously. (PNK [*Philosophy in a New Key*] is, of course, Volume -2.) Further burdening my summer reading list (albeit delightfully) is my receipt, just this morning, of a library copy of Innis' *Susanne Langer in Focus* (which will now interrupt my reading of *FF* as the latter interrupted that of *Mind*). I'll be a better "collaborator" when I'm done. But a couple of matters have bubbled to the surface and perhaps addressing them will not throw our schedules off course.

You had written that you "find it interesting that scientists received her *Mind Essay* more favorably than philosophers did." I find that potentially worrisome. Like everyone else, scientists have *implicit* philosophical stances or positions that they are not, by training or inclination, equipped to scrutinize explicitly. Philosophers are so equipped. Langer therefore *may* have inadvertently reinforced positions in others that she regarded as errors. If she offered her work as a contribution to *philosophy*, then to suggest that philosophically less competent readers appreciate it more than philosophically more competent readers is to render an odd verdict on that work. An empirical-scientific "detour" may helpfully shift the perspective on what a philosophical problem is, but defining the latter and entertaining solutions to it remain philosophical undertakings. And so, for instance, whether something like panexperientialism is true (e.g., how far "down" ontologically do feelings go?), or whether or not it is important whether or not it is true, is not a question for empirical scientists *as such* to decide. Or at least not in isolation from philosophers. Your comparative demotion of philosophy (vis-

a-vis science) as conducive to progress on certain issues has registered with me, but I invite any clarification of that impression you may wish to make.

You had also quoted my prefatory note to Auxier's criticism of Langer wherein I noted that he wrote "from a philosophical foundation not very different from my own," i.e., Whiteheadian process philosophy. You followed that with: "Since you share to some degree the criticism ..." I'm sorry if I gave that impression. Auxier's being a process philosopher may make his criticism of Langer of especial interest to me, but it does not follow that I share his criticism to any degree. His criticism of "misplaced concreteness" may itself be misplaced. My mental jury is still out. The need to put critical controls on my progressive study of a philosopher whose vision and its fine literary expression seduce me alone accounts for my posting critical essays by Auxier, Liddy, and Lang.

By the way, I notice that Innis thought to cite only one of those three critics, i.e., Auxier. I'm surprised he didn't think Lang's criticism worth a mention any more than Langer herself apparently did. Silence is ambiguous.

Which is why I decided to break mine for a quick chat before resuming my mining operation.

All the best,  
Tony

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 02:53 PM

Hi Tony,

I have been thinking of you. I seem to recall an email exchange on teleology with reference to Kant, and I was going to update/correct what I said. But I find the email nowhere. So, if it wasn't said, I guess I won't go into correcting it!

See below concerning your comments/questions.

I don't really think of our sharing as being on a "schedule." I appreciate the effort, questions, and feedback you provide.

You had written that you "find it interesting that scientists received her *Mind Essay* more favorably than philosophers did." When Volume I came out, *Science* magazine reviewed it, saying she combed the scientific literatures better than any other philosopher. Still, she remains largely ignored by science and scientific-oriented philosophers (e.g., Evan Thompson). Antonio Damasio mentioned her, simply because I brought her to his attention. He gave no serious treatment of her.

Innis speaks to your questions. Langer was "anti-foundational" vis-à-vis knowledge. She was not empirical, per se. Innis also discusses how "far down" feelings go. Evan Thompson says, perhaps, to the quantum level. . . For a current discussion of how far down they go, I encourage you to read Evan Thompson's *Mind in Life*. He never references Langer or Whitehead, but the foundation of his thinking, rooted in the biologist Francesco Varela idea of "autopoiesis" [not in its original non-telic formulation] establishes the same basis as Langer. Although, I feel, if Thompson would have read Langer, he could have sidestepped several issues he spends much time to

refute. Thompson does a good job reviewing the different brands of empirical and reductionist thinkers on the problem of mind. I stand with his position. Insidious dualisms keep us arguing non-events. He addresses your concerns quite nicely, I think.

RE: my “demotion” of philosophy. Innis discusses Langer’s description of philosophy as the highest form of religion. It analyzes *how* we may know what *facts* science purports. Science is not the final word, but a revolving door into subjectivity.

Thanks for the clarification. In your posted article, Auxier said “Langer is only a quasi-process philosopher.” I suppose, if we must split hairs and put everyone into their box. She is as fully a process philosopher as Whitehead, “her great teacher,” but she found the art symbol to be the “objectification of feeling and subjectifications of nature.” Art became her truly innovative heuristic, which makes a sharp turn from the metaphysical speculation of Whitehead and many process philosophers (I wish they would incorporate “process biology” which came into being through Ludwig von Bertalanffy contemporaneously with Whitehead’s thought).

Feeling or sentience is Langer’s starting point. Unless feeling is formless or forever “ineffable,” it is exemplified in forms that objectify it. Innis addresses this. In the art symbol, Langer found objective concreteness, not “out there in actual reality” and not in the “verbal realities” of the Nominalists.

The root forms of feeling go all the way down to what has since become known as “morphodynamics” (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morphodynamics> for a straightforward example of “beach morphodynamcis”). It is not misplaced concreteness in the sense of localizing the abstracted description in space outside of time. It is about an abstract “phase space,” which is hard to mistake as a reification.

“Morphodynamics” also applies to cell biology <http://dir.nhlbi.nih.gov/labs/lctm/>, which speaks of our vascular system where cells migrate from place to place:

Metazoan cells move directionally across an extracellular matrix by a repeating cycle of protrusion of the plasma membrane of the cell edge in the direction of migration, [in terms of SKL’s “act concept”: protrusion is the impulse phase; largely prefigures the remaining phases of the act], formation of a stable adhesion of the protrusion to the extracellular matrix, [in terms of SKL’s “act concept”: a phase of intensification of a distinguishable dynamic pattern] pulling against the adhesion sites for translocation of the cell body, [in terms of SKL’s “act concept”: a point at which the pattern changes; the point of general change is the consummation of the act] and dissolution of older adhesion sites at the trailing edge of the cell to allow rear edge retraction. [in terms of SKL’s “act concept”: the subsiding of the movement, the conclusion or cadence of the act] This necessitates complex and dynamic mechanical interactions between the cell and its extracellular environment that must be coordinated in space and time by physical and biochemical signals.

More on Langer’s anti-foundationalism can be found on your site’s “The Lord of Creation” article (1944) by Langer:

We are fighting a war of fictions, from which a new vision of the order of nature will someday emerge. The future, just now, lies wide open—open and dark, like

interstellar space; but in that emptiness there is room for new gods, new cultures, mysterious now and nameless as an unborn child.

And from your site's Langer article, "Make Your Own World" (1945), she makes clear her view of concreteness of realities:

"The rise of any civilization is unconsciously sponsored and steered by whatever happen to be the real forces in society at the time. . . . reckoning in large numbers, dealing with classes rather than individuals, using the weak as auxiliaries to the strong, and thinking in impersonal terms about the major issues of life: marriage, education, citizenship, the family, and even religion. . . . [concrete reality is actualized by] the most real force; . . the prosaic, brute reality that frame[s the] course of progress [to become] the dominant "realities" in the daily life of men and women.

Her abstract thought never forgot that "concreteness" is nothing more than a form of mass hypnosis that takes on specific, concrete forms. I comparatively "demote" philosophy because we are now in an age that is beyond traditional empirical, reductionist science (though its vestiges cling still), and we now have the tools to go beyond speculative process. We can find exemplifications in *phase spaces* and Langer's use of art as exemplar of "minding" phase spaces is becoming increasingly important to go beyond the levels of thinking that philosophers like Evan Thompson are stuck at.

I finished Evan Thompson's *Mind in Life* and now have returned to Innis's *Susanne Langer in Focus*. I find Innis useful, but also find it a little odd in the way he incorporates (or does not) other thinkers, but will hold judgment until I finish it. A frustration I have with both Thompson and Innis is that their Index sections are not thorough. Innis mentions Auxier in his Bibliography, but does not reference him in the Index. Perhaps, he doesn't refer to him and mentions him only as bibliographic reference. I will keep my eye out for Auxier while reading. Innis is pretty stuck on Pierce and Dewey as comparison and contrast.

Not only is silence ambiguous. Dialogue is as well!

Nice to hear from you, Tony.

Gary

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 04:12 PM

Hello Gary,

Thanks for the comments, clarifications, and references. Much more, and welcome, food for thought. Innis is right up my alley. I will get around to Thompson (thanks for reminding me of him), but one more book this week, and my canoe will capsize!

In his expositions of panexperientialism, David Ray Griffin regularly cites two scientific papers that, while dated, are germane to our common topic. I have attached pdf's for your convenience. Please do not feel the need to "study" or comment on them. I certainly cannot follow them in all their specialist detail! Just sharing.

I was being facetious about “schedules,” but e-mail, being what it is, obscured that tone. (Talk about dialogue being ambiguous!) I am confident that we both understand that we are “in touch” about Langer even if we don’t (FACETIOUSNESS ALERT!) bombard each other with daily messages.

Please feel as free as I do, however, to break in on the “silence” with emergent insights when they occur.

All the best,  
Tony

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 04:28 PM

FYI

I read this in Wikipedia under “panpsychism”:

“Panexperientialism, as espoused by Alfred North Whitehead is a less bold variation, which credits all entities with phenomenal consciousness but not with cognition, and therefore not necessarily with fully-fledged minds.”

Curiously, Evan Thompson and Francisco Varela credits all “autopoietic” entities with cognition, but not with phenomenal consciousness.

Gary van den Heuvel

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 06:44 PM

Gary, I found the excerpt you provided unreliable regarding Whitehead and the article itself more so. More than one person contributed to the latter, but there has been no attempt to harmonize the contributions. Only later in the entry is it made clear that the term “panexperientialism” was provided by Griffin, not ANW. Whitehead did *not* “credit all entities with phenomenal consciousness,” but rather proposed to conceive (not “suggest”) that fundamental entities are subjects of experience that are not exhaustively determined by their pasts. More reliable is Hartshorne’s [“Panpsychism.”](#) More on Langer’s “refusal to accept” panexperientialism (Innis) another time.—Tony

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 07:10 PM

Tony,

I didn’t read the whole Wikipedia article; browsing other matters led me to that statement. I personally don’t hold the imputed Whitehead view or Thompson’s view, which I contrasted. I think we get into deep semantic waters where I won’t tread.

Please be kind and cite me the page in Innis where Langer refused to accept panexperientialism (it is not in the index). And if you come across Innis’s statement that Langer was definitely a monist, please cite that page for me as well.

I plan to contact Innis after finishing his book and ask for clarifications. He makes several statements and comparisons and leaves them at face value without arguing his case for the statement.

Thanks, Gary

Mon, Jun 08, 2009 08:23 PM

Tony,

I found Innis's statements about Langer's positions. And then, I went searching about suspicions that have come up today. I find the following Stanford University *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* authoritative and clarifying. See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panpsychism/#1>. My interest is to get beyond such cognitive duels.

Innis said Langer is not a process philosopher (as Auxier did), but a "processual philosopher." I have always thought of Whitehead as a process philosopher. He was, but today, apparently, "process philosophy" is strongly theological, which IMJ may be imputing too much into Whitehead, who was so vague with his coined terminology, one can make what they want of him. I consider Whitehead weakly theological, in the same way Einstein was. Langer was not a "process philosopher" in the sense that she accepted and valued religious thought and practice, but considered it to have no ultimate truth value; its function is different, as is art's.

Apparently, the duel today is between the so-called emergentists and panpsychists. I think you will like Evan Thompson; he reviews all that quite well. He sort of straddles the middle.

Personally, I think the matter is a false argument. I believe Langer never took a stand between the two. Which way you want to go is a matter of temperament and cannot be proven either way. As Thich Nhat Hanh said, "Discussing God is not the best use of my energies." Likewise, determining where mind and consciousness arise is not the best use of my energies. Clearly, they exist. I go back to my analogy about "heat" being an agitation. When the agitation turns from cold to hot is a matter of one's temperament. Shall we argue who is right when one says, "It's hot," and another says "It's cold." That level of argument is clearly experiential and we can allow that both are right. Feeling of experience goes "all the way down." Down below current ability to think and speak adequately about it. In time, we will have a more robust rationalism where the hot/cold analogy will not be questioned. There is no absolute determination when one turns to the other. Strictly speaking, zero degrees Kelvin might be the only meaning "cold" has!! And that goes all the way down.

Gary van den Heuvel

Tue, Jun 09, 2009 01:01 PM

Hi Tony,

Since you sent the PDF file on bacteria “communicating,” I thought you might be interested in a current, and accessible, status of those studies, from the TED community. This one is about the ways that bacteria “communicate”.

[http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/bonnie\\_bassler\\_on\\_how\\_bacteria\\_communicate.html](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/bonnie_bassler_on_how_bacteria_communicate.html)

Eventually, we might get to discussing Langer’s analysis of the problematical use of the word “communicate” for these types of phenomena. It is relevant to what is mind and what I consider the pseudo-dichotomy between panpsychism and emergentism.

Anyway, a good video if you have the interest or time to view it.

Gary van den Heuvel

Tue, Jun 09, 2009 03:56 PM

Just a note to say thank you. I find you engaging and helpful!

Tue, Jun 09, 2009 04:32 PM

Hello Gary,

Bonnie Bassler’s a great presenter. Thanks. Clearly, bacteria are not engaging in symbolic transformation.(:^D) I’m all for exposing and repudiating false dichotomies, but need time to ascertain whether “panexperientialism vs. emergentism” is one.

Although Whitehead developed his “philosophy of organism” (his preferred term for his philosophy) into panentheism, some interpreters, like [Donald Sherburne](#), thought that extension unnecessary and disposable (I’m tempted to say “inorganic”!). I wouldn’t characterize the author of the fifth part of *Process and Reality* as “weakly theological” (let alone “in the same way Einstein was”), but then we’ll have to take time to explain what we mean by our key terms so that the ambiguity you ascribe to dialogue doesn’t defeat us.

Sooner rather than later, however, I would like you to clarify your twice- (or is it thrice-?) cited remark of Thich Nhat Hanh (“Discussing God is not the best use of my energies”). Its meaning is painfully ambiguous to me. Does the Zen master perhaps mean that he would rather worship—than waste his energy “discussing”—God? Or does he mean that God is beneath his notice? Whatever *you* mean to convey to me by this *apparent* deprecation of “God talk,” I’m not sure that sheerly quoting Thich Nhat Hanh is the best way to do it. Until each of us knows what the other means by “God,” neither of us can evaluate the “energy cost” of such a discussion. A word shouldn’t be allowed to get in the way of our addressing an important dimension of human meaning. I’m not impressed by attempts to “dispel” the problem by the analysis of ordinary language (as though there is no possible non-mythical way of articulating what myths originally address).

I’m enjoying Innis, but agree that he “makes several statements and comparisons and leaves them at face value without arguing his case for the statement.” For example, his “she [Langer] *will not* accept any form of pan-experientialism, which she finds also

in Whitehead and which has been developed by others, often with theological intent” (p. 5, my emphasis) is a mare’s nest. Her philosophy does *not* rule out Whiteheadian panexperientialism, as far as I can see, regardless of whether or not she “would not accept” it (which makes her sound boringly dogmatic) I am content not to impute panexperientialism to her. The phrase “with theological intent” has a negative ring to it. (*Law & Order: Theological Intent*). The speculative philosophy Whitehead worked out during the 1920s slowly grew into a theism: the latter was not a foreordained conclusion. The “God” of *Process and Reality* (1929) was simply not available to him when he wrote *Science and the Modern World* (1925). Once committed to the position that every (*pan*) fundamental entity is an experiencer and a partial decider of its successor, however, he faced the problem of the source of cosmic order, which presupposes a degree of harmony of aim among the countless occasions of experience. God as the source of initial (but not irresistible) aim for each such entity grew in theoretical attractiveness.

In the one-good-reading-suggestion-deserves-another department: please consider adding [Griffin’s chapter on consciousness](#) (from his book on a famous modernist dichotomy) to your long list of eventual reading. Remember: this Whitehead interpreter is a naturalist, but not a materialist.

Since I’ll be nonphilosophically occupied over the next few days, I might not be able to answer messages (from anybody) during that time as promptly as I am happy to have been able to answer your recent ones.

All the best,  
Tony

Wed, Jun 10, 2009 10:53 AM

Hi Tony,

I had no intention to be offensive in my apparent “dismissal” of certain ideas that you may hold dear. I respect your positions. No one has a monopoly on truth. See below for specific comments on your expressed concern.

Gary van den Heuvel

You hit the nail on the head. Bacteria are not engaging in symbolic transformation! Symbolic communication gets blurred with super-organism interactive creation of order. Both are interesting but they are not the same and need not be clumped by the careless use of the word “communication.” As for whether or not “pan-experientialism v. emergentism” is a false dichotomy or not, that is a large question that will not be settled in email. It does relate to my answer to your question about Thich Nhat Hanh below.

I was speaking in quick generalities that email is prone to, without attempting to be philosophically precise. I see us as wading through some foundational issues, and I’m bringing along a few hors d’oeuvres. You know better than I the historical development of “process philosophy” from Whitehead to its current state. I may rely on your knowledge later, when I get to actually writing my next book, if you would be kind enough to consider that. I feel affinity to Panentheism in the sense of the American



Transcendentalists and of God as the animating force of the universe, with the universe as the manifest part of God. And Whitehead's idea that the origination of God is from the mental pole. . . . whatever that actually means! I have my personal intuitive sense.

Thich Nhat Hanh, as all Buddhists, teach compassion toward all sentient beings and focus on practices that reduce or eliminate suffering. Buddhists don't focus on the origin of the universe or engage in theology. They remain mute on the nature of God, akin to modern science in that regard. So do I. Not that I reject all meanings of the concept, "God" (I find arrogant materialists like Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins to be repugnant fundamentalists). It's just that discussing its nature becomes Alice's rabbit hole. And the concept quickly becomes reified in terms of one's on temperament and upbringing. For example, compare these statements by Whitehead and Sherburne (to whom you link me above):

Sherburne: "What role does the concept 'God' play in Whitehead's system? There are three main roles: (1) God preserves the past and in so doing creates significance, meaningfulness, and also provides the ontological ground for the claim that truth is immortal; . . ."

Whitehead: "God is a creature always in concrescence and never in the past. By reason of this character, it receives a reaction from the world; this reaction is its consequent nature. This reaction is termed 'God.' . . . Primordial Nature of God is above constituting a status as an actual efficient fact."

Taking just those two statements (without purporting to be definitive of either man), we can go round and round on the apparently different meanings of the word "past" or the relationship between "provides the ontological ground" and "above constituting a status as an actual efficient fact."

Discussing God, it seems to me, without fail falls into parsing meanings, potentialities, and possibilities. As an "anti-foundationalist" in the manner of Kurt Gödel's incompleteness proof, there are no foundational answers to any knowledge system, especially questions concerning God, the "concept encompassing all concepts." Given there are no final answers, and given one always can't but help fall back upon his/her own temperament and past experience, people tend to balkanize into their like-minded conceptual groups (whether or not they do so socially). None of the balkanized "truths" are truly of "God." As the Taoist, Lao-tzu, said, the Tao that is said is not the Tao.

Therefore, I feel (and think this is the intention of Thich Nhat Hanh), focusing on acts of compassion and the practices that eliminate suffering ("enlightenment") does not require the endless rounds about ontological status of existence. I have no objection if others find pleasure in doing so, but I feel it is not the best use of my energies. Like the question, what existed before the Big Bang, I remain silent. There are certain things that are not sayable, but that does not mean they are meaningless. God belongs to the unsayable.

And I think that "God" is a different matter from "non-mythical way[s] of articulating what myths originally address," as you said. I do believe there are non-mythical ways of articulating what myths address. And by literally addressing the nature of myth (which Langer devoted her life to), one is not led to a *knowledge system* that

provides the foundation for some final meaning of “God.” One is led to processual act forms that exist. As Langer mythically sums up her *Mind Essay*’s rationally articulated Chapter 9:

Like a child from the womb,  
Like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

The “I” is filled with mystery, and does not refer to an Agent, but an Agency.

I plan to contact Innis and ask him questions such as how can he be so sure what her stance was on pan-experientialism. If one accepts the necessary dichotomy between it and emergentism, I personally would guess she was an emergentist. Perhaps, Innis accepts the dichotomy. As I said, I don’t. I personally believe Langer sidestepped these questions for a more pragmatic heuristic. The dichotomous matter can be resolved by the category of Eastern logic of “BOTH AND”, or more precisely, “NEITHER IS NOR IS NOT.”

As you say, the phrase “with theological intent” has a negative ring to it. And choosing sides IS a “mare’s nest.” These questions, therefore, are not the best use of my energies, regardless the tremendous import embodied (or disembodied?) by them.

