God, Evolution and the Power of Love

LaGrange, IL, October 2012
Cosmology was part of theology as long as the cosmos was believed to be God’s creation -- the Divine intrinsically related to the universe.
Theology is not a particular science; rather it is related to the whole (*Cosmos*).

The very name of “God” is a cosmological notion.

There is no cosmos without God and no God without cosmos.
Ingredients for God-Talk

Theology

Cosmology (order)

Philosophy (being)
Axial Consciousness

- 800 – 200 BCE
- Human person as individual arose
- Autonomy, freedom, transcendence
- World religions
- Monk as archetype
The Greek Cosmos
Plato’s Allegory of the Cave

Plato’s Cave

- the Fire
- Roadway where puppet showmen perform
- Prisoners
- Shadows cast on this wall
- ascent to Sunlight
- diffused Sunlight
GOOD FORMS

Participation

Sensible Reality (Matter)
spirit, soul, immortality

- matter
- body
- mortality
Classical Metaphysics

- GOD
- Eros
- Created Reality
- Return
- Emanation
The goal of existence is to raise the lower soul or self to consciousness of its higher identity;

The transcendent self is to enjoy identity with pure intellect and through intellect union with the unknown One.
Journey to Contemplation

- Ascension
  - Introversion
    - Self-Knowledge
      - Eros

(influenced Christian Spirituality)
Flight of the Alone to the Alone

ONE

EROS

SOUL

Multiplicity
platonistic concept of order whereby cosmos seen as:

- perfect
- immutable
- hierarchical
- geocentric
- anthropocentric
The Centrality of the HUMAN PERSON

- Human nature from beginning created perfect (body and soul) – became subject to death due to sin, perseverance in good was destroyed

- Soul is ‘nobler’ or ‘higher’ than the body
In contemplating the world, human contemplated him or herself.

Human is at once spiritual and material, a unity of nature and a multiplicity of individuals.
The ladder of intellect

- God
- Angel
- Heaven
- Human
- Beast
- Plant
- Flame
- Stone
New transcendent relation to nature

Lifting up from earth to heaven.

Lex orandi,
Lex credendi
Lex vivendi
The Rise of Science

- Heliocentrism
- Efficient Causality
- Contingency
- Experience
Heliocentrism
Geocentrism

Heliocentrism
The Decentered Human

From Center to Decentered

The Human Person in the Cosmos
“The Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.”
Descartes’ Dualism

World of Ideas (Mental world)

Cogito ergo sum

World of Matter (physical world)
Reformation

- Radical subjectivity
- Invention of printing press
- Prevalence of sin and death
- Other – worldliness
Newton’s World

- Law
- Order
- World as machine
- God of Gaps

“Keep the Rule and the Rule will keep you.”
Our “God view” came to resemble our worldview. In this century, even much of our practical theology has also become mechanical and atomistic. Walk into many churches and you will hear God described as a being who behaves almost as predictably as Newton's universe. Say you believe in God and you will be saved. Sin against God and you will be condemned. Say you are sorry and you will be forgiven. Obey the law and you will be blessed.

Barbara Taylor Brown
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Science</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>geocentric</td>
<td>heliocentric</td>
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<td>anthropocentric</td>
<td>eccentric human</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creator God</td>
<td>God of gaps</td>
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<td>religious world</td>
<td>Secular world</td>
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A mistake about creation
is a mistake about God

T. Aquinas

EVOLUTION:
COSMOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL
The word *evolution*, to unfold or open out, derives from the Latin *evolvere*, which applied to the “unrolling of a book.”

**Convergence**

**Divergence**

**Emergence**

ex. $\text{H}_2 + \text{O} = \text{H}_2\text{O}$
Evolution is a movement toward more complexified life forms which, at critical points in the evolutionary process, qualitative differences emerge.
Evolution is not merely an explanation of physical life but a whole new weltanschauung that affects every aspect of created life.

*It is only through a deep feeling for the human’s past and the history of the cosmos that one can begin to envision the new humanity for the future.*
The foundation of things is not so much a ground of being sustaining its existence from beneath, as it is a power of attraction toward what lies up ahead.
Evolution: An *Unfinished* Process

Novelty

Creativity

Future
Evolution as Process

Attraction
Convergence
Union
Complexity
Emergence
“Evolution is a general condition to which all theories, systems and hypotheses must submit and which they must satisfy if they are to be thinkable and true.”

Teilhard de Chardin
**Static world**

- Fixed, immobile
- Top down/closed
- Fixed purpose
- Earth ➔ heaven above

**Evolution**

- dynamic/reltn
- open system
- novelty

Earth ➔ heaven/Future
A Shift in Consciousness

Axial Period
- autonomy
- self–transcendence
- freedom
- individual person

800 – 200 BC

Second Axial
- relatedness
- immanence
- ecological
- global community

1900 – 2012 AD
Postmodernity

- World Wars
- Death of God
- End of metanarratives
- New social imaginaries
- Post theism
Is Evolution the new metanarrative?
Can Christian Life be in Evolution?

Christians live in two worlds:

medieval – static, fixed, hierarchical

postmodern/evolutionary world – global, technological, interconnected
“God is always God for a World, and if the conception of the World has changed so radically in our times, there is little wonder that the ancient notions of God do not appear convincing.

To believe that one might retain a traditional idea of God while changing the underlying cosmology implies giving up the traditional notion of God and substituting an abstraction for it, a Deus otiosus.

One cannot go on simple repeating “God creator of the world,” if the word “world” has changed its meaning since that phrase was first uttered—and the word “creator,” as well.”

Raimon Panikkar
Reflection

What are some of the most significant changes for you over the last twenty years as a human person?

Has your life evolved or devolved in view of:
  Faith?
  Religious life?
  Church?