

Running Head: The Cosmology of the Integral Yoga

The Cosmology of the Integral Yoga

Seth Miller

Cosmology and the Old Story

Every human society is embedded within, and co-evolvent with some formulation of cosmology. Every individual too, variously met with riddles posed by life and by experience, seeks the contextualization, penetration, and explanations provided by one or another cosmology. Cosmology, in this sense, can be seen as a fundamental need of the human being, regardless of whether it becomes conscious and consciously developed or remains veiled beneath darkened layers of the soul. Therefore, the particular manifestation of a given cosmology within a culture and within an individual has potentially far-reaching consequences. Our very relation to our world, to our own self, to our fellow human beings, and all action flowing from such understanding is potentially at stake, linked to the underlying vision of the specific cosmology.

Today, in much of the contemporary world, a cosmology exists whose consequences, demonstrated in the scourging of the Earth's resources, the destruction of its biomes, the mass extinctions of its species, and the prevalence of human warfare, are perhaps beyond the point of tolerability. Within this modern cosmology, Man (even more so than Humanity) holds a de-facto place hierarchically above other sentient life, growing plants, and the Earth itself, which must subject themselves to his need for expansion, power, and progress. With roots in the mechanism of Newtonian science, this cosmology, which we could call the scientific-industrial, provided the stage upon which humanity could develop its various technologies – technologies which helped elucidate an outer cosmological background which supported and furthered the assumptions of the cosmology itself.

In particular, Copernicus' discovery that the Earth was not the center of the universe and Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection took away a major source of any cosmic, teleological, or divine purpose that humanity may have had, leaving us instead with the idea that our situation had roots only in the outer mechanics of impersonal, physical forces. This allowed for the continued objectification of the cosmos itself and humanity's position within it.

Almost as if in a twisted backlash to the loss of a once-divinely inspired stature, humanity turned towards a vision of outer progress in which Man's place in the universe depended less upon any inherent or inner meaning, and more upon the establishment of meaning through the outwardly visible manifestation of subjugation of the Earth and its inhabitants through technological Progress. Even the human physical body itself was desacralized, objectified, and placed alongside the other objects of the Earth to be dominated, manipulated, and controlled through skillful and clever means.

In general, the scientific-industrial cosmology has as a major component a splitting of the inner, subjective, and spiritual, from the outer, objective, and material. This division, begun in the West in large part as a conscious program through which the new fields of science could extricate themselves from the religiosity and subjectivity of the inherited traditions of the past, has allowed for the flowering of scientific knowledge and its accompanying technologies. We understand more about the outer world than ever before. Yet the underlying cosmology which provides for this continued outer 'advancement' has abrogated much of the meaningfulness of life itself, and finds itself ill-equipped to handle the global complexities presented by today's world. Its story – that the world exists as an object to be manipulated for the betterment of Man – is dying a slow, hard death, having gone so far as to objectify the source of its very

meaning: Man himself. Having become more and more alienated from its own roots, the cosmological story is less and less capable of sustaining itself. As Thomas Berry states,

A radical reassessment of the human situation is needed, especially concerning those basic values that give to life some satisfactory meaning. We need something that will supply in our times what was supplied formerly by our traditional religious story. If we are to achieve this purpose, we must begin where everything begins in human affairs – with the basic story, our narrative of how things came to be, how they came to be as they are, and how the future can be given some satisfying direction. We need a story that will educate us, a story that will heal, guide, and discipline us. (Berry, 1988)

If, as Berry would have us believe, the dominant scientific-industrial cosmology is the old story which is in need of replacement or at least repair, what might a new, more appropriate story look like, and what might its effects be?

Berry, along with his colleague Brian Swimme, propose versions of this new story. In particular, Swimme's work can be understood, in a basic sense, as an attempt to bring a new perspective on cosmology to the masses. His work endeavors to communicate much of what the various modern scientific disciplines have discovered about the way the universe has evolved from its primordial beginnings to a primarily lay audience. His goal encompasses a recontextualization, reformulation, and re-enlivenment of the scientific-industrial cosmology into a story that does not fall prey to its old pitfalls, but attempts to give meaning back to the human situation – this time in concert with the outer world.