Evan Thompson has an interesting discussion of such telic issues, and comes to the same conclusion as Langer. They both start with Kant’s telic without purpose, and reject Kant’s conclusion of “constitutive” versus “interpretative.” I do think discussing a circumscribed *teleology* is a good use of my energies, but not *theology*! That is my temperament and does not reflect on you or anyone else.

I will read the chapter. Glad to hear Griffin is a naturalist. So was Langer, though she was not a materialist either. She was an “energist”! Energetic motion out of the cosmic plenum precedes matter and forces. What is the source of the cosmic plenum? I don’t know, and don’t feel it is a good use of my energies to try to decide the matter. I agree with J. B. S. Haldane, the British geneticist, evolutionary biologist, and one of the three founders of population genetics, who said, “Now, my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose.”

Yes, we all have a life besides doing this. Write when you can. Again, I want you to know that I appreciate and value these discussions. I find you knowledgeable and stimulating.

All the best,  
Gary

**David Ray Griffin link you asked me to read**

Wed, Jun 10, 2009 11:55 AM

Sorry, Tony, I will keep this short and will stop. I just read the link you provided, asking me to read (without proceeding to the full argument. I take this paragraph, which is absolutely central to Griffin's argument and to both of our interests. I totally agree with what Griffin wrote:

We need, in other words, a philosophical cosmology that explains the fact that our minds seem to be fully natural. The reason a cosmology based on scientific materialism cannot provide such an explanation is that the abstraction on which this materialism is based involves precisely the removal of mind from nature. The science that has provided the most help toward a reinterpretation of the actualities of nature, Whitehead suggests, is physiology, because "the effect of physiology was to put mind back into nature" (SMW, 148). Whitehead is not naive: He knows that physiologists "are apt to see more body than soul in human beings" (AI, 189). What he means is that physiology has had the effect of overcoming the dualism of mind and body formulated by Descartes and Locke and that overcoming this dualism will require us to reconceive the nature of the body as well as the mind.

I fully agree and will check out Griffin more fully. I am devoted to reconceiving the nature of the body, the mind, AND the environment. Not wanting to press you on reading Evan Thompson's *Mind in Life*, that is the heart and soul of his book. He never mentions Griffin, Whitehead or Langer, but relies on phenomenology and the most recent findings of science, which is struggling within itself with reconceiving the body, mind, and environment. Thompson surveys quite nicely the various approaches and promotes his own, which is based on the biologist Francisco Varela's work (and the "contemplative sciences").

Griffin relies on Whitehead, who is important, but times have changed. Although you sent me two PDF files that are more current, in the link Griffin addresses the difficulty of Whitehead's terminology, which is fascinating as well as difficult. Although Langer said Whitehead's concept of "abstractive continuum" (alternatively, "extensive continuum") is a truly profound new philosophical notion and relied on his idea of "actual event" (alternatively, "actual occasion"), she wrote this in *Mind Essay*, Chapter 10, "Although I am reluctant to coin words (a favorite technique of pseudo-science making), I have resorted to the new word, 'pression.'"

She wrote that in the context of discussing problems with Darwin's "natural selection" (which she said is not a mechanism of evolution, but a historical pattern). But whenever I read or think of coining words, I think of Whitehead. I don't know if she thought Whitehead was indulging in "pseudo-science making." I do know that I begin in Whitehead's "extensive continuum" as foundational to my own thinking, but bring it immediately to Henri Poincaré's physiological concept of "instinctive geometry," which I described in a paper as

Dimensions "emerge as spontaneous elementary abstractions" (Langer, 1974, p. 337) out of sensory motor space, a sphere of body activity and its relations to its environment. The body is the instrument of measurement in sensory motor space. That space is neither geometrical space nor the space of representation. It is a kinesthetic action space, what Henri Poincaré called the "instinctive geometry" that fixes body position in an ambient. Poincaré said a person must first construct this

restricted space before he can “amplify” it to the “great space where he can lodge the universe” (Langer, 1953, p. 91). The kinesthetic is the tactual sense of gravity and is ground zero of sentience and mind.

On the question whether Mind precedes sentience, I remain silent without judgment. No response expected. . .

Cheers, Gary

**Gary, in advance of replying to your important messages, . . .**

Wed, Jun 10, 2009 07:36 PM

. . . hope you will enjoy [this gem from 80 years ago](#), which I managed to post before .  
..

. . . I really must be going.

Tony

Thu, Jun 11, 2009 09:42 AM

You are a gem, yourself, Tony! The things that you find to post!

I loved that post. And to think that this July 4 will be the article’s 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Langer was so elegant and economical with her language. In the article one can see her departure from Whitehead, in her comments about the uselessness and “harm” of creating entity after entity. And her call for switching to a focus on concepts rather than propositions shows the revolutionary direction she took which was to include art. And it explains why she used exemplification after exemplification. I used to joke that she spent 50 pages on elephants alone in her *Mind Essay*. I began to feel, all right already! But her logical mind was thorough.

I am not the verbal genius that she was. I tend toward visual thinking. She said the philosopher should look for a minimum number of concepts to work with, which articulates my methodology. And it shows why she wrote later that she has nothing against metaphysics, but that one should end in it, not start in it. All that in that lovely article.

And I guess it is an elegant way to say why I feel discussing God isn’t the best use of my energies. Not that I don’t believe in the universe as God. I believe one is better served to hold to a minimum of working concepts that can lead to spiritual implication.

And I liked her shift from attempting to prove the truth of ideas to exemplifying the applicability of a minimum number of working concepts, an attitude that she repeats in *Mind Essay*. Philosophy is not science, but it should be content with the meaning of concepts and their applicability and discard them when they prove not useful. Innis’s sections, “Expanding the Notion of Logical Form” and “Multiple Realities” (p. 19-22), is relevant here.

Thanks again, Tony. I am delighted with it. And to repeat, respond only as you feel moved. Our conversations are outside earthbound time in a phase space that moves toward its own attractor.

Regards,

Gary

### **Susanne Langer in Focus**

[This email subject line is the title of Robert E. Innis's book. Gary's correspondence with him follows. I have to ask Innis if the correspondence continued—apparently it didn't: see Gary's of July 19, 2009, and if I have his permission to reproduce his reply to Garyt. is Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts Lowell, MA 01854 [Robert\\_Innis@uml.edu](mailto:Robert_Innis@uml.edu) Gary cut off the date of his initial email to Innis. Written on or before June 11, 2009; probably not much earlier than mine to him.]

Dear Robert,

Hopefully, you will not mind my addressing you by your first name.

I abridged Susanne Langer's *Mind Essay* and I appreciate your comment on page 13 of your new book, *Susanne Langer in Focus: The Symbolic Mind*, concerning Arthur Danto's claim in the "Foreword" that her philosophical architecture was obscured by her supporting material. I quite agree with you, but I was in no position at the time to contest Danto with Johns Hopkins. He was gracious to write the preface. But I enjoyed your confirmation!

I find your book delightful, but I do have questions. For example, on page 5, you wrote, "like Dewey, she will not accept any form of pan-experientialism, which she finds also in Whitehead and which has been developed by others." On the face of it, I agree with the statement, except wonder about the phraseology, "will not accept any form of." Rather than not accepting, per se, I judge that she sidestepped the issues of what I consider to be a false dichotomy between "pan-experientialism" and "emergentism." She had a more pragmatic heuristic in mind and merely left certain unanswerable questions behind. Or do you know something that I do not?

I would like to establish a dialogue on questions and comments that come to me as I read. I hope you do not find this request too unusual. I planned to finish reading your book before contacting you, but have reconsidered. I was half finished with it, and decided to start over with greater scrutiny. It deserves it, and I think you will be able to address thoughts I have had about Langer for some time. My research has taken her ideas into general systems theory, morphodynamics, neurobiology, and what Evan Thompson calls the "contemplative sciences." I have been researching and writing since abridging her /Essay/ without attempting to publish much.

I am now working on a book, *An Act of Mind*. It builds upon Langer to take Evan Thompson's writings to where he seems to want to go.

Look forward to hearing from you, even if you decline entering in dialogue.

Sincerely,

Gary

[Robert Innis replies] Thursday, June 11, 2009 1:53 PM

Dear Gary,

Thanks for your email. I am happy that you are finding my Langer book worth reading and that it succeeds in showing, in some synoptic way, Langer's philosophical architecture. As to the pan-experientialism issue, I incline to think that the problem of emergence in Langer is actually meant to free her from the overly speculative side of Whitehead's metaphysical scheme and bring a metaphysical orientation closer to empirical materials with philosophical relevance. Langer uses emergence, and the notion of emergent levels, to counteract the deleterious principle of ontological continuity she sees in Whitehead.

Langer oscillates between the poles of a non-reductive monism and a commitment to distinctively different 'frames' both of analysis and of reality, including the subjective reality of humans and other sentient beings. But experience for her is connected with sentience and not with actual entities, in Whitehead's sense of that term. While Langer thinks of reality as ultimately having an 'event structure' and being structured as patterns of relations, she did not 'push experience down,' in the analogical, non-psychological way, to events *qua* tale in the way that Whitehead did.

Your own project sounds very interesting indeed and I look forward to hearing more about it in the future.

All the best,

Bob

Fri, Jun 12, 2009 12:50 PM

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your speedy response to my question. I agree with your explanation of the pan-experientialism issue. You seem to indicate her methodology and not a metaphysical stance, *per se*. Given you are an accomplished philosopher, I will assume you will not object to my detailed response in turn.

In an incisive and disparaging critique of modern philosophy, "The Treadmill of Systematic Doubt" (*The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 14, July 4, 1929, 379-384--my thanks to Anthony Flood for bringing it to my attention), Langer displayed her criticism of modern philosophy, which implicates Whitehead's analogical, non-psychological approach (without naming him):

But in the shrine of pure reason, now so pure as to be empty, we find one new doctrine as easy to set up as another; we can prove to our own satisfaction, according to our inclinations, the complete certainty of Spirit, or Matter, or logical Categories, Monads, Egos, Essences, Vital Urges, or the Absolute; but the most convincing proof of our realities will not prevent the next person from doubting the whole product, going through the same mental acrobatics of

skepticism and introspection and proof, and arriving at very different results. Every thinker must begin at the beginning not only of his specific problem, but of the whole field of knowledge. And as the collection of weird entities increases, the business of clearing the way becomes more and more irksome, for there are more and more things whose existence must be refuted.

Whitehead certainly created many “weird entities.” Although Langer praised his concept of “abstractive continuum” (alternatively, “extensive continuum”) as a truly profound new philosophical idea. Since Whitehead, his process philosophy has become identified to a great extent with a theism that stands in opposition to emergence. As you say several times in your book, Langer takes sentience “all the way down.” She looks at sentience as a gradient in which one can’t determine the boundary where it begins (I doubt she would claim a stone is sentient, however). Her act concept allowed her to sidestep that and many other boundary issues. I find her mute on pan-experientialism, per se. I agree with your statement, as explained.

Given the vast task of a synoptic view of Langer’s life work, you had no choice to state ideas without expanding upon them. Your book would have become unwieldy. So I appreciate your mentioning “monism” in your explanation of pan-experientialism. It was my next question! There are many meanings to that word. Your discussion of her being a monist on pages 152-53 didn’t explicitly state what type of monist she was. You answered it in your first answer. Again, your explanation below indicates her methodology and not a metaphysic. In its most generic definition, monism is a unitary conception of the world. She did attempt to systematize the entire domain bounded by the human body and human culture, as Arthur Danto said in his “Foreword” to my A.E. Yet, as you say in your synopsis, she acknowledged experiential “Multiple Realities” (p. 21-22). Focused on experience, I think she was mute on the ultimate nature of reality, as “monism” seems to imply. In the 1929 article I mentioned above, she rejected seeking any “absolute truth.” She wrote,

The function of philosophy is not to doubt everything, and then prove the existence of things; it is *to assume as little as possible, and understand as much as possible* [italicized in original]. Thus its interest centers in concepts, which are the instruments of understanding, and not in entities. . . . Philosophy should begin not by denying something (let alone everything!), but by saying something: preferably something reasonably simple and concise. A metaphysical formulation should always be made with some ulterior motive—not to explain the world, for that is meaningless, but to describe some definite aspect of experience.

As you say, she begins in experience and looks for “actual events” rather than entities as exemplifying patterns. To me, she seems mute on “monism,” per se. She did alternate between a synoptic top-down approach (which you explained below as “monism”) and a bottom-up approach.

I have three short-answer questions for you:

- 1) Will you be kind enough to give me your translation of “qua tale”? I read it to mean, basically, “such as the route taken by.”
- 2) You expressed interest in my project. In your book, you mentioned Evan Thompson, Antonio Damasio, and others without discussion. How versed are you in such subject

matters? Knowing will help how to explain the project. Its root is in Whitehead's "extensive continuum," Poincaré's "natural geometry" (thus empirically grounding Whitehead), and Husserl's "pre-given" in the "life-world." I take those concepts to be logically isomorphic. I currently call the concept an "instinctive geometry extensive" (though I am not fully satisfied with the phrase). It is the "pre-given" to which I apply the typical form of Langer's act concept to describe a continuity in seven emergent and discontinuous state spaces: kinetic, kinesthetic, esthetic, ethic, synesthetic, cinematic, and kinematic. (Yes, I know: too cute for words!) Like Langer, I start with as few concepts as possible, and provide exemplifications, rather than attempt to "prove truth."

3) You mention in your book that Langer's "act concept" is contentious. With whom? I find it, more often than not, not understood and ignored. Has there been extensive dispute in the literatures of which I remain unaware? If so, knowing of it will prove invaluable.

Again, I appreciate your engagement.

Gary

### **An explanation**

Sat, Jul 18, 2009 03:30 PM

Dear Gary,

On June 17 I was in the middle of drafting a substantial, and long-overdue, letter to you when I fainted and collapsed on the street after lunch and was hospitalized. I'm basically OK, but the need to follow up visits with several specialists and a recently wrenched back (which the fall may have made more likely) have made it difficult for me to concentrate on our thread, which is very important to me. (I've managed to finish *Feeling and Form*--definitely on my all-time top 20 books--and most of Innis and to post a couple of articles on the site.) Although you've made it clear that we'll each of us contribute to our correspondence at his own pace, I felt you needed to know the reason for my longer-than-usual silence. I'd be happy to hear from you about anything, of course, but before I can return to writing I must get better. I'm confident you understand.

All the best,

Tony

Sun, Jul 19, 2009 03:22 PM

Dear Tony,

Sorry to hear of your health issues. Hope nothing serious and that you rebound quickly and well.

I've been reading several books simultaneously and writing, so haven't been directed toward communicating either. I just finished Innis's book this morning. I had difficulty reading the first half because he put Langer in the context of Peirce and Dewey, who she



explicitly differentiated herself from for various reasons; finally in the very last chapter he explains why. Okay, he had to put the context somewhere.

- overused quotations;
  - on pages 100-101, for example, there must be 10 examples. That is a bad practice in writing for it confuses intent (e.g., you are an “interesting” person—what might I really be saying about you; if I mean you are interesting without further agenda, then the quotations not only add nothing, they raise the question what I really might mean)
  - sometimes he quotes a Dewey or Peirce word or phrase when it appears it comes from Langer
- kept comparing her use of “image” to Wittgenstein’s pictorial logic; in the final summary chapter he states she rejected that
- used the word “representation” and “representational” in multiple ways without clarifying which meaning applied; often appeared that Langer believes in the “representational” cognitive of theory, that the mind creates representations of objects of sense; she did not start with the senses, but with the inner motivation of the organism. Eventually, that becomes clear, but the reader who does not know Langer may remain misled.
- Kept saying she was definitely a monist, without explanation. I questioned in an email how he meant that, for it means so many things. I have not received a response. In a long paragraph that goes from p. 183 to 185, toward the bottom of p. 184, he says, “This astounding assertion, rooted in a non-monistic, or at least non-reductive, naturalism. . . .” Whatever. Innis states all along that she was non-reductive, so I don’t get the switch. I believe that paragraph is one of the best in the book. On top of p. 185, she says, “[That the body is a material translation of acts, not the material ‘expression’ of its genes] is a deep and provocative claim and assertion, but it may be questioned whether it is a biological assertion.” Innis cites Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life* (2007); the oddity is that her statement preceding in time the ideas of Maturana, Varela, and Thompson, is corroborated by them. That is precisely what they mean by “neurophenomenology.” Go figure.

So I could read for only short periods. But the last 100 pages got quite good overall. So, overall, I would give him a 4.5 out of 5. The “focus” he put her in was spot on in its key outline. I just wish Innis knew biology as well as he does philosophy. But his audience is philosophers. He points the interested reader.

*Feeling and Form* is a classic, isn’t it!

Get well!

Gary

Sun, Jul 19, 2009 04:03 PM

Dear Gary,

Good to hear from you again, and thanks for your understanding and good wishes.

Your critical observations on Innis are helpful to me; my concern about her metaphysics, or rather side-stepping thereof, will have to wait for now. For me the most annoying thing about Innis is that he uses “foreground” as a verb and seems never to tire of doing so.

My library has reserved for me [Ernst Cassirer: The Last Philosopher of Culture](#) by Edward Skidelsky and [The Symbolic Construction of Reality: The Legacy of Ernst Cassirer](#) an anthology edited by Jeffrey Andrew Barash, and I look forward to the change of pace (as well as the enrichment of my grasp of Langer) they promise. I’ll be picking them up when I return to work tomorrow.

Please write again as the spirit moves you. I’ll do likewise.

Best,

Tony

Sun, Jul 19, 2009 06:27 PM

Tony,

You’ll know more about Cassirer than I. . . .

I just looked up the word “foreground.” Innis’s use of it as a verb never struck me because I use it as a verb and in the realm of art theory “foreground” and “background” are bread and butter. I checked it out, and it is acceptable as a verb.

tr.v. To place in the foreground; call attention to: *“He is currently at work on a trilogy of pieces . . . which foreground the Algerian War” (Eleanor Heartney).*

“foreground.” *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.* Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. 19 Jul. 2009. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/foreground>>.

Innis’s use of the phrase “qua tale” in the first half bugged me. I went searching all over the internet and in several English-Latin dictionaries, and the phrase is not to be found. Googling (a verb! J) “qua tale” comes up with arcane metaphysical and theological tracts. The phrase seems to be isolated to that narrow field. And it always seems to be used as if the reader already knows it.

As far as Langer’s “metaphysics, or rather side-stepping thereof,” I think you will be delighted by the end of Innis’s book. Langer said she has nothing against metaphysics, but felt one should end up there, not start with it. Innis’s *Susanne Langer in Focus* follows the chronology of her thought and writings. Your web site’s Cassirer quote from *The Myth of the State*, Langer analyzes fully and Innis presents briefly.

Although her Part Six of the *Mind Essay* was curtailed because of blindness, where she intended to be metaphysical, it is clear in the trajectory of her thought where she was headed. Vol. III of the *Essay* got a good start on it, and Innis does a good job overall of highlighting the metaphysics. His metaphysics is awe-inspiring, once you waded through her “fusion of the descriptive-phenomenological and the conceptual-constructive dimensions [that] situates and qualifies Langer’s ‘rejection’ of the traditional way of doing philosophy. . . . Strangely enough, it is not that Langer thought of previous

philosophies as being ‘wrong-headed’ or simply ‘mistaken’ in their types of questions and methods of inquiry. In spite of her essentially systematic interests, Langer thought of philosophy as fundamentally situated in history.” (p. 253).

Innis (rightly so, I think) says that her “reflections have a kind of admirable descriptive adequacy that is missing from many philosophical analyses, which are often conceptually top-heavy and descriptively thin. . . . This turn to thick description allows Langer, or rather forces her, to attempt to construct a conceptual framework that give *analytical adequacy* to the descriptive adequacy, though not completeness, that marks her work” (p. 252-253).

She is demanding on the noodle, but I find her product refreshingly original and adequate to the needs of the day. But then, I’m a groupie of sorts ;-)

Just started Douglas Hofstadter’s *I am a Strange Loop*. Accessible, delightful, but lacks depth compared to Langer, though she would agree with his concepts, she would eschew his jargon. As Langer wrote in “The Treadmill of Systematic Doubt,” “[A]s the collection of weird entities increases, the business of clearing the way becomes more and more irksome, for there are more and more things whose existence must be refuted.”

Gary

Mon, Jul 20, 2009 02:19 PM

Gary, “to impact” is also “acceptable” as a verb, but “to foreground” and “to background” are no less barbarous for being so, in my opinion. I’m not particularly illiterate, but that usage somehow escaped my notice until Innis. A minor matter. Metaphysical presuppositions underlie everyone’s work, but not everyone’s a philosopher, as was Langer, so I hold her chosen order of tasks to a higher standard than I would that of, say, a neuroscientist who has no intention of ever getting around to working out an explicit metaphysics. I must sadly postpone developing this point. -- Regards, Tony

Mon, Jul 20, 2009 03:17 PM

Hi Tony,

“To impact” has come into common use; I personally avoid it, but it is here to stay. Language is as living as the animal that uses it. We live in an age where nouns are being turned into verbs at a staggering rate.

