



Eucalyptus rubida

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This cute koala was recently snapped by Mary White near Cape Otway. Pray we don't lose them.

The New Cosmology/Consciousness

You could fill a large box with books that talk about consciousness. Maybe you would think that most people would agree on what the term stood for, but on reading a lot of the literature on the subject you could easily imagine that writers each had a different window on the subject.

It is not a subject you can talk about as if it was something 'over there' that you are looking at. Rather it is consciousness looking into itself, analogous in a way to the police, say, conducting an enquiry into the misbehaviour of one of its members. This generally brings a chorus of objection. There has been no lack of writers, poets and thinkers to write on the subject. Poets in particular, I think help us to see consciousness in a special way.

Science has generally shied away from the subject, not willing to get entangled in a potentially metaphysical problem. Just maybe science in alliance with religion might be able to come up with something interesting.

Western religion is fascinated by the notion of a theistic god who has an historical and continuing relationship with the world. I have two problems with this. Firstly it is a dualistic way of looking at the state of things, and results in a mainly static form of a god/man/creation cosmology. Secondly, there is a new cosmology arising from an evolutionary perspective that demands our attention. This cosmology has been entering our western consciousness over the best part of a century and a half.

Evolutionary cosmology invites theology to move from the single expression of a theistic and 'separate' deity to one removed from a temporal role and seen as immanent to the universe and 'present' in all times and places.

Examples of this thinking can be seen as far back as Meister Eckhart in his frequent inclusion in his sermons:

I have often said that God is creating the entire universe fully and totally in this present now. Everything God created six thousand years ago - and even previous to that - as he made the world, God creates now all at once.

Meister Eckhart was consistently non-dualist in his thinking and writing, and this quote must be interpreted in this

light. His God language is seen as reconcilable with much of eastern spiritual treatises where God language (as in theistic god) is effectively absent.

So where can the ever-present deity enter into an evolutionary cosmology/consciousness. Well, the only place it can enter into our thinking is in thinking itself, and that is consciousness. As far as any sentient life (maybe any life) is concerned we create and construct the world in our inner selves, our consciousness. We are co-creators of our universes.

This is the sanctuary where the creative principle finds a home. To mix the metaphors of the old and new cosmolo-



gies - God dwells in the innermost depths of the human heart, and awaits our discovery of him there. (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes).

Mystery arises on all sides and is to be found at the core of all the sciences, whether it be the mystery of the quantum dimension or at the root of cellular differentiation in the embryo, and in many other places. In the recent 'debate' between Cardinal Pell and Richard Dawkins, I noted that Dawkins in attempting to describe what preceded the 'big bang' said that whatever it might be he thought it would be *simple and mysterious*. I thought it was the best thing

he said all night.

Mystery was at the core of the mystery religion of Pythagoras, perhaps the first philosopher and apparently a mystic in his own right. In sympathy is Thomas Berry's epigram:

The story of the universe is at once scientific, mythic and mystical.

We now have an excellent grasp of the scientific story of the universe thanks to modern science. We also have a growing appreciation of the mythic dimension thanks to people like Eliade, Campbell, Spretnack and Houston.

We are only now being exposed to the spiritual implications of the new cosmology. The Universe seen in its immediacy can be seen as the primary sacred community. The dualistic view of creator/created depends so much on an historical interpretation of reality.

The non-dual view is difficult to grasp, but we ourselves, along with our sacred incandescence are:

less a being on the earth or in the universe than a dimension of the earth and indeed of the universe as a whole.

Intimacy with our newly discovered sacred world/universe can be inclusive of our intimacy with older sacred world views and cosmologies. The languages might look incompatible, but then any language only hints at reality. I believe that every movement towards sacred presence is authentic in that all movements of the human heart demand our respect. The human heart is the interface of the human and the sacred, and the kind of god-language we use is embedded uniquely in our own experience.

We bear the universe in our beings as the universe bears us in its being. The two have a total presence to each other and to that deeper mystery out of which both the universe and ourselves have emerged.

Trevor Parton

Quotes from *Creative Energy, Sacred Universe* by Thomas Berry