

Why Cosmology Matters: Spirituality & Personality

Gard Jameson

Cosmology in the larger sense of the word is about our view of reality, all dimensions of reality. In a more specific sense it is about our scientific appreciation of the origin, history, structure, and destiny of the universe as a whole. In looking at these dimensions, cosmology attempts to narrate its story in accord with best facts available to the physicists, astronomers, astro-physicists, chemists, and biologists.

One of my most memorable teachers along the journey was the mythologist/philosopher, Joseph Campbell, advisor to George Lucas while filming Star Wars. Joe always spoke of four essential elements in any cultural myth:

- 1) The spiritual element
- 2) The cosmological element
- 3) The sociological element, and
- 4) The psychological element

The first function of mythology serves is the mystical or **spiritual function** with which religion is involved, of realizing what a wonder the universe is, what a wonder you are, and of experiencing awe before this numinous mystery.

The second function is **cosmological** in nature, the dimension of myth with which science is concerned, showing you what the shape of the universe is, but showing it in such a way that the mystery again comes through. Myth makes a connection between our waking consciousness and the mystery of the universe.

The third function is a **sociological and cultural one**, supporting and validating the social order and of one's place within that order, eg. the Ten Commandments.

The fourth function is **psychological** in nature, fostering the "centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity," in accord with himself, his society and culture, the universe, and "that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things." It helps us pass through and deal with the various stages of life from birth to death.

Myths are our way of making sense of the cosmos, providing a cosmology in the larger sense of the word. They are worthy of consideration. In a certain sense we are all carrying a perspective, a narrative, a myth which helps us to bring order to our experience.

If one examines the contour the great historical moments that have brought us

to this current moment, we can appreciate the unfolding qualities of awareness that blossomed in those moments, and that is now blossoming. We can begin to discern the fabric of our current mythic moment.

Mythology helps you to identify the mysteries of the energies pouring through you. Myths are the clues to unite our understanding of the forces within and around us.

Mythology is an organization of images and narratives that are metaphoric of origins, history, and the aspirations, destiny, of the human spirit in the field of a given culture at a given time. All myths, all religions, communicate primarily in the language of symbol and metaphor. By myth we learn to understand and communicate in the language of metaphor, ie. “Big Bang” in the West, “Big Blossom” in the East.

Myths are intended to answer the Three Big Questions: Where Did I Come From? Why Am I Here? Where Am I Going?

Myth Provides a Grand Frame of Reference, a World View. Listen to Jesus as he discusses these three questions with the aged Greek philosopher:

At Ramah Jesus had the memorable discussion with the aged Greek philosopher who taught that science and philosophy were sufficient to satisfy the needs of human experience. Jesus listened with patience and sympathy to this Greek teacher, allowing the truth of many things he said but pointing out that, when he was through, he had failed in his discussion of human existence to explain “**whence, why, and whither,**” and added: “Where you leave off, we begin. Religion is a revelation to man’s soul dealing with spiritual realities which the mind alone could never discover or fully fathom. Intellectual strivings may **reveal the facts of life**, but the gospel of the kingdom **unfolds the *truths* of being**. You have discussed the material shadows of truth; will you now listen while I tell you about the eternal and spiritual realities which cast these transient time shadows of the material facts of mortal existence?”

There is an innate capacity, it seems, for the mind to form a universe frame of reference in which to view and filter experience. While such frames of reference are partial and incomplete, they are indispensable maps for human functioning. They require both deep humility, vulnerability, and expansive curiosity.

What history suggests is that all such frames of reference serve as scaffolding and must eventually give way before the expansion of enlarging

scientific or cosmic awareness and religious or spiritual awareness, requiring humility.

As finite, time bound creatures our comprehension must always suffer from the fact and consequences of our own finitude, while on the path of discovering larger and more serviceable frames of reference. Humility helps us weather the storm of our own limitations.

“The only wisdom we can hope to acquire Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.” T.S. Elliot

According to neuroscientist, Andrew Newberg, at the University of Pennsylvania, we each and all have a “myth-making brain” that attempts to organize a mythic frame of reference within which the organism is able to function.