You certainly are not illiterate, but if you have not read a lot in art theory and criticism, “to foreground” may not have come up (just as “qua tale” never came up for me before—whatever it may mean. Do you know?). I studied art my first two years in college and then switched to filmmaking, in which I received my B.A. “To foreground” became part of language to my ear. Unless we attempt to keep language “pure” as does the French Academy, such fights are lost (even the French have lost their battle).

As far as holding philosophers to higher standards, I agree; requiring a certain order of presentation to their argument is something else. Shall the musical piece begin with a crescendo, or end with it? That is the composer's choice.

Innis presented Langer in the chronological order of her major works. By Chapter 6, "The Mind of Feeling," Innis states,

"[In her *Mind Essay*] Langer turns more explicitly to issues that can only be characterized as "metaphysical," especially as dealing with the "metaphysics of mind." *Mind* is a kind of philosophical tour de force, a complex web of semiotic, phenomenological, psychological, metaphysical, and meta-philosophical reflections." (p. 147-8)

Even so, as one reads from that point on, the metaphysical vision is not stated so much discursively as it is presentationally. Langer was interested in explicating that which can be shown, that cannot be said. She showed the different morphological forms between what we can show and what we can say. By the end of the presentation of her life's work of methodical conceptual reconstruction, one experiences a frisson of awe (if one has psychological readiness to appreciate it, as in the appreciation of art). Her method and her metaphysics are revolutionary, showing the inescapable necessity of ritual, magic, and religion, even though we live in an age of science. That is why she is so difficult.

From a socio-political perspective, embedded in her vision is a kind of anarcho-capitalism that describes the inevitability of the individual and social imbalances today and its ensuing chaos. She is not calling for a single "world government" in this vision, but for a reconstruction of how we see. The final paragraph of Chapter 22, "The Ethnic Balance":

Wherever the balance between man and the greater powers that surround him has been established by some fundamental religious expression, as it has largely been today, it fills the background rather than the foreground of conscious thought." But no balance holds itself passively for very long in the course of evolution." A state of equilibrium in nature generally indicates a fulcrum between two antagonistic forces." Even though we may be in the midst of an eon of cerebral elaboration rather than radical mutation, intellectual drives and cultural checks are always shifting the ethnic balance, and its present direction seems to be toward internalization, i.e., toward a centering of the fulcrum of social equilibrium not between men and Supernaturals, but in society itself." We may be at the very bottom of a new ladder of mental and moral ascent, in a human world stunned by civilization, and in a moment of pause in its otherworldly concerns, meeting the challenge of its own technical and economic construction of a world-wide civilized society.

She envisioned Art and Science will become co-equal and complementarity modes that give rise to a new metaphysics and a new religious order, one that is not "antagonistic" and not "subordinate" to science. Since she wrote the above paragraph, the "fulcrum between two antagonistic forces" has already shifted. We are at the very bottom of a new ladder of ascent. Her metaphysics is placed in history and in experience; at the same time she reconstructs the notion of "experience."

Gary

Mon, Jul 20, 2009 04:22 PM

Gary, each of us must decide whether some causes some deem “lost” are still worth fighting. Thanks for fleshing out your perspective on Langer, on which I cannot yet comment. Feel free to continue doing so, as the food for thought it provides me is most welcome. – Tony

Mon, Jul 20, 2009 05:32 PM

Yes, Tony, we each choose our battles. Some see themselves fighting eternal cosmic battles. Some circumscribe themselves to battling small everyday challenges they feel they can be effective in changing. And there is a host of agents and agencies along the entire continuum between those two poles of omega and alpha. Along the continuum, there is suffering.

As for freezing language to appropriate forms, I ain’t gonna even try, no way, Jose. ;-) In addition to turning nouns into verbs (“to impact”), and turning verbs into unnecessary nouns (from a book I am reading—as Argh: “hearableness,” “intendableness”), the normative trend in language use today includes eliminating all adverbs and adjective—oops, that should read simply “includes eliminating adverbs and adjectives”—in order to write “with greater clarity.” The stripped down Hemingway effect. Some say it is an inappropriate use of email to quote another. “the medium is meant for one” own voice only. Some insist that “U2R OK” is the future. Riotous changing norms linguistically, culturally, politically. I write as I will and the battles seem to come to me. Hope you don’t mind that I have “foregrounded” some of the linguistic changes gone down!  
<wink, wink>

Hope you are well,

Gary

Tue, Jul 21, 2009 09:10 AM

Gary, one can reasonably maintain a standard without (unreasonably) expecting anyone else to.

I’m better, thanks. I’ll let you know when I’m well. – Tony

## **Two more from the Langer archives**

Gary, I hope you enjoy these. More evidence (if any is needed) that her writing was always vigorous as well as rigorous. -- Tony

[Posted Recently](#)

- Susanne K. Langer, [Form and Content: A Study in Paradox](#) [1926]
- Susanne K. Langer, [On a Fallacy in "Scientific Fatalism"](#) [1936]

Mon, Aug 10, 2009 11:08 AM

Tony,

I so delight in these essays that you find. They are such wonderful gifts.

I received your email on my Blackberry on a Friday evening at a family reunion that just started for the weekend. It was a hoot reading parts of the essays in such a setting. My family are entrepreneurs and business people who have no interest in these things. I asked several of them if they wanted to see a picture of my sweetheart. I showed them the picture of SKL that appeared before each essay. . . .

Just last evening and this morning have I had a chance to actually read the two essays through. In the past, you have expressed concern over SKL's reticence to be metaphysical. I think these essays really explicate why she believed metaphysics is where one ends, not where one starts.

Given her ability to see through to such premises as those resulting in the fallacy of "scientific fatalism," which lead to mysticisms, or what she called "philosophical chimaeras," and given her ability to understand what "Whitehead and Russell have called an "illegitimate totality," a whole which cannot be theoretically constructed," she was always reserved in flying like Icarus too close to the sun. Even her essay on the classic Form vs. Content showed an "illegitimate totality."

A classic case is the use of the form "chair" to stand in for the content of all actual chairs. However, if you itemize ALL chairs, you will run into the problem of a particular content, a particular chair, that may not fit the abstract logical form "chair." Yet our everyday thinking does it all the time. We assume the logical form IS the content, and we befuddle over the false paradox of form versus content. Our minds are filled with illegitimate totalities. Your web site's case against Obama "fixing" the economy is really an argument against an illegitimate totality. The world runs on them. The Hindus call this condition maya, "The transitory, manifold appearance of the sensible world, which obscures the undifferentiated spiritual reality from which it originates; the illusory appearance of the sensible world."

Yet ultimately, she understood the profound wonder and felt the awe of the limitations of systematizing everything. As she ended her essay "On a Fallacy in 'Scientific Fatalism',"

So, since the "total sum of causes of a future act" cannot be constructed, the melancholy determinist knows no more than his sanguine brother, the indeterminist. And if the god have a scientific secret, he need not guard it in his holy bosom lest the Sybil betray it; for it is beyond logic and language, in the limbo of the Inconceivable.

Is there not a profound metaphysic in that? In not the “limbo of the Inconceivable” the undifferentiated spiritual reality from which the sensible world originates? Her *Mind Essay* certainly leaves me to think so! To understand her greatness, one must see behind the careful logician to the Spirit.

Thanks again for the beautiful essays!

Gary van den Heuvel

## **Striking Parallels**

Mon, Aug 10, 2009 12:17 PM

Tony,

On your other Langer post, Cassirer and Barfield: A “Striking Parallel”:

Your prefatory comment to the post was:

That Lewis and Langer were intellectually indebted to men who labored in the same vineyards and harvested the same fruit while unknown to each other is a tantalizing fact provocative of further questions.

Other scholars have explored the Cassirer-Barfield parallelism, but Langer was the first to note it over a half-century ago.

You might be interested in Thomas Kuhn’s lovely essay, “The Historical Structure of Scientific Discovery” (*The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. 1977. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago. pp. 165-177; reprinted from *Science* 136 (1962): 760-64)

In it, Kuhn writes,

Many scientific discoveries, particularly the most interesting and important, are not the sort of event about which the questions ‘Where?’ and, more particularly, ‘When?’ can appropriately be asked. Even if all conceivable data were at hand, those questions would not regularly possess answers. That we are persistently driven to ask them nonetheless is symptomatic of a fundamental inappropriateness in our image of discovery. That inappropriateness is here my main concern, but I approach it by considering first the historical problem presented by the attempt to date and to place a major class of fundamental discoveries.

Those classes of discovery include oxygen, the electric current, X rays, and the electron. For example, Joseph Priestley is historically given credit for discovering oxygen, but Carl Scheele, Antoine Lavoisier and Pierre Bayen all have legitimate claims to the discovery. They “independently” discovered it.

Carl Jung called the phenomenon “synchronicity,” and there is no simple causal answer to the complex phenomenon. Our image of the nature of discovery is another “illegitimate totality.”

On Cassirer and Barfield, SKL said, “The parallel is so striking that it is hard to believe in its pure coincidence, yet such it seems to be.” From a cause and effect perspective, the

only word for it is coincidence. From a synchronicity perspective, the acausal simultaneity of events occurs in the same soup of cosmic milieu, that of problem solving.

Thought you might find this of interest.

Gary van den Heuvel

Wed, Aug 12, 2009 12:21 PM

Gary,

Thanks for your recent encouraging posts, to which I wish I had responded sooner, and so thanks again for your patience.

I understand your defense of Langer's order of procedure, but in spite of my debt to her theory of art, I cannot concur. Everyone has an implicit metaphysics, even before one makes one explicit, if one ever does (which only philosophers do). I hold Langer to a higher standard than I would the writer who simply takes his or her implicit metaphysics for granted. When she undertakes to investigate "life" with no appeal to "non-zoological factors" (somewhere early in Volume I), she presupposes without argument -- and she is not alone in this -- that there are no such factors. Therefore, if there are such factors, her approach is biased from the start against their discovery. The transition from the inorganic to the organic? It happened somehow, but of course there was no divine *telos* calling forth and actualize that form. We just *know* that as enlightened intellectuals, or at least we must, if we are responsible, assume that to be the case unless logically forbidden. Or, if a divine *telos* were possible, we couldn't address it fruitfully before working out an adequate conceptuality for the mundane. I *understand*, Gary, but I do not agree with that approach. It begs important questions. (Whitehead's did not, in my opinion.) I do not deny that her approach led her to look deeply into biological nature, and I expect to learn things from her that I would from no one else, but however instructive an error her bias may have been, it was bias nevertheless, powerfully and even elegantly expressed, but not excusable for all that.

Thanks also for your Kuhn gloss with its Jungian synchronicity insight. I'll post more golden oldies from Langer when I have time, which is justified by hearing from just one appreciator, such as yourself.

All the best,

Tony

Wed, Aug 12, 2009 03:17 PM

Tony,

I enjoy these interactions with you. And stop apologizing for the speed or slowness by which you respond. I took a week to respond to your email with the two new links to Langer and I felt that was too slow. But let us understand that our communications



aren't the entire universe to either one of us. Let's enjoy what we receive when we receive it and be at peace. And may you not find my LONG responses tiresome.

See below.

Gary van den Heuvel

Yes, there are metaphysical premises implicit in her explicitly stated approach that excluded "non-zoological" factors. I believe she understood the biases in such premises that would exclude from the start her discovery of such factors. She admitted at the outset of her *Mind Essay* she made no claim to the sole rightness of her approach or systematic conclusions. At the end of Volume III, she hoped that others would find her work useful despite what "dross" may be in it (BTW, all use of quotes here are actual words or phrases she used; I will furnish citations if you wish).

From the outset of her career, she was keenly aware of the inevitable realm of the "limbo of the Inconceivable." There are limits to any knowledge system, even Whitehead's who started with premises, apparently, more to your temperament. I disagree with Innis that Langer was definitely not a "pan-experientialist." Her knowledge system didn't speculate on how far down intelligence in the universe goes. She defined "mind" and "mentality" in a circumscribed way and structured her system around that. A deep understanding of her makes clear she left much unsaid and that she had a profound humility and wonder about the "inconceivable."

Also, she was writing in a hostile climate of logical positivism. One of her goals was the take hold of that mainstream totally holding sway in shaping modern culture.

"And science, as against philosophy even in that eager and active philosophical age, professed to look exclusively to the visible world for its unquestioned postulates."

Scientific thinking that excludes "non-zoological" factors is a *visual* enterprise. That is profoundly important to recognize. She pointed out some of its fallacies throughout her career and wrote in *Mind* that, simply because thinking starts with the premise that all knowledge starts with the sense and that all senses are turned into the visual in order to be scientific,

"No crasser oversimplification could possibly be made than the assumption that symbolic processes are either concerned with receiving, handling and storing information, or with externalizing and working off emotions."

Langer was not interested in being right or to reveal some great metaphysical Truth, for she humbly accepted that knowledge cannot do such things anyway. Despite her vast breadth and depth of knowledge, she tried to bring modern thinking to understand the essential role of myth in science and art and religion. She wanted to explicate that which cannot be said. To do that, she chose as her springboard the basic premises of the age in which she wrote. Of that age she wrote in *New Key* (pp. 15-16)—forgive the long quote:

The results [of science's visual enterprise] were astounding enough to lend the new attitude full force. Despite the objections of philosophical thinkers, despite the outcry of moralists and theologians against the "crass materialism" and

“sensationalism” of the scientists, physical science grew like Jack’s beanstalk, and overshadowed everything else that human thought produced to rival it. A passion for observation displaced the scholarly love of learned dispute, and quickly developed the experimental technique that kept humanity supplied thrice over with facts. Practical applications of the new mechanical knowledge soon popularized and established it beyond the universities. Here the traditional interests of philosophy could not follow it any more; for they had become definitely relegated to that haven of unpopular lore, the schoolroom. No one really cared much about consistency or definition of terms, about precise conceptions, or formal deduction. The senses, long despised and attributed to the interesting but improper domain of the devil, were recognized as man’s most valuable servants, and were rescued from their classical disgrace to wait on him in his new venture. They were so efficient that they not only supplied the human mind with an incredible amount of food for thought, but seemed presently to have most of its cognitive business in hand. Knowledge from sensory experience was deemed the only knowledge that carried any affidavit of truth; for truth became identified, for all vigorous modern minds, with empirical fact.

And so, a scientific culture succeeded to the exhausted philosophical vision. An undisputed and uncritical empiricism — not skeptical, but positivistic — became its official metaphysical creed, experiment its avowed method, a vast hoard of “data” its capital, and correct prediction of future occurrences its proof. The programmatic account of this great adventure, beautifully put forth in Bacon’s *Novum Organum*, was followed only a few centuries later by the complete, triumphant summary of all that was scientifically respectable, in J. S. Mill’s *Canons of Induction* — a sort of methodological manifesto.

Her life was devoted to reconstructing that enterprise. That’s why philosophy had to be made anew, in a new key. To defeat the enemy, don’t resist him; embrace him. When I first started reading her *Mind Essay* I fought her all the way. An unrepentant mystic at heart, I wrote out each objection to make it coherent. Yet, she won the day each time as I stuck with her long 1200-page argument. My mystic vision stayed not only intact, but was strengthened and given tools.

Langer was a revolutionary. Seeing the surface of her starting points does not mean one sees how she subverted the whole enterprise. One of the most central premises she overthrew was “knowledge from sensory experience was deemed the only knowledge.” Today, neuroscience is catching up to her. As you read, don’t react to the face value of her claims, but seek out how she is subversive. Still, that doesn’t mean she will convince you. We have all our intuitions of truth, based more on temperament than rationality. The temperament pretty much stays with us from birth to death, regardless of the intervening events.

And Langer was explicitly clear that how life arose is unknown and unknowable. But delimited to her system of playing by the rules of a non-zoological approach, she constructed a reasonable vision of emergence, which the new nonreductionist sciences of complexity are catching up to.

Assuming ipso facto that her approach was an error of bias appears to have within it a certain “illegitimate totality.” Assuming you know upfront

Such a “total state of [her] universe” is what Whitehead and Russell have called an “illegitimate totality,” a whole which cannot be theoretically constructed. . . . Since causality is transitive, the “ultimate cause” of any act may be traced back to the causes of its causes, etc., and we may choose at random any “totality” of facts in the remote past as the starting-point for predicting any act in the future. But in truth the “totality” of cumulative causes breaks up at exactly the point which is, for the knower, the present; for here his knowledge enters in as a fact, and makes the “totality” impossible.

So her knowledge system intersects with your present, from which vantage point (the only one anyone ever has). The conscious *present* makes totality impossible. Wallace Stevens ends his poem, “The Comedian as the Letter C” in a way that may be applied to Langer’s work (Crispin is the name of the philosopher in his poem, an alter-ego of Wallace):

Invented for its pith, not doctrinal  
In form though in design, as Crispin willed,  
Disguised pronunciamento, summary,  
Autumn’s compendium, strident in itself  
But muted, mused, and perfectly revolved  
In those portentous accents, syllables,  
And sounds of music coming to accord  
Upon his law, like their inherent sphere,  
Seraphic proclamations of the pure  
Delivered with a deluging onwardness.  
Or if the music sticks, if the anecdote  
Is false, if Crispin is a profitless  
Philosopher, beginning with green brag,  
Concluding fadedly, if as a man  
Prone to distemper he abates in taste,  
Fickle and fumbling, variable, obscure,  
Glozing his life with after-shining flicks,  
Illuminating, from a fancy gorged  
By apparition, plain and common things,  
Sequestering the fluster from the year,  
Making gulped potions from obstreperous drops,  
And so distorting, proving what he proves  
Is nothing, what can all this matter since

The relation comes, benignly, to its end?  
So may the relation of each man be clipped.

I trust your use of the word “gloss” was intended with its positive connotation and not its negative connotation (superficial, with false or deceptively good appearance).

And yes, I look forward to any of your offerings, particularly by Langer. If the time shall come, you certainly must be acknowledged for your research assistance, among those I thank!

Thanks, Tony.

Gar

Wed, Aug 12, 2009 07:03 PM

Gar, if I thank you for a gloss, you may safely assume something positive, and if I thank you for your patience, then I’m not apologizing . . . except now for the testy way these curt clarifications must come across! (: ^D) The length of your responses doesn’t tire me, but the thought of tit-for-tatting them does. I still have thoughts about “God and the best use of one’s energy,” but can’t spare the time to organize them. If I write a little, you write a lot, so should I write a lot, I fear I will be avalanched. I do not assume that if you haven’t responded to a point of contention, you can’t. I assume the feeling is mutual. Having said that, I wish to express my appreciation for the care you put into our correspondence and only wish that Langer were alive (at 114!) to see what sympathetic champion she has in you. Best, Tony

Wed, Aug 12, 2009 07:34 PM

Namaste!

Gary van den Heuvel

Wed, Aug 12, 2009 08:44 PM

You wrote, “I still have thoughts about ‘God and the best use of one’s energy,’ but can’t spare the time to organize them.”

Understood. I hope your thoughts remember “Discussing God. . .” Devotion to, spiritual practice of prayer or meditation, humility before, and aspiration to the awe and mystery of life and the universe is a beautiful and powerful use of one’s energy. Taking that energy and rolling into a verbal ball is another matter. . . . J

Gary

Thu, Aug 13, 2009 02:09 PM

Right, Gary, but in order to know that what “the awe and mystery of life and the universe” referred to, to know that it was *not* verbal ball-rolling, we need a more or less adequate conceptuality. (Langer 101) We can refine that conceptuality through reflective *discourse*, i.e., by discussing God.

Hartshorne wrote somewhere that we’re all experiencing God, all the time, which means that that even atheists are experiencing God but, due to their inadequate conceptuality, misconceive their own experience and deny God (a dignity denied my cats who also experience, but can neither conceive nor misconceive God).

It is human nature to reflect on experience, which doesn’t not require them to regard reflection as a substitute therefor. (When I want *music*, I do not want *discourse* on music.) Your quote of a Vietnamese thinker whose name escapes me gave me the impression that to commit an act of theology (a *logos* about *theos*) was either not a profitable use of *your* energy (“to each his own” but, hey, if I want to do, that’s cool); or it’s not a profitable use of *anyone’s* energy -- or at least anyone seeking wisdom - - insofar as it involves the intrinsically foolish practice of speaking about that which one cannot speak about.

