

American Literature I: Edgar Allan Poe's Cosmic Theory

Introduction

Occasionally down the corridor of history, a solitary individual, through dint of his own leaps of logic and intuition, produces a work so astounding and compelling that it shakes an entire community of scholars, indeed the entire human village, which include people like Plato, Kepler, Newton or even Einstein. However, the scenario here is the singular contributions, the writer Edgar Allan Poe, who intuited the current modern cosmic theories, yet has never been properly credited for his discoveries. Even today, most people who thrill to Poe's masterfully told tales have never heard of [*Eureka*](#), the work which Poe believed represented the full flowering of his mind, the precocious prose poem which delivers more modern cosmological theories than any work of the Newtonian era. And beyond scientific import, Poe composes a unified cosmic theory based on his spiritual insight. Unlike many scientific descriptions of the cosmos as a mathematically based machine set in motion, Poe's view of astro-physics resides within, and as a part of God.

Poe's Obsession: The Dissolution of Matter and Mind

Edgar Allan Poe's finest works of fiction, in great part, are perhaps not entirely fictional, but rather, poetic representations of the grand consistency of the universe. In this collapsing universe, every particle hungers for its undifferentiated reunion, for its loss of individuation. If we as readers are to take flight with Poe's angels, and if we aspire to comprehend his most challenging characters, we must take with Poe this intuitive leap into the nature of death, the realization that in Poe's scheme, death is the return of spirit to unity and that this return to unity mirrors a grand universal consistency which can not be altered by the feeble efforts of the human will.

The human body and the psyche, thus, follow the same pattern manifested in the birth and death of a flower, a star, a galaxy, or a universe. Although Poe recognized that the motions of the universe are double, he himself seemed obsessed with the return to Unity rather than the springing forth from Unity; in a word, Poe was absorbed by the thought of death. Many biographers believe that Poe's interest in death stems from his own experience. He was not yet three when he lost his mother to consumption, the descriptive nineteenth century name for tuberculosis. What effect might this have had on an impressionable two-year-old to watch his mother slowly perish from this terrible red death. Then he lost his step mother the same way. Then his young wife Virginia, also from tuberculosis. How unfair it seems to judge Poe harshly for his preoccupation with death, when the repetition of death seemed "his avatar." How much more interesting to discern the remarkable conclusions Poe drew

from his spiritual and psychological probing into what awaits all of us, our inevitable dissolution.

Perversity: the Universal Tendency to Psychic Dissolution

Many of Poe's best writings describe his own psychic tendencies toward dissolution. These tendencies will be subsequently spoken of as Perversity. The counterpart to Perversity is Creativity. Material man, like all other matter in the universe, is subject to both: birth and death, creativity and perversity. The imprint of the universe is upon us. Just as Poe was entranced with death, he was also intrigued by perversity, the psychic tendency of the spirit to do itself harm. Later essays will treat the spirit of perversity, which Poe discussed in "The Black Cat" and "The Imp of the Perverse," and which turned many of his protagonists into their own nemeses.

What is more, because of his experiences, Poe became enchanted with the unifying forces of the cosmos. Rather than write about flourishing house and psyche of Usher, Poe chooses to examine the disintegration and final dissolution of Usher. Rather than, like Whitman, sing the joys of selfhood, Poe anticipates the loss of selfhood and the reunion of the soul with the Godhead.

Poe's Universe II: The Cosmic Spirit

Even still, it is important not to lose sight of Poe's grand unified theory because of an insignificant quibble, just as we should not dismiss Poe's theory because of the factual and statistical errors drawn from the sources of his day. Actually, Poe presents for his readers of *Eureka* a wondrous, self-maintaining, double process. Poe recognized that in a differentiated universe, gravity has its counterpart. Poe called it electricity. In the original One there could have been no electricity because electricity is noticeable only when two or more differing particles are brought into proximity. Though the original particle contained no differing particles, the cosmos, which has irradiated from that original unity, does depend upon the repulsive impulses of electricity. Gravity represents the force of attraction. Poe asserted that attraction is the body, repulsion, the soul.

Edgar Allan Poe originated a theory of the cosmos, which is of such scope that it explains everything that exists, as well as the motions and changes of their existence. Perhaps the breadth of Poe's discussions caused the scientific community of his day to pass over his *Eureka*. The science of Poe's time spoke not of positrons, yet Poe's allegory, amazingly, demonstrates the process in its imagery. Although at least two other theories have been posited which could explain the phenomenon at our galaxy's center, the black hole theory best represents the forces requisite for the quantity of anti-matter being produced.

Conclusion: The Heartbeat of God

Above all, this piece of writing endeavors to demonstrate Poe's amazing gift to those of his own time, as well as to our own. His *Eureka* is, indeed, a very personal journey into the miasma of his own spirit and intellect. It should serve as part of the foundation for all serious study of Poe, and not be relegated to the realm of the erudite. *Eureka*, written in the year following Virginia's death, also represents Poe's moment of greatest vulnerability. First he is accused of solipsism, of believing that the Creator *is* Poe. His conception that the individual gradually attains oneness with the Godhead, that the self is Jehovah, flew in the face of the objectivism posed by Christianity of his day. Secondly he is accused of pantheism for having identified God as manifest in the works He had created. Lastly, Poe is accused of writing his greatest work as a desperate attempt to transmute the death of Virginia (Silverman 340). Yet Poe, frustrated by the attempts of others to label his unique cosmic vision, believed so completely in his *Eureka* that he proclaimed at its onset that "it cannot die—or if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will 'rise again to the Life Everlasting.'"

In his cosmic scheme, Poe anticipates man's eventual recognition as that of his creator. Rather than suffer death, the self "instead grows exalted" as individual personalities merge with the Divine Heart. For the present, however, man must be satisfied with "faint indeterminate glimpses," achievable, in Poe's scheme, through intuition, dreams, and near-death encounters. Poe also reminds us of our source and of our destiny, among the [myriad galaxies](#); of the bondage of our individual wills to the universal design; and of our psychic and physical predisposition to the unifying forces of that design. Poe pursues us with double truths, which reflect the imprint of the Spirit Divine, from the embryonic flowering of a universe, a planet, a child or a seedling, to its eventual reunion in its birthplace. He presents us with knowledge which is rightfully our own, if we can but step from the deluding light of day to ponder the deep truths of Poe's night.

Reference: Granz, David. "Edgar Allan Poe's Eureka: I Have Found It" 20 Apr. 2001. 22 Dec. 2004 <<http://www.poedecoder.com/essays/eureka/>>.