“There is evidence that our brain is a myth-making machine.... We develop myths to explain the world. We use them to explain things we can’t really comprehend.

“Myths help us to understand our universe and ourselves. Myths also show us what is most important and what, in terms of the inner life, is most deeply and profoundly true. The power of myth lies beneath its literal interpretations— in the ability of its universal symbols and themes to connect us with the most essential parts of ourselves in ways that logic and reason cannot.

“The brain does the best it can at creating a coherent story about what it is processing. This story helps the brain to respond to the world in effective and adaptive ways. We must always remember that the entire story our brain presents for us about the world is a second-hand rendition of what is actually out there.”
Andrew Newberg, University of Pennsylvania.

When we are fed information that is not informed by “facts” and by “values” our story becomes distorted at best, and disastrous at worst. Imagination, if it is cultivated with pure intention, can sometimes transcend the limitations of a mind not willing to face “facts” and acknowledge “values.” More often than not, when the science of facts is not honored, poor outcomes can be anticipated. More often than not, when the spirituality of values is not honored, again, poor outcomes are the result.

*The Paleolithic Stage
A Primal Mythic Moment*

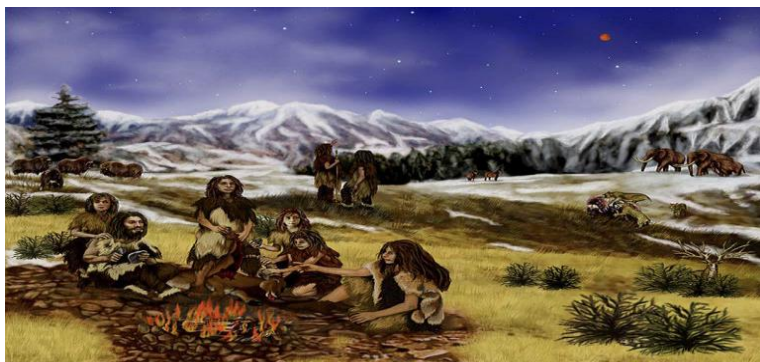
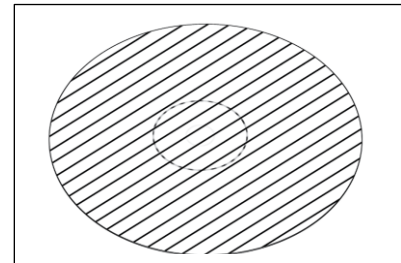
Millions of Years in the Making

In this moment, millions of years in the making, this represents the wisdom of indigenous traditions across the planet, who learned great lessons along the way.

- 1) Spiritual aspect: experiencing the numinous awe before the great mystery of reality: everything carries a sense of the sacred.
- 2) Cosmological aspect: the dimension of myth with which we are given a sense of *whence, why, and whither*, where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going.
- 3) Sociological aspect: validating the given social order, primarily tribal in nature.
- 4) Psychological aspect: the dimension through ritual integrating the individual with the larger whole.

THE PALEOLITHIC STAGE

This circular diagram shows a universe that is regarded as sacred in its entirety. There is little or no sense of individuality, and no differentiation between self and other (dotted inner circle). The seeded and animal powers of the earth dominate human behavior and the collective perspective. We are members of the tribe or federation of tribes



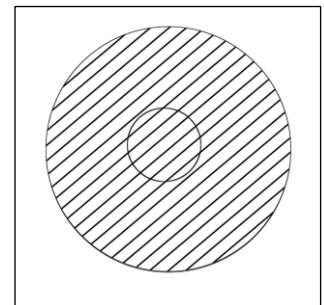
*The Classical World View
A LOGOS Moment - The Axial Age*

The Emergence of the Individual (Not the Person)

- 1) Spiritual aspect: the development of all major world religions, thanks in large part to the work of Machiventa Melchizedek and his missionaries
- 2) Cosmological aspect: the Ptolemaic System of the Earth at the Center of the Universe
- 3) Sociological aspect: emergence partially out of tribes into Empire building.
- 4) Psychological aspect: emergence of the individual ego, beginning appreciation of the value of individuation, or the possibility of spiritual growth.