I suspect the latter is your position, which implies a negative judgment on my theological interests *unless you can specify what it is about you and me as individuals that makes it a profitable use of energy for me but not for you*. You cannot articulate your (putatively objective) stricture on theological discourse without violating it (i.e., without making it an exception to its own rule). -- Tony

### **Gary Van Den Heuvel CaringBridge web site**

Sun, Mar 13, 2011 05:32 PM

I forward a CaringBridge website set up by my great friend, Kell Julliard.

Some of you I have been out of touch with for awhile now and you know nothing about my health status. Others call me frequently to find the latest news. CaringBridge can keep everyone up to date without wiping out my energy.

Feel free to forward this to others whom you think are interested.

When you go the web page, the default is to go to the “Welcome” tab. If you want to see previous entries, click on the “Journal” tab. You can select newest to oldest or oldest to newest entries.

Some of you will have the desire to call me. I welcome that but do not want to be overloaded with phone calls. If you want to talk directly, please “sign my guestbook” and leave a message expressing your desire to talk directly. I will call you as I can, I promise. Siblings and nephews and nieces may call direct!

My emotional health is good. The paradox is that emotionally and mentally I am healthier than I have ever been in my life! I must confess, there is much to meditate on.

Gary

## **Expression of deep appreciation too deep for words**

**Monday, March 14, 2011 10:32 PM, EDT**

Namaste, Gary.

My distress at the news of your illness, almost two years after our correspondence died of neglect, has only partly been rolled back by the spirit with which you deliver it, that is, the frank cheerfulness (I can think of no other word) with which you face the prospect of death. You don't seek it, but neither are you afraid of it. You seek the truth in it. In this respect, you are a philosopher, if Socrates in the *Phaedo* knew what he was talking about.

I reviewed our exchange of messages this morning, and marveled at how much ground we covered. It renewed my interest in matters that I put on the back burner for one apparently good reason or another. It is a treasure-trove of ideas. Thank you for initiating what turned out to be in its own way the "collaboration" you proposed but I at first thought unrealistic.

I hope for good news on the health front for you, wish you every comfort as you face unimaginably difficult choices, and hope none of my poor words have misfired.

Peace,

Tony

Wed, Mar 16, 2011 07:17 PM

Tony,

I am deeply moved by your words and sentiments. I am touched deeply. Your influence on my understanding of SKL and others was immeasurable. I have been thinking of you for several weeks. Our correspondence broke off, in large part, I believe, because of my hard, immovable stance against theology. I have softened much on that stance.

Since we never met in person, I am pleased that you care enough to show interest in me and to sum up so beautifully our communications. None of your words were "poor" nor did they "misfire."

I would love to say more right now, but I don't have the stamina I once did. Let's stay in touch.

It is important to let you know how you moved me.

Namaste,

Gary VDH

Thu, Mar 17, 2011 09:16 AM

Gary,

I do not equate my need to find the right words to your plight, but your assurance means as much to me as you say my sympathy means to you.

When you are up to it, but only then, I'd like to know how much further you have taken your ambitious and creative interdisciplinary project and if you were able to interest others in it. Where does it stand?

Please resist any urge to respond immediately, for my curiosity is not urgent. Just know that my thoughts are with you, and as a Whiteheadian, I assure you that ain't chickenfeed.

Peace,

Tony

Sun, Apr 03, 2011 12:18 PM

Tony,

Your thoughts being with me ain't no chickenfeed, indeed, you Whiteheadian! I remained moved by the intimacy of appreciation you shared with me upon hearing of my health issues.

You asked about my "ambitious project." I assume you continue to read my CaringBridge journals. If so, you know that my ambitious project is not complete. I entered hospice in November 2010 and made peace with the fact that I would die on the verge of its completion after 40 years of work. I have the whole of the project sketched out, but nobody seems able to take over where I left off. They understand each piece of my description, but can't seem to get the big picture. I am the only one who can put the final package together. I am convinced the final edit of a coherent total, along with experiential experiences of a workshop I am creating, will communicate the big picture. I work 40 years, get almost there, then I die. Ironic karma.

With Mayo in the picture, I hope I am given more time. I want to live long enough to finish the project. When my hemoglobin gets boosted upward, I will have sufficient oxygen to the brain to work on the project. As is, I can't sustain the required mental and physical energy.

The project is in two parts. I am developing an interactive workshop to set up experiences of the ideas. Since feeling is the foundation of mental constructions, participants must start with feeling their kinesthetic body and their kinetic ambient. From there we move upward to the full reaches of the domain bounded by the human body and human culture. The model I use is not a theory. It is a new map of the geography of the domain. It generates disprovable hypotheses, which will satisfy the scientific oriented (Ken Wilber's system fails there), and it moves into literal statements on the ineradicable human need for metaphor, myth, magical thinking, religion, and art. The map integrates the functional interaction of the whole, now seen as impasse and dichotomies.

In *Process and Reality*, Whitehead coined many terms, including "extensive continuum." Langer didn't like all his coining of terms, but said that "extensive continuum" is an important new philosophical concept. Whitehead said in 1929 that the current cosmic epoch of extensive continuum is "atomistic" ("atomic" was his word, I believe; same difference). Because of Langer's work and advances in physics, cosmology,

and neurobiology, I claim and attempt to map how today's transformations are creating a new cosmic epoch of "complementarity." I intend to show that Heisenberg's discovery of quantum complementarity is not unique to the subatomic level. Heisenberg said needing to see elementary particles as both "particles" (atomistically) and "waves" is not a limitation of theory or instruments of observation. Complementarity is the structure of the universe.

I will show that complementarity goes all the way down as Heisenberg and all physicists since then say. And it goes all the way up. Complementarity exists on the level where we live. Socialized habits prevent us from realizing that. I will reveal exactly which habits limit us and how altering those perceptual behaviors through practice will open us to a spacetime where it is apparent that our experience is both atomistic and in waveforms (we hear much about being in flow). In normal everyday task performance, we attend to the motion of events around us more than the atomic boundaries of things. We then attempt to translate actual experience into atomistic, dualistic mental constructions that do not have the morphology or topology for clear representation of actual experience. We are at the threshold of evolving to a new level of understanding and thinking. It will occur whether or not I die before my project is completed. I just feel I can be of service to speed up the gestalt switch. The world is in desperate need for it.

I do fear that when I return to the project, I will not finalize it without help for two reasons. I doubt that my full health and energy will be restored to what I once knew. More importantly, the whole new complementarity way of being will not be conveyed by dumping sets of facts on listeners and participants. As Langer said and my experience for the last 20 years proves, we have the facts. We don't need more facts. We need a new way of seeing those facts. And verbalizing a picture of the new way of seeing will not suffice. We need experiential events where we feel the change.

The complementarity on the level where we live will be realized only "in relation," in the durations of flow between and among persons. The social picture today of atomistic isolation of the individual must be overcome. I can't do that in a package I create alone. There must be a core of individuals who "get it," and the new understanding will flow organically out from that core in relation. Martin Buber's "I-It" and "I-Thou" was onto complementarity on the level where we live. His book begins, "The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude. . . . Thus the I of man is also twofold."

So we await to see what the future has in store. . . .

Gary

### **Complementarity on the level where we live**

Tony,

As it happens a friend just shared this with me. It's an Alan Watts & Trey Parker or Matt Stone YouTube animation.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXi\\_ldNRNtM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXi_ldNRNtM)

My concept of complementarity on the level where we live is not left field. Everyone is struggling with it in metaphorical ways. We have evolved to the point that we may move



past mere metaphor. The Alan Watts illustration resonates, but how does one integrate it into the fibers of the soul? You can't. It sticks in the head as a lovely metaphor.

Gary

### **Expression of deep appreciation too deep for words (resumed)**

Gary,

I appreciate your allocating the precious resources of time and energy to give me a sense of where things stand.

I've toyed with the thought of putting your idea of complementarity in front of Geoffrey Klempner of the [International Society for Philosophers](#) (of which I am a member) whose [Pathways School of Philosophy](#) in I've been associated as a [mentor](#) since '02, to see if he knows whether anyone in the Society or School would be interested in learning more and carrying on the conversation/collaboration.

It's a shot-in-the-dark, and I do not have the subjective "stuff" to "sell" your idea. I don't feel confident enough to boil down a *precis* from the contents of many email messages, even if my other commitments spared me the time for that). I don't want to generate either energy-consuming pressure or unrealistic hope for you. (Needless to say, even if I did, I would not do it without your permission.)

I just felt helpless reading your description and could only think of how I could "broker" an introduction of your work to a segment of the international philosophical community to which you might leave it as a legacy (which you would still have to think about even if you live to be 100!).

Only you can answer the question, "What have I got to lose?"

Better to shoot in the dark than curse the darkness?

Tony

### **En-courage-ing numbers!**

Sat, May 28, 2011 10:10 PM

Gary, I just wanted you to know I read every word of your journals as soon as they "arrive," including your comments on *American Idol*. (Yes, best season ever; glad it was Scotty; I'll pass on La Gaga, thank you very much.) The best news, of course, is your latest numbers are going in the right direction and you are falsifying dire predictions. Your attitude must have *something* to do with it. You face setbacks heroically and then treat yourself to the best things in life. (A walk, a vista of nature, a cappuccino.) You put my daily gripes in perspective. -- Tony

Sun, May 29, 2011 12:57 PM

Hi Tony,

Again I appreciate your kind words. Attitude definitely has something to with the successes of the Cyclosporine as well as the several unexpected results. There is no pharmaceutical explanation and no medical explanation for some of the results. May the positive results continue!

I have not forgotten your offer in early April when you referred me to Geoffrey Klempner and offered to approach him about my concept of complementarity on the level where we live. I wrote a draft in reply almost immediately but never got back to finishing it. I read Chapter One of Klempner's *Naïve Metaphysics*, which I understand lays the foundation for the rest of his book. We share common assumptions, which I listed. I will try to get it finished soon.

In appreciation for your eloquent statements of support. (Yes, I know you do not seek eloquent statement, but the subtlety of your mind and manner of stating support = eloquence).

Gary

Thu, Jun 02, 2011 10:04 AM

Hi Gary,

Thanks for confirming my psychosomatic surmise, for working on a summary of your insights for possible consideration by Dr. Klempner, and for your gracious words.

A logic professor, David Marans, contacted me "out of the blue" the other day to send a pic of [Brand Blanshard](#) from his Swarthmore days ('25-'44). In replying to my gratitude for the delightful gift, he mentioned that he had compiled an anthology of quotes from logicians, [Logic Gallery](#), the lightest of introductory glances of about a hundred thinkers. When I surveyed its list of names, however, I noticed that Susanne Langer's was not among them, and suggested to him that the first woman to author a logic textbook should find a place in his gallery. He immediately composed a page on her which I helped him edit, which you can see on the 13th page of the preview (accessible via the link given above; Blanshard's on the 12th). It's not the historiographically richer portrait I (unsuccessfully) tried to talk him into providing, but he said readers interested in any of the thinkers he spotlights can satisfy their curiosity online easily enough. I'm glad I may have helped put Langer's name before more students of philosophy.

More appreciative of Langer has, of course, been Antonio Damasio, whom you once kindly brought to my attention. John Searle, the eminent philosopher of mind, has just reviewed his new book, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*, in *The New York Review of Books*. I've so far only glanced at the review, which I hope to consume along with my lunch in a couple of hours, but thought I should send it to you at once. I've appended the text below, changing the font for ease of on-screen reading, but in case you prefer to print out their serif-font edition and read it off-line, [here's the link](#).

I have presumtuously gambled that I have not burdened you with this article, which you may, of course, simply put aside.

I know you hate when I apologize, so I apologize, not for apologizing, but only for having mistimed this reading suggestion, if I have.

Hoping to hear more good news from you soon, but any news at all no matter what.

Kind regards,

Tony

## **Searle and Damasio**

Hi Tony,

Thanks for sending me Searle's review of Damasio and the other links. I have not looked at the other links but did read Searle.

The frustrating aspect of my health status is that I am stimulated to respond with specificity how I believe both Searle and Damasio are right and both are wrong, but I don't have the physical energy to pursue it in a scholarly way.

For now, thanks for these important links, and suffice it to say that Searle has always bugged me. He is a brilliant critical thinker in matters of "consciousness," but he sets his standard of comparison in his personal 19<sup>th</sup> century notions he can't get out of his gut responses. For example, his saying there are "genuinely unconscious mental states, such as my unconscious memory when I am sound asleep that Washington was the first president." That hypothesis is questionable. It gives memory an ontologically objective status when it is epistemically objective. During the interlude when he is sound asleep, does he have "memory." Is it "out there" somewhere?

And Damasio I consider a leading thinker in the area. I say kudos to him for insisting the brain stem must be considered in "consciousness" and "self." And I say boo to him for stopping at the brain stem. The "primitive feelings" Damasio talks about precede the brain stem. The boundary is artificial. The sensory systems (chemical senses of taste and smell, somatic senses of human skin, the visceral sense, muscle sense and kinesthesia, the sense of balance, hearing, and vision). In developmental biology all develop from layers of skin (the brain and central nervous system develop out of the epidermis). I say one must start with skin to begin to explain sentience, which is a better word than "consciousness," which has too much 19<sup>th</sup> century baggage. Without going all way down this way, one is still confronted with insolvable mind/brain-body dualities. Starting with skin, one can address all of Searle's objections and clarify Damasio's primitive categories.

Just a thought for now!

Gary

Thu, Jun 02, 2011 11:55 AM

And now I have a side of Gary's fries to go with my lunch reading! Thanks.--Tony

Thu, Jun 02, 2011 12:15 PM

Lol; But wait there's more! I will be sending further comments in a moment.

Gary

## **Mindstream**

A paragraph from my mash up manuscript of subjective and objective interaction (*Re-imagining*

*The Meaning of Human: Three Stories*):

Chemical paths of taste and smell, somatic paths of human skin, the paths of visceral sense, muscle sense and kinesthesia, the sense of balance, hearing, and vision deliver their electrochemical goods intact to the brain stem and *thalamocortical systems*. Those goods can be measured. The goods jump a synaptic divide between the thalamocortical and neocortical systems as *electrotonic* neural replica of the physical pattern. They electrically preserve the physical pattern. *Neocortical strategies* select some and only some of those replicated goods to weave *pluripotent* virtual matrixes throughout the interior body mass. Virtual means those matrixes are electrotonic signals that mirror their originating physiologic signals. A *pseudo-matrix* emerges. The pseudo-matrix stands on the *vestibular nucleus* to poke a head into the upper brain. There the “central processor” of the pseudo-matrix perches. The pseudo-matrix projects virtual (versus actual) activity spaces. The brain organ conflates its auto-generated virtual space of activity as if it were an external objective space. AAA moderns conflated their subjective rules as objective and universal in an actual space. My task was to re-imagine a human evolved beyond the narcotic confluences of the puny brain. Mindstream cannot be contained by the brain or the body. It spills out to become ambients that feed back inside the body wall. The objectifications of AAA moderns saw the ambient as independent environment. The brain makes an excellent servant but a poor master. AAA moderns convinced themselves the brain is their master organ as if its input paths were incidental.

BTW, “AAA moderns” references “modern Western values.” Those values are an Aryan-Anglo-American (AAA) post-Enlightenment conceit.

Lest you think I am positing some mere subjectivist philosophy where nothing exists outside the self (body), allow me to use Damasio's example of plate tectonics as ontological objectivity. I agree. Let us not forget, however, that that “ontological objectivity,” according to Wikipedia “developed during the first decades of the 20th century (one of the most famous advocates was Alfred Wegener), and was accepted by the majority of the geoscientific community when the concepts of seafloor spreading were developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s.” Early on, most of the scientific community considered Wegener a nut job.

In other words, prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the human world had no such ontological objectivity. It did not exist in the human world where claims of its truth or falsity might be considered. Only by positing an Newtonian absolute space can we argue that even without human intervention plate tectonics were ontologically objective. Alfred North Whitehead did a good job destroying Newtonian absolute space. That objectivity of plate tectonics evolved to consensus over several decades. It first had no part of the human world, then went through an epistemically objective phase in which its truth or falsity could not be settled as a matter of fact independently of anybody's attitudes, feelings, or evaluations.

If one steps out of Aristotelian either/or logic of the excluded middle, even bona fide epistemically objective events such as pain have an ontological objectivity, albeit the ontological status is a different ontological category from material plate tectonics and the logical forms differ. I do not know the pain of withdrawal from heroin. Though I say its truth or falsity can be settled as a matter of fact independently of anybody's attitudes, feelings, or evaluations. The writhing body and vomiting is a matter of fact. The verbal consensus uses the word, "pain," no different from verbal consensus uses the phrase, "plate tectonic." I personally have no observational proof of either. Any argument against what I am saying is an argument over the role of being able to quantitatively measure, not logical merits.

Gary

Thu, Jun 02, 2011 01:01 PM

Thanks again, Gary. It'll take me a while to enter into your thought (again). But I supposed I should practice before getting your summary essay! -- Tony

### **Your 6/4/11 [Caring Bridge journal entry]**

#### **[Excerpt from that entry:**

To expose my dweeb side, I shall share a most remarkable event. As I sat in inaction, an email from my friend, Tony, arrived. He collects the most obscure philosophical gems. Who would ever suppose a thinker such as Susanne Langer, logician, epistemologist, and analytical philosopher of the highest order, not particularly a social or political thinker, would publish her prophetic political vision in *Fortune Magazine* in [1944](#) and [1945](#)???? Her prophetic analysis was right on. She said nation states are failing and global corporatist power will be filling the vacuum. It doesn't matter if global corporate policy is not interested in universal human rights. Those rights are slipping away fast now. When, where, and how will the human spirit rise up against a new type of tyranny?

The email Tony sent on Wednesday included several links: a *New York Times Review of Books* in which the philosopher of mind, John Searle, reviewed neurophysiologist Antonio Damasio's new book, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*. Light sparked and energized me.

Most amazing was his link to Brand Blanshard's report on ["The Seventh International Congress of Philosophy, Oxford, 1930."](#) My fascination and level of inspiration is

dweebish to be sure. Blanshard covered the state of argument in every issue important to philosophy, including the then new Quantum Mechanics, which had just largely supplanted the physicists' musings on Einstein's Theory of Relativity. No one could imagine its philosophical impact. Blanshard wrote a beautiful precis of that tipping point moment in history. It foreshadowed the nature of the decades to come, including the current American pandemic of anti-rationalism.

Excited, I jumped up and sat at my computer to respond to ideas that Tony presented for my edification. Then I turned to my languishing manuscript and workshop under development, *Re-imagining the Meaning of Human*, a fact-based praxis of human mystery. Science is the study of true knowledge. The more truth we learn, the greater the beauty of the mystery. There is no end point out of mystery.

The nature and workings of "attitude" are not within the individual psyche contained within our body walls. Attitude is a transpersonal event that transcends the individual. We are social creatures. Only the support of meaningful relationships allows attitude to work its magic.

My healing process is a paradox. What keeps me alive are the pragmatic though unorthodox ideas that have sustained me for over 40 years. It has taken a lot of research and work to bring it to the point of implementation. It is now ready. Although to implement it, I must have a team with software development and social network skills, some knowledge of biology and art preferred (or are willing to learn). To gather such a team will require capital investment. It seems I have a snowball's chance in hell getting that investment given my health status. An irony of karma, to say the least. A nagging feeling has me believe I will defy all odds and get my important project completed. Will attitude inspire others to save the day?

Sat, Jun 04, 2011 01:52 PM

Gary, it was a pleasant surprise to find myself as a character in your attention-riveting meditations on healing and creating. Funny, I had sent *that* Blanshard piece only because I was interested in showing off, so to speak, my latest pictorial acquisition of Blanshard (which I posted on a number of BB pages: I chose a piece he had written while a Swarthmore prof). Your take on his reportage on the 1930 congress made me appreciate it anew, as did your comment on Langer's mid-century prescience. When I step away for a time from these writers, they strike me as both wonderfully familiar and fresh. The warm familiarity is a reward for "time served," so to speak, in the vineyards of the literature; without the passage of time, however, and perhaps a little distance and the slight loss of control it brings (which I then ache to recover), there is no testing of worth. It is gratifying (to me, at least) to see how my workshop has alchemized into a garden where others find some respite from their cares. -- Tony (fellow dweeb)

Sat, Jun 04, 2011 02:19 PM

Tony, I am glad you enjoyed my description of what lifted me into an energy space no longer paralyzed by inaction.

Yes, I know you were focused on the Blanshard pic. It didn't fit in my journal narrative. What struck me about the pic is your statement Blanshard was 38 at the time the pic was taken. He looks well into the 50's to me. I do know that life aged the body faster then.

Tell me more about what you mean:

It is gratifying (to me, at least) to see how my workshop has alchemized into a garden where others find some respite from their cares.

Is that garden your web site or something more? Tell me all about it.

