

Daily Meditation 05/06/2023

## Joy and the Cosmos: Brian Swimme's Invitation to Cosmogenesis

Good morning.

This morning we're meditating on joy and the cosmos. And I'm invoking Brian Swimme's book *Cosmogenesis* to bring us along. And I make the point that for me reading his book is reading a love story about the universe and us. See, if it's a love story, then it's a joy story. Because where there's love, there is joy. Joy is a fruit of love and born of love.

And I end with a quote from Julian of Norwich: "We have been loved before the beginning." And this would mean 13.8 billion years, the beginning of the universe.

So many steps have happened in this long history that have been favorable toward us, benign toward us, and have rendered us possible. We can talk about the Earth as our own home; the Milky Way as our neighborhood. The sun, the moon, the oceans--all of it--have made us possible. And not just us humans, but all the amazing creatures we share the planet with. All of which can bring joy to us and beauty, which generates more joy.

I want to share one section of this book, **Cosmogenesis** book, 216 and following, where Brian is quoting his mentor, Thomas Berry, who spent a month carefully rereading Dante's poem--Dante's great poem, *The Divine Comedy*. And although he acknowledges the greatness of the poem and its impact and all the rest, Thomas Berry has a criticism of it. And the criticism is that of a better late 20th century thinker, a student of science looking at the science and the worldview of Dante in the 13th century.

And he says that the simplest criticism is that Dante presents his vision in a geocentric cosmology, because all the stars and planets and even the sun revolve around the earth. Of course, this vision was overturned by Copernicus in 1543, which places the sun at the center of the solar system. And then he says there's a deeper inadequacy, and that has to do with time.

So Dante, of course, got space wrong. He had the planets and the Sun in the wrong positions, and the earth, of course. But, as he says, for the classical civilization throughout the planet, the creation of the universe took place at one time in the past. Everything is fixed. And everyone fits into an order that has existed since the beginning.

Now this is a tremendous vision. Now, he was inaccurate, which is why there was such a rattling and rupture going on when Copernicus suggested otherwise. But you can see that people lived with that for a long time.

Now we know, modern science has discovered that everything in the universe is in movement. Everything is evolving--the stars, the galaxy, the planets! So we don't live, really, in a cosmos anymore. We live in a *Cosmogenesis*, a universe that is becoming. A universe that establishes order in each era and then transcends that order and establishes a new order.

So that's the key word: "cosmogenesis." The cosmos is still being born every day. And my mentor, Pere Chenu, had this very rich concept that he used a lot, which he called "continuous creation." Continuous creation or ongoing creation. I think that very much parallels this word "cosmogenesis."

Things are constantly being born. That is a very different world from that fixed world, that a lot of our fixed institutions and fixed ideas, frankly, we've outgrown. And this why the word "relativity," as in Einstein's work, is so important.

Relativity and relationship. Because nothing is fixed.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.