THE CLASSICAL WORLD VIEW

This circular diagram shows the universe still seen as sacred, filled with gods and goddesses who transmit themselves to humanity through nature and the environment, including weather and human events. What is different is the emergence, still frail, of the individual (thin inner circle). Philosophers and spiritual teachers are beginning to speak their mind, from their individual perspective and personal experience, from poetic bards to prophetic visionaries. Such emergent individualism finds its way into philosophy, art, and technology.



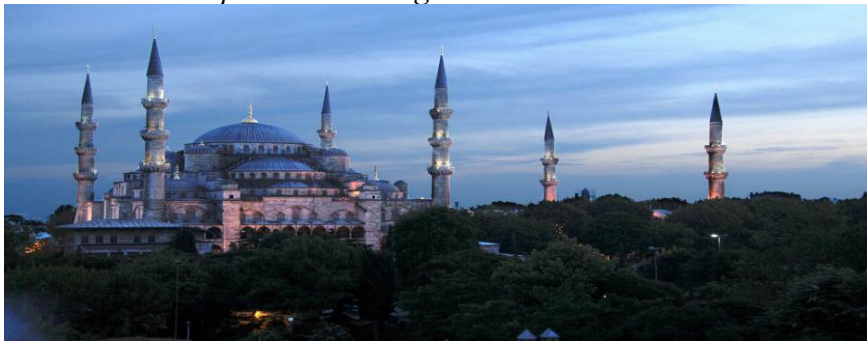
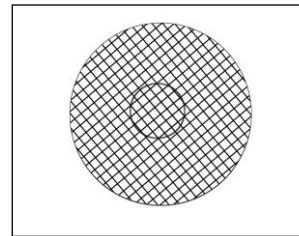
The Medieval World View A Spiritual Moment -

The Ecclesiastical Age

- 1) Spiritual aspect: the dominance of formal religious institutions, East & West,
- 2) Cosmological aspect: Dante's version of Ptolemy with the Earth at the Center of Universe prevails, a three layered universe, with Hell at the Center of the Earth, and Heaven a Celestial Orb surrounding the Earth,
- 3) Sociological aspect: an ecclesial society with its "faith," The ecclesiastical institution and its structures occupy the center of the community.
- 4) Psychological aspect: the emergence of a religious identity, that separates communities into "us" and "them."

THE MEDIEVAL WORLD VIEW

This circular diagram shows the universe, crosshatched, seen as a place of heaven and hell, angels and demons, saints and sinners, good and evil. Heresies are persecuted and dogma is preserved. The Church, the Synagogue, the Temple and the Mosque are the dominant social institutions. A Time of Heretics and Heresies. Inquisitions & Pogroms.



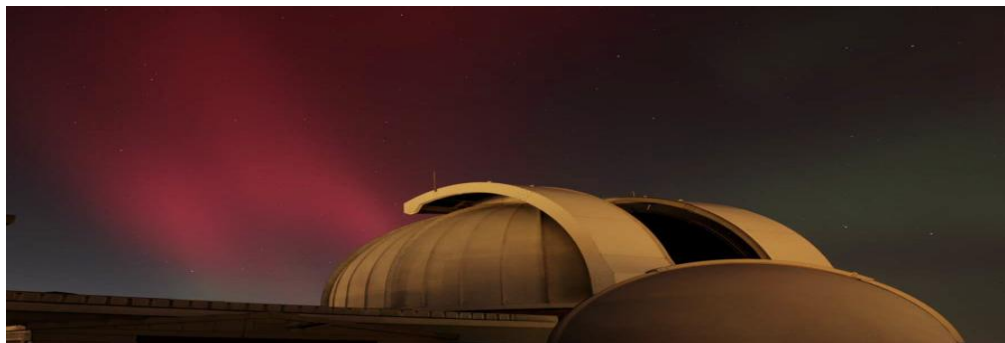
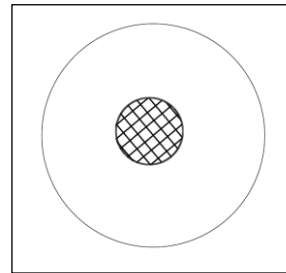
The Modern World View A Scientific Moment -

