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Inclusive Times

Issue No. 23

Latest Edition:

This edition is quite late because Dr. Pettit lost track of his responsibilities.

He is very sorry!!!

June, 2026

Cosmogenesis and Process Theology

In this issue of the **Inclusive Times**, I will point out the relationship that I understand between cosmogenesis - the inherent drive of the universe towards creation and increasing complexity, a book about which I reviewed in the [last issue](#) of the **Inclusive Times** - and process theology - a perspective that the evolving universe is lured forward by a divine process of advancement. (If you'd like a refresher in process theology, visit [issue no. 18](#).) In this article I would like to describe to you the connection that I see between cosmogenesis and process theology.

First and foremost, an important point of "[cosmogenesis](#)" is that, by definition, cosmogenesis is a part of the very nature of our dynamical universe. It is well accepted that any individual who's alive and breathing was born on a particular date and, at some point in the future, they will exist no more. This fact alone, indicates that our universe is ceaselessly in flux, and affects every entity it encompasses.

Yet, it is the **origin** of this ever-changing state which is controversial. Some attribute the growth and formation of our world to the consequence of a loving, generating God whose demeanor, or role played in the universe, is also controversial. Others understand the drive of cosmogenesis as having its origins in a more methodical or structural way. These people understand the divine drive as a great impersonal 'spirit' or drive of the universe.

While not denying the fact that **all** things in existence feel a drive toward randomness (following the [2nd Law of Thermodynamics](#) which shows that **all** energetic interactions increase the entropy or disorder of the universe), such people may believe that humans live in a unique part of the universe, which as a whole trends toward destruction, death, and randomness.

Personally, I can see some validity in both of these viewpoints. Yet, in alignment with [process theologians](#), I also understand the divine, or God, as functioning as a **lure** or divine Eros, directing, guiding, or goading, all actuality toward novelty: “[t]he Primordial Nature of God is the goad toward novelty in the universe”¹.

I believe that process theologians hold an inherently [panentheistic](#) understanding of the divine -- that the divine intersects every single part of the universe and also extends beyond space and time. To me, and many process theologians, the divine impulse felt by **all** of creation, in a word **cosmogenesis**, is a basic fact of nature's response to the lure of novelty, enhanced complexity and true beauty.

This divine lure is one that promotes greater compassion, justice, and love in more complex life forms like ourselves and, not just in advanced lifeforms, but also in **everything** which exists in the universe! To me, this is how God operates!

But, you might ask, where does this drive come from and what is its origin?

In answer to this question many people for a long time (or as long as our species has existed, seemingly) have attributed creation and the drive against the 2nd law of thermodynamics to a powerful entity, or God, who has created all things.

However, a powerful critique of the notion of the universe being created by a God, or gods which some cultures praise, is that our concepts of God(s) are nothing more than **human projections** of our own abilities.

Even though there have always been a plethora of ways of thinking about or imaging God, looking back on the development of images of the monotheistic God, we can see that such projection has occurred: perhaps the most common image of the God of monotheism is one of a powerful king ([Psalm 10:16](#)) or mighty warrior ([Isaiah 42:13](#)). It is important to remember that God is also understood as a “still small voice”, or the “sound of sheer silence” ([1 Kings 19: 11 - 13](#)). Another image commonly embraced by many Christians these days is the more abstract: “God is Love” ([1 John 4:8](#)).

So, you might ask, which is it: what do you understand to be the animating force of all life, the monotheistic God, or is this continuing cosmogenesis just a simple fact of the universe?

My answer to this query is “**Yes!**”

It seems to me that it isn't important – or even consequential – how one *understands* the origins or advancement of cosmogenesis, life, or even God to occur because **human belief only has consequence as a motivating impulse of action**. Truly, it is only one's **action** that has an effect on anything in the universe!

If you find the traditional monotheistic image of God as the most compelling understanding of the origin of cosmogenesis and life, and if this understanding leads you to try to work toward greater compassion, justice, and love, then I agree with this beautiful and productive understanding.

If, however, you are more comfortable believing that cosmogenesis and the advancement of life is simply a fact of the universe **and** if you feel that your promotion of compassion, justice, and love is good because it is in harmony with universal trends, then it seems that you have come to a productive understanding of how our universe operates.

I am unsure if the distinction between these different ways of thinking matters at all, so long as one feels it best to always try to make an effort to enhance compassion, justice, and love in the world around us all.

It seems that many people who've thought deeply about the origins of our universe and the lure or motivating force of the advancement of life in our universe have come to the conclusion that, at heart or on a deep level, these concepts might just be beyond human comprehensibility! Who are we to say that we're **sure** of the cause of cosmogenesis and the advancement of life?

I believe the important thing is that we continue to ask these crucial questions, struggle to understand these issues, and most importantly always continue to try and work for the advancement of our compassion, justice and love everywhere in our world today!

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**I know it has rained recently in Colorado;
but we need a lot more to compensate for our historically hot and dry winter!**

Work Cited:

¹Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality*. (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1929), 135.



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