Gary

Sat, Jun 04, 2011 05:18 PM

Gary, my "workshop" is nothing other than [my website](#):

... this site is a workshop where my tools are either organized onto racks and into shelves or lying about indeterminately related to an emerging project. Among the latter will be essays by others that I feel compelled to post without a sure notion of their relationship to any architectonic. This work-in-progress is shot through with dependency on the creative efforts of others. If mine consists wholly in their successful synthesis I shall be satisfied.

but if you and others continue to tell me they delight in what they find lying around there, then I suppose it's not too much of a stretch to regard it as a "garden."

By the way, Blanshard (b. 1892) was around 38 when he attended that 1930 Congress, but I don't know when the pic on that page was taken. The following is dated 1936 when he was 44. [See first Blanshard picture on <http://anthonyflood.com/blanshard.htm>]

Tony

Sun, Jun 05, 2011 09:18 AM

Your web site project is a "garden." My life has been enriched by the surprises I find there. It brings beauty (and knowledge) into my life. BTW you are a good writer.

Gary

Sun, Jun 05, 2011 09:28 AM

I try to be one, Gary, and with the realization that I have yet a long way to go, I thank you for that vote of confidence. And your style fits your thought perfectly. – Tony

Wed, Jun 15, 2011 02:49 PM

A powerful statement of your outlook, Gary, under any circumstances, let alone yours.  
[What is? His journal entry?]

I heard your frank cry in the wilderness for a collaborator. If you can complete your overview, I would be happy to introduce Geoffrey Klempner to it, with your permission of course.

Attached is a .pdf of *Only Connect*, a well-written study by Belgian art theorist [Christophe Van Eecke](#) who, like you, reached out to me after discovering my site's Langer "portal." His esthetic interests are a bit outside of my comfort zone -- and he knows it! -- but he more than compensates me for that mild discomfort by expounding Langer's philosophy of art so masterfully. I haven't finished it, but what I have read warrants my bringing it to your attention without further delay.

Tony

Wed, Jun 15, 2011 07:17 PM

Thank you, Tony. As I was writing my "frank cry in the wilderness for a collaborator," I was thinking of you. Way back on April 6, you wrote and extended a generous offer of assistance. I feared you might consider me unfair to you or think I make much ado, but don't follow through when a hand is extended.

I started to respond shortly after your April 6 email, but it sits unfinished. I decided that I would finish my response today. I did not get to it. One might think I sit around with nothing to do, but my afternoon was completely filled with health related activities. By this time of the day, I can't pull together the energy for intellectual work.

I promise I will get a response to you by Friday. It will not be a précis to forward to Geoffrey Kempner. It will provide some foundational thoughts for you to tell me whether further effort is worth it. Basically, what is Geoffrey Kempner's attitude toward the role of developmental biology in philosophy?

Thank you for the Van Eecke link and attachment. I will look them over.

Gary

Wed, Jun 15, 2011 09:09 PM

Gary, I considered and thought no such things. As the circumstances of my offer were and are not usual, there was no usual expectation of a response, given the time and energy a response would require, despite any felt obligation your noble character may have imposed on you. Any silence, short, long, or infinite, is the response. In this case, it was relatively short, but if it reverts to either of the other two, I will only be disappointed for you.

Geoffrey himself has no special interest in that area, so far as I know, but someone on his roster of international contacts may.

Tony



Thu, Jun 16, 2011 09:36 AM

Tony, thanks for the info about Geoffrey having no special interest in the role the body, which is biological, has in constructing philosophy, and conversely, philosophy's role in critical analysis of what the biologists are saying.

Almost all philosophers I have met are not interested in biology or are hostile toward it. Even Robert E. Innis, who published a book, *Susanne Langer in Focus*, skipped over the entire biological foundation of Langer's master work, her *Mind Essay*. She came up with a concretely empirical unit of measure, the "act," which biologists use all the time. Innis glossed over it as a conceptual and controversial term. I contacted him to engage him, but he avoided engagement with me like the plague. He said he was writing to make Langer accessible to other philosophers. But he never got her in focus! He said interesting things, though.

I have decided what to send you. It is all written, has been for years. It will be a graphic précis with verbal outline. I doubt philosophers will see in it anything of interest. But it is the heart of what I want to collaborate about.

Gary

Thu, Jun 16, 2011 09:54 AM

Let me see it, Gary, and we'll take it from there. -- Tony

### **Expression of deep appreciation too deep for words**

When you offered to act as liaison between me and Geoffrey Klempner on April 6, I immediately started a response. Below is it. Below it, is a further comment I add today.

Tony,

RE: My "allocating the precious resources of time and energy." My energy is more limited than my time. Touching another with my vision in a way that brings dialog inspires me and lifts me out of the limitations of my physical and mental energy. I am carried further than my energy might seem to dictate.

I appreciate your consideration of acting as liaison between me and Geoffrey Klempner. I reviewed the links you provided and I read Chapter One of Klempner's *Naïve Metaphysics*, which lays the foundation for the rest of his book, as I understand. There are statements in it that might provide an opening for dialog:

—from Geoffrey Kempner, Chapter One:

"Implicit in our naive philosophical picture of reality are two conflicting views: one places I at the centre of the world, the other finds the I in a common world alongside other I's. Neither standpoint can be upheld at the expense of the other, for they are (for different reasons) equally valid. We must embrace both."

"The subjective and objective standpoints each present a different account of my relation to the world as a whole."

“In our everyday lives, we pass back and forth between the subjective and objective standpoints without ever thinking what we are doing.”

“We begin to realize, however obscurely, that no stable compromise between the subjective and objective standpoints could ever be achieved. Each of us stands alone at the centre of our own unique world; we all share one and the same world. Both propositions are true, and at the very same time both propositions are also false.”

Not having read the entirety of his work, I speculate on the meaning of his last statement. Both propositions are both true and false. I think I would agree. I would take it to another logical level and say that each proposition is neither true nor false. At that next logical level, an integration of the apparent duality, paradox, contradiction occurs: what I call complementarity on the level where we live.

Complementarity on the level where we live occurs because of what I call “bifurcation by skin.” The concept unites developmental (embryonic) biology and Ilya Prigogine’s Nobel Prize winning work in chemistry on dissipative structures. Human physiology is composed of dissipative structures, as well as self-organizing rush hour traffic patterns.

Klempner’s *Naïve Metaphysics* is saying something very important. However, it remains at an unnecessary level of abstraction, IMHO, by not grounding the nature of subjective and objective in the body. For everything he says, is *embodied* experience. I don’t understand the resistance to that fact.

Langer would agree with Klempner on subjectivity and objectivity. She said there are not actual, discrete subject and objective realms. Citing many concrete, empirical examples, she argued that the basis of these two “irreconcilable” mode of experience are two mode of feeling: “feeling as impact” which has a short, relatively sudden rhythmic structure; it feels like something hits you from the outside, whether or not it does. The general class of that mode is “sensation.” The other mode of feeling is “autogenic action,” which feels like it rises up slowly from within and feels it comes from the self. The general class of that mode is “emotive.”

Focusing on the mode of experiential impulse, she sidestepped all issues of boundary. So much current philosophy and biology argue over boundaries. Langer said it is more useful to focus on the center of the impulse action and recognize that the limits of it reach are labile. Nowhere in complex dynamical systems in nature can we find clearly demarcated boundaries.

I make broad sweeping statements without the lengthy argument made and supported with such diverse examples that she became almost tedious. She spent 50 dense pages on her argument about elephant mentality!

Gary

### **A request for your consideration**

[My email to Geoffrey Klempner]

Thursday, June 16, 2011 2:40 PM

A request for your consideration

Dear Geoffrey,

It is my good fortune to have been in correspondence for the past four years with a systematic thinker who has been working out the details of his epistemological project over the past four decades. The editor of the [abridged version](#) of Susanne K. Langer's *Mind* trilogy, he had contacted me after discovering the Langer portal of my site. Unfortunately, he been stricken with a medical condition that threatens to leave his life's work nearly but not actually complete. What energy is left over for writing is spent online journaling his trials, both spiritual and medical, for those who wish to receive his updates.

As I considered his plight, it dawned on me that some other philosopher, more suited than I, would enjoy knowing of this project and maybe even collaborating with him on it while that is still possible, and, in a qualified sense, "inheriting" it in order to carry it on; and that you, with your small army of global philosophical contacts, might know just who he or she might be. I felt extremely uncomfortable about the alternative of not bothering to explore this possibility, even if it should lead nowhere; thus this exploratory message to you, sent with his knowledge (although he has left to me the details of the task of composing this overture to you).

Could you spare a few minutes to read the thread of our recent correspondence in which he summarizes his idea of "complementarity on the level where we live"? When I suggested to him that I contact you, he began reading your *Naive Metaphysics*, and in that summary he contrasts what (he thinks) you're doing with what he is interested in. He had hoped to draw up a *precis* of his project, but that was not to be. He must rely on what he began writing a few months ago, now preserved in our correspondence.

If what you find in his messages piques your philosophic interest or puts you in mind of a better matched reviewer of his interdisciplinary vision, you could contact him directly, or the other interested philosopher, if you have stimulated his or her interest in this. The parties could then correspond directly, and I would step back (or back in as needed).

If what you find leaves you uninterested, that would be the end of the matter.

It would all begin with your perusal of the thread, which I would send to you only with your express permission and with no obligation attaching to it.

With gratitude for your taking the time to read this, I am

Yours very truly,

Tony

Thu, Jun 16, 2011 08:09 PM

Tony,

You are something else! You inspire me to review my graphic/verbal *précis* of what my workshop and manuscript is about. It may not appear as philosophy, but as [Brand Blanshard](#) wrote,

"But rightly to digest and interpret experience is the business of reflection, and such reflection is philosophy. Its practical value lies in 'influencing and modifying the

accepted standards of conduct which lie in the background of our minds,' 'in the constant and vigilant criticism of the assumptions which, without it, we should too readily take for granted.'"

I will go over it this weekend and send it along to you.

You are appreciated.

Gary

Thu, Jun 16, 2011 08:21 PM

Glad to have images of inspiration sandblast away those of bleeding gums. (:^D) I look forward to getting both your abridgement and Geoffrey's response. – Tony

Fri, Jun 17, 2011 07:26 PM

Hi Tony,

I read Geoffrey's response to your inquiry concerning some type of collaboration with my thinking. I do not know what representations of my thinking you shared. My impression is that he jotted off a hurried response without thinking through his statement's internal contradictions. I make the following commentaries not to flame Geoffrey, but to share some of my philosophical mind.

He said he just doesn't "have the heart, or the stomach, for the nitty gritty dialogue which would be required to enable your author to complete his magnum opus. Like Kierkegaard, I am highly suspicious of any attempt at philosophical system-building."

The magnum opus is complete, but not fleshed out. I seek not hand-holding, but opportunities to bounce ideas from multiple specialties around in order to discover what "sticks" for other people. BTW, I also share Kierkegaard's suspicion of philosophical system-building. I'll comment below.

Geoffrey responded [June 17, 2011] to you (see below):

**"It has become fashionable in philosophy, since the rise of the analytic tradition, to distinguish between 'genuine' philosophical questions which have answers, and 'pseudo-questions'. My own view is strongly antagonistic to this approach. The questions are genuine, they are real. But there are no answers, period."** [bold emphasis mine]

[COMMENT: RE: below, SKL wrote that she agreed with everything Carnap and other logical positivists say, but said she would not promise to stop where they do].

Compare Klempner's statement quoted above to his [since-deleted] blog, "Making sense of the world," Monday, April 18, 2011:

"The idea of a framework, the distinction between questions within a framework and questions about a framework, is one which Rudolf Carnap discussed in his seminal article, 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology'. After Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction less attention has been paid to Carnap's

foundational work on this topic, but the fundamental point is still valid as a *diagnosis of the error* which we easily fall into, of confusing questions about a framework with questions within a framework.

“When the framework is the universe or cosmos, and the question is about meaning, **then the correct and proper conclusion to draw from Carnap’s theory is that *we imagine a question where there is no question***. We to ask questions about the framework which can only be asked within the framework, such as the question, or questions, about the ‘sense of the world’” [bold emphasis mine]

In both cases, quoted cases above Geoffrey’s intention of sense is vague. What is the distinction between the concept of “pseudo-questions,” which he rejects, and the Kantian concept of imagining “a question where there is no question,” which he embraces?

Geoffrey wrote below:

“The questions are genuine, they are real. But there are no answers, period.”

Period!!!! Such a definitive answer to what apparently has no answers??! The statement has internal contradiction.

I will not give proper response to his notion of “conundrums.” That requires a careful and lengthy answer. Instead, I will quote, Susanne Langer, *The Practice of Philosophy*, Chapter IV, “The Trivial Art,” pp. 75-76. 1930:

For centuries past, logicians have realized the triviality of the accepted formulations, but sought to preserve logic none the less by widening its scope and drawing new problems into its domain. [Gary’s comment: “questions within a framework”]. It is just as though all its Levites, from the schoolmen of the Middle Ages to the college professors of today, had been prompted by a vague feeling that there is some serious purpose in their apparently vain and idle logic-chopping: that when the whole forest of propositions is chopped down, something will be found to lie at the roots of it [Gary’s comment: or, apparently, in the case of Klempner, nothing lies at the roots of it]. The scholastic philosophers regaled their jaded minds with problems of universal and particular, realism and nominalism; they turned from the formal relations among propositions, to the ontological consideration of their elements—general concepts, particular things, negative objects, and other puzzles of considerable interest, which usually showed the peculiarity of ending in paradoxes [Gary’s comment: “conundrums”], the famous “insolubilia” that brought logic into disrepute among metaphysicians. These philosophers were running up against the intrinsic limitations of their logical system—against the problems which *their system* could not include. But instead of pondering over the relativity of all abstract forms, and the consequent necessity of exploring other possible systems [Gary’s comment: “questions about a framework”], they respected their particular one as absolute, and commended the problems to God [Gary’s comment: or to atheistic nihilism?].

And finally on system-building, Geoffrey:

“[being suspicious of] any attempt at philosophical system-building. The system is never completed. Meanwhile, you live in a little shack next to the building works, where the real action takes place.”

An obscure mix of metaphors, but I get the gist of it. “The system is never completed.” I don’t know if he means an author never physically completes such attempts or whether he meant it in the Kurt Friedrich Gödel sense, that any system is either incomplete or has internal contradictions. Many, including Kant, completed his system. More to the point, every person, especially philosophers, are system builders in some sense. Making sense of experience is a form of system building. Humans cannot escape it. I agree that system-building as seeking some grand final answer to all things is an impossible, vain, and foolish task. And it is very passe in today’s intellectual relativism.

Nonetheless, every explanation of experience is a systematization. The role of philosophy or any other mode of explaining must not be judged in terms of its sole rightness or its absolute completeness. It must be judged in terms of its *usefulness*. Most modern philosophers have run away from trying to be useful, in the larger sense of coming up with a robust intellectual system that addresses the great needs of our transformative age. All the old philosophical “isms” are no longer very useful and philosophy is generally in disrepute (rightfully so, IMHO).

Concluding there simply are no answers might be a philosophically curious assertion to make, but it certainly is NOT useful to anyone including the thinker who makes it.

Now if Geoffrey or any of his “small army of global philosophical contacts” is interested in being engaged in creative new ways, not necessarily with a sense of collaboration, but as a lover of knowledge, please point me to their direction. Please forewarn them, however, I carry a mighty and powerful sword! Robert E. Innis, author of *Susanne Langer in Focus* essentially ran away from engagement with me, because I questioned his understanding of SKL’s “act concept.” He didn’t stay long enough for me to show him it is more than a “controversial” abstraction. It is a rational concept based in empiricism, used by biologists in the field all the time. I find modern professional philosophers generally do run when outside their ivory bailiwick. I would love to engage with an exception to my decades-old observation!

Thanks so much, Tony, for your intervention. I am deeply and forever grateful.

Gary

Fri, Jun 17, 2011 08:52 PM

Tony,

I just reread my response. I think my core intention is vague in it. That is, I understand that Geoffrey isn’t up to the dialogue. I respect and honor that. I meant to cast no dispersions on him.

As I said, I think he jotted off a quick, not thoroughly thought out and edited, response. Fair enough. But he said, “All this is prefatory to your question whether or not I am

‘uninterested’.â€” I took the liberty to challenge those prefatory remarks. That is fair, I think, in philosophy.

Gary

Sat, Jun 18, 2011 11:32 AM

Hi Tony,

In my responses about Geoffrey Klempner, I restricted myself to statements written on the page before me. I do not know the breadth and depth of Geoffrey’s interests and knowledge. Therefore, what I say in my restricted sense, can appear offensive or dismissed because my critique is not a critique of his whole body of work. Very likely, my criticisms are properly addressed elsewhere in Geoffrey’s body of work.

You suggested I might be interested in Philosoph.com for my work. You suggested it before, but with my limited energy, I nowadays follow what my gut says is important or what I absolutely must read. Today I finally looked at the web site. I will send you the overview of my work and you can help me decide.

On the web site’s main page it says, “philosophers should know lots of things besides philosophy.” That contradicted in a refreshing way, my statements of experience with most professional modern philosophers who run away from anything outside their ivory bailiwick.

The Philosoph.com “collection of specialized search engines for philosophers and students researching all aspects of the humanities, arts and sciences” is a superb source of matters outside philosophy per se. I searched names of particular neuroscientists and words like “thalamocortical” and “vestibular nuclei.” The list of research papers and books that came up in each case were highly impressive.

Although it is posted on the site, I wonder how Geoffrey and others actually use it.

I searched “Susanne Langer” and read only one link on the list, [Reassessing Susanne Langer: Forty Years After the Essay on Human Feeling](#). It is a panel discussion proposal with three unnamed participants! It is however, the most cogent assessment of Langer.

Gary

Mon, Jun 20, 2011 10:27 AM

I hear you, Gary. (I took a little R&R, so I’ve just read your last three messages.) We all have such fragmentary knowledge of others.

My impression of Geoffrey’s response, which I did not convey to him, was that since all he had to go on was his own feelings about the prospect of entertaining someone else’s theory, the word “system” set off a reverie of unsolicited musings on that topic, at least one of them, as you noted, arguably contradictory (or at least “unstable”). (Philosophic humility counsels, I think, a more moderate statement, e.g., *I have so far found no*

systems that satisfy *me*.) He failed to disguise completely his difficulty in balancing a gracious openness with a concern about being imposed upon. He doesn't know enough about your work to have a more considered response, *and* also not sure he really wants to. That's my utterly fallible "take."

On pages 138ff of *Only Connect*, Van Eecke exposes Arthur Danto's self-absorption at the expense of Langer in his introduction to your work of abridgement. If you have any comments about that disparaging intro that you feel comfortable sharing with Christophe, let me know. Otherwise I will simply tell him that I'm in contact with you and see if that generates any interest. I won't breathe a word about your condition or your project. Remember, independently of each other, you and he contacted me because of the Langer material on my site. I would like to think that that might signal an opportunity for "connection."

Tony

Mon, Jun 20, 2011 11:54 AM

Tony,

You are a wonderful and generous man!

I agree with your take on Geoffrey and am at peace with his lack of interest. His prefatory remarks fired me up to respond to you. I don't expect you to pass those remarks to him. It may unduly offend him. You may choose to do as you wish.

Thanks for pointing me to Van Eecke's exposure of "Arthur Danto's self-absorption at the expense of Langer" in his Foreword. I have judged the matter from the beginning in the same way. It feels good to learn that others reacted the same way. The Johns Hopkins Press required me to accept Danto's Foreword. He was a student of Langer's, a professor at Columbia University, and has a well established reputation as an art critic. He added gravitas to an unknown abridger. My feeling is that although he may have been Langer's student that was in the day of her work on aesthetics. She retired before beginning her magnum opus and I feel Danto was out of his depth in making his judgments. Despite his less than glowing evaluation of her *Mind Essay*, he did add credibility to the project and has perked interest and admiration in others that Danto wrote a Foreword to one of my projects. In the balance it was good. I have often copped his phrase that Langer attempted to encompass "the domain bounded by the human body and human culture." A most concise summary.

I plan fully to delve in *Only Connect* ASAP. I searched "Langer" in the PDF file you sent and enjoyed Van Eecke's understanding of her aesthetics. I would enjoy connecting with him. Even though you need not mention my project (and it may be best not to mention my health status), I would enjoy engaging in his expert knowledge of Langer's "virtual forms" and anything else of mutual interest.

I wrote a senior thesis using Langer as part of my B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I advanced the thesis that there are two logical levels of virtual forms: 1) the



human imagination itself is primary virtuality, and 2) art objects are externalized virtual forms that objectify the primary. The professor loved that.

