

COSMOLOGY

'Cosmology' literally means 'knowledge of the cosmos'. What people usually seem to mean by 'cosmos' is the order inherent in the Universe. The basic premise seems to be that the Universe is a self-maintaining, integrated whole. A whole which operates according to a set of self-consistent laws. Cosmology is the sum total of our understanding of the World. Cosmology is a concern with the basic principles whereby we structure the world we inhabit. As such a society's consensus view of reality is its 'cosmology'.

'Cosmology' is a 'two-edged sword'. In order to maintain our existence as physical beings we have to have a cosmology. In order to survive in this world we have to have a meaningful structure to interpret it. But the tremendous danger of having an all-embracing view of reality is that it can become your own prison - stifling any further growth. There is a growing awareness nowadays of this negative aspect of cosmology. "Isn't it terrible the way we are conditioned by our parents". "Isn't it awful the way society brainwashes children. What right have we to impose our world view on them?" But until a child has established such a world-view it is helpless, we adults have to look after it. The child can only survive on its own when it has established some sort of cosmology - through its own explorations, through its own inherent knowledge and through being taught by others.

The members of Saros are in the process of formulating a world-view, that is, a cosmology. This world view has to have sufficient form to be meaningful without imposing unnecessary restrictions on ourselves. You have to use some sort of framework in order to organize your experience and to communicate with others. But this framework has to be sufficiently flexible to allow growth and development.

Three essential considerations in any discussion of 'cosmology' are energy, form and consciousness. 'Consciousness' must be a basic principle of any meaningful cosmology. The starting point of any description of the Universe must be the affirmation of existence: "I Am". So, if we take 'Consciousness' as our starting point, what is it that 'Consciousness' is conscious of?

A traditional answer is 'Kaos'. The attachment of Consciousness to Kaos engenders Form. A modern way of looking at it is to see Kaos as 'undifferentiated energy'. Consciousness becomes attached to a part of this continuous spectrum of energy. This 'consciousness of' is form. The forms we perceive are the ordering or structuring of energy by consciousness. This arising of form within energy is the origin of a 'cosmos' (*Cosmos* is derived from an ancient Greek word, one of the original meanings of which is 'order'.)

The three principles of Consciousness, Energy and Form can be seen as emanations of the same underlying Unity. Their interrelationship occurs at every level of the Universe. At the level of the physical senses, our particular consciousness attaches itself to part of a spectrum of physical energy. As a result of that attachment form arises which we perceive as the structure of our bodies. We tend to interpret everything we come in contact with in terms of that structure. But we ourselves are not that structure (I think it is significant that one of the original meanings of the Greek word *Kosmos* is 'an ornament').

The way in which Human Consciousness structures the universe it perceives varies from one society to another. Within a single culture there is a considerable change in world view from one period of history to another. In a sense there are as many cosmologies as there

are sentient beings. But it seems there is an archetypal pattern in the way the Human mind tends to perceive reality.

The world we see is one of extreme diversity and complexity. But Man perceives that this multiplicity exists within Unity. Cosmology is to a large extent an attempt by the intellect to describe the relationship between the Multiplicity of the World and the underlying Unity. This description is usually in the form of a creative process. This is a process whereby a Oneness arising in Unity gives rise to a multiplicity.

Any such process must have 4 aspects. Firstly it must be a process of division within the One. This is analogous to cell division in biology. This gives us a universe consisting of many entities but all of the same type. In order to make things more interesting we need a second process - that of 'differentiation'. By this is meant separation into different types of entity. In order for anything much to happen in this universe we need a third process - that of interaction. To maintain the coherence of this developing universe a process of integration is required - that is, a process of structuring.

So we have a universe manifesting through four aspects. Firstly, the process of 'division / multiplication' giving us the principle of 'multiplicity'. Secondly, the process of 'differentiation'. This gives us the principle of 'relativity' - differentiation produces different types, all defined in terms of each other. Thirdly, the process of 'interaction' producing the 'connectivity' of all things. Fourthly, the process of 'integration' related to 'structure'.

The same pattern can be seen in the development of the Human body. There is a division of one initial cell into many cells. These differentiate into distinct tissue types. Interaction between cells produces a developing structure,

The pattern recurs in psychological development. As your awareness grows your world gets more complicated. There is not only a quantitative increase in information but a growing variety of experiences all interacting in constantly shifting patterns of thought. To handle this complexity you need a new level of organization. In order to achieve this organization you need knowledge. This knowledge can come from within or without. An example of organization by external knowledge is that of a successful business corporation. If the developing firm organizes in response to the demands of the market then the market forces represent the knowledge necessary for integration.

An example of organization by internal knowledge is the development of the body. The pattern of organization the cells take up is based on the knowledge embodied in the genes of the first fertilized cell. In the Universe as a whole the knowledge whereby it is organized must exist within the initial oneness. The structure of the universe at every level is an embodiment of that knowledge.

This process whereby the universe unfolds and organizes itself can be seen in terms of two complementary forces. There is that force or urge which affirms Undifferentiated Unity. There is that which affirms separateness from Unity. The maintenance of a stable cosmos depends on the correct balance between the two. If the affirmation of Unity were to predominate there would be no differentiation and no creation. If the denial of Unity were to predominate the Universe would not hold together. The balance of the two is a oneness-within-diversity. The Universe is a multiplicity, but it is a multiplicity that strives to unify itself. This is the essence of a cosmos.

The balance between the two urges is a dynamic one. Their interplay leads to the unfolding of successive levels of organization as spurts of growth and diversification alternate with unification and consolidation. In contemporary cosmology we can see two such hierarchies: an 'ascending' hierarchy and a 'descending' hierarchy. By the 'descending' hierarchy is meant the sequence: Universe, Galaxy, Star-system, Planet. Within this is another hierarchy: elementary particles, atom, molecule, cell, organism. Man appears to be the spearhead of this ascending hierarchy on this particular planet. If we so chose it may be the destiny of Man to move beyond the confines of this planet and carry life out into the Solar-system and beyond.

So far I have presented a picture of a developing Universe which becomes organized by the unfolding of hierarchical levels. These interlock and interpenetrate to form a harmonious ecological whole of which we ourselves are a part.

This is a rather pleasant view of the Universe. But unfortunately there is another side to the coin. All this beautiful, harmonious balance of nature is maintained by incessant conflict. Conflict can be seen as a mechanism whereby more organization is brought into the universe. The desire to escape conflict provides an incentive for those within Creation to seek Unity.

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