In order to achieve this, the cosmological picture he presents must be heavily reliant upon the "facts" as science understands them. As a result, the cosmological picture presented by Swimme seems to have more or less inherited the scientific assumptions about the nature of the universe, specifically in terms of its materialist basis. Although certainly the pictures that

scientists have been refining for centuries are tremendously important and must be considered in all their details, these pictures arise from specific cosmological assumptions which do not lie in the realm of scientific ‘facts’ but must remain assumptions. With regards to the ‘new story’, the nature and role of consciousness is one particularly important area to reconsider, as its status is the most central determining factor for the ways in which the next cosmological story will unfold for humanity.

At present, many scientists (both implicitly and explicitly) make the assumption that consciousness is a secondary or even entirely epiphenomenal part of the universe that is to be treated as a late outgrowth of particular material configurations such as brains. There can be a lack of understanding of qualitative levels of consciousness, as if consciousness were an almost singular phenomenon that can be *either* on or off. Additionally, inasmuch as any levels of consciousness are taken seriously, it is generally the case that the “highest” level of consciousness is that achieved by the material structure of the average adult human brain. In other words, any levels of consciousness higher than that of the researcher’s own consciousness are generally ignored or at best considered hypothetical, and at worst outright pathological.

Although Swimme certainly recognizes the existence of consciousness in varying degrees (at least up to the level of his own), when he speaks of the evolution of consciousness in its cosmological context, he seems to more or less parallel the above “scientific” understanding of this evolution, namely that consciousness is essentially a natural product of ever-increasing levels of complexity that has its roots in purely physical laws of material organization. In other words, the laws of the universe allow for the increasingly complex

organization of matter into forms of primitive life, which evolve over eons through adaptation and natural selection. Ultimately, these laws allow for more and more complicated brains to exist, which then give rise to deepening levels of consciousness until finally something like self-consciousness arises in the human species.

To be sure, Berry and Swimme do make an important contribution by pointing out that in addition to the Second Law of Thermodynamics (a.k.a. the law of entropy), the universe also operates through the complementary law they call the Cosmogenetic Principle. This principle actually has two major components which are not initially well-separated by Berry and Swimme. The first aspect is the recognition that there are “form-producing dynamics” (Swimme & Berry, 1994, p. 67) latent everywhere in the universe which underlie the way in which ordered states of increasing complexity emerge over time. The second aspect is the assumption that these form-producing dynamics are the same everywhere in the universe, and arise whenever the conditions permit to produce more complicated structures such as galaxies, stars, planets, life, and ultimately consciousness.

It is interesting to note that Swimme, who is a mathematical cosmologist, not only finds it necessary to formulate the cosmogenetic principle, but also begins to shift his language to include phraseology most scientists would find anathematic. He states that “Most central of all, perhaps, is our knowledge that in some sense the structures of the universe were ‘aimed at’.” (Swimme & Berry, 1994, p. 69) Additionally, he mentions that “at each branchpoint in the universe a fundamental decision is made” (Swimme & Berry, 1994, p. 71). This language is not accidental or sloppy, but in a certain way betrays the difficulty that scientists run into when attempting to move beyond pure materialism and into a world with some kind of intrinsic

meaning. In the case of Swimme, the old habits of the scientific tendency to seek objectivity through subjectless phrases such as “a fundamental decision is made” and “structures of the universe were aimed at” (by no-one in particular, we assume) are encoded in his very language. Yet at the same time the fact that precisely this type of language creeps back into the discourse underscores the directionality of the shift that is needed to heal the long-time effects of the excessive de-subjectivization of the world around us.