Part of my current project focuses on translating the various virtual forms of the arts (virtual space, time, ethnic domain, creative imagination, etc.) as neural patterns of activation of primary virtuality. The mind projects these virtual dimensions of space, time, etc., whether or not we realized our doing it. Artists find a way to objectify that subjectivity. As a framework, I use Whitehead's *extensive continuum*, which he also called *extensive continuity*, and argue for seven emergent dimensions of *extensive continuity* in humans. We share some dimensions with all sentient beings and four dimensions with other mammals. Langer's virtual forms are the esthetic dimension of the embodied mind. I don't argue for the rightness of my methodology. I advance how the model is useful in these troubling times.

You have inspired me, and apparently pumped up my energy level. As soon as I sent off my missive on Geoffrey, I turned to working on the final edit of a summary of my project, which you requested from me. Yesterday I worked on it for 8 hours. This week is busy and I may not get back to it until Friday. I hope to finish it this coming weekend.

Thanks for everything.

Gary

Mon, Jun 20, 2011 01:18 PM

Gary, with each go-round, more of your insights seep beneath my cranium's outer defenses [against the hard work of understanding another's POV (:^D)], and this last message of yours continued the pattern. I will send carefully selected excerpts from it to Christophe. *Only Connect* has moved from being an informally assumed obligation (as I find most unsolicited reading material to be) to a source of dialectical pleasure. – Tony

### **Langer and *Only Connect***

Mon, Jul 11, 2011 03:31 PM

Thanks, Gary. If I've facilitated the meeting of two minds similarly disposed toward Langer's thought, then I feel I've been useful. – Tony

### **Your most recent journal entry**

Fri, Jul 22, 2011 12:39 PM

Gary, not to diminish the importance of your detailed periodic reports from a patient perspective, which I'm sure have much to teach medical professionals,\* the paragraphs about your writing and its significance were quite poignant. The harvest may yet be reaped, but not necessarily during the sower's time. And that goes for all of us, not just those facing their mortality more frankly, less evasively, than others. My own small role in bringing the field and its current landlord to a potential harvester is a source of

gratification, and I'm enjoying it. (Intellectual middlemen of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your marginality!) -- Tony

\* Does your doctor even know about them? Might he have some suggestions?

Sat, Jul 23, 2011 08:51 AM

Tony,

I don't understand your question with the asterisk. Doctor know about what?

When I wrote in the journal about my writing, I mentioned Christophe again. All the time I was also thinking of you. You are "one of us" in that you perform an amazing service to so many with great articles and photographs. You are a hub for those who are not institutionalized, for one reason or other (not associated with an institution that demands publish or perish, with journals that restrict what they consider is appropriate thought). I feel more connected to an invisible world of kindred spirits through you and your site. If it weren't for your efforts on my behalf, I would not be writing so much.

Unite, indeed, to lose our marginality!!

I have always wanted to ask you. You find so many obscure articles. I am thinking in particular of the two articles by Langer published in Fortune magazine in 1944 and 1945. They are jewels. Whatever prompted you to go through a magazine like Fortune, not known as a philosopher's forum? If you found them from the 1940s, you must have gone through decades of magazines.

Since I was 20, I knew I may well die before being recognized. Most who influenced me greatest had such a fate: William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Vincent Van Gogh, filmmaker Robert Bresson, Susanne Langer. Some were partially recognized by a few, such as Langer (most for her art theory, not her biological thought). Others, were dead before they received any recognition. Blake was dead for 150 years before he was appreciated. Following one's bliss makes not worldly guarantees. But it is nice to have a small circle of appreciation!

Gary

Sat, Jul 23, 2011 11:52 AM

Gary,

The asterisk refers to my first sentence, which includes these words (and asterisk): "your detailed periodic reports from a patient perspective, which I'm sure have much to teach medical professionals,\*" Your reports are a mine of information, a case study of how one patient monitors his ups and down, how he and his care providers interact, and how the whole person, not just his biology, is involved in treatment. In your case (and I'm sure in many other cases), "patient" is an unfortunate term, for it denotes that *you are what someone else, the agent, "works on."* Outside of medicine the word "patient" is

rarely used in that sense (e.g., “the evidence is patient of, i.e., susceptible to, an alternative explanation”) You are a very active “patient.”

As for my “acquisition” procedure, there is no mystery. I simply mine bibliographies. The [biography by Dryden](#) that I link on my main Langer page has a fine one, and I just went through it item by item. I found the *Fortune* issues on eBay and bought them for ten bucks each. A similar story lies behind that never-anthologized Cassirer article, [“The Myth of the State,”](#) which is different from the posthumously published book with the same title. Once I have the physical article, all that remains is scanning it to .txt, formatting it, and adding a prefatory note.

Thanks for the encouraging and mission-reinforcing words. You specifically “get” my site: kindred *but philosophically diverse, even logically incompatible* spirits haunt my site and have the opportunity to continue to enrich the lives of those who do not rely on classroom hand-outs to figure out what to read. (A logic professor told me yesterday he can’t find any professor of philosophy under 45 who’s even *heard* of Blanshard.)

I’m doing what I love. I’m just waiting for

I look forward to reading your overview whenever it’s ready for another pair of eyes, if you would give me that privilege.

Best,

Tony

Sat, Jul 23, 2011 01:48 PM

Thanks, Tony.

I knew that the asterisked statement at the end referred back to your first sentence, but I didn’t/don’t understand how your questions (Does your doctor even know about them? Might he have some suggestions?) mean in relation to my “patient” perspective might teach medical professionals.

I am quite vocal with my medical professionals of all kinds. They admit the system is “broken.” I told one he and pharma pushing Dacogen and Vidaza as treatments for blood cancers amounts to being snake oil salesmen. He said, “I don’t think we’re that bad.” I said perhaps not, but he did know, didn’t he, that most patients take them without asking or researching anything about them. They take them with the hope the drugs will extend their lives. They do not. He admitted that. So, I said, if not a snake oil salesman, you are a merchant of hope in the name of profit.

I am seldom so brutally frank, but I have learned I can’t “teach” them anything. They are complacent with the broken health care system, which primarily has incentives for profit, not the health and wellbeing of the “patient.” Woe to the patient who does not advocate for him/herself.

Aha! Mystery explained. Donald Dryden became a close friend of Langer’s son, spent quality time with her (including canoeing), and met some of her few close friends. In their dinner conversations, etc., they probably told Donald about the *Fortune* articles.

And yes, I will definitely send you a PDF copy of what I am writing, "Oceans of Repertoire: A New Way to See." I don't know how you will react. I may be one of those logically incompatible with you. We'll see.

As for professors under 45 having never heard of Blanshard, I am not surprised. Our society is wiping out cultural memory at an alarming rate.

Gary

Sat, Jul 23, 2011 04:27 PM

Gary,

I defer to your experience of frustration with medical professionals, but I am still innocent enough to believe that *some* of them are committed to excellence in the training of the next generation of doctors, regardless of what corrupting forces are at work. I didn't mean to convey the impression, if I did, that you and your immediate caregivers are even potentially in an adequate, let alone ideal, teacher-student relationship. Your diary is empirically and existentially rich, however, and I was speculating that there are still a few cultured souls in the medical education community who would treasure such windows into the world of the people they are professionally committed to helping. How the treasure might reach the treasure-hunters is entirely another matter.

I'm not worried about logical incompatibility -- that's never stopped me before, my critics would observe -- but only about my capacity to understand a new way of thinking about things without feeling all at oceans, I mean, sea.

Tony

Sat, Jul 23, 2011 06:39 PM

Not all medical professions are corrupt. Even though most are not, the institutions in which they work, tend to be corrupting. Even many of the particular institutions who work hard to avoid corruption, function in a larger system.

Still, some, such as Mayo Clinic, are not corrupt. They are models of what could be. Their model does not follow that of the others.

I may send you what I am writing before the "seven classes of relatedness" of phenomena are detailed. I may send you the background on them to see if you understand. I will be surprised if you cannot understand. But I have been surprised many times before!

Gary

## **Gary, I plead guilty to . . .**

Sun, Sep 11, 2011 05:27 PM

. . . the offense of silence. The shoe of the reprimand/judgment in your last two posts fits, so I will hobble along in it.

Your apparent ueber-cognizance of every objective-medical and subjective-psychological-spiritual aspect of your situation and their ramifications leaves the sympathetic reader struggling to say something non-banal, non-saccharine, non-clueless. The one struggling is, of course, focusing on *his* "difficulty" instead of your impossible plight . . . which I now find myself doing.

Please know that I read every word of your journal entries slowly, Gary, and only wish I could compose responses worthy of them. I'm not announcing in advance my excuse for not responding more frequently than I have. I'm suggesting I don't think you'll feel any better if I confirm you in your frustration with the world and its imperfect inhabitants, me included. I don't even know any more how to close\* these messages anymore. --  
Tony

\* e.g., "Yours truly" . . . "Best" . . . "Be well" . . . "Stay strong" . . . "Hang in there" . . . See what I mean?

Sun, Sep 11, 2011 07:59 PM

Please do not feel guilt. You speak so eloquently of the dilemma many feel:

Your apparent ueber-cognizance of every objective-medical and subjective-psychological-spiritual aspect of your situation and their ramifications leaves the sympathetic reader struggling to say something non-banal, non-saccharine, non-clueless.

Here is the solution that will satisfy me. You need not address my emotions to reassure me or whatever. You need not speak of the disease. Unless you have a question or want to say something.

From time to time, simply let me know you like <what> <how> I say something. Someone said that thought my analysis of the financial situation we are in is brilliant and will likely play out exactly as I predict. You might say, Gary, I don't think you have the financial situation right at all. I don't seek agreement. I appreciate a note jotted down that implies nothing more than I am still reading you. Don't focus on the personal struggle or suffering (unless you want to say, sorry you were vomiting, but what a great description) Just let me know I am being heard and I am not wasting effort for no one.

I understand the problem with closing. Leave off the salutation (or whatever the closing is called, my brain is working) and simply sign "Tony." Yours truly sounds too formal,

doesn't it? Best is neutral and will work. Be well, stay strong, hang in there strikes me almost as a denial of facts and giving me a pep talk, which I tend to dislike. Or just say something silly or stupid, like "Toodle-doo!"

But do not feel guilt. I am sure you do read the posts closely if you are still reading them. Just check in to let me know and say "toodle-doo."

Namaste!

Gary

Sun, Sep 11, 2011 09:00 PM

Thanks, Gary. You've provided an excellent guide. The *what* and *how* focus is the key.

Those closings were just examples, each inappropriate in its own way. It's just that tagging my name to the last sentence sometimes feels abrupt, but here goes.

Tony

Mon, Sep 12, 2011 10:05 AM

Tony, congratulations! You took the plunge into the abrupt tagging you name to the last sentence without a closing. That proved not so hard right?

I like to use a closing. Sometimes I end with "In appreciation," or whatever feels appropriate. I find at times in email everything seems awkward. The practice of just tagging the name at the end is acceptable in email.

Are you familiar with, "Namaste"? It is universal and always works.

Gary

Mon, Sep 12, 2011 10:09 AM

Yes, I learned it years ago, from you. -- Tony

### **An opening**

Thu, Sep 29, 2011 03:46 PM

Gary, toward the end you wrote that “I have long meditated on this larger metaphysic of weird. In it is the meaning of this lifetime and that meaning strikes even me as weird,” but I wish you would enlarge upon it, now that you’ve finally brought it up in the context of your health. I have often looked for an “insertion point” in your detailed medical reports for some connection to your metaphysics.

I assume you mean *weird* in the sense of *strange*, not *absurd*, but I won’t be surprised if I’ve missed a third sense.

In your view, what ultimate reality is expressing itself (if it is) in all these existents--you, the constituents of your body?

Is there an objective truth that Dr. Kali et al. are trying to approximate? Or are they but methodological operationalists looking for a recipe that will “work” for you for which their medical lingo just provides the trappings of a myth, the myth of mechanism? Do the phenomena they examine open a window into reality or are they part of a grand illusion which will one day be dispelled?

If I elaborate further, I will only reveal my ignorance of your architectonic, so I will hope that you sense my perplexity and will try to address it to *some* extent if and when you feel up to it (physically, of course; I have no doubt you are intellectually). -- Tony

Thu, Sep 29, 2011 07:46 PM

Dear Tony,

Yippee! You took my bait. I wondered how many would. I thought for sure that you would.

I have created a number of “insertion points” throughout my blogging to connect my metaphysics, though I have kept its development intentionally circumscribed. I often speak of Buddhist thought, karma, and the nature of life and death. There are many contemplations on life and death. Between the lines lay a metaphysic. Now I am beginning to edge toward more explicit expansions. Though I doubt that I will become too metaphysical with an audience who reads me primarily for my health news. Interwoven with the news, much is written between the lines.

Many layers of story exist beyond what you call my “detailed medical reports.” Some find me so philosophical they don’t understand me. I think it depends upon what the reader is expecting from a blog on one’s health. I know some read quickly for the hard facts. Some enjoy the meandering storytelling. Some like my intellectual ruminations. Some like my “healthy attitude toward dying.” In that healthy attitude, which I often refer to as calm abiding is a spiritual vision. But you are right. I am furtive about the details of that vision.

By *weird* I mean *strange* at times, as you surmise, especially the medical mystery that I present. At times I do mean *absurd*. At times I mean *ironic*. I often speak of my ironic karma. And I wouldn't be surprised if even I've missed additional senses of it. Whatever meaning of *weird* pops up, run with it. You might be moving toward my metaphysics.

As for your asking me to speak of Dr. Al-Kali and Mayo's reality bubble, I feel constrained. You ask

Is there an objective truth that Dr. Kali et al. are trying to approximate? Or are they but methodological operationalists looking for a recipe that will "work" for you for which their medical lingo just provides the trappings of a myth, the myth of mechanism? Do the phenomena they examine open a window into reality or are they part of a grand illusion which will one day be dispelled?

I don't know his understanding of "objective truth" or what he thinks he is approximating. Of course, they are "methodological operationalists looking for a recipe that will 'work' for me." That's modern medicine. Are they trapped by the myth of mechanism? I doubt it! Clearly they seek to understand physiological "mechanisms" (functions and roles, how a protein turns on or off a gene). No intelligent serious biologist today believes in the reductionist "machine model." They say that biological systems just don't function that way. There is a beauty and mystery in biological mechanisms. They do work in particular ways, by certain algorithmic means. Too bad the reductionist trappings of the word "mechanism" lingers among us. That creates much confusion. And finally, the phenomena they examine open a window into an exquisitely beautiful and elegant reality, and yes, of course, all knowledge is a grand illusion that will one day be dispelled. That is not an either/or question.

Mayo is very much into the spiritual. Their architecture, sculptures, paintings, glasswork create a beautiful art gallery like environment. They say beauty promotes healing. They not only have a chapel in the clinic, they have a lovely meditation room. The institutional culture is one of smiling, going out of one's way to be helpful, and caring. I love them!

Yes, I sense your perplexity of my architectonic and will try to address it in the attachment [*Oceans of Repertoire*]. I started it after you requested a *précis* from me. I am able to work on it off and on as health, energy, cognitive acuity, and medical appointments permit. Weird, this existential condition that seems "meant to be."

Please bear in mind that the attachment constitutes a draft. It is a formatting mess (though the box inserts remain with the originally intended text) and as all drafts go, it has revisions and revisions to go. It will do for starters.

I hope the attachment gives you at least a sense of my architectonic and resolves some of your perplexity!

With warm regard,

Gary

Thu, Sep 29, 2011 10:07 PM

Thanks, Gary. Giving it the attention it deserves will take a day or so. – Tony

**Mind and Life Newsletter - Summer-Fall 2011**



Sat, Oct 01, 2011 08:38 AM

Dear Tony,

You asked many questions about Mayo and my doctor. Underlying those questions is an image of science and intellectual thought we have inherited from the times of Descartes.

I feel it is imperative that we citizens and individuals educate ourselves into the new world/universe we are entering. The Mind and Life Newsletter below [Summer/Fall 2011 issue] gives one great overview how times are changing. Mayo is mentioned to have participated in the 2011 conference. We live in exciting times.

Gary

Sat, Oct 01, 2011 08:48 AM

Dear Gary,

I generally agree, but would like to distinguish between how we ought to view science and the way its practitioners actually do. And so, for example, Dr. Kali is probably not a Langerian, not even a Van Den Heuvelian-Langerian.

I am reading your paper (which I printed out for mobility) with great interest but, alas, with greater skepticism toward some of the things I've think I've taken for granted over the last decade. If I express that skepticism in my reply, I'm confident it will be received in the spirit of exploration and truth-seeking in which I will (however imperfectly) write it.

Peace,

Tony

Sat, Oct 01, 2011 09:15 AM

Dear Tony,

Please do express genuine intellectual and heartfelt response even when skeptical or downright oppositional. I hunger for that spirit of exploration and truth-seeking.

You distinguish between how we ought to view science and the way its practitioners actually do it. That is an important distinction. We live in an age of transformation and there remains the "old science" and the "new science" practices and view. When it comes to individual practitioners, their ways will lie somewhere on the continuum between. Proper discernment gives a sense where an individual practitioner is positioned. Preconceived judgment of one individual is stereotyping.

I don't know what philosophical influences shape Dr. Al-Kali. He need not be a mirror reflection of my ideal. He is a brilliant doctor who is up-to-date in his narrow

specialization of hematology, especially MDS. The complexity of practice requires narrow focus for excellence. My local hematologist runs a cancer clinic, where practitioners treat multiple types of cancers. They are not up-to-date, because it is impossible. Thus, in practice, their judgments are based too often on the benefits of their business model rather than the benefits of the patient.

I like Dr. Al-Kali. I trust him. He has an open heart and mind. He practices in one of the most exceptional institutions in medicine—Mayo. I don't care what philosophy he entertains or whether he entertains any at all. That is not an important criterion in my life. A small minority throughout history have been *philosophes*. That doesn't make the others "less than." We live in a cynical and distrustful age. Do I detect a little of that in you? I don't know.

Gary

Sat, Oct 01, 2011 12:36 PM

Dear Gary,

My reference to Dr. Al-Kali (whose name I had unfortunately misspelled) and his beliefs about his practice was illustrative only. I could have referred to physicians in general, but I thought I'd be concrete. You responded to the general point I was making.

My skepticism toward my own thinking -- "*that* skepticism" --while entertaining the thoughts of others over the years is not born of cynicism or distrust. There are certain presuppositions of practice that we all make (I just made one in order to make that last claim with some confidence) and they "network" in ways that, it now seems to me, we presuppose on an even deeper level. *I don't doubt any of them*. But that they are networked on that level is itself a presupposition, but of human existence, which I at least notionally distinguish from human practice. I am trying to "unearth" that, address it explicitly. As I read you -- which I have not finished doing -- I am aware of my own philosophical "agenda."

Please feel free to comment on this -- I have no doubt given expression to what you might regard as a misunderstanding or two -- but I cannot respond further intermittently, and my response will be to your *summa*.

Peace,

Tony

Sat, Oct 01, 2011 01:56 PM

Dear Tony,

He often refers to himself, as do his staff, as Dr. Kali. I asked him at the first visit which is the correct way (i.e., the traditional way of his family). He said Al-Kali. But in America, such things get dropped. I continue with the Al- out of respect for him and his family.

I'm glad you commented further on your skepticism. I call it suspending judgment. It is not doubt. It is granting the reality of all phenomena, although every phenomenon is not of the same status. You said you don't doubt any of them. You say "they 'network' in ways that . . . we presuppose on an even deeper level." That network is exactly what I refer to in the metaphor "oceans of repertoire." I, too, am trying to "unearth" that.

Gary

Tue, Oct 04, 2011 04:48 PM

Dear Gary,

That was quite a workout. My main difficulty with your almost intolerably compressed (and unfinished) overview of your way of seeing -- a difficulty I now express provisionally and which is subject to revision or retraction on the basis of greater understanding -- is that you left out of the picture the finite mind that synthesizes and generalizes so much on the basis of so little.

I had to grant you several conceits along the way, sort of the way I have to grant that that rodents can talk when I watch a Mickey Mouse cartoon. I happily grant others the same without a second thought -- but not when the soundness of a philosophical hypothesis is at stake.

I don't only mean that you presuppose the findings of science, which rely on what you call the "old" way of seeing. I also mean basic things such as nonsolipsism. You see, Gary, not only am I incorrigibly *not* a solipsist but, more amazingly, I'm incorrigibly certain (a) that *you're* not either and (b) that *you* are certain that *I'm* not! How dare I?!

What kind of world must it be for that confidence to be justified?

I have but a finite mind, and yet I apply abstract, necessary, and universal laws of logic to concrete, contingent particulars. I have no doubt that I use those laws more or less successfully, but what kind of world is it such that I -- you and I and countless others -- can do this reliably?

It won't do to say that the world is intelligibly put together so that we can do these things because, after all, we do. When we philosophize, we have to account for the possibility of doing so, rather than positivistically take it for granted.

