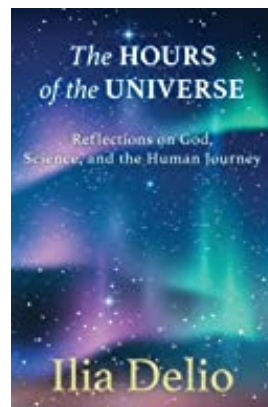


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The Hours of the Universe by Ilia Delio



Ilia Delio, OSF, PhD is a Franciscan Sister of Washington, DC and American theologian specializing in the area of science and religion, with interests in evolution, physics and neuroscience and the import of these for theology.

Ilia currently holds the Josephine C. Connelly Endowed Chair in Theology at Villanova University, and is the author of twenty books including Care for Creation (coauthored with Keith Warner and Pamela Woods) which won two Catholic Press Book Awards in 2009, first place for social concerns and second place in spirituality. Her book The Emergent Christ won a third place Catholic Press Book Award in 2011 for the area of Science and Religion. Her recent books include The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution and the Power of Love (Orbis, 2013), which received the 2014 Silver Nautilus Book Award and a third place Catholic Press Association Award for Faith and Science. Ilia holds two honorary doctorates, one from St. Francis University in 2015, and one from Sacred Heart University in 2020.

From the Introduction to [The Hours of the Universe](#)

In the brief span of the last two decades we have experienced a number of major crises, including the terrorist attacks of 9/11, protracted wars in the Middle East, the recession that followed the mortgage crisis of 2008, persistent racism, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Each crisis has brought about profound loss, and yet we manage to pick up the pieces and move on, as if these crises were merely interruptions in our otherwise normal lives. In a fragile world of finite limits, the breakdown of systems is not unusual. What is startling, however, is that within twenty short years, the number of human casualties due to catastrophic events has risen exponentially. Profound suffering can evoke different responses. We may mourn our losses, especially the loss of loved ones to tragedy. But we may also recognize in these disruptions a call to awaken from our cultural stupor to the signs of a new reality breaking forth in our midst. We may long for what we have lost, but are we also able to read the signs of the times? Can we discern a new reality on the horizon? The New Testament calls our attention to the in-breaking reign of God.

The message of Jesus was one of seeing, believing, and trusting in the empowering presence of God. God is doing new things, Jesus proclaimed, but only those with new minds and hearts can see a new world breaking through the cracks of the old. Jesus offered a new set of values, teaching us how to live on the edge of a new tomorrow. We must make a choice, however, to embrace these new values and to live in a new way. The spiritual masters called this process of change “conversion”: an unlearning of old habits that block the light of the new reality and a turning of the mind and heart in grace in order to entrust our lives to the living presence of God. Only if we believe in a new power in our midst can we let go of the old reins of control and allow the Spirit to draw us toward a new future. We know the Christian message as a set of instructions, but do we know it as a new way of life? Its basic message is simple: God is doing new things through us; we are the new creation in process. Hence, the most unchristian position we can assume is to block the new creation from taking place. And that is exactly where the institutional church finds itself today, internally divided and defending itself against the cultural winds of change. The marginalization of religion from culture, the opposition of religion to evolution, and the reduction of religion to privatized forms of spirituality have left the world stripped of God, bereft of meaning and purpose. It is a world gone blind, turned inward, satiated with things, and unconscious of its fundamental interdependency. Nothing really binds us together, and we find ourselves in a world of fear and resistance. We are skeptical of any new reality because we fear that rearranging our lives will disrupt the comfortable niches we have come to inhabit. We have a condition of chronic low-level depression driven by fear and distrust. And yet there is also a deep dimension of our lives that wants to transcend this trap of isolation and fear. What we know today from the modern sciences is that evolution is our fundamental reality.

All of nature, in a sense, is summed up in the human person; the principles of nature are the fundamental principles of human personhood. Systems of nature work in tandem with the environment, so that when environmental conditions thwart the optimization of

life, the system finds the necessary tools to adapt, change, or rearrange its organization. The maxim of nature is life seeks more life. This maxim holds true on the human level as well as throughout all of nature, except we do not follow the principles of nature. Instead, we seek to control nature and direct its course of action.

