

COSMOGONIES as CONTROL-STORIES:**WORLD-ORIGIN STORIES HAVE BOOMERANG TRAJECTORIES**

I tried as a child to carve pieces of soft pine in such shape that, when thrown, they would return to me. Less successfully, I have tried as an adult to shape my sentences so that, when thrown, they would not return to haunt, embarrass, or damage me. (Webster, metaphorical "b.": "an act or utterance that reacts to the damage of its originator.")....Every sub/culture tells its children how "things" came to be, & that how-story (world-origin story, in Greek "cosmogony") functions as a +/- control on all the other soul-&-life-formative stories the particular sub/culture teaches its children. To put this in terms of influence-power, whoever controls the cosmogony controls the children. THAT is what the public-school evolution/creation controversy is about.

1. Two disasters have afflicted religion in America in the public eye in these latter days--the video-packaging of religion in the mode of the commercial tube, ie as entertainment (reaching bathos with Jim's penis and Tammy's mascara), and the pretense that "creationism" is acceptable in the public school because "it's not religion" (a fraud reminiscent of the Maharishi's subterfuge that TM, Transcendental Meditation, is not religious). The latter is a low-cultural-level bastardization of both science & religion, as the former is a low-cultural-level (by un- or ill-trained promoters) presentation of the Christian religion. The good news is that somebody is trying hard to challenge the "evolution" origin-story's monopoly in the public school: the bad news is that the particular challenge is both pseudoscientific & (deceptively) cryptoreligious, lacking intellectual standing in both the scientific & the religious communities, so any legal success it has must be perforce regressive. (Note the etymology of "mono-poly": Evolutionism has, in the PS, exclusive "selling" rights.)

2. All cosmogonies are metaphoric inferences-projections-reflections-extensions from human activities. We procreate, talk, fight, play, pray, mold clay, weave cloth, build, & a few of us (as priests of small religions that oblate flora & fauna) offer sacrifices (an activity analogically extended, in the three Abrahamic religions, to self-offering, esp. in prayer). (Of these, the Bible's cosmology involves two: talking, & molding clay.) All the above are personalistic: the universe is seen as being, & manifesting, the activities of a Personal Source, the Cosmic Model for all human activities/manifestations. (Yes, here we go again with the age-old cosmological argument for the existence of God, an argument that (1) loses plausibility-credibility along with the decline of a particular philosophy in terms of which it's stated, & (2) gains plausibility-credibility along with fresh philosophies it frames itself in.)

3. While all cosmogonies are metaphoric, not all are anthropo-metaphoric: not all picture the world-origin on the model of human activities. The one I'm concerned with here that doesn't is "evolution" (the story) & "evolutionism" (the "scientific" dogma). Alone among the world's impersonal cosmogonies, this one is antipersonalistic: no Personal Consciousness is behind-above-within-beyond the "natural" (antonym of "supernatural," "divine") processes humanity observes & can rightly (?) assume to be continuous with those at the beginning; life on earth began "spontaneously" (antonym of intentionally, by the divine will); the "selection" (though the word is of personal agency) was/is impersonal, by an automatism originally called (but recently modified) "the survival of the fittest." Darwinian evolutionism could not be more specifically atheist & in this regard, antagonistic to the biblical-personalistic cosmogony. It is theoretically possible to present evolution descriptively, without such polemic-antitheistic phrases as "spontaneous generation" and "natural selection." That would be science, in contrast to the present mythology-story-dogma, the secular-humanist religion of evolutionism. ↘

4. A cosmogony is not just something you think, it's something you do: whether we will or no, we live our cosmogonies. I needn't advert to how neat a fit into rampant capitalism is the "survival of the fittest" cosmogony....I'm about to reply to a well-to-do Forest Hills, NY, exec (whom I know only through his letter to me) who, by reading a Seventh Day Adventist publication, became a sabbatarian but who has been thrown into a crisis of lived faith: "I now have a chance to take a new job with a lot more responsibility and salary--but it requires that I work Saturdays. My question to you, Prof. Elliott, is: does the Bible dictate that the Sabbath has to be observed" on Saturday, "or is there some latitude in interpretation?" What would YOU reply? Whatever, you should include praise that he's seriously trying to live the biblical cosmogony in weekly remembrance & celebration. For him, its creation-in-action! Carl Sagan, too, is living his cosmogony (&, honorably, making his living at it); but it is awe without love, a cosmos without warmth, the universe with faceless forces behind & within it, & human beings as their own deities. In short, the cosmology taught in our public schools (using, as I never tire of saying, our tax money). By contrast, consider W.H.Auden (whom Nobel Poet Jos. Brodsky calls "the greatest mind of the 20th century": the tribute of a Russian poet to an English one), so saturated in our iconic Book that his biblical cosmogony shines through much of what he writes (as, I found the once I was with him, through him himself): "You shall love your crooked neighbor / With your crooked heart." This, too, of Brodsky: "Men who lack faith are both blind and inhuman. / God, then, looks down. And men look up. But each / has a peculiar interest of his own."

5. Seems like a contradiction of the above, that we live our cosmogonies, for me now to say that a person may be living one cosmogony while dreaming another. The apparent contradiction disappears with the observation that the latter is a transitional stage from what is being lived to what is being dreamed (precisely as happens erotically: live with one sexual partner while dreaming of another & you'll not long be living with the former whether or not you take up living with the latter). We become, in some mode, what we dream. What gets our inner attention has a way of getting our outer life. Here, as everywhere else, the Bible is ethical: we are responsible for what we dream....In sum, cosmogony is egogony: you are being birthed through how you see "all things" as being birthed.

6. Soul-formation inevitably includes a picture or paradigm of world-formation. Where are we (in reality, in "universe"), whose are we, & who are we? In my soul daily I rehearse good words that feed me soul. Not always rote: I often reshape them, sometimes from poor memory but more often because I want to have a part in the cooking of the inner food ("daily bread"). Often, when having come fully awake in the morning, I find myself to have been playing with some remembered great saying--playing with it, trying (usu. vainly) to give it a more beautiful, a more human, a more soul-fitting shape. Sometimes I turn it into plainer modern speech, sometimes in inclusive language. (Nothing I love Jn. Mortimer's Rumpole ("R. of the Bailey") more for than for that he's forever recalling & mumbling, as appropriate to the occasion, great poetry.) This morning, this (roughly, from Aquinas): "The road that opens before our feet is a challenge to our heart long before it tests the strength of our legs. Our destiny is to run to the edge of the world & beyond, off into the darkness: sure in spite of all our blindness, secure in spite of all our helplessness, joyfully in love in spite of all the pressures on our hearts. In that darkness beyond the world we can begin to know the world & ourselves. We can begin to understand that we were not made to pace out our lives behind prison walls, but to walk into the arms of God." Eschatological cosmogony!