The same goes for the reliability of memory and our belief that the future will conform to the past. That's the network of presuppositions we rarely advert to. I believe there is an *Ur*-presupposition that ties them together without which we could not perform any of those mental operations -- could not even say "we" with justification.

Do all the various levels of your myth all hang together? And even if so, is the synthesis *true*? I'm not sure you even posed that question. My experience with philosophers is that each of them asks me to try on their suit to see if it fits. I then either nod or shake my head as put my legs in those pants or arms in those sleeves. That's what it was like for the ten years I entertained Whitehead's hypothesis. I felt the same thing ten hours into Plato's *Timaeus*, and ten minutes into your "Oceans of Repertoire."

You rather casually employ the symbol "empty ground" and "nothing" -- as in, "emerging out of nothing" -- in ways that baffle, all the while citing Mingyur Rinpoche as if I am supposed to know who he is or what authority he bears. Does *he* know how those basic presuppositions network? Does he even think that is a profitable question to ask? His or your claim that it isn't important doesn't mean it isn't. "Not a thing but a background" -- what does that mean? How is emergence out of nothing to be preferred to divine exnihilation, assuming that Mingyur Rinpoche is not a Christian?

In your ladder I saw no rung reserved for the mind at work in the ladder-constructing. I caught much excited, but uncritical, reliance on what science is doing these days and, as much as I admire her penetrating mind and her hawk-eye for telling metaphor, Langer and her bold denial that act entails agency. I must strain to "see" that such a syntactical oddity is really the case -- or could be the case if only we'd meet her hypothesis halfway. She left out the non-neurobiological dimension of the human mind and its search for truth.

And so did you. This is rationalism built on a foundation of chance matter in motion or, in a word, irrationalism.

If dualism is unsustainable, then do you propose a monism? Or a pluralism? How does a finite mind decide except on the basis of taste? (Not my view! But how do *you* avoid those choices?) You *claim* that she transcended materialistic reductionism, but I see no warrant for the claim, that her "vision restores the wonder and dignity of human life." I find it gratuitous, wishful thinking. I fail to see how her vision betters Russell's who wrote, both passionately and inconsistently

That man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."

Whether or not the image of humans as "meaningless corpuscular clumps of matter on a lonely planet at the edge of a distant galaxy" is "stubborn vestige of dualism," I saw nothing in your hopeful, discovery-linked, but ultimately *Timaeus*-like poetry that can overturn it intellectually.

I have recently, and rather suddenly, faced up to something that's been lurking in the proverbial back of my mind for decades, something I only intermittently give way to in my so-called weaker moments: there is a fundamental choice to be made between conceiving reality as revelation, which makes man a second-order, not first-order, interpreter of "the facts," and conceiving reality as human construction. You may believe that the first choice is an illusion. I believe it is the only choice that saves one from irrationalism, and the history of philosophy provides me with all the exhibits I need.

I'll have to leave it there for now and look forward to your criticism and correction. Thanks for the privilege of peering into your creative thinking at such length. I doubt that anything I've written will derail it in your mind, as I am sure that I have not offended you by addressing it so unsentimentally.

Peace,

Tony

Tue, Oct 04, 2011 06:19 PM

Dear Tony,

Today is a low energy day so I will make only a few comments. I suspected you would find the writing "intolerably compressed." You have familiarity with Whitehead, but not Buddhist thought, nor biology. My writing is basically for an audience of one (me). Metaphysically weird karma. My years of bringing together patterns in unlike fields results in nobody seeing any patterns.

Though, I must confess, your response seems to ramble in ways that I find intolerably compressed. You slip in solipsism, how you believe neither of us believe it and your certainty is somehow daring. How is positing that about a fellow human being, with whom you have communicated for some years now such a daring leap of faith?

I am curious what “Mickey Mouse” conceits you have granted me. You want a picture for your finite mind but give me none of that.

I did not leave out of the “picture the finite mind that synthesizes and generalizes so much on the basis of so little. You seem to believe at the basis of mind are rational algorithms that are the building blocks of mind, generalizing, and abstraction. Unfortunately that assumption has been left behind by neuroscience. I trust the facts of neuroscience more than the “facts” of Western philosophical speculation, even if it has built up a body out of 2 thousand years of logic that presumes the law of the excluded middle. Western philosophy has been quite primitive, it seems to me.

It won't do to say that the world is intelligibly put together so that we can do these things because, after all, we do. When we philosophize, we have to account for the possibility of doing so, rather than positivistically take it for granted.

The same goes for the reliability of memory and our belief that the future will conform to the past. That's the network of presuppositions we rarely advert to. I believe there is an *Ur*-presupposition that ties them together without which we could not perform any of those mental operations -- could not even say “we” with justification.

Those are non sequiturs vis-à-vis what I am doing. I take nothing positivistically for granted, even if my language comes out of analytic schools you seem to have a strong distaste for.

That *Ur*-presupposition that ties our world together this the embodied mind. Without the body, philosophy today is the phlogiston of the past.

Do all the various levels of your myth all hang together? And even if so, is the synthesis *true*? I'm not sure you even posed that question.

I am surprised anyone philosophizing today holds a standard of sole rightness or “true.” I addressed the question at length. There is no foundation to any knowledge, even mathematics. Kurt Godel elegantly proved that, in 1933, I believe. Your lack of

knowledge—dare I say aversion—to biology as the foundation of philosophy and of how the mind is embodied, makes my writing most inscrutable to you.

You rather casually employ the symbol "empty ground" and "nothing" -- as in, "emerging out of nothing."

There is a four thousand year old history of Eastern thought about the empty ground and today's quantum field physics sees all phenomena emerging out of emptiness. I assumed at least casual familiarity with those concepts, even you I did not think the reader would have expert knowledge of Buddhism or physics. Mingyur Rinpoche is not a Christian. Rinpoche is a title for an accomplished Buddhist monk. There appears to be a certain provincialism in your devotion to a Christian-based theology. You ask me how emergence out of emptiness differs from "divine exnihilation." You must inform me to the meaning of that. It seems not to be used except deep in the context of Christian theology. And in [www.dictionary.com/](http://www.dictionary.com/) "divine exnihilation" brings up Anthony Flood articles almost exclusively. So I don't know how to answer your question. If it means "something created out of nothing" I prefer the Anglo-Saxon language. If it does, then it does not differ.

Do you reject the Big Bang Theory or do you accept it with the caveat that someone must have lit the bang?

In your ladder I saw no rung reserved for the mind at work in the ladder-constructing. I caught much excited, but uncritical, reliance on what science is doing these days and, as much as I admire her penetrating mind and her hawk-eye for telling metaphor, Langer and her bold denial that act entails agency. I must strain to "see" that such a syntactical oddity is really the case -- or could be the case if only we'd meet her hypothesis halfway. She left out the non-neurobiological dimension of the human mind and its search for truth.

The ladder is a linear metaphor that is not apt, but the kinetic universe emerges out of the Big Bang. Kinesthetics emerges out of kinetics. Sentience emerges out of kinesthetics. Mind emerges out of sentience. All that is quite explicit in the paper.

As for my "uncritical" excitement about what science is doing these days, you are quite mistaken. I venture that you are biased against facts of science in favor of a logic of theology. That is irrational.

And too bad, you emulate Langer without having read her *Mind Essay*. We construct concepts out of our language, especially the questions we ask. It is no syntactical oddity to construct concepts out of verbs—motion, motility, action—than reified nouns. If I take

offense to anything you have written, it is the claim Langer left out “the non-neurobiological dimension of the human mind and its search for truth.” You can’t say that if you understood the first half of her career in aesthetics. And you would feel silly if you said that knowing her masterwork. She embraced the importance of ritual, magic, religion, and art as indispensable dimensions of the human mind that would never be eradicated despite the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s great effort to do so. Modern scientists totally accept the dimension of religion, etc., now.

Your comment on dualism not being sustainable. I don’t get it. Monism is not the only option. Are you familiar with the history of materialistic dualism from the time of Descartes and Newton? Have you studied those areas of philosophy?

And you emulated Russell: “Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.”

If the only firm foundation of truths is unyielding despair, doesn’t that say that phenomena emerges out of emptiness? For what is so empty as despair?

And finally, you say, there is a fundamental choice to be made between conceiving reality as revelation, which makes man a second-order, not first-order, interpreter of “the facts,” and conceiving reality as human construction. You may believe that the first choice is an illusion. I believe it is the only choice that saves one from irrationalism,

My whole paper is conceiving reality as revelation, out of which comes human construction. And yet you find so much irrationalism in my paper.

May we continue as pursuers of truth and not as opposed minds?

Gary

Tue, Oct 04, 2011 06:26 PM

Question: What do you understand Whitehead’s “extensive continuum” to mean? Where did it come from, that “first determination of order” without definable characteristics? How does it differ from the simpler, more accessible, formulation of emptiness?

I consider those crucial questions.

Gary

**A final response**



Wed, Oct 12, 2011 11:06 AM

Dear Gary,

When I first took the bait that elicited “Yipee!” from you, I was looking for your existential insight into your situation in the light of your metaphysics. If I did not make that intention clear, I accept responsibility for the consequences.

What I got from you instead was an answer to an earlier question concerning the outline of your worldview apart from that personal insight (which I nevertheless get snatches of in your reports). “All right,” I said to myself, “I will bracket Gary’s condition and treat this as I would any other paper.” I regret having done that. But I’m glad I “sat” on this reply for over a week so that I would read your latest sobering report before fulfilling my responsibility of reply, which that report simplified.

Lately I find that all of the occupants of my (soon-to-be-quarantined) “gallery of heroes” (Langer, Whitehead, Griffin, Lonergan, etc.) beg questions regarding how their minds relate to the rest of reality (via logical law, laws of nature, and absolute moral norms). They presuppose or take for granted that we can do certain things, after which they’re “off to the races.” And yet (in my opinion) the various “package deals” they offer cannot make sense of that sense-making.

(I did *not* grant you any “Mickey Mouse conceits.” I was just reminding myself how I was using the word “conceit,” as I grant when I watch a Mickey Mouse cartoon that rodents can speak. There’s nothing “Mickey Mouse” about the presuppositions of the laws of logic, natural laws, or moral absolutes.)

Anyway, my response went over like the proverbial lead balloon. You responded with understandable, if not altogether justifiable, expressions of incomprehension and a little aspersion-casting on my grasp of science and philosophy. Having been put on the defensive, you returned the favor.

You then went on to found your critique of me at least in part on the alleged anti-foundationalism of Goedel.

You claimed to have greater confidence in neuroscience, which has ever proceeded on the presupposition of the law of the excluded middle, than in that law. Unfortunately, that law is the precondition of the intelligibility of every one of your claims.

(Without that law, I could say that you disagree with me . . . and that you don't. And you would have no basis for objecting to the latter conclusion except by appealing to that law.)

You say you want to seek truth with me, but your mind's eyes roll at my presupposition at such a naive notion of "a standard of sole rightness or 'true'" that is a precondition of any such joint venture.

Isn't dialectical strife just the cat's meow?

Your charge of Christian "provincialism" is easily reversible, and the antiquity of a tradition is hardly a logical point in its favor. (I think Plato made that point . . . in antiquity.) I neither know nor care whether Genesis 1:1 is older or younger than any scripture of "Eastern thought."

Either the "empty ground" is nothing or it is something. (There's that darned law of the excluded middle again!) Perhaps you believe it is both nothing and something. I can prove anything if I start with that. Nothing comes from nothing. I think your tradition treats it as something, in which case "empty ground" is a misnomer. It would matter not to me that Whitehead, or Hawking, or anyone else encouraged that abuse of language, if he did.

The Christian holds that God requires nothing as a means of creation. I am sorry to learn that your search for "exnihilation" yielded links to my site than to its coiner, Mortimer J. Adler (*How to Think about God*, 1980. It's simply the antonym of "annihilation.") Theistic exnihilation is an arguable *explanans*. Buddhistic exnihilation is not, but I'm not sure whether you feel that any negative charge attaches to that description. I was trying to elicit your understanding of the distinction, not pretending that I didn't know they were different.

You don't know how anyone who has read and understood Langer could fail to see that she adequately explained how biology, a realm of physical events, could account for the non-neurophysiological, e.g., logical deduction. On your presupposition, it simply must and, after all, neuroscientists are working on the problem, and Langer devoted her life to it. Still, I've yet to see even a plausible causal story *from anyone* showing how even omniscience regarding successive brain-states could illuminate the relationship of premises to a conclusion. Since Langer ruled the Christian God out of her court, she just assumed that if she kept thinking hard enough, she could show this. I claim it's logically intrinsically not showable.

Now, have I just made things better? No, I made things worse, with this possible exception: since I've only further confirmed my disqualification from benefitting from any further expenditure of your extremely scarce physical resources, I may have made it easier for you leave things where they are, without prejudice to your views or mine.

Gary, you are facing more proximately what I will face inevitably, in however different a way. My prayers are for your comfort and peace through all your remaining days. I consider it a privilege to have been sought out by you and to have my thoughts honed in friendly "combat" with you over the years. I mean that with the deepest respect. I am sorry if my imperfect expression and ignorance have in any way been a source of unease for you.

Further response from you would, of course, be welcome but is not expected and also the "last word" of this thread of correspondence.

Peace,

Tony

Wed, Oct 12, 2011 03:28 PM

Dear Tony,

Dialectical strife is the cat's meow, as you say! Though don't write me off as too sick or dead to respond in time with a fresh start.

When I responded to your critique, I started out saying I was to acknowledge receipt and address the issues later. Then I proceeded to jump in head first into a response. That was a mistake. My Hgb was in the 6's and I didn't have the mental stamina to provide a disciplined response. I fear I came across attacking you. Please accept my apologies if so.

Today, I am more alert, but I have a friend from NYC arriving in 1/2 hour so now is not the time.

Warmest regards,

Gary

## Fresh Start

Tue, Oct 18, 2011 05:47 PM

Dear Tony,

I have now reread your response to my “Oceans of Repertoire: A New Way of Seeing.” It confirmed what I have been suspecting. When I first read your response and immediately replied, my mental capacity was too debilitated. I did not understand what you were saying! My mind is not what it used to be, but I think I am up to the task to better address my understanding of what you say below. And I hope I address some of your objections, although some of them I cannot, either because I know I don’t understand you (in which case, I say so) or because certain differences result from having our feet planted in different perceptual and conceptual universes. There is no one-to-one correspondence in such cases. We must then simply agree to disagree.

Because of your writing style, it is difficult to cut and paste particular statements in my response and keep your context here. And I don’t want to respond in generalities that do not refer specifically to your thoughts. Therefore, I will insert responses into your text. Please see below.

And because I have now tired myself out, I choose not to re-edit my statements below. Consider them first draft. I think the first draft is sufficiently clear to give us a fresh start. That is to assume you wish to pursue this dialogue.

Warmest regards,

Gary

[Gary’s interspersed comments]

Please clarify “left out the picture the finite mind that synthesizes and generalizes.” I believe you refer to the mystery of the mind, based on so little to go one, takes concrete experience and synthesizes and generalizes it. You are not referring to my mind specifically, which in my initial fog I thought you were! **L**

True, in its incomplete states, my piece has left that picture out, though it is embedded in there. In the paper is the foundation of my explanatory effort, which comes out of the kinetic universe of the Big Bang and the purely kinetic (motion) development of complex forms of mass and energy. The paper explains how the kinesthetic (feeling, sentience) emerges out of a kinetic body mass that reaches a certain level of complexity and intensity. I borrow from Damasio and Langer (I could include Rodolfo Llinás, Varela, and others in a long treatise) the idea of feeling emerging. The correlation of kinesthetic = feeling = sentience is new and foreign to most readers. I leave out of the picture the bridge and in such short space assumed some reader familiarity (always dangerous). I then touch upon the dynamics by which the esthetic (based upon SKL’s *Feeling and Form* “virtual forms”—e.g., virtual space, virtual time, virtual volume, virtual ethnic domain, virtual creative imagination—emerges out of the kinesthetic. I leave out, as Langer and Damasio say, who by his words are “kindred spirits,” that this emerges of virtual images of feeling is the further development of feeling that emerges in

mammals. That development of feeling emerges out of the kinesthetic interaction of social creatures. It is the basis of what Damasio calls “dispositional representations.”

I then suggest that out of the esthetic class of experiential relations emerges the ethic. I leave out any development of that. Its rudimentary forms can be found in other animals, but is fully developed in humans only. It is the beginning of the emergence of human experience. Wittgenstein said, “Esthetics is ethics.” I say that the esthetic class of experiential relations is the inner reflection and the ethic class of relations are one and the same event, not two separate in kind. It is the emergence of what Buddhists call the “Wisdom of the Great Mirror.” They mirror each other, and come out of what are now known as “mirror neurons.” Out of that esthetic/ethic mirroring comes the synesthetic class of experiential relations. The synesthetic relations will explain how the emergent movement toward the fullness of mind synthesizes and generalizes. The synesthetic synthesizes first and foremost what today we call the “self” or “mortal soul.” From there, what SKL called “The Great Shift” in her *Mind Essay*, emerges. The cinematic emerges in the social, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and empathic interactions of the first five emergent levels (the kinetic, kinesthetic, esthetic, ethic, and synesthetic). Ritual, magic, and religion is born. And out of the cinematic class of experiential relation emerged the kinematic (scientific) class of relations. SKL lifted the emergence of Mind as classes of relations and felt forced to coin a word, which she was loather to do: “pressions.” Eastern philosophy has an analogous concept in their idea of “skandhas.” Neuroscience is rediscovering those classes of relations. My “almost too cute” system of naming is simply a way to visualize these multifarious classes of relations. The Venn diagram I included in my paper shows a graphic of those relations.

The whole of these classes of relations comprise a comprehensive and coherent picture of how the finite mind synthesizes and generalizes, which you wish to see. I will never get it fleshed out before I die without interactive dialogues, perhaps not even then. The complete project will create a picture of the physicist’s quantum vacuum, the Buddhist emptiness, Whitehead’s “*potential* for extensive continuity”—motivated by self-driving activities (the types of which vary at each emergent level; they all can be specified as class of relations); all is out of motion; “The universe is a verb,” said F. Buckminster Fuller—where at each emergent level the new level folds back into the one out of which it emerged. The “folding back in” is held together purely through active forces, not material. The matter is literally “star stuff” (I assume you are aware all elements are produced in stars) that gets pulled into the action. Ultimately, the picture is of a universe in which complexity emerges, and where the most complex known creature to emerge, the human, is able to fold back in and understand the universe to discover it is a finite image of the universe. Whether the picture is theist or nontheist (distinct from atheist) depends upon the temperament of the beholder. Where it all comes from and why are deep, unanswerable mysteries. The theist feels the need to have some type of answer. The nontheist does not feel such a need, but finds deep satisfaction in the mystery of that which is. No one will ever answer that mystery to anyone’s (but a few adherents) satisfaction.

I thought you might relate to the Whitehead section. You said little of it, but focused on the Buddhist concept of emptiness, voidness. Whitehead’s “extensive continuum” is the void out of which his atomistic and process universe emerged. A close reading and understanding of the Buddhist and Whiteheadian concepts shows that though their

terms and practices differ greatly, they have converged on the same starting point. Convergence is not at all uncommon, but more the rule.

I have no clue what these “several conceits” might be. It sounds as if you are questioning the soundness of my philosophical hypothesis (for the seven classes of relations are a hypothesis from which postulates and facts are developed) and consider my efforts “Mickey Mouse.” You followed up saying that was not your intention. I have no clue here.

How dare you (we)?? That seems to refer back to your initial want of a picture of the finite mind successfully doing its thing. You seem to be asking, “How do we know what we know?” Following the lead of SKL, I attempt to propose one answer to that great epistemological question.

A world of unfathomable mystery! The more we know the deeper the mystery goes.

I do not share the hypothesis that you (we) “*have* but a finite mind.” Nor do I share the implied hypothesis that you (we) “*are* a finite mind.” You (we) may not have transcended the finiteness of your (my) *experience* to realize oneness with the infinite, but I hold the premise that you/we are infinite in our true nature. My Venn diagram is a visual model of how we may abstract and generalize reliably (few humans actually do it reliably!).

Western moral philosophy puts forward your hypothesis that it won’t do to say that about the world. Nor is the sole alternative to positivistically (in the philosophical Positivist sense) take it for granted (nor take it for granted in the ordinary meaning of that word). As do the mathematicians, they judge by elegance and beauty. They give no further explanation. The elegance and beauty of the intelligent world can be understood if not the *raison d’être*. If that does not satisfy one, as it does most deep thinkers of the world, including me, then one must posit some theism. The nature of *Mystery* is that not all of it fits the grammatical scheme of explanation; if so, then some other schema is required for understanding. SKL spent her career on that problem and solved it quite to my satisfaction. There are limits to the feeling mode of the philosophy of generalizing and system-making (it is ultimately finite). A complement to that feeling mode is the presentational mode, which all artists and religious persons adhere to. Neither the generalizing mode alone nor the aesthetic mode alone satisfy with a complete picture. My model attempts to show there is an analogue to quantum complementarity of the level where we live. Being one with the elegance and beauty of whole satisfies me without further explanation.

