

Evolutionary Spirituality and the Edgar Cayce Readings

BY LYNN SPARROW CHRISTY



WARNING: This article is not for people who can't wait to be free of this earth plane!

ONE OF THE HOTTEST “new” directions on the contemporary spiritual scene is something called “evolutionary spirituality.” Concerned with far more than the evolution of the individual soul, evolutionary spirituality focuses instead on the evolution of the entire cosmos and our role in that unfolding story. It is a worldview that looks at this vast cosmos, where new stars are continually being born and old ones are dying; at this earth, where life continues to evolve toward ever-greater diversity and complexity; and at human consciousness, which continues to grow to ever more expansive reaches, and sees an underlying unity of purpose. The universe is *going* somewhere, and we are a key part of that journey.

From the standpoint of evolutionary spirituality, we can see the fingerprint of an irrepressible drive to create in both the exterior world of stars, planets, plants, and animals, and the interior world where consciousness itself is evolving on a cosmic scale, influencing every atom of manifest creation as it does so. And that means that we have an important part to play here in this manifest world of form. Our spiritual quest is not to “graduate” from this earth, as if it were a mere school to get through, but to participate as incarnate, awakened souls who can serve as pacers for what may be the greatest evolutionary advance this world has ever known.

The idea of an unfolding or developing manifestation of the divine in the material world has roots that go back to long before Darwinism added “evolution” to the popular lexicon. It’s found as far back

as the 1600s in the writings of the German philosopher Leibniz and continued among German idealist philosophers such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Schelling, in particular, offers us an evolutionary perspective on one of the conundrums that have stumped many a spiritual seeker: if our ultimate purpose and destiny is simply to rest in perfect oneness with God beyond this manifest world of form, why didn’t God set it up this way from the start? In other words, if it is possible to have a free-willed soul that theoretically could re-descend into the world of form and separation but in actuality has overcome any tendency to ever again do so, then why didn’t God spare us the trouble and create us that way from the start? Presaging modern evolutionary spirituality, Schelling wrote, “Has creation a final goal? And if so, why was it not reached at once? Why was the consummation not realized from the beginning? To these questions there is but one answer: Because God is Life, and not merely Being.”

From the perspective of evolutionary spirituality, the expression of life—not only in the biological and cosmological worlds, but also in evolving human culture—is an attribute of the divine creative drive. A purely biological view of evolution leaves out the crucial role of Spirit, just as a purely spiritual view of soul evolution disregards the integral importance of our engagement here on this earth. The Indian sage Aurobindo, in seeing the achievement of nirvana as the beginning of engagement with the evolutionary force of the cosmos, was among the first to articulate what modern evolutionaries hold as axiomatic: evolution occurs synchronously in the outer, physical manifestations of life and the

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inner, consciousness-centered dimensions.

Perhaps the most developed articulation of how cosmological, biological, and spiritual evolution intertwine comes from the works of French priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. As a Jesuit who studied both paleontology and geology, Teilhard grasped the spiritual implications of evolutionary theory for the entire human race and the future of the earth. “The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human—these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others,” he wrote. “They will open only to an advance of all together, in a direction in which all together can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth.”

A spiritual renovation of the earth: how timely that message is! Yet until recently, this evolutionary perspective has been largely ignored by most of the spiritually-minded. In our culture, the religionists with a “ticket to heaven” theology, and the New Agers, with “this world is only an illusion to be outgrown” spirituality, have largely ignored the huge importance of our place in this evolving world of manifest form. Nonetheless, that importance cannot be overstated in a world

that seems to be tripping over its own limited resources in solving the problems that beset humanity. I've heard it said that religion is for those who are afraid to go to hell and spirituality is for people who've been there. Well, *evolutionary spirituality* is for people who've been to both hell and heaven and now know that we have a choice as to which decides the destiny of our world. Or, to put it in the language of that *other* herald of evolutionary spirituality, Edgar Cayce, "The soul of each individual is a portion then of the Whole, *with* the birthright of Creative Forces to become a co-creator with the Father, a co-laborer with Him. As that birthright is then manifested, growth ensues. If it is made selfish, retardments must be the result." (1549-1)

The reference in this reading to the growth of the individual soul is obvious. But notice, too, those terms that we so often see in the readings and so seldom stop to think about in the context of the evolution of the cosmos: *co-creator* and *co-laborer*. Sometimes, in our eagerness to attain access to spiritual dimensions beyond this manifest realm, we forget that creation of this universe seems to have been something God wanted to do. In fact, the first thing we are told about God in most of the spiritual traditions of the world is that God *created* the heavens and the earth. This earth is not a penal colony for wayward souls, but the field of ongoing creation, in which we are invited to participate. *That* is evolutionary spirituality.

In the cosmology of the Cayce readings, materiality was born through spirit pushing itself into matter. Then, "Spirit was individualized, and then became what we recognize in one another as individual entities." From there, the point is for spirit to "use matter" and everything in the earth's environment for the glory of the Creative Forces. (3508-1) Is it possible, then, that this staggeringly vast creation, with its unfathomable mysteries, is about nothing more than our development? At the end of the day, is the idea that the earth plane is here simply as a school for souls just a tad narcissistic?

How much more expansive is the evolutionary perspective, where despite our detours and tendency to separate ourselves from God in consciousness, our primary purpose, our overriding call and destiny, is to be instruments of creation!



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As author and religious studies scholar Christopher Bache puts it: "Only after we had absorbed Darwin and recalculated the age of the Universe, after the vision of static forms of life had been replaced by a vision of fluid processes flexing across vast tracts of time, only then could we dare to guess the immensity of the symphony we are a part of." We are the leading edge of evolution in the manifest realm; in us and through us comes the evolutionary advance of all that is.

Once we entertain this idea, we see it running throughout the Cayce readings. The consciousness that we possess is itself an evolutionary advance that now has the opportunity to leverage further evolution. In the words of American philosopher Ken Wilber, "Both humans and rocks are equally Spirit, but only humans can consciously realize that fact, and between the rock and the human lies evolution." Evolutionary spirituality calls us to choose how we will develop and use consciousness, which early evolutionary thinker Henri Bergson called the "motive principle" behind evolution. Edgar Cayce places will at the center of our creative capacity, reminding us that our effect on the universe's evolution is like the effect that the atoms of our bodies have on us. (1473-1) In another place we read, "Know that as thy service is a portion of the Creative Energy or God, as it is exercised it influences the pulse—as it were—of the universe." (1261-1)

This influence we have over the pulse of the universe is no small matter. One reading even seems to suggest that it is

only through the mind that matter itself evolves: "...there is the evolution of the mind, but not evolution of matter—save through mind, and that which builds same." (262-56) Is it possible that through our very bodies, through the consciousness we build into every cell, the ongoing advance of creation takes place? This reading goes on to hint at that possibility: "Each element, each corpuscle of the body is a universe in itself, or a universe on the beginning of power and force."

Having influence over the pulse of the universe may seem like a pretty abstract idea, so let me bring it down to the daily reality that you and I live in. In a time when we face so many crises—ecological, political, sociological, economical—conscious co-creatorship may be the only hope for this world. We no longer have the luxury of spiritual development for purely personal reasons, or for the special thrills and comforts of spiritual experience. As one World Affairs reading put it, "as the time or the period draws near for these changes that come with the new order, it behooves all of those who have an ideal—as individuals, as well as groups or societies or organizations, to be practicing, applying same in their experience—and their relationships as one to another. For unless these are up and doing, then there must indeed be a new order in *their* relationships and their activities." (3976-18) 🌐

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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