Another major assumption seems to be that inasmuch as evolution occurs, it is causally dependent upon matter. Matter is understood as primary, and even if its interrelations give rise to complex evolving systems with emergent properties, these emergent properties are causally dependent upon the fundamental rules of the material substrate of the universe, i.e. the physics of matter. A short example that demonstrates this assumption: generally speaking, scientists would agree that if one destroys Bob’s brain, then one also destroys Bob’s consciousness. Another way of stating this assumption is that the predominant materialism still present in much of modern science does not recognize the existence of any coherent non-material entities, i.e. spirit.¹

These types of assumptions define boundaries to the present scientific cosmology, and help keep the old story predominant, along with its concurrent effects on our self-conception and our actions in and upon our world. It may be, of course, that such assumptions ultimately provide the best explanation for the vast span of human experience, but they should at least be recognized as assumptions and not be taken dogmatically.

¹ Although contemporary science recognizes the concept of “energy”, this concept is, although non-material, always linked to material (e.g. via the equivalence of mass and energy), or at least the potential to become material. It is not satisfying to equate the highly differentiated forms of consciousness with a numerically calculated energy value, as if consciousness simply were energy. This approach is another form of reductionism and yields little of value.

Even if specific areas of science (chaos theory, quantum physics, M-theory, etc.) push and stretch these boundaries, the consequences for the cosmological perspective of the bulk of humanity is quite limited. (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996) Not only does it take time for any fundamental shifts in worldview sparked by highly specialized scientists to filter down into the lay populace, the nature of the underlying science practiced today is qualitatively much more complicated than ever before, requiring exact imagination of events taking place within extreme scales of both space and time.

Is it possible to have a cosmology that does not subscribe to these assumptions but also does not place itself at odds with the well-understood details of the evolutionary picture of the material universe as understood by science? In other words, what might a cosmology look like that found room for spirit, for consciousness in all its varieties, levels and potentials, as well as for the latest scientific understanding of the behavior of the material universe from its beginning to the present and off into the future?

Although Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry have identified the need for such a new cosmology, their approach still holds over many central presuppositions of the old cosmology – assumptions which may not be required, even if we are to keep the benefits and knowledge of science as an integral part of the new cosmology. This very dilemma is actually already present in Swimme and Berry's work, as indicated in the way they use language to describe the new story, as noted above. I propose, however, that the cosmology developed primarily by Sri Aurobindo Ghose, called the Integral Yoga, provides significant elements to the new story which can educate, heal, and guide us, while at the same time enjoying significant compatibility with the useful empirical elements of the old cosmology which should be carried forward.

Whereas Swimme's cosmology provides a necessary recontextualization of the contemporary scientific worldview, it is not enough by itself, nor is it ultimately satisfactory for meeting Berry's description for what the new story should look like. Aurobindo's cosmology, on the other hand, incorporates an evolutionary perspective into a larger framework of cosmic development that includes a much more vast view of the potentiality of human consciousness and its relation to the universe and its Divine nature. Just as much as Swimme's cosmology deals directly with the details of material evolution, Aurobindo's cosmology deals with the details of spiritual evolution. Yet these two approaches, although seemingly on opposite sides, are not incompatible or mutually exclusive. In fact, Aurobindo's cosmology provides a larger framework within which the best elements of the scientific cosmology can find a meaningful home, while the scientific cosmology provides detail of outer evolution lacking in the spiritually-oriented cosmology of the Integral Yoga. Let us take a look at the basic details of Aurobindo's Integral cosmology, so that we might better understand the extent and nature of this compatibility more thoroughly.

The Cosmic Span: Involution and Evolution

The primary beginning point of the cosmology of the integral yoga, which also stands as its ending point and ultimate consummation, is the Divine, the Absolute. Science must necessarily concern itself with the manifest world – its particulars, but the Divine is beyond all particularity and imagination, unmanifest, the source of all. In this sense, then, the Absolute itself is beyond any possible science, which relies upon the ability to distinguish one thing from another. Thus, for Aurobindo, the Absolute is the only possible beginning. Yet how can

something ineffable, timeless, spaceless, and formless give rise to the effable universe of manifest time, space, and form? Aurobindo identifies a somewhat complicated series of related movements of the Absolute, which can be understood as the process of divine involution, a necessary complement to the process of evolution. As Aurobindo states:

