

COSMOS AND CREATION

London talk to Christian Community, October 2012

Like the cosmos, I want to begin with silence

My aim is not to contradict the current scientific narrative (of a Big Bang), but to take a different journey to our origin, ie, to the account of our origin. My background is in myth and symbol, and the first thing I want to make clear, is that mythologies are not quaint stories, nor pseudo-history, but different ways of expressing through words, images and narrative that which is most important: the big questions; who we are, why we are, where we have come from, where we are going.

In this sense, all religions present a story, and so does science. None of them are wrong. But they have different purposes and resonate at different 'levels' of being. They have arisen through the exercise of different faculties, they apprehend what is real/true differently, with observation derived either externally or internally. (In terms of consciousness, can one approach be more 'real' than the other?)

This point was appreciated by some of the fathers of Quantum physics:

Werner Heisenberg: *“Quantum theory provides us with a striking illustration of the fact that we can fully understand a connection, though we can only speak of it in words and images.”*

Wolfgang Pauli: *“I consider the ambition of overcoming opposites, including also a synthesis embracing both rational understanding and the mystical experience of unity, to be the mythos spoken or unspoken of our present day and age.”*

So, I would like to read you a little fable, which touches on a different approach to creation, and pick up a few points to ponder together.....

Reading of **Reflections on the power of Silence** (see article)

Now returning to the narrative of Science:

Before that Big Bang, before Time and Space, what was...?

There were no molecules to disturb, no receptors or ears to vibrate, and so no sound. But then, microseconds after, so the scientific story goes, the beginnings of the growth of sound—quantum fluctuations—pressure waves and oscillations in the thin hot gas of all matter spread out. They are called acoustic waves, potentially at least, though there are still no ears to hear...(except retrospectively: they have been translated into audible frequencies and compiled into a sound-event, all these billions of years later...).

But just as we are now, according to science, heirs to all that matter condensing into galaxies and the proteins of life, *so must we be heirs to the silence of its origin.*

The idea of Silence as an ever-present ‘substance’, parallels the dense fog out of which matter condensed, but always before us is the mystery of what caused the condensing, the lawful process, the ordering into complexity. In my little parable, there are a couple of suggestions: firstly, ‘once I spoke the world into being’.

Here is a common mythological theme, that creation begins with a Word’ It will be familiar to you from **St John’s Gospel**:

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God’

Meister Eckhart:

‘When all things lay in the midst of silence then leapt there down into me from on high, from the royal throne, a secret word. ...It is in the purest part of the soul, in the noblest, in her ground, aye in the very essence of the soul. That is mid-silence, for thereinto no creature ever did get, nor any image, neither has the soul there either activity or understanding...’

And the same mechanism (of meditation) is described in the **Cloud of Unknowing**, beginning with a state of silence, darkness, formlessness:

‘ Take thee but a little word of one syllable...And fasten this word to thine heart, so that it never go thence for thing that befalleth....into that same darkness, and into that same cloud of unknowing.....in this work it shall be cast down and covered with a cloud of forgetting....’

And note Genesis:

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

God *said*, ie sound entered. Prior to that, the Pre-creation is pre-thought, void, without form, unknowing, darkness, silence....all of these.

It is an internal state, one we are heirs to now, not confined to back then. It's a state to which we have to intentionally *return* to know it. Our normal interior space has plenty of form, collected assiduously from the moment of birth, and taking the shape of ideas, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, reactions—all of which are verbalised inside.

This automatic verbalization never stops. Exactly like a primal fog full of pressure waves which condense into this or that conviction or action, the interior personal dialogue chatters the world of our everyday lives into being without cessation. You know what happens when you sit down and try to be silent, or meditate. Some of the frantic pre-occupations might die down if we relax, but there's always more, deeper layers which rise up like small dragons to lead us off into some train of memory or thought which is difficult and frequently impossible to subdue. All are *formations in inner space*. If followed through, thoughts condense into actions in the outer world.

So returning to the 'silence' at the beginning of this process is an encounter, an experience of the creative principle itself....God, however described, and consciously utilising a chosen Word is a mechanism to do it. Some willed mechanism of attention is needed to reveal the silence hidden in the heart of things. In the practice of meditation, the Word holds steady; around it the silence....

Why bother?

'All things lie in silence'.

For each of us personally it might mean new beginnings, new directions, new ideas, and indeed, power. The *power* of silence. The more frenzy, the less power.

In gnostic mysticism the pleroma contains all potential. In Genesis it's the Void.

Emptiness, the no-thing is the starting-point in many spiritual teachings and mythologies, and by implication contains the potential for all emergence. The emphasis is on the taking away, stripping back, Via Negativa, because this is the route to the beginning, and from the beginning, to the Creative.

What is empty is also full.

This kind of paradox is no problem in Scientific myth either, (Is it a particle? Is it a wave? It is both) with the principle of complementarity making it respectable to accept that two opposing appearances can both be true, and depend on how 'You', the Conscious one, see or measure them.

And the pleroma makes its appearance as the underlying field, zero-point field, or quantum vacuum, containing enormous potential energy. Empty, but not empty.

Behind it all, whether scientific or experiential, is the principle that emergence starts from silence/darkness/the unknown. I'm quite consoled that the universe is currently described as about 95% Dark Matter and Dark Energy, leaving a mere 4% for normal matter. What a lot of potential that represents!

