

Our Divine and Cosmic Identity in Expression

[Daniil Trifonov – Rachmaninov: Rhapsody On A Theme Of Paganini, Op.43, Variation 18](#)

Volker Brendel: I hope you've had a chance to look at the night sky in recent days particularly. You may have read the news reports about the spectacle of the comet [NEOWISE](#) appearing in the northern sky, right below the Great Dipper after sunset. I have been going out every evening trying to get a glimpse of the comet zipping by, with its sparking dust cloud trailing. I figure this is my only chance: the comet comes around every 6,800 years, and I don't know where I'll be next time!

Anytime we look up the sky, particularly at night, we cannot but appreciate the vastness of the creation of which we are parts. The typical human view is rather minuscule and self-centered. We think of our own affairs and maybe the crises of the day as all-important. There is relief, for example, that this particular comet is not on a crash course with the earth. Many believe that dinosaurs died off some 65 million years ago because of such an event, and I think the general consensus is that we have enough on our plate right now that we can do without worrying about the impact of a comet.

But be that as it may, we realize that it is a vast context in which we are operating. The self-centered viewer often looks at this creation and, with their mental capacities, try to figure out why things are the way they are. Why do we breathe? Why we need to sleep? Why do we have to be born and die so quickly? Who should be on this planet, and whom can we do without?

Obviously, human beings have probed all these questions philosophically and scientifically, but not really with convincing success. More often than not, trying to be cleverer than what is present and right in front of us has met very limited access, typically ending in disaster rather than greater prowess. We still can't do without breathing and sleeping, and we haven't figured out what species we can do without and what species' existence we should tolerate. This is all futile mental endeavor, when what we could and should do creatively is to give keen thought and feeling to what ought to be our contribution right here and now.

Bill Isaacs in his recent essay "[The Dragon and the Antidote](#)" posed the following question to us and anyone: How aware are you of your purpose in life? Well, I submit that we are here for a purpose. We are part of this magnificent creation, and we each have a role to play; and that role is also vast in context of both space and time. Let's explore.

I appreciated the music we listened to at the beginning of the hour. Some of you will have recognized it as Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini. This particular

rendition was by the young Russian pianist Daniil Trifonov. I thought we might ponder this a little bit. What are all the factors that had to come together for us to have that beautiful experience of listening to this intensely romantic, loving melody?

Paganini, an Italian, lived from 1782 to 1840, roughly 200 years ago. Something had to happen in his consciousness to come up with this specific arrangement of musical notes that make such a pleasant whole. There certainly is a lot of hard work involved in composing, and I would assume also little bit of magic. Somehow there is inspiration from the universe putting some notes together that then appear as a coherent whole. Obviously, Paganini was known for many other compositions and his virtuoso playing of his violin.

Rachmaninov, the Russian composer, lived from 1873 to 1943. So, these two gentlemen did not overlap either in time or space. And yet through recording the music on score sheets, Rachmaninov had access to Paganini's musical creation and built his variations on the theme, which have since been performed countless times over the years. Today we heard an impressive rendering by the enormously talented young Russian pianist Trifonov, born 1991, almost 50 years after Rachmaninov's death. And here we are, being moved by all of this in the present moment, giving us inspiration to move forward, recognize beauty and add to that.

To me this is a beautiful illustration of how rightly creation occurs in a very large context. We build on what has gone before. We recognize many colleagues in creation, and we happily play our part, whatever it is. In my case, listening to the music and being inspired by that to do creative work in a different realm.

Our assembly today has been keenly interested in the art of living; spiritual creative endeavors in every aspect of living, wherever we find ourselves. We recognize the same principles at work. There are creative impulses often articulated by other individuals, our spiritual mentors, if you will, and such impulses are then amplified by their colleagues at the time, and eventually by us; individually and collectively.

There is an interesting facet to all this, which is intrinsic to the creative design of which we are part. What I wish to highlight is that there is something to be created by the collective whole that is larger than one individual. Why do I say that? Well, first of all, it is an evident fact that there are more people on earth than one. With our mental capacities we can certainly imagine different universes in which on each planet there is one being that takes care of everything. Not so here, though. Now, do we need seven to eight billion? Doubtful. But clearly there is more than one needed. We create as individuals in a collective context.

Religions have often been built around individuals as if those individuals were the only ones with that creative task, and they were sufficient on their own. Again, if we follow this to its logical conclusion, then why would we be here?

Moreover, any true spiritual leader has emphasized, independent of their particular cultural and time context, that they are not interested in followers. They are interested in collaborators. They recognize their particular role in the larger context that requires others to fill in with their specific responsibilities and abilities. Every one of those leaders conveyed this! Jesus said to go out and do greater things than he could accomplish on his own; there's more to be done. His living example was to inspire people to be his friends and colleagues.

Obviously there have been many attempts at implementing this, where there has been a bit more of a collective generation of creative substance; but ultimately this should involve everyone. This would be one way of answering the question as to our purpose: Let us play our essential part of the larger whole of creation.

In many ways we recognize ourselves as an expression of divine and cosmic identity. "Divine" indicates something beyond our mental constructs, and "cosmic" indicates a vast context. The task of the day is not to rehash that this is what we are about, because others have said so, people whom we respect. No, the task is to provide a living, practical demonstration of our deep knowledge of that identity, expressed in whatever is on our plate; hour by hour, day by day.

And as we engage in that, we recognize our spiritual colleagues and engage everyone towards the larger fulfillment of responsibility.

Note: Readers are encouraged to follow up with their friends, possibly with these suggestions:

- *Share an experience you had in the last couple of weeks when you felt completely on purpose (in the deepest sense of expressing your Self).*
- *What do you see as the broader and deeper potential in your peer group of spiritual friends that has yet to be fully realized?*

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Pre-Service Music

With Or Without You [LIVE at Arena Pula]

Composed by U2 and performed by 2CELLOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNziABZJhj0>