According to Genesis 1:26–28, we were given dominion over nature, giving rise to the idea that the human person is special and distinct from nature. But the fact is, earth is the primary reality and we are derivative of earthly life. God was creating long before we arrived on the scene. We are not meant to control nature, but instead to be its mind and heart as it seeks its ultimate fulfillment.

John F. Pohl MD



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A Response to: The Hours of the Universe by Ilia Delio

Science and Faith: As such, life and perhaps the Divine is seen as that narrow edge between quantum mechanics of randomness which some would define as the basement of Creativity and our observable, deterministic Newtonian mechanical world. Science advances with amazing discoveries – the human genome, gravitational waves, and actual pictures of what is occurring at a black hole. Church, per Delio can be “rather boring and staid at times”. I agree with Delio that our religious life does not have to be this way! I also agree we need to look at the theological ideas of the Cosmic Christ which not only makes the possibilities of Christ exciting but also allow us to look at the Natural World and science to see our faith before us as beautiful and changing by reflecting on what we have learned – whether quantum field theory, or evolution, or the cosmic microwave background, or interactions with our neighbor. Specifically, through

Delio's interpretation of de Chardin: if matter is conscious, and if consciousness can be religious, then matter certainly has a subjective and perhaps religious experience. Science + Theology can improve science and can improve theology. They work together. God wants these concepts to work together expressed as Divine Love. Delio wonders if this leads to a new concept of religion (and to me, a new way of seeing God). I certainly hope so!

God as Love: This concept is so important. We forget that our idea of the immutable God or the Aristotelian God is foreign to our understanding of Jesus in the Gospels. As Delio points out, the concept of God after the two World Wars was demolished. No impassable God can let that degree of suffering occur and not appear to care. Jesus set foot on Earth and wept and was amazed. God is there in the suffering, "...an indispensable aspect of God's Love, one that is necessary to understand the power of God's selfless love."

Technology: This aspect of the book is probably the most important as it affects us so much with what is occurring today. Technology separates us from Nature – I very much agree here. However, if we follow the ideals of de Chardin as seeing technology as a new way of experiencing God through elevated consciousness ("the noosphere"), then this a warranted endeavor. Again, God allowing continuous change, allowing evolution, wanting the church to evolve – this is key. Here is the bad thing about technology – In its current state, it is a huge contributor to global warming with the downstream effects of potentially increasing poverty, increasing species extinction, and promoting pandemics. As the world warms, the world is changing. Technology is contributing. We are contributing. Religion in its current form is stale and not addressing such important issues. "Eco-anxiety" (or "ecological anxiety") is a very real thing now recognized by the American Psychology Association. Both individually and in a large cultural setting, how we introduce and discuss global warming will lead to eco-anxiety if we do not introduce the concept of hope. Eco-anxiety is specifically associated with paralysis in decision making, an inability to face important concepts, and a refusal to make any change despite evidence that an individual making a change for the better may have no effect without worldwide governmental action.

Here is where a church evolving is so important. As Delio states, "we need a new type of religious orientation" in which the Universe is a communion of subjects while the Earth is a single reality seen as a one-time gift to our species from God. Our institutional as well as religious ethics need NEW ethical direction for condemning the extermination of species, the suffering of the poor among us due to global warming, and the potential destruction of our planet. "If the church could embrace modern science and evolution as the very stuff out of which God is born, then the unknown God would no longer be faceless, dark adoration could become luminous." The church could be and should be a luminous possibility for the dire change needed for religion, science, and for humanity that is so sorely needed.

I highly recommend this book.

Dr. Bethany Sollereeder

Dr. Bethany Sollereeder is a research coordinator at the University of Oxford. She specializes in theology concerning evolution and the problem of suffering. Bethany received her PhD in theology from the University of Exeter and an MCS in interdisciplinary studies from Regent College, Vancouver. When not reading theology books, Bethany enjoys hiking the English countryside, horseback riding, and reading Victorian literature.

