

Humanity

Look for a moment at the skin on your hands, and ponder how this is the merging place of two worlds. Beyond your skin is the expanding universe of cosmos, stars, our beautiful hurtling planet and all its other inhabitants. As individuals and as a species we are an integral part of this web. Within our skin is another star-dust universe of comparable complexity. Blood, bone and muscle, cells, genes, dna, the amazing balance that at best holds us in life and health, the neuroplasticity that can re-route damaged brain functions, our electrical regulators. And within too are the immeasurable mysteries of Spirit, consciousness, awe, love, language, emotions, imagination, creativity, our facility with symbols and metaphors and so much more. As human beings we hold this astonishing role of knowing the complexity of it all, knowing our connectedness, and having the responsibility of responding to this awareness for our own human well-being, that of all creatures and of our planet.

We here have this privilege of conscious awareness because our physical survival needs are more or less met, so our energy has been freed to reflect, research, learn and grow. As cosmologist Brian Swimme says “We are the Universe becoming conscious of itself.” With our privilege comes responsibility.

Swimme in a ground-breaking set of DVDs names and describes 10 discernible Processes or Powers that have been at play in the Universe since its first moment. And since we are made of the same stuff, these powers flow through us as well. Five examples he names are: Allurement – the power of attraction, how things hold together – from atoms to human love. Emergence – the power of creativity, how the Universe transcends itself - and we share in this. Synergy – the power of working together, mutually enhancing relationships. We know the power of community.

Transformation – the power to change the whole, communion and intimacy. We offer ourselves for transformation to be more in tune with what I and others call God.

Interrelatedness – the power of care, how the Universe responds to the other. And so how we allow compassion to grow within us as we travel the Jesus way. ¹

Together, love, creativity, self-transcendence, cooperation, the power to change, compassion, inter-dependence are among our best human values or powers. We have recognised and named these powers or values, but we didn't actually invent them. They have come to us through the evolution process, because the Universe or the Cosmic Christ-Sophia is at work in and through us too. When we live in harmony with these powers or values, we care for the earth and all it contains. I understand God as this loving all-permeating force-field within which as Tillich said, “We live and move and have our being.”

All this magnificence, and yet – we struggle, we mess up, we cause ourselves and others pain and damage. There are billions of sisters and brothers for whom daily life is simply too hard to have any energy for reflecting. We thought we all had free will and the full power to choose a better path. But it doesn't work out like that.

¹ <https://www.ecopsychology.org/journal/ezone/swimme.html>

The ancients came up with the story of Adam and Eve, to explain why it's all so hard. Later, Augustine had the idea of their "sin" being bequeathed to us all in the form of Original Sin. We've moved on from there. Nonetheless intergenerational problems and tendencies are a reality. Twenty years ago there was a speaker here at St A's who named the problem Original Wound, rather than Original Sin, on the grounds that we have all had imperfect (i.e. human) parents who bequeathed issues to us, and we in turn pass these or others on to our children. And 'wound is a much more compassionate word than sin. As a wise woman taught me, unskilled behaviour, my own and that of others, comes from these wounds of ours. Each generation is responsible for seeing to its own healing as our contribution to world peace. This is where God's offering of hope and healing comes in, the unconditional love the all-embracing compassion. As we open to receiving these gifts, so we are more able to give them to ourselves and offer them to others.

So look again at your skin - and at your neighbour's. Acknowledge the magnificence of together being part of the Universe's evolutionary story. And acknowledge the magnificence, flawed and all as it is, of your unique personal inner life, your existence as a beautiful member of the species Humanity. We are One! All is One! And we must live our lives in harmony with the Oneness, with the web, with the God of our understanding.

A few moments of silence.

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