The word evolution carries with it in its intrinsic sense, in the idea at its root the necessity of a previous involution. We must, if a hidden spiritual being is the secret of all the action of Nature, give its full power to that latent value of the idea. We are bound then to suppose that all that evolves already existed involved, passive or otherwise active, but in either case concealed from us in the shell of material Nature. (Ghose, 1971b, p. 235)

Aurobindo's words are meant to be precise; all that evolves can only do so because in some way the evolution has been preceded by an involution, an inward involving of the Divine with itself. Additionally present in this passage is the subtle hint of a hierarchical structure in which matter forms the basis for the *evolutionary* process. In other words, the Absolute has concealed itself in material Nature in order to evolve *through* it. Thus matter itself is like a shell, an outer, sensible covering within which the Divine itself is active, but in a hidden, esoteric way.

The cosmic involutory span between the unmanifest, singular Absolute to the manifest, plural material world of the universe is not taken in a single step, but has proceeded through a series of stages, by which successively involved layers of the Divine are prepared for future activity.² The overall picture is of the creation of *planes* of qualitative potentiality increasingly removed from the Divine. These are planes of being, of existence, of consciousness. They are qualitatively nearer or farther from the Divine, which is another way of saying that they are

² It should be noted that this particular area of Aurobindo's cosmology is perhaps the most difficult to understand, both for its technicality and its subtlety of origin, and it will be necessary to simplify for the purposes of this paper.

stages through which the Divine forgets itself through a process of self-absorption. Yet these planes are established first as potentialities and contain no actual substance, no explicit form, acting instead as the creation of the various realms through which separated parts of the Divine will later evolve – for example in the form of humanity.

The involution begins with Being-Consciousness-Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda), which then establishes itself as the plane of Supermind, which then becomes the successively involved planes of Mind, Life, and Matter.³ In a certain sense, it can be said that the creation of these planes occurs because the Divine, having bliss in the awareness of its own existence, wished to conceal itself so that it could experience the joy of rediscovering itself through actual manifestation. In order for the discovery to be complete, the Divine had to make a complete self-forgetting possible. Thus the Divine's highest aspects – Being, Consciousness, Bliss, and the Supermind (or Truth-Consciousness, which is unitive) – had to go through a reversal via the involuntary process into their opposites: Non-Being, Inconscience, Insensibility, and Mind (separative, divisive Mind).

The establishment of the various planes of potential existence leads the Divine away from itself, until finally it forgets itself so completely that it no longer even recognizes that anything is lost – its descent into inconscience is complete. It is at this moment that the involution ends; the Divine cannot objectify itself from itself any further. This marks the transition from the involuntary movement to that of evolution. Now it is possible to speak of the Divine working through actual manifestation – i.e. specific, individual forms arise to fill in, as it were, the potential planes of existence with actual objects, beginning with the lowest:

³ Each of these planes has multiple subdivisions, but for the most part these are less pertinent to the present discussion – the reader is referred to Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* for more detail.

inconscious matter itself. In matter, the one unitive Divine has lost itself in a world populated entirely by mutually separating objects. This is as divisive as the Divine can become, where every bit of matter is necessarily separate from every other, alone.

At this point of supreme self-involvement, evolution begins, proceeding now in the only possible direction open to it: back towards the Divine. Thus Matter evolves into Life, which evolves into Mind. Ultimately, Mind must evolve beyond itself into the Supermind, (Ghose, 1973, pp. 255-258) from which a reunification with the Being, Consciousness, and Bliss of the universe can occur; more about this in a moment.

What is important to consider is that this view provides an entirely different context for the principle of evolution than is normally the case in scientific circles, where evolution is generally understood as a solely material process. As Aurobindo indicates:

If we push the materialist conclusion far enough, we arrive at an insignificance and unreality in the life of the individual and the race which leaves us, logically, the option between either a feverish effort of the individual to snatch what he may from a transient existence, to “live his life”, as it is said, or a dispassionate and objectless service of the race and the individual, knowing well that the latter is a transient fiction of the nervous mentality and the former only a little more long-lived collective form of the same regular nervous spasm of Matter. (Ghose, 1973, p. 20)