The Enlightenment

- 1) Spiritual aspect: the distancing of God through disenchantment with the fruits of religion. Emergence of secularism, nihilism, and materialism as formal philosophies, Deism & Agnosticism.
- 2) Cosmological aspect: the Newtonian System, the Principia as the primary appreciation of the Universe, with discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo stripping the Universe of its sacred sense, the numinous being relegated to the individual or to a specific institution,
- 3) Psychological aspect: increasing scientific inquiry and a skeptical attitude. Facts being the new *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

THE MODERN WORLD VIEW

This circular diagram shows a universe stripped of any meaning or soul, a cold and empty space devoid of significance. All meaning, both good and evil, resides in the growing sense of individuality. The great social institution is no longer religion, but science, commerce and politics. The rights of the individual rise above the collective. Democracies begin to replace autocracies; kings, queens and tyrants are deposed. The fragility of systems becomes massively apparent in the 20th and 21st centuries.



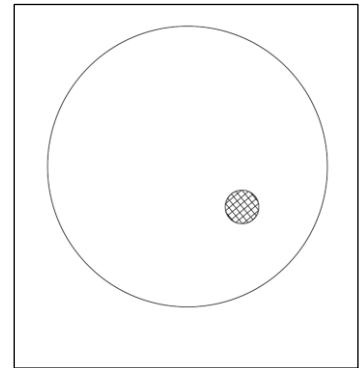
*The Postmodern world view
A Transitional Moment -*

End or Beginning?

- 1) Spiritual aspect: distrust of religious institutions, emergence of fundamentalism incorporating a culture of fear to cement its foundation;
- 2) Cosmological aspect: the Quantum Universe with Deep Uncertainty,
- 3) Sociological aspect: the emergence of the Other, the ethnic Other, the racial Other, the religious Other, the gendered Other with their rights.
- 4) Psychological aspect: a deep sense of alienation and confusion.

THE POSTMODERN WORLD VIEW

This circular diagram shows the individual de-centered within the circle of reality. Reality has been stripped of its sense of the sacred for many; the individual is still the source of meaning. Increasingly there is a sense that facts have been replaced by individual interpretations. Great confusion and alienation abounds. Collective individualism in National Socialism and Communism strips the value of the person. The discovery of the collective unconscious provides one way forward. There is a growing sense that spiritual growth in a material world may carry meaning, and that individuation and soul growth represent an abiding hope.



*The Post - Postmodern World View
The Hope & Possibility of a Future,*

The Discovery of Meaning & Value in the Person

- 1) *Spiritual aspect: mutual respect and support of all spiritual perspectives based upon shared values and the integrity of the Person,*
- 2) *Cosmological aspect: the awareness of a living, organic universe that can be trusted at all levels, the realization that we do live in a universe that supports.*
- 3) *Sociological aspect: the recognition of the interdependence of all living systems, human and non-human.*
- 4) *Psychological aspect: a deep sense of contemplative interbeing, the emergence of cosmic consciousness and the deepening of our spiritual perception of lasting values: truth, beauty, goodness, love, grounded in the integrity and character of the Person.*

THE POST - POSTMODERN WORLD VIEW

This circular diagram shows the individual re-centered and re-connected within a circle of reality. Reality has been re-enchanted with a sense of the Sacred, the Numinous dimensions of every facet of reality. Facts, meanings and values are discovered to be integrated within human consciousness, with the Person. There is growing trust in the cosmos. Individuals realize that a contemplative attitude is essential to a meaningful existence, that Love, Compassion, and Hope form the baseline for a Progressive Civilization.