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A Response to: [The Hours of the Universe by Ilia Delio](#)

Hours of the Universe is creative Franciscan reflection on society spiced with the heady tones of Process Theism and the cosmic gaze of Teilhard de Chardin with a slight dusting of ultrahumanism. I enjoyed the reflections on prayer and the introduction to Beatrice Bruteau—I think I was not familiar with before. I liked the reflections on death. As a set of reflections, it is not a systematic treatment of issues. There is a lot to admire, but as time is short, I wanted to ask for clarification in two particular confusions I had while reading the reflections.

One example of my confusion was the treatment of technology. In the chapter “Race and the Axial Age” Professor Delio tracks a western-focussed history of the expansion of individual power and the will to dominate and then contrasts this with what she calls “the posthuman of the second axial age” who “has a new electronically embedded body with an electronically embedded mind”. Technology seems to be seen as the means by which we expand our consciousness, embrace the planet, and take humanity to an idealised telos. As she says, through electronic means “we are creating a world of deep relationality because we are being rewired for belonging to the cosmic whole, suggested by the term global consciousness.” But later in the book, Professor Delio seems to lament the place of technology: “Computer technology... has made consumerism into a

god...” or “We bought into Apple [etc.]... and we forgot the needs of the earth, as we googled our way through the internet.” She goes on to talk about the distraction of screens, etc. So I wondered if I could ask for a bit of systematization here—do computer technologies, with their inherently environmentally harmful mining practices and energy use and unrecyclable waste, offer the key to the next steps in human evolution, or are they damaging us from right and proper connection with the natural world?

I think the other question I had was around the view of nature. There is a great deal of focus on nature, but usually on the easily beautiful and charismatic parts of it: a typical remark is “God is contemplating himself in the beauty of each created form, in this tree or this flower.” (158) Or “Biological nature lives in harmony with the cosmos, whereas humans have come to live acosmically” (150), and the reason I was confused is that when I look at nature, I see a pretty messy, aggressive, often horrific place. I study the history of evolution, long before humans, and it is a history of—well, sometimes cooperation—but more often of brutality. 99% of all species extinct, 5 major mass extinctions and about 50 more smaller mass extinctions, species-induced climate change (the first time was 2.4 billions years ago), dinosaurs dying of parasites and cancers. A whole history of blood and want and stings. A universal love of nature sounds amazing, until you think of smallpox and worms that specialise in eating eyeballs or indeed the violent and horrific trauma of earthquakes. So I was left wondering how far this cosmic love ought to extend? Near the end of the book was a touching reflection on the adoption of stray cat named Mango, and the eventual need to put him down—a poignant reflection for me given that I had to euthanize my own much beloved cat in November. But because my view of nature is that some parts should be welcomed and others fought against, I could welcome my rescue cat and happily exterminate the mosquitos and the wood worms when they try to move in. Does your view of nature mean that ideally you would welcome the mosquito and the termite as well as the cat? If not, how do we discern between the cosmic love and argue for and the need for the occasional can of Raid?

Thank you very much, and I look forward to dialogue with you and the other panelists.

Despite the news we belong to one another – the harmony of nature 150, 170

Now, I could disagree with quite a bit here. It seems to me that the internet has stoked as much racism, misogyny and siloed echo chambers as it has created any connection, and that it is a space particularly dominated by white western men: Bill Gates, Tim Cook, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, David Karp, Jack Dorsey, Larry Page... I could easily go on.

Reverend Philip Avery



Vicar of Chepstow at Church in Wales

Chepstow, Wales, United Kingdom

A Response to: The Hours of the Universe by Ilia Delio

Sr Ilia, just wow, reading your book was like the final crescendo of a fireworks display with fireworks going off everywhere and not knowing where to look. The wisdom that you have gathered and shared in this book is so profound it's almost overwhelming. The inspiration to use the Liturgy of the Hours provided me with the prayerful key to entering into the mystery and wisdom. I was able to enter the fireworks with stillness through the invitation to approach it within a posture of contemplation, to surrender and trust. Which for me seems to be one of the keys to unlocking what you are inviting us into as we seek to embrace fully evolution and seek to enter into higher and more complex levels of consciousness; contemplative energetic.