I agree. And I have the audacity to propose my kinetic-kinesthetic-esthetic-ethic-synesthetic-cinematic-kinematic picture reveals the operational mode of just that Ur-presupposition!

I hope that what I have said here shows that my myth (all hypotheses are myths at the beginning) does hang together. Is it true, you ask? Only through 1) its coherent formulation, 2) eventual mathematization, and 3) empirical demonstration combined will the question of true or false be answered. No giant leaps are ever gained by the insistence of knowing truth value upfront. It takes the above triumvirate of experience to know truth value.

I still have no clue what “divine exnihilation” means, though it seems to be a word coined by a Christian theologian you prefer—I may be wrong. So I cannot speak to your question there. I did not suppose you know Mingyur Rinpoche or what his authority he bears. I did suppose you have a cursory awareness of Buddhism, which has had decades of influence in American philosophical thought going back to Thomas Merton and D.T. Suzuki dialoguing. Since then, its influence is vast in many quarters, including neuroscience (I mention a link to the Mind & Life Institute in the paper; a cursory glance at the site would have informed you there might be some credible ground of authority). And Rinpoche is a Buddhist title that bestows authority. The concept of emptiness is not Mingyur Rinpoche’s. It goes back to ancient Indian philosophy (more sophisticated in its logic than Western!) and has been a part of Buddhist since the Buddha himself. Buddhism does address “how those basic presuppositions network.” They call it “dependent origination” or “dependent emerging” out of voidness or emptiness. I didn’t leave any of that to supposing you know about it. I talk directly about them in the paper. And I parallel it to Whitehead, which you appear to claim some understanding. I did suppose that could be your springboard into the content of the paper. That don’t address your need for a moral philosophy, as I mentioned above.

In such a short paper, I have no control over what a particular reader might bring or not bring to the table. I was throwing out an initial and incomplete offering, a starting point for possible dialogue, without any possible hope for a reader’s complete and coherent understanding at the outset.

In your ladder I saw no rung reserved for the mind at work in the ladder-constructing. I caught much excited, but uncritical, reliance on what science is doing these days and, as much as I admire her penetrating mind and her hawk-eye for telling metaphor, Langer and her bold denial that act entails agency. I must strain to “see” that such a syntactical oddity is really the case -- or could be the case if only we’d meet her hypothesis halfway. She left out the non-neurobiological dimension of the human mind and its search for truth.

First, the ladder image does not work. The image of emerging soap bubbles within soap bubbles is closer. Second, the whole is Mind at work. Mind is not a part of the whole.

So you must strain to “see” the interface of science and SKLs unsurpassed criticism of it. For the life of me, I don’t know how you say I had uncritical reliance on science. The majority of the paper is an explicit and severe criticism of both the “old” and the “new” sciences. I *do* accept the data or *facts* of science, some provisionally and some with more confidence. I think such *facts* are more reliable than starting with metaphysical conjecture. We all need *some* starting point.

I am sorry that you see SKL’s argument as a “syntactical oddity.” Perhaps reading Part III of her *Essay* might help you see, given a willingness. I directly addressed your objection by discussing at some length what her concept of “pression” means and how it is a philosophical statement of the neurobiological statement that “Nothing in neurobiology makes sense except in the light of behavior.” To SKL, that behavior is a subset of acts, a natural (empirical) event of typical form. More than a syntactical oddity it is a summation of a century of biology.

Using her new way of seeing and speaking, all natural events, including the emergence of mind and the entire domain of human culture can be coherently talked about without that lingering feeling that some “invisible hand” must be at work. It is an explanation that precludes the need of hidden agents. Once the new way of seeing and talking are understood, we are back to the question of temperament of the beholder. If you want a Creator, you will suppose one. If my temperament is satisfied that the whole is emergent, elegant, and beautiful, I will forgo the further ultimately unanswerable question of the existence of a Creator. There may or may not be. I do not speak to that question. Some find no satisfaction without a Creator. To each his temperament! There shall always be that impasse. Always.

And you saying that SKL “left out the non-neurobiological dimension of the human mind and its search for truth” convinces me that you never read her Mind Essay. Because in a very short paper, I focus on the neurological dimension of biology, for brain and the nervous system are neurological and are intimate with Mind, does not mean that SKL or I have failed to address those dimensions you allude to. Given that, I cannot address your objections further.

And so did I, you say. I hope the statements immediately above at least provide an opening of disabusing you of what SKL and I supposedly have done (or not done). You will have to define your terms “rationalism” and especially, “irrationalism” for me to be certain I know the intention of your meaning. In my system “irrationalism” is a *non sequitur*. There is beautiful order in the whole with self-similar order in the parts. Are you familiar with fractal geometry? Check out some examples of it, if not. It will give you an image of order that is neither rational nor irrational.

[If dualism is unsustainable, then do you propose a monism? Or a pluralism? ]

No, a radically new concept: complementarity in the precise image of quantum complementarity. I will assume you are at least aware of that, given the philosophical conjecture it has generated. The structure of the universe, and thus of the Mind, is both a particle and a wave from current 3D views modern world values. I say that in a century that sole reliance of 3D perception will be overcome and the conundrum won't seem so deep, paradoxical and unsolvable. I addressed that briefly in the paper. I have another paper giving critical deconstruction how 3D space perception developed in the Western world. In the paper you read, I briefly address it quoting Whitehead's criticism of Newton, which was brilliant!

Whether or not the image of humans as “meaningless corpuscular clumps of matter on a lonely planet at the edge of a distant galaxy” is “stubborn vestige of dualism,” I saw nothing in your hopeful, discovery-linked, but ultimately *Timaeus*-like poetry that can overturn it intellectually.

You see no warrant for SKL or my praises of her. May I suggest a thorough reading of her before you judge?? Granted, my paper is not unlike *Timaeus*-like poetry. Look where Plato, then Aristotle took us, or rather the Western tradition took it for 2,000 years. Give this new vision, which is biology-based, a mere one hundred years in comparison. I think you are ultimately being unfair. You will not grant what appears to be nontheistic premises and will find fault with anything I (and SKL and science for that matter) propose. One must have a willingness to enter in meaningful dialogue. And



parties to the dialogue must be willing to come up to speed a little in the content of discussion. Neuroscience is not going to be wished away through denial and speculation. Nor is quantum physics. If the facts of neuroscience were not true, there would be no molecular biology or genetics and the pragmatic discoveries that result. If quantum physics were not true, we would have no high tech gadgets like our computers we use or smartphones.

I do not subscribe to your either/or proposition. From my complementarity on the level where we live, I believe that when Mind is a wave revelation is first order. When Mind is a particle, man is the first-order interpreter of facts. Martin Buber said that humans are twofold because of their twofold attitude (I/Thou, I/It). The Greeks spoke of Kairos (another time where special things happen) and Kronos (the time of sequence).

Everyone is familiar with two psychological senses of time. One is the feeling and perception that time is sequential. Objects and boundaries are foregrounded. My body is one object among objects. The other feeling and perception of time occurs when one's attention is immersed into something or some activity one enjoys. Perception of the external world seems to slip away and we experience a sense of eternal time or time is forgotten altogether. Today, many speak of being in the flow. There are philosophical implications in that basic complementarity. I see no reason to ignore them.

Therefore, from one perspective, we are either in Kairos (I and Thou, psychological flow, revelation) or we are not. A logic of either/or ensues. With another perspective, we can watch ourselves slip back and forth in the two times, between revelation and interpretation. A logic of both/and ensues. We may through intuition alone and not through conceptual thinking, perceive the two times as forms of perception that give us the image of the universe itself. A logic of time neither is/nor is not ensues. That last logic takes years to master. These logics have been developed over 4 thousand years of Indian philosophy. Each applies to a certain class of relations and not to others. If we want to think clearly we must discriminate among various classes of relations, which SKL has assisted greatly in doing so in a Western sense.

I am now tired. I started this fresh answer some time again and had to let it sit until the time and energy returned my attention to it. I hope that this response is more fair to you (despite the questions I have raised about your thinking and knowledge domains—please disabuse me if I am mistaken) and is more coherent and to the points you make. Forgive me if you find offense in anything I say. To quote Anthony Flood, “Dialectics is the cat's meow!”

Oceans of Repertoire (Will he ever stop?)

Wed, Oct 19, 2011 11:33 AM

Hello again!

Attached is a re-edited section of a paper I wrote in 1994. Written strictly in the generalizing mode rather than mixing the generalizing and mythic modes to produce *Timeus*-like poetry, I send it today to further your understanding (hopefully).

I think comparing it to the paper, “Oceans of Repertoire: A New Way of Seeing” and my comments in yesterday's email (SUBJECT: Fresh Start), will clarify some important concepts (hopefully).

Perhaps I am piling on more work than you care to receive. You may always tell me “stop” or “slow down.” As you know, I have a sense of urgency and a long abiding love for my project. I find myself turning furiously to it while I have cognitive clarity and the time. I have said more than once that if my project is to proceed I need interactive feedback from others. You lucky two bright fellows are on my list! Without feedback, my writing shall remain inaccessible for decades. I would like to live to see it take on a life of its own!

Peace, appreciation, and cheerio!

Gary

Wed, Oct 19, 2011 11:38 AM

Gary, I apologize for my delay in responding, for silence is not golden but rather an oxidant in these circumstances.

I have your recent messages, and as soon as my other commitments allow, which I expect to be later this week, I will give them my full attention. -- Peace, Tony

Wed, Oct 19, 2011 11:53 AM

Cool! And thanks.

In appreciation,

Gary

Wed, Oct 19, 2011 12:59 PM

. . . and please don't stop.

### **Bertrand Russell -- further comment**

I will add now that SKL and I challenge head-on the need for a philosophy of despair (Russell above: “all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built”). Russell lived in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when many scientific advances about the nature of the universe and evolution were developing quickly. Philosophy was broadsided and overwhelmed by science, especially by Einstein's Relativity Theory and Quantum Physics. I reject the assumption that that moment in history represents the crown of creation with no further place to go, where we are forever stuck dealing with managing “unyielding despair” upon which “soul's habitation [may] henceforth be safely built.” Russell was undeniably a giant among thinkers, but he got some things wrong. SKL discusses Russell's answer to despair—the existence of two “logical languages,” for which he, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, and others argued. She points out the fallacy in their analogy that the existence of mind and feeling relative to physical reality parallel different logical languages in mathematics. I can refer you to the passages, if you like. Instead, of giving you that argument, I give you SKL's challenge to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century “despair”:

It is the concept of feeling--the modulus of psychological conception--that I propose to reconstruct. . . .

Feeling stands, in fact, in the midst of that vast biological field which lies between the lowliest organic activities and the rise of mind. ***It is not an adjunct to natural events, but a turning point in them*** [emphasis mine]. There must have been several such turning points in the evolution of our world: the rise of life on earth, perhaps the beginning of irreversible speciation, the first true animal form, the first shadows of a “psychical phase” in some very active animal, and the first genuinely symbolic utterances, speech, which marked the advent of man. It is with the dawn of feeling that the domain of biology yields the less extensive, but still inestimably great domain of psychology.

That is why I make feeling the starting-point of a philosophy of mind. The study of feeling—its sources, its forms, its complexities—leads one down into biological structure and process until its estimation becomes (for the time) impossible, and upward to the purely human sphere known as “culture.” ***It is still what we feel, and everything that can be felt, that is important*** [emphasis mine]. The same concept that raises problems of natural science takes one just as surely into humanistic ones; the differences between them are obvious, but not problematical. . . . An adequate concept of “psychical” should serve all psychological purposes.

The basic need is for powerful and freely negotiable concepts in terms of which to handle the central subject matter, which is human mentality--properly, and not foolishly, called “mind.” But such concepts are still missing, or at least unrecognized; and as long as they are missing there will always be some primitive, scientifically useless entity--soul, entelechy, metaphysical Subject or vital essence--ready to slide into the vacant place to work havoc with the incipient science. This ever-present danger creates a constant desire on the part of psychologists to fill that empty place somehow with borrowed concepts, or at worst to shut it off with a verbal screen such as the “physicalist” vocabulary of behaviorism. Meanwhile, however, our understanding of mental phenomena does not progress except by inches. We have reached a point at which a sounder substructure is required, and the philosophical work of construing the facts in logically negotiable, intellectually fertile ways is imperative.

With such purpose, SKL spent 25 years combing the scientific literatures from physiology to anthropology and wrote 1200 pages arguing those facts to refreshing new conclusions. A 1964 review of Volume I in the journal, *Science*, said no one analyzed the wide range of literatures so thoroughly.

Even today, it remains rather heretical to philosophers to use human psychology, physiology, and biological and evolutionary development as sources for a philosophy of mind. The aversion to approaching an “embodied mind” remains strong among most philosophers. Witness Robert E. Innis’s, *Susanne Langer in Focus*. He does a great job of her early career but gives short shrift to her biological conclusions. When I tried to engage him on his use of SKL’s “act concept,” starting with a specific quote in his book, he would not engage. A true lover of knowledge would leap at the opportunity, I would think. But he is a professional philosopher first and foremost. He at least ventured in the direction, while most philosophers reject the value of science altogether. Evan Thompson is an exception, as well as others, who start with the inescapable fact we are dealing with an embodied mind, as did SKL. That “finiteness” of mind is a concern of yours. Why not see how psychology, physiology, and biological development might inform those concerns?

SKL’s refreshing approach to philosophy of mind eventually did thoroughly address your concerns:

How does a finite mind decide except on the basis of taste? (Not my view! But how do you avoid those choices?) You claim that she transcended materialistic reductionism, but I see no warrant for the claim, that her “vision restores the wonder and dignity of human life.” I find it gratuitous, wishful thinking. I fail to see how her vision betters Russell’s.

I can only point down the road to where your concerns are properly addressed. Her vision does restore the wonder and dignity of human life. It endorses the inescapable fact that ritual, magic, religion, and art are integral and inherent parts of being human and science will never eradicate them. She explains how mind is not matter, per se, although it is embedded in material substrates. Several quarters of science are now acknowledging those facts, independent of any SKL influence.

Gary

Sun, Oct 23, 2011 08:22 PM

It’s been an unusually busy week, Gary. Will bear down on your thoughts this week. – Tony

Mon, Oct 24, 2011 06:32 AM

I appreciate your willingness to read my stuff. I have been throwing a lot your way. I recognize you have greater priorities. Thanks for your interest!

Gary

Tue, Oct 25, 2011 03:49 PM

And I’ve read every word of it, Gary, but my head’s a pressure cooker right now, and every time I sit down even to *think* about how I want to recast my thoughts for you, I get side-tracked by the urgent which, as Covey reminds us, is not always the important.

I didn't mean to "pick on" Langer as I may have appeared to. She just provides a convenient illustration of the problem I'm trying to pose, convenient because of our common interest in her writings. (And as ignorant as I may still be of all her words, perhaps even her most important ones, it's still true that I have typed more of them than anyone else on my block.) I could, however, have "picked on" anyone else in my "gallery." I also could have picked on my erstwhile philosophizing self.

And so I'm less interested in the metaphysics Langer didn't get around to conceiving and formulating than the one she tacitly presupposed as she undertook her life's work. I'm less interested in the fact that her philosophy acknowledged the humanistic importance of various symbol systems, including religion, than in her own "ultimate commitment" to the capacity of her mind to arrive at an adequate philosophy to begin with. But to expand on this assumption of the powers of the autonomous human mind will cost me more words than I can lay out at the moment.

Consider the above a down payment until my head clears.

Peace,

Tony

Tue, Oct 25, 2011 06:51 PM

Hi Tony,

Thanks for keeping in touch. I have several readers of one writing or another. All lead busy lives. None can have the sense of urgency that I do. I am content with those facts. Do it as you can. I appreciate your willingness and interest in doing it.

I understand you were chewing on a philosophical problem that is a tough nut to crack. Your restatement below clarifies that problem as you pose it as well as raises more questions in my mind.

There is an impersonal nature to philosophical dialectics. There is often passion and that passion may sound person in the volleying back and forth. I understand, and I believe you do, too, that none of it is a personal attack on each other or on philosophers, such as SKL, we use to illustrate a problem. Yet using a specific thinker to illustrate a specific problem inalienably weds the two as one. The hazards of mind's magical ability to reify.

I will forgo specific comments and questions to what you say below, although it fills me with interest, wanting to know more. I will wait.

Gary

### **Refocusing my intention**

Wed, Oct 26, 2011 07:35 AM

Tony,

Not to have your head explode in a pressure cooker or to attempt to rush you, I write simply to clarify what we are actually doing in our realm of ideas of mind. You wrote below

And so I'm less interested in the metaphysics Langer didn't get around to conceiving and formulating than the one she tacitly presupposed as she undertook her life's work. I'm less interested in the fact that her philosophy acknowledged the humanistic importance of various symbol systems, including religion, than in her own "ultimate commitment" to the capacity of her mind to arrive at an adequate philosophy to begin with.

I love the first sentence! Well stated.

Since Langer simply "provides a convenient illustration," I understand that your stated interest in her "tacitly presupposed" metaphysics she never got around to explicating and "her own 'ultimate commitment' to the capacity of her mind to arrive at an adequate philosophy to begin with" is less *her tacit metaphysics* and *her commitment* and *her capacity of mind* than the human capacity to act with mind.

If so, I will stop straying into defending or explaining her and stick to my primary interest, which is to give an answer, articulated in an accessible way, to the question of that human capacity to act. I use thinkers, monks, theologians, scientists, whomever, and especially Langer to illustrate my explanation. I think we have—I know I have—drifted from my tacit presuppositions and metaphysics in our dialogue.

I am not a Langer clone. I make no pretensions to be mirroring or channeling what she did not complete. I do have ideas I consider coherent, valid, and important. I want to get them articulated in an accessible way.

Best regards,

Gary

Wed, Oct 26, 2011 11:46 AM

Gary,

I will also venture a mere clarification (upon which I cannot now elaborate--although by the time I'm done, it may *feel* like an elaboration!).

I do not regard anyone's *tacit* (pre-theoretically presupposed) metaphysics-epistemology-ethics and *espoused* metaphysics-epistemology-ethics as necessarily identical. (NB: I am not committed to the terminology of "tacit" and "espoused." Those are just place-holders.)

One's *espoused* worldview is the network of (non-negotiable) presuppositions pertaining to what one *claims* to believe about reality, knowledge, and value (which refers to "the human capacity to act with mind").

One's *tacit* worldview is the one one actually operates with (whether shopping at the supermarket, driving a car, undertaking a philosophic-scientific research program, evaluating the fruit that someone else's program bore--or even what you and I are doing right now).

The two are usually in tension, not identical. That is, the espoused is not necessarily the unfolding of the tacit. On the contrary, I will argue.

Griffin has persuaded me that there are “universal, hardcore-commonsense presuppositions of practice” that we can verbally deny but only at the cost of performative self-contradiction.[1] I would go beyond Griffin’s “pragmatic” framework, however, to argue that a *non*-pragmatic “*Ur*”-presupposition (so to speak) relates those “non-negotiable” as a network.

I would go further and argue that it is not autonomously achieved, but rather divinely revealed or given, and that the revealing *Deus* is *not* Griffin’s or Whitehead’s. That is, the “*Ur*”-presupposition is religious in nature.

And on that additional promissory note (*not* exhaustive of my emerging view) I must leave it for now, but not before thanking you for occasioning this exercise in self-clarification.

Tony

[1] E.g., [this essay by Griffin](#), cited for reference only, *not* to bog you down or provoke discussion of it right now. (:^D)

Fri, Oct 28, 2011 10:25 AM

Tony,

I greatly appreciate your clarification of your assumptions and approach to thinking of mind/body issues. It will allow us to approach common terminologies and assumptions in our dialogues. We can get down to the heart of the dialogue, which for me is to discover a way of writing that is accessible to the intelligent and interested layperson as well as scientists and philosophers.

I thought the David Ray Griffin essay on materialism, dualism, and pan-experientialism.[sentence fragment sic] It is an excellent review of the history of and current status of the main schools of thought on mind/body. His concise representation of each school was clear and accurate.

You don’t want my further thoughts right now so I will not begin. I will be working on stating my assumptions and goals in the terms and concepts you present below and found in the Griffin essay.

I think we have a chance to stop spinning wheels with each other and gain some traction that will benefit you and me.

Sincere regards,

Gary

That was his last email to me.