It is precisely these pitfalls that the Integral Yoga avoids by tracing the processes of material evolution to the preceding stages of involution. Matter, then, is not *by itself* either entirely responsible for, or even capable of, evolving into Life. Life can only arise out of Matter because the possibility of Life was established through the creation, via involution, of the unmanifest *plane* of Life. But the plane of life required the higher plane of Mind, which is preceded by higher planes, and so forth to the Divine itself, which is responsible for the whole thing in the first place. Matter then, although unconscious, dead, and by itself inert, owes its

existence to higher planes of potentiality which are literally *involved* within Matter itself. All the higher planes are thus present as potentials within Matter, all the way to the Divine itself. This, in a fundamental sense, is what makes evolution possible, and is a key tenet of the Integral Yoga. It also provides a cosmological foundation within which the evolving human being can find itself as an integral component.

The Human Context

Matter, then, evolves *as* the fully involuted Absolute into the very planes of existence laid out beforehand by the Absolute's self-forgetting. As each plane of existence becomes filled with actual evolving forms, complexity, diversity, and consciousness increase. The progress of evolution is one that takes the completely self-involved separateness of the material world upward through higher and higher forms of consciousness. This is the vertical scale of evolution. What makes human beings *human* is the fact that we have parts which are evolving through and within the planes of Matter, Life, and Mind⁴, simultaneously. But although humans today have relatively easy access to the planes of Mind, this is not the end of the evolutionary process, which has the potential to proceed beyond the Mind into higher states, which Aurobindo identifies as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, and Overmind, before finally reaching the Supermental plane of Truth-Consciousness. Despite the inclusion of the word "Mind", these higher planes are at first characterized by the silencing of the normal levels of Mind experienced in everyday logical thinking. Aurobindo is actually describing states

⁴ Only the lowest aspect of the plane of Matter is the gross, inconscient material substance of the elements, the physical proper. Additionally, the Material plane includes a vital part as well as a mental part. So too, the Vital and Mental planes each include physical, vital, and mental parts. Only humans exist simultaneously on all these nine levels.

through which the human surrenders more and more to the influence of the higher spiritual planes, in which “man the mental being is sublimated by the endeavour of the evolutionary Energy to develop out of him the spiritual man, the fully conscious being, man exceeding his first material self and discoverer of his true self and highest nature.” (Ghose, 2003, p. 8)

In addition to this vertical evolution, a corresponding horizontal evolution is possible, where consciousness becomes more and more able to penetrate the inner nature of each of its parts (material, vital, mental), until ultimately it comes into contact with what is known as the psychic being, the “spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution” (Ghose, 1971a, p. 281) which evolves over many lifetimes. This psychic being is an expression within an individual lifetime of the spark of the Divine, the soul, which is itself a mediator between the individual psychic being and the Jivatman, the “individual Self or Atman; the eternal true being of the individual” (Ghose, 1971a) which is already one with the Divine. The two evolutionary movements – inward and upward – are simultaneously possible for the human being (although not for lower forms). Connecting with the psychic being makes the upward evolution proceed much more smoothly.

It is important to note, however, that unlike some prominent streams of Eastern thinking, the vertical progression is continuously inclusive of the lower levels. The goal is thus not a reunification with the Divine through a transcendent *surpassing* of the material form of the body, but a complete realization of the Divine *within* the material. Thus, once the psychic being is contacted, it becomes possible for the human being to open up to higher realms and effect a descent of the Supermental into the lower realms, all the way into matter itself. As

Satprem, an important follower of the Mother, who herself was the one most active in experimenting with this descent in her “yoga of the cells” indicates:

On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo’s goal, as we have seen, is not only to ascend, but to descend, not only to dart up into eternal Peace, but to transform Life and Matter, beginning with this little life and the little bit of matter that we are. (Satprem, 2000, p. 51)

The human being is the first being that is capable of *consciously* connecting the Absolute with the Material. In a way, the human being thus marks a cosmically significant evolutionary turning point, precisely because in the human a consciousness that is completely involved with all the lower mental, vital, and physical planes has the potential to open itself to the Divine above.