As a Franciscan I relished reading a book that incorporates the theology of Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, I can't help but imagine how different the Western Church would look if they had become the predominant theologies and not Thomism. I resonated so much with the level of interconnectedness and entanglement that you describe, and how much science and philosophy has led the way in our understanding and how much theology and religion needs to catch up, but how the realization of this evolution into more complex levels of consciousness can't happen without the integration of religion and science as partners in the endeavor, and the need for a radical new religion of the earth.

I was overwhelmed, excited, fearful, to be brought to tears at the sheer beauty of the potential vision on offer, often all at once I have so many questions - grounding these in the context I find myself in, accompanying those without much science and technological know-how.

Questions are always contextual to the questioner, but I hope they have a universality in their particularity. Where do you see the hope? Do we have time for religion to catch

up? Do we need all of humanity to evolve into more complex consciousness or only a critical percentage, to realize the hope in this wisdom?

I may have misunderstood, but you talk about cyberspace as a technology which is able to help us move into this new non-physical evolution, which we see in the post millennial generations, but there are still large pockets of people in the world who do not have access to such technology, will this evolution be restricted to those who do?

I get the impression that you hold great hope in post millennial generations, which I share, who are already orientated towards what are future needs to look like. How might we encourage, support or just get out the way to enable them to lead us into where we need to be? Or do those of us who hold on tight to the long dead theologians and philosophers need to die before the new consciousness can emerge?

I am a simple parish priest in an institutional church which is desperately trying to hold onto and preserve it's historical theological positions and institutional structures, with many highly invested in preserving the status quo. Where might one start in luring people into this further evolution of consciousness and begin to bring the radical change required? Or will people like me who wish to see this change need to be prepared to go to the stake and be branded heretical until the tide turns?

In I minor capacity I am involved in ordinand training. What do you feel we need to look for in the people who will lead us into this new religion of the earth and what needs to change in the way we equip and support them? Other than making Teilhard compulsory?

Karl Rahner said that "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all." what spiritual, religious, scientific practices would help me and those I accompany become as Bruteau says "we ourselves are the future, we are the revolution"? Or are they yet to be discovered?

Do you see the new religion of the earth being a coming together of many faiths bring their treasures or will it need to maintain a Christian Center

I would like to thank you as you have given me a lifetime of work trying to understand, inwardly digest and live out this wisdom. I would like to thank Tom asking me to participate as thought this interaction I am forever now quantumly entangled with Ilia Delio and in inseparable relationship it doesn't get much better.

E. Maynard Moore, Ph.D.



E. Maynard Moore currently serves as President of the Board of Directors for WesleyNexus, and has been a member of IRAS since 2007, presenting workshops in six subsequent IRAS conferences. He is a member of the American Scientific Affiliation, the Wesleyan Theological Society, and regularly participates in DoSER programs of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Moore received academic degrees at Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Adult/Continuing Education at Union Institute & University in Ohio. He served on the administration and as faculty at The American University in Washington DC, Chicago State University, Columbia College in Chicago, and has authored two dozen articles, reviews and chapters in books.

As a redundant fourth in this sequence of commentaries. I want to take a somewhat different tack with a nod here to John Buchanan - and connect theology with the arts.

We just lost this week the great songwriter Burt Bacharach at age 94, but I was reminded that it is now 10 years since jazz legend Dave Brubeck died on December 5, 2012, one day shy of his 92nd birthday.. Brubeck's death was noted by front-page announcements in newspapers all over the world, in recognition of his profound impact on the world of music. At its peak in the early 1960s, the Brubeck Quartet was releasing as many as four albums a year, notably the "College" series and the "Time" series anchored by his innovative album *Time Out*, the first jazz album in history to sell one million copies. *Time Out* featured pieces entirely written by members of the quartet, notably using unusual time signatures in the field of music—and especially jazz. In his signature piece, "Take Five," perhaps the most popular jazz single ever, five-beat measures alternate smoothly with four-beat measures. It captivated the world.

