

# PROCESS THOUGHT AT A NEW THRESHOLD

***Date: October 31, 2020***

***Time: 9 am to 12 noon***

***ZOOM Meeting***

## Second Letter from John Cobb

Dear Fellow Members of the Process Movement,

I hope that you have all received and read my [earlier letter](#) about a conference on preparing ourselves to respond to a new openness to process ideas and especially the idea of ecological civilization. I hope that many of you have reserved the time, October 31, 2020, from 9am to 12pm. I am writing now with a few more details about the program, and am attaching a schedule.

The purpose is to get many of us thinking about how to get the attention of a much wider public, and to communicate the most relevant and urgent ideas to it. I speak of urgency because of my judgment that the time that changing policies will help very much is short. I encourage you to listen to [Pope Francis' recent Ted talk](#). I am very grateful that, under the rubric of "integral ecology," he shares our concern for transforming society and our sense of urgency. What is most hopeful is that he already addresses the people of the world.

We are experiencing a mild foretaste of an ever-worsening future unless there are profound changes. The process community has been reflecting about the needed changes longer than any other. We believe that, if we are heard, we can help, and there may be a real chance of being heard. Philip Clayton has co-edited an important new book called [The New Possible](#), a title that would have worked for this conference. Zack Walsh told us in our weekly gathering with friends of the Institute that his colleagues in Silicon Valley are influenced by process-relational thinking and know that we must shift in that direction. But unless we use the new opportunity wisely, the door will slam shut. Hence, the urgency!

The most important part of the conference will be the breakout groups at the

end. We hope they will begin the conversation about what we need to do, and that all of us will continue that conversation and find ways to implement our creative ideas. One realistic topic for discussion is whether the process community should seek to work together or any one project.

Actually, the conversation is already beginning. Andrew Schwartz wrote me that a correspondent made the point that to influence most people in any topic in which they are not specialists, the point must be made in a single step. Speaking for myself, I find that hard. Process thinking believes that everything is connected and that, therefore, all adequate explanations are complex. But Andrew is right that we must learn how to make crucial points simply and well.

For example, a crucial need is to shift from a global economy to local ones. I have been making that point since the eighties, but I have made it as part of complex proposals for reorganizing society. Recently the idea of a local economy has caught on. The leader of this very promising movement is Helena Norbert-Hodge. The way she promotes it, as in the excellent film, "[The Economics of Happiness](#)," leaves many questions unanswered. But in its simple presentation, it is having an influence on the way cities think of their economy. Of course, actual efforts to localize will bring many issues to the foreground, and we may be able to help. But simplifying is required in order to get cities to ask those questions. I must learn new skills, and I do not think I am alone, especially among academics.

We have ten people who have agreed to lead or facilitate discussion after the presentations. In my previous letter I briefly described some possible projects. The purpose of including this was to stimulate imagination, not to gain priority for these proposals. Please begin thinking now. Then come and get a clearer idea of what we are already doing and what the openings seem to be in diverse fields. Be prepared to think boldly, as if life depends on you. Perhaps it does.

-John B. Cobb, Jr.