

The Implication of Morphic Fields for Our Understanding of God and of Creation

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The biologist, Rupert Sheldrake gives a radically new hypothesis of how humanity and nature come into being, and change, and grow. His explanation ties in with the psychology of Carl Jung. I see it as a post modern alternative to the Intelligent Design pontificating of pseudo-science and Christian fundamentalism. It revolutionises the way in which the ancients (and traditionalists) conceived of God, and finds echoes of reality in the mediaeval notions about nature and the spirit world which were discarded by modern science and modernistic religion. It also confronts the mechanistic underpinning which conventional wisdom is still giving to Science, Medicine, and Biology.

If we are serious about 'living fully' we are also challenged in the realm of post-modern psychology to look at the elemental forces that shape who we are, influence what we think, and contribute to what we do. It seems logical that it is only possible to live the fullest life when we are in harmony with those elemental forces. So what are they? As far back as Plato wise people have been saying something significant about them. Is it good enough to let them drive us into a traditionalist cul-de-sac and call them our gods, or can we better understand them to our mutual advantage and to the advantage of the environment? In the post-modern jargon they have been variously referred to by Jung as 'innate universal psychic dispositions' or 'components of the collective unconscious'. Sheldrake talks about Morphic Fields which are similar, and also have the capacity to influence who we are and what we (and all of nature) can become. Without being deterministic about life, how do we understand the effects of their formative influence within and upon us, and, importantly for progressive thinkers, are they driving our pursuit of truth and meaning?

As I understand it, a Morphic Field can apply to any thing in the cosmos including humans and things which I originally thought were inanimate. (e.g. Rocks are, like "living" organisms, really bundles of an energy which drives the atoms and molecules of which they are constituted.) But Morphic Fields can not only operate on physical stuff like a hatching egg: they can apparently work with mind stuff as well. (e.g. the thought patterns of our brains and of our culture.) The Fields obviously operate in another dimension which we don't know about yet, or which we are unable fully to pick up with our senses.

Because Fields are largely beyond our present awareness we have to be satisfied with similes to describe them. It seems to me that they are *like patterns or data bases for the growth and development of the cosmos*. Contrary to the old 'modern' school of biologists they are not to be confused with the genetically driven developments in a dividing cell. The 'drivers' are apparently more profound than that! While I have used the simile 'like

patterns or data bases' to describe them, they are subject to the innovations of evolutionary activity, and are able to change as those habits of re-production are somehow communicated within the development of individual species over millions of years. They do not exclude natural selection; they do not presume pre-determined outcomes; they can incorporate chaotic or chance events.

A specific Field brings to focus similar activities of creation, remembers what previous stages of development have taken place, gathers new information about current developments in smaller like fields, and feeds it all into the evolutionary pattern for the next generation. It is thus the data base for growth. When applied to the evolution of the human species, Morphic fields not only are the powerful formative influence upon our bodies, but also upon abstract things such as the way we choose to live, and how we imagine new inventions, and what we believe.

That is why I find Sheldrake's Morphic Fields have significant relevance for Progressive Religious Thought. Are we in the midst of a world wide Field of progressive religious thinking? Is this Field not only individual and group but corporate and universal among humans of like mind and heart? Are our discussions contributing to that exciting revolution even when they are not verbally communicated? If the answers to these questions are positive then our discovery of a spiritual reality will enrich and be enriched by countless and largely unidentified 'morphic friends' around the world. The concept re-enforces our sense of personal identity and self esteem; it gives us a sense of belonging to a safe and secure community, and it affirms our felt need for truth, justice and compassion in searching for meaning in human existence.