This completes our brief survey of the major elements of the cosmology of the Integral Yoga. The universe is an evolving expression of the Divine, which purposefully loses itself so that it can experience joy in finding itself anew. The Absolute is *both* immanent *and* transcendent; matter includes elements of the Divine, and evolves higher forms of self-consciousness on its way back to itself. Finally, the human being is presently the evolutionary form which has the most potential to connect the lower planes with the higher planes, through conscious transformative acts, fulfilling the evolutionary cycle and realizing the “Life Divine”.

Aurobindo’s cosmology, as should be apparent, deals primarily with spiritual evolution in the largest of contexts, and may seem somewhat abstract or remote. Let us now briefly ground this expansive cosmological picture by pointing out its compatibility with much of the modern scientific view, before turning finally to some closing thoughts.

Room at the Bottom: Science and the Integral Yoga

The cosmology of the Integral Yoga shares some of the most important aspects of the modern scientific view of the universe. Specifically this can be seen in the way in which evolution is central to both. Evolution is also the most central tenet of Berry and Swimme's work as well. The Integral Yoga not only admits the centrality of evolution, but agrees with science that it can be seen as an evolution of the material into higher forms. What the Integral Yoga adds to the picture is precisely what the scientific picture necessarily excludes when it focuses *only* on the material: the inner spiritual nature of the evolution of matter, its status as a completely involved, self-absorbed Divine. Whereas science can only look into outer nature for answers to its questions, the Integral Yoga provides a context within which its inner nature can be addressed through the evolution of the individual questioner.

If these two aspects of the evolutionary path are to be mutually inclusive and inseparable, it follows that if science can formulate truths about the material aspects of evolution, these truths should be commensurate with the picture of spiritual evolution given in the Integral Yoga. For the most part, such correspondences may be difficult to see, because neither science or the Integral Yoga makes a habit of speaking about the other's domain. Yet at the same time, we may be able to see a few areas of correspondence.

For example, it may be possible to understand the initial turn from involution to evolution as the moment science identifies as the Big Bang, in which outward manifestation occurs for the first time. This includes both the creation of matter as well as the beginning of time and space. Science is beginning to speculate more seriously about the possibility that the Big Bang was not a singular event, but is actually itself representative of a wider picture in

which a cosmic evolution of a multiverse occurs. (Smolin, 1997) This fits well with Aurobindo's idea of the eternal creativity of the Divine in its desire to manifest the greatest amount of possibility for recognizing itself through matter.

The very scientific foundation of matter itself also perhaps hints at the Integral understanding of matter as a Divinely involved potentiality. Since the formulation of quantum mechanics in the late 1920's, the scientific view of the nature of matter has fundamentally changed from the Cartesian "res extensa" (extended substance) to a much more complicated understanding in which matter is an expression of relations between literally infinite fields of quantum potentiality (the quantum wave-function). In other words, matter is not "stuff" but is more like the precipitation of singularity out of infinite probability for unknown reasons. Whereas material science loses matter into abstract mathematical fields of potential, it could be speculated that the Integral Yoga provides a more coherent understanding of the cosmic spiritual nature underlying what science can only attempt to describe outwardly.

Likewise, the description of matter itself in its external form seems to fit very well with the qualitative understanding of the Integral Yoga that matter is what it is precisely because of its particularity – i.e. its removal from the unity of the Divine. Indeed, modern science finds that a defining characteristic of the material world of neutrons, protons, and electrons (all of which are called fermions and constitute the directly experienced material of human experience such as shoes and daffodils), obey a principle known as the Pauli Exclusion Principle, which states that no two identical fermions can simultaneously occupy the same space. In other words, the nature of any material object is just to be *not* any other object.

Going further, the very nature of the quantum wave function is itself inherently evolutionary. That physicists speak of the actual evolution of the quantum wave function, according to the Schrodinger equation, underlines the fundamental importance of evolution even at the most fundamental possible level of the material universe. The evolutionary view of the Integral Yoga also squares very well with a scientific understanding of biological evolution as expressed first by Darwin and then others. Evolution by natural selection, with its corresponding mechanisms of genetic heredity and mutations, can sit comfortably within the perspective offered by the Integral Yoga. What the Integral Yoga adds is simply a wider context within which the biological evolution becomes *meaningful* rather than random and meaningless.