By the mid-nineteen sixties, when I was immersed in the civil rights movement, Dave Brubeck was one of the first white jazz musicians to publicly endorse and support Dr. Martin Luther King's movement that changed America. In 1968, Brubeck produced *The Gates of Justice*, a cantata mixing Biblical scripture with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Brubeck's father was an avowed atheist, while his mother, a Christian Scientist, directed the choir at a Presbyterian church. Brubeck's first job was playing the organ at a

reformatory chapel at the age of 14. He remembered the inmates singing “Just as I Am” and “The Old Rugged Cross.” In the middle of his critically acclaimed career as a jazz musician and composer, religious themes and motifs began to appear in Brubeck’s music. While composing the Mass To Hope: A Celebration, he was so struck by the beauty and power of the liturgy that in 1960 he joined the Roman Catholic Church and regularly worshiped in his parish church in Wilton, Connecticut. His funeral was celebrated in that church on December 12, 2012, and included performance of his compositions “The Desert and the Parched Land,” “Psalm 23” and the “Gloria” from his astounding composition, “the Mass: To Hope.”

THAT’S WHERE I WANT TO PICK UP ON A RECURRING THEM IN Ilia Delio’s book, *The Hours of the Universe*. That theme is HOPE. My colleagues have already commented on the structure of the book, and the book is well indexed – however, even though there are multiple entries in the index on Faith, and Love, there is nothing in the index on hope. Be that as it may, one can say that Hope is a major undercurrent in Delio’s book, because, after all, in her exhaustive treatment of Teilhard de Chardin’s work, OMEGA is not only prominent but essential to Teilhard’s (and Delio’s) understanding of the Christian life. Early on (p. 38) Delio says; “Even in the midst of darkness, God’s love tenderly stoops down and embraces us, comforting us even as a parent comforts a child, empowering us to get up again and choose life. God, who loves us in our darkness, is the power of hope, promise and new life.”

More than a dozen times in the book, Delio refers to Teilhard’s understanding of creation, with the notion of cosmogenesis. She says (p. 95), “Teilhard recognized that theology and creation are deeply intertwined. The integral relation between theology and creation impelled him to go beyond dialogue to find a new synthesis between science and religion...” And because evolution marks the emergence of consciousness, what constitutes the “self” is the dynamic and ineffable core of becoming a person (p.122), the “art of becoming a person is itself a creative act, made possible for us through the presence of the absolute being in love – God-Omega – who is within and always ahead, drawing us toward the One who can make us whole... always alone on the horizon of the future.” (p 130)

Delio says, “Teilhard’s ethics is for people who are on the move; he proposes an ethics based on evolving into a future of more life, more being and more consciousness, an ethics... reaching a cosmic heart immersed in hope for realizing a world of change. It is this Christogenesis that gives our life meaning and purpose as we, in our own way, contribute to the fullness of Christ, and thus bring about the unity of all things in God.” (p.43). “Theology,” she says, “should give voice to this hope” moving us beyond otherworldly doctrines and rituals, “for without looking into the mirror of creation, we cannot see the face of God.” (p.140).

This is exactly the feeling and the conviction that wells up in me when I hear Dave Brubeck’s creative witness manifested in *The Mass, to Hope*.” To conclude: I commend it to all of you who seek an inspiration for your witness to Christ – Tom, if you have some

flexibility in your summer Conference ORT23 schedule, maybe you should have a contemplation session with Brubeck's Mass to Hope as the listening resource. In Delio's words, "Faith and hope in God become faith and hope through the world,' and for me, as she says in another context, this "becomes a sacred door opening on to the universe, spreading God's radiance through all the earth." (p.160). Quoting Delio: "To believe and to have hope is to become one with the world." (p. 161). I commend this book to all of you.... I don't really have a question, but I hope Iia has a few moments to comment as to whether my interpretation of hope is in any way authentic.