And as the outer cosmos, so the inner. From the human genome project came the surprise that 98% of our DNA appears to have no function (as yet defined), so-called 'Junk DNA' ...another huge incursion of the unknown into our attempts at mapping 'what is'.

Speaking for Science, **J A Wheeler:**

" We live on an island surrounded by a sea of ignorance. As our island of knowledge grows, so does the shore of our ignorance."

And ever more inner- into the mysterious depths of the psyche and of consciousness, mystics of all traditions have always proclaimed uncompromisingly, that beyond what we know or can think (forms) is the unknown potential, and it is Vast. Power arises here, real knowledge can be touched upon, the seeds of creation, the beginning of the creative process. any creative process. Named Godhead, the Infinite, the Eternal.....

According to this creative model, because we see consciousness *manifest* in us, therefore, there must be an original, formative basis or foundation in the *Unmanifest*. (This makes a lot more sense to me than a current favoured model which makes consciousness Emergent once a level of complexity is reached, but which leaves all the fundamental questions begging....)

Meister Eckhart:

"Things are all made from nothing: hence their true source is nothing." And:
"The Godhead is as void as though it were not."

Plotinus:

"It is precisely because there is nothing within the One that all things are made from it."

The relevance to you and me is that silence is the heart of the quest to know one's origin, to know God, to know peace, because real, experiential peace 'passeth understanding', and unless you pass understanding, ie. leave it behind and enter the silence, you never experience true peace.

Desert Fathers:

For God is silence, and in silence is he sung by means of that psalmody which is worthy of Him. I am not speaking of the silence of the tongue, for if someone merely keeps his tongue silent, without knowing how to sing in mind and spirit, then he is simply unoccupied and becomes filled with evil thoughts: ... There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is a silence of the soul, there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit.

The Persian poet and mystic Rumi said:

Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation."

The difficult part is cultivating it. It takes effort and will, directing and sustaining attention-- that is our conscious part of the process. But what arises, the creative moment, can be discontinuous with our effort. Here is one of the signatures of a quantum universe—the leap. As an electron can (as it were) jump from one orbit to another without passing through the intervening space, so the most creative moments come as a sudden arising, from no-where. Our minds are so constructed as to expect continuity: to expect a cause to lead to a logical, often pre-visualized result.

It works much of the time, fortunately, but this world view of logical cause and effect has always failed to cope with leaps:- with the miraculous, with Grace, with the so-called super-normal events and experience.

Only myth and mysticism had sustained from time immemorial the recognition of different dimensions of our universe. But then one day the quantum nature of thought itself broke through in certain great minds which were trained and dedicated to science.:

Heisenberg:

'Not only is the universe stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think.'

Bohr:

'Your theory is crazy; but not crazy enough to be true.'

The logic of quantum events is that all objects remain as "superpositions of quantum possibilities until consciousness gives them substantiality by collapsing into an actual experience'. (Goswami). The laws at work conform to a different and discontinuous logic,

with roots in the invisible and unknown. But the crucial factor is the Presence, the observer or conscious being whose will, whose looking, whose attempt to measure calls it forth.

But **Meister Eckhart** got there first:

“The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, ...”

God's eye, we are told, saw the first Light as creation began, and that it was good.... Note that in Genesis, the seeing came *after* the Void, and after the Word or exercise of Will where “God *said* ‘Let there be....’”. So the sequence is that once it was seen and measured, creation unfurled. And Now, the same applies, for if we can reach to the knowledge that ‘my eye and God's eye are one eye’, new creation is possible. But the route for us all, as St John of the Cross made so clear, lies through the void or darkness of the unknown,

‘without other light or guide save that which in my heart was burning’

and

In order to arrive at being everything, Desire to be nothing.

In order to arrive at knowing everything, Desire to know nothing.

In order to arrive at that point where you know nothing, you must go by a way you do not know.

In order to arrive at that point at which you are nothing, you must go through that which you are not.

But note that in these paradoxes, which are dual, there is always the point of the observer, the third element: “...*you* must go through....” The basis of any creative process is a threeness, Trinity.

Action- reaction, but always a third factor involved, hidden, usually not recognised or acknowledged as part of the process. We naturally focus on opposites, duality, yin/yang. But if you want to change some repeating or oscillating situation,--an argument, or a habit, a way of looking, introduce a third force: bring consciousness to it. Then change is possible, and movement.

*“And the spirit of God **moved** on the face of the waters”*

The ‘spirit of God’—the observer, the presence of consciousness to call forth the particle from the wave.—this collapses the wave potential into actuality. The genius, for me, of formulating the Uncertainty principle through Science, and it now being part of the mythos

of our Age, is that it acknowledges the crucial role of a third force in every interaction, and its mysterious potency.

An early traditional recognition of the Uncertainty principle : viz. the Trinity, The Father, the will; the Son who embodies (collapsed into manifestation), and the Holy Spirit, represented sometimes as a dove. It is hovering, here and not here, its potency descending into Mary at the Annunciation, appearing as a flame, inwardly a Comforter, Counsellor, the spirit of truth within.

In the words of Christ:

John 14.25: *But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

The Three are bound up. In Time they can manifest sequentially, in essence they are one. I will give the last word to a scientist:

Heisenberg: *'The first gulp from the glass of natural science will turn you into an atheist, but at the bottom of the glass God is waiting for you.'*
