

Section 12: Man's Role in Nature

John A. Gowan
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Abstract

Man's role in nature seems to divide naturally in two parts: 1) the dispersal of Earth-Life into the galaxy; 2) the enhancement and development of the self-awareness and creativity of the Cosmos. Humanity is, in the first instance, the practical, scientific tool of Gaia, or Mother Earth, evolved as her reproductive agent; and in the second instance, humanity is the perceptual or intellectual tool of the Cosmos, evolved to carry the intelligence and self-awareness of the Cosmos, the agent by which the Cosmos explores, understands, and appreciates itself, including exploring new modes of creativity. Our native spiritual awareness appears to be our intuitive recognition of this cosmic connection. The first role is Earth-oriented, manifesting socially as Science; the second role is Universe-oriented, manifesting socially as Art and Religion, in all their forms. It should be obvious that the first role is in no way intrinsically at odds with the second.

Introduction

The visionary view of the Earth as a self-interested and self-regulating super-organism, "Gaia", put forward by the English scientist J. E. Lovelock (1979), allows us a new and elevated perspective of man's role in Nature. Humanity is the seed of Gaia, the dispersal agent, the means by which Gaia will reproduce and colonize the galaxy with her life forms. Like any other organism, Gaia has a life cycle, controlled on the planetary level by the Sun and influenced by the presence of the other planets, comets, asteroids, meteorites, and our Moon. During this life cycle, like any other organism, Gaia will seek to reproduce herself when she has achieved maturity. That time has now come for Gaia; Gaia has entered her reproductive phase of life and we are her reproductive agents. This is the reason for the great excitement and anticipation surrounding the appearance of Man in Nature.

Noah's Ark

In this view we are not the masters of the Earth; we are the specialized reproductive cells and servants of a planetary super-organism, evolved for a specific purpose and role. We are the puppets of Gaia's reproductive designs, evolved in our social billions for a single reproductive mission: to create the technological structure which will carry Gaian life to other stellar systems, populate the Galaxy, and so

insure the survival of Gaia despite the bombardment of asteroids and comets, and even despite the eventual death of the Sun and Earth. The story of Noah's ark is not only a legend of the past, but a vision of the future, encompassing the space ships of Earth as they carry the life forms of Gaia across the ocean of space to new planets and stellar systems.

Our large brains, our clever hands, our social ways, our multitudes, all are necessary to the task. Our huge populations are required not only to provide the manpower and gather the resources for the work, but also to produce the very rare geniuses who will discover how it can be done, who will solve the daunting technical problems of interplanetary and interstellar travel. Earth's huge reserves of oil, coal, gas, and nuclear ores are the necessary stores for the great reproductive effort, waiting for the species that understands how to use them to produce rockets and rocket fuel, launching the space program.

Biologically, humanity has one central evolutionary task: to colonize the galaxy. To this end the resources of the Earth should be preserved and husbanded; the Earth should be protected rather than raped, so it can continue to provide the resources to sustain this great reproductive effort. Space travel is the common evolutionary goal of humanity, and our species should awake to this realization and rally to this shared purpose.

We do not want Gaia's reproductive effort to be like that of the salmon, a single burst of seed after which the organism dies; rather it should be like the tree, which produces seeds year after year throughout a long and vigorous life. This is a shared vision which our species can embrace and celebrate in unison, the vision of humanity transforming itself into a space-faring galactic presence and explorer. It can save us and our planet from our destructive internal strife and environmental devastation by lifting our vision to a higher common purpose which involves our planet's health, and requires a universal cooperative effort with benefits for all. This is why science and humanity is important and this is a message which science, not just science fiction, should be sending to young people.

Finally, we are probably not the only species in this galaxy that hopes to achieve planetary colonization and galactic dispersal. As always, time is of the essence. Competition is always with us; even the galaxy is a finite resource. If we wish our species to achieve the distinction of galactic citizen and explorer, we need to set our house in order and with all deliberate speed, answer the call of a new frontier and our evolutionary destiny. See: ["The Information Pathway" \(table\)](#).

Our Cosmic Connection

Biology and living systems represent the information pathway through which the Universe evolves its own capacity to experience itself (see: "["The Information Pathway" \(text\)](#)"). All forms of life represent attempts by the Cosmos to apprehend itself. On earth, this self-inherited cosmic curiosity culminates in humanity - we are the perceptual and intellectual agents of a universe which wants to look at and understand itself, and to explore the limits of its capacity for creativity. Human creativity is a fractal iteration of cosmic creativity; indeed, we have been created in the image and likeness of God. Humanity's role in the cosmic context is therefore to experience life joyfully, understand the universe, appreciate its beauty, respect other forms of life (including each other), and develop our own creativity. Religion in this view is recognized as a form of self-worship, the Cosmos paying homage to itself, humanity (the only animal with religion) finally able to fully cognize our connection to the Universe, expressing awe and wonder at its majesty, size, power, and beauty (See: "["A Rationale for Love in the Universe"](#)"). In this regard, we must recognize that many forms of nature worship are quite appropriate spiritual exercises, and that Art and Science are also forms of religious practice. (See: "["The Human Connection"](#)".)

References

Barbour, Ian G. 2000. *When Science Meets Religion*. HarperSanFrancisco.
[2] Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper and Row, 1959, 318p.
[3] [John Curtis Gowan, *Trance, Art, Creativity*, privately printed, 1975, 448p. + xxvi](#)
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