On the other hand, the Integral Yoga has a cosmology which goes beyond the strictures of science, even if it can include science as a necessary aspect at its lower levels. This is the case not because science generally takes as its basis materialist assumptions. In fact, the Integral Yoga would maintain the same criticism of the limitations of science even if science took the spirit as fundamental (as even some physicists do). Rather, science is limited by the very fact that it depends upon the divisive capacity of the Mental plane for its method. But it is characteristic of the higher levels of Mind that consciousness moves through and beyond division, towards the unitive consciousness of the Supermind; this is a place science cannot go. Aurobindo indicates it this way: "The reason cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace the totality of their secrets; it deals with the finite, the separate, the limited aggregate, and has no measure for the all and the infinite." (Ghose, 2003, p. 18)

Conclusion

Cosmologies, whether implicit or explicit, form the basis for human action. They are the very source of meaning itself, and provide the context within which we relate to ourselves and the world. Contemporary humanity is in a position of trying to navigate the negative consequences of the old cosmology which has proven itself disastrous to both ourselves and the surrounding world. A shift to an evolutionary view that also includes cooperative places for both spirit and matter is thus very important, lest we continue the negative consequences of the scientific-industrial view which treats nature as a usable object instead of an evolving subject intricately and intimately connected with humanity individually and as a whole. Both Berry (1988) and Aurobindo (1971b) recognize that a spirituality that decries the material element of the universe cannot lead humanity forward in a healthy way. A synthesis of the material and spiritual is required, and the Integral Yoga goes a long way towards creating a cosmological view that can accommodate this in a way that does not at the same time devalue the findings of either science or spiritual knowledge.

In this sense, then, the 'new story' of Berry may find a more complete and useful background in the cosmological context provided by the Integral Yoga, in which the evolution of matter is simultaneously the evolution of the spirit towards the Divine *within* and *through* matter. Thus, matter has within it the higher potential to be life, mind, etc., making it a potential subject instead of an object. As Aurobindo indicates,

A progressive evolution of the visible and invisible instruments of the Spirit is the whole law of the earth nature; that too is the fundamental value which underlies all the other values of its existence and its process and gives them their significance. (Ghose, 1972, p. 13)

Humanity has put itself in its present situation by taking as its basis cosmologies that took as their basis *either* the “visible” *or* the “invisible” components of the evolutionary process. Adopting a view that works consciously with the integration of the visible with the invisible may help humanity change its present perspective which supports habitual overuse, consumption, and objectification of the Earth. The Integral Yoga provides a cosmology which not only provides the context for this reintegration of the material with the spiritual, but also provides steps by which the reintegration can proceed through the evolution of individuals. It brings humans fully out of the deterministic, materialistic worldview of Descartes and shows that humans are spiritual beings involved in an evolutionary process spanning the entire cosmological gamut, all the way from matter to the Divine itself. It is this kind of recontextualization that can help humanity discover its new story, a story that may just have the potential to heal, guide and discipline us as we enter into the future.

References

- Berry, T. (1988). *The dream of the earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
- Fox, M., & Sheldrake, R. (1996). *Natural grace : dialogues on creation, darkness, and the soul in spirituality and science* (1st ed.). New York: Doubleday.
- Ghose, A. (1971a). *Letters on yoga*. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Ghose, A. (1971b). *The supramental manifestation and other writings*. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Ghose, A. (1972). *The hour of God and other writings*. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Ghose, A. (1973). *The life divine*. Pondicherry, India: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- Ghose, A. (2003). *The future evolution of man: the divine life upon earth*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press.
- Satprem. (2000). *Sri Aurobindo, or the adventure of consciousness* (M. Danino, Trans.). Faridabad, India: Thomson Press.
- Smolin, L. (1997). *The life of the cosmos*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Swimme, B., & Berry, T. M. (1994). *The universe story : from the primordial flaring forth to the ecozoic era--a celebration of the unfolding of the cosmos* (1st HarperCollins pbk. ed.). San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.