



Science and the Symphony of Creation

with John D. Mays

Lesson 6: Encountering Creation through Art

Outline:

Our teaching must encompass more than the material and the technical.

- The knowledge that we acquire from holding a live fish is different from all other knowledge, and cannot be obtained in any other way.
- Encountering creation through a textbook involves an intrinsically human mediation. Human beings write texts and decide what to put in them.
- Encountering creation through the arts, a third way of encountering and knowing, also entails human mediation.
 - Works of art are human productions.
 - When humans create art in response to the world God made, we have an opportunity to expand our own experience of the world by encountering it through the mediation of the artist.
- The Poets

- As Kingfishers Catch Fire, by Gerard Manley Hopkins
 - As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I dó is me: for that I came.

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

- Read also, Colossians 1:17 and Colossians 3:11
- God's Grandeur, Pied Beauty, Starlit Night
- I am like a slip of comet, by Gerard Manley Hopkins
 - — I am like a slip of comet,
Scarce worth discovery, in some corner seen
Bridging the slender difference of two stars,
Come out of space, or suddenly engender'd
By heady elements, for no man knows:



But when she sights the sun she grows and sizes
And spins her skirts out, while her central star
Shakes its cocooning mists; and so she comes
To fields of light; millions of travelling rays
Pierce her; she hangs upon the flame-cased sun,
And sucks the light as full as Gideon's fleece:
But then her tether calls her; she falls off,
And as she dwindles shreds her smock of gold
Amidst the sistring planets, till she comes
To single Saturn, last and solitary;
And then goes out into the cavernous dark.
So I go out: my little sweet is done:
I have drawn heat from this contagious sun:
To not ungentle death now forth I run.

- Worlds, by Richard Wilbur, U.S. poet laureate in 1987
 - For Alexander there was no Far East,
Because he thought the Asian continent
India ended. Free Cathay at least
Did not contribute to his discontent.

But Newton, who had grasped all space, was more
Serene. To him it seemed that he'd but played
With several shells and pebbles on the shore
Of that profundity he had not made.

Swiss Einstein with his relativity -
Most secure of all. God does not play dice
With the cosmos and its activity.
Religionless equations won't suffice.

- Galaxy, by Richard Ryan
 - faint
in deep space,
immense as a brain

down
through the thought-
shaft it drifts, a wale

of light to
which the retina
opens and is centered

time and
space dis-
appearing as the mind



recedes
to a soundless
flickering somewhere

deeper
than consciousness
where, permanent as

change
a whorl of light
rides, wheeling in darkness

- The Tyger, by William Blake
 - Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat.
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

- Auguries of Innocence by William Blake
 - To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower



Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

- Paintings
 - Johannes Vermeer: The Astronomer (1668)
 - Jan Matejko: Astronomer Copernicus – Conversation with God (1872)
 - Vincent van Gogh: Starry Night (1889)
 - Joseph Wright: An Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump (1768)
 - Joseph Wright: The Alchemist Discovering Phosphorous or The Alchemist in Search of the Philosopher's Stone (1761)
 - JMW Turner: Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway (1844)