

The WPM Belief Statement*

1. We revere and celebrate the Universe as the totality of being, past, present and future. It is self-organizing, ever-evolving and inexhaustibly diverse. Its overwhelming power, beauty and fundamental mystery compel the deepest human reverence and wonder.
2. All matter, energy, and life are an interconnected unity of which we are an inseparable part. We rejoice in our existence and seek to participate ever more deeply in this unity through knowledge, celebration, meditation, empathy, love, ethical action and art.
3. We are an integral part of Nature, which we should cherish, revere and preserve in all its magnificent beauty and diversity. We should strive to live in harmony with Nature locally and globally. We acknowledge the inherent value of all life, human and non-human, and strive to treat all living beings with compassion and respect.
4. All humans are equal centers of awareness of the Universe and nature, and all deserve a life of equal dignity and mutual respect. To this end we support and work towards freedom, democracy, justice, and non-discrimination, and a world community based on peace, sustainable ways of life, full respect for human rights and an end to poverty.
5. There is a single kind of substance, energy/matter, which is vibrant and infinitely creative in all its forms. Body and mind are indivisibly united.
6. We see death as the return to nature of our elements, and the end of our existence as individuals. The forms of "afterlife" available to humans are natural ones, in the natural world. Our actions, our ideas and memories of us live on, according to what we do in our lives. Our genes live on in our families, and our elements are endlessly recycled in nature.
7. We honor reality, and keep our minds open to the evidence of the senses and of science's unending quest for deeper understanding. These are our best means of coming to know the Universe, and on them we base our aesthetic and religious feelings about reality.
8. Every individual has direct access through perception, emotion and meditation to ultimate reality, which is the Universe and Nature. There is no need for mediation by priests, gurus or revealed scriptures.
9. We uphold the separation of religion and state, and the universal human right of freedom of religion. We recognize the freedom of all pantheists to express and celebrate their beliefs, as individuals or in groups, in any non-harmful ritual, symbol or vocabulary that is meaningful to them.

* You may print out this statement and distribute it to your friends and other people. Stick it on notice boards, leave it lying around on desks and tables, whatever you like. You may also reproduce it and copy it in any form you like, provided the source is acknowledged: **World Pantheist Movement:**

<http://www.pantheism.net>

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Commentary on the WPM Belief Statement

by Paul Harrison

This commentary is not part of the belief statement but is one interpretation of certain elements of it. In particular, it deals with those words that I feel may be in need of further clarification.

Why “scientific” pantheists?

Scientific pantheism is called scientific not because it claims to be a science, but because it adopts a scientific approach to reality to complement its religious and aesthetic approach:

1. It accepts the results of science, while being fully aware that science is not static, and that facts and theories change.
2. It respects empirical evidence and is based on evidence rather than faith in improbabilities and impossibilities.
3. It is based on investigation of reality rather than on revelation in ancient books.
4. It has a basically materialist paradigm, which is also the basis of science. (But see below for the definition of matter).
5. It respects Occam's razor by not multiplying unnecessary entities. Where two theories have equal predictive power, it would prefer the simpler theory.
6. It remains in principle revisable in the light of new evidence and theory.

However, scientific pantheism is not blindly uncritical of science:

6. You do not have to be a scientist, or even to know anything about science to be a scientific pantheist. All you need is a reverential attitude to nature and the universe.
7. While we rely on science and the senses for a proper understanding of the world around us, we attach great importance to spiritual aspects of life such as emotions, religious, mystical and aesthetic feelings and experiences.
8. Scientific pantheism does not believe that science will necessarily be able to explain everything in the universe. Above all, the fundamental mystery of the sheer existence of matter/energy is likely to remain impenetrable.
9. Scientific pantheism condemns the pursuit of scientific knowledge by unethical means, including cruelty to animals and experiments on humans without fully informed consent.
10. Scientific pantheism does not unthinkingly endorse the products of modern technology – in particular, it wishes to see all technology that damages the environment replaced by non-damaging technology that is sustainable indefinitely.

“Universe”

“Universe” written with a capital U means the totality of existence past, present and future. It includes the universe known to us, but also includes parts of the universe not accessible to us at present, and any parallel universes that may be shown to exist.

“Matter”

The word "matter" here is used in its philosophical sense. Matter is defined to include all physical objects, forces and fields that have been or may in the future be detected by the senses or extensions of the senses, or that may reasonably be deduced as existing by established scientific methods, procedures, and evidence.

Use of the word is not restricted to forms of matter or energy known only at the present time. And implies all the discoveries about matter of quantum mechanics. In other words, matter is not dead, matter is not mechanistic, matter is not made of hard little Newtonian balls. Matter is unpredictable, restless, vibrant, creative, mysterious.

“Matter/energy”

Matter/energy indicates that these two aspects are completely interchangeable. Matter can be seen as frozen energy, energy as liberated matter.

Commentary on the WPM Belief Statement and on the commentary by Paul Harrison

It seems to me that the WPM Belief Statement and Paul Harrison's commentary are in complete agreement with my paper *A Process Interpretation of the Transactional Interpretation of QM* (PTI) <http://home.swipnet.se/bo_herlin/pdf/Process_TI.pdf> However, it appears that the conclusions of this paper makes it possible (and in my view even desirable) to make the following addition, in ones mind, to the second sentence of the sixth paragraph of the belief statement of the WPM ("The forms of 'afterlife' available to humans are natural ones, in the natural world"): "...with its (hypothetical) "active 'past'" (maybe as a part of a potentially conscious unity)."

Bo V. Herlin

Stockholm, November 2008

A comment on the PTI in the light of WPM

On page 14 of my *PTI* there is a quotation from the book "Process and Reality" by A.N. Whitehead: "*It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.*" I agree with this, but I think it is misleading outside its context. The following formulation would correspond more closely to my view:

It is as true to say that the world creates its "active 'past'", as that this "'past'" sustains and stabilizes the creative process of the world.

– The world + its 'past' + its (open) 'future' (or original chaos) = the Universe.

In other words: the world of our senses, rather than its "active past" (or "God" according to Whitehead, as I understand him), is the principal creative agent of the Universe. I think this view is closer to pantheism than to the alleged panentheism of Whitehead.

BVH