Biological Spirituality: An Essay Reconstructed from a 2015 Recorded Talk

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October 1, 2026



Photos submitted by F. Lagrotteria

Synopsis: You're basically looking at a million-year-old body and million-year-old emotions. Read on!

We live in 2015, in America, in a land of abundance. Food is everywhere, and medicine and science have taken us to an amazing level. It is easy to assume that because our environment has advanced so dramatically, our bodies and emotions have somehow evolved correspondingly and come into balance with modern science, technology, and circumstances.

But the reality is: they have not. We are living in a modern environment with bodies shaped by an immensely longer biological history. When you eat something, your body processes that food according to biological systems that developed over vast stretches of time, not according to the comparatively recent environment in which we now live.

Consider refined sugar. For most of human history, sugars were consumed as components of foods rather than in the highly concentrated, refined forms that are now commonplace. Modern abundance therefore presents the body with dietary conditions very different from those under which its metabolic systems developed. The resulting health consequences can include metabolic imbalance and an increased risk of conditions such as type 2 diabetes. The point is not that the body has suddenly adapted to refined sugar; rather, our environment has changed much faster than our underlying biology.



Likewise, when I speak of "biological spirituality," I am talking about the way human beings relate with Heaven, with nature, with other people, and with themselves while carrying emotional capacities that are far older than the modern world around us.

We are sitting here with ancient emotions—the same basic emotions attributed to Noah and Adam: love, hate, jealousy, greed, lust, fear, and so forth. They did not appear because of modern technology or contemporary social conditions. The circumstances in which they arise may change, but the emotions themselves are deeply rooted in human experience.

We think we live in a sophisticated environment and have enlightened ways of relating with one another, but we still feel fear and threat; we still experience love and hate; greed and lust still arise within us. Modernity has changed the setting, not the fundamental emotional repertoire.

When I use the term "biological spirituality," then, I mean that just as these ancient emotions re-present themselves in a modern context, we have to reinterpret our response to them in that modern context.

A Three-Step Framework

The first step is to identify the emotion. There are no fundamentally new emotions created by the latest world situation. They are the same human emotions, eon after eon. The difficult task is to recognize accurately what is actually occurring within us.

The second step is to assess that emotion from what I would call "God's viewpoint." The Divine Principle teaches that human beings and nature are understood as created rather than as purposeless accidents. There is an original design and purpose involved.

This brings us to the question of good and evil. If we believe in God's perfection and in an original purpose for creation, then evil is not part of that original design. Evil is not an independent creative principle standing alongside good. It can instead be understood as the absence, distortion, or misuse of the good—a failure to realize the original purpose of human existence. Evil takes what is good and perverts or misuses it.

Consider jealousy. We normally think of jealousy as simply a bad thing. But if we roll it back to its underlying function, jealousy can be understood as a protective response within a relationship or family unit. From the perspective of an ideal committed relationship, it is understandable that a wife or husband would react when the other is relating to someone else in a way that threatens that bond. In its proper context, the emotion can serve a protective purpose; distorted or misdirected, it can become destructive. The same method of interpretation can be applied to other emotions.

The emotions that arise, then, should be considered in relation to the good—to the original design, the blueprint of human existence with purpose and order. Otherwise, we would have to believe that evil has its own independent origin, life, and integrity. I do not. Evil reflects the failure of people to realize their God-given character, embody that ideal, and live it out.

So the framework is simple:

1. **Identify the emotion.**

2. **Assess the emotion from God's point of view (or the original nature of creation).**

3. **Chart a course of action in response.**

Here's the rub: there is no particular course of action that can simply be written on a blackboard or put into a PowerPoint for every circumstance, because charting that course of action is precisely a human responsibility.



Human Responsibility

Many people cry out, "Where is God?" when they are suffering, facing difficulty, feeling attacked, recovering from an accident, or confronting a decision. "God doesn't love me. God doesn't care about me. God abandoned me."

But it is precisely at that moment that we confront ourselves as beings of agency and consequence. You want to know what human responsibility is? It is right there—in the place where you feel that nobody is with you, nobody is helping you, and nobody cares about you. That is the gap that can only be filled through the completion of our portion of human responsibility.

Then step back and ask: is it objectively true that nobody cares about me? God doesn't care about me? My parents don't care about me? My friends don't care about me? They may appear not to care in this particular moment, but there may be a great deal of evidence that they do.

Why, then, does it feel otherwise? Because this may be the moment of my own responsibility. God may appear silent because this is the point at which I must choose and act.

Think about parents. Parents cannot live their children's lives for them. They can guide them, give them opportunities, counsel them, and offer advice. But at the end of the day, parents cannot make every decision for their children. They cannot decide whether their children will do right or wrong or turn right or left.

And we would not want them to. We would not want our parents grabbing the steering wheel and making every decision for us. We want them to respect us enough to allow us to go forward and make decisions of our own. In this respect, I understand God in much the same way.

That is why the third point is to chart your course forward. If you are waiting for enormous hands to reach

down, hold you, and carry you through the decision, you have misunderstood the situation. You are an autonomous moral being. You have agency, and your choices are consequential.

You can chart a course forward if you have first identified what is really going on—and that alone can be one of the hardest things in life. Then you must see it from the right perspective, from God's viewpoint. Finally, you must act. That is where responsibility lies.

Conclusion

When I talk about biological spirituality, I am talking about getting down to the root of our emotions and of what is really going on, then reinterpreting and reevaluating those emotions in light of modern circumstances or, in our case, from a Divine Principle framework.

But be not deceived: these are the same fundamental emotions human beings have experienced across the ages. What we can bring to the table is a clearer understanding of how to manage them and how to take appropriate action when the decisive opportunities arise.

Not every moment is a great moral crossroads. We make countless small decisions, but the big moments come only occasionally: marriage, a serious temptation, an ethical choice, a decision that can redirect a life. These are moments that define us and allow us to go forward.

That is why we need to be prepared—with good thinking, a sound philosophy, and the willingness to act.