

The Journey of the Universe

A film project that tells the story of the unfolding of the universe from the beginning to the present, and is designed to develop a new and closer relationship between humanity and Earth. The project includes:

- A film for national and international distribution
- A DVD series
- An illustrated book
- An educational website

Executive Producer

Mary Evelyn Tucker

Written by

Brian Swimme and Mary Evelyn Tucker

Directed by

David Kennard

Produced by

David Kennard and Patsy Northcutt

Presented by

Brian Swimme

“We live in a universe of remarkable creativity that has evolved over some 14 billion years. The Earth itself has given rise to a magnificent display of life forms of which humans are an integral part. Yet in a very short period we have grown to become a planetary presence that threatens the continued flourishing of life. Our challenge now is to inspire awe and wonder so as to provide a comprehensive context for ecological values. By evoking this new understanding of our relationship to life and its emergence we can embrace the Earth community as our home. In so doing we can give to future generations the full birthright of a healthy planet that they so richly deserve.” **Mary Evelyn Tucker**

Introduction

The story so far

Since the earliest days of human civilization, we have struggled to understand and define our place in the universe. We have developed cosmologies, which are stories that describe where we have come from and where we are going. The religious and cultural traditions we have honored all bear witness to our deep desire to find meaning in what we see and feel around us. That desire lives in the hearts of our potential audience.

Over the last two centuries however, and particularly in the West, the scientific paradigm has taken root and, in many cases, become the dominant philosophy. Through the scientific method, science tends to objectivize what it describes. In recent years, science and religious cosmology have therefore co-existed uneasily. Some scientists and philosophers have come to the conclusion that the universe, while appearing to follow certain natural laws, is largely a random and accidental accretion of objects, with little meaning and certainly no larger purpose. One of the aims of this project is to counteract this view with a cinematic presentation of a dynamic and self-organizing universe.

The goal of the project

The goal of *The Journey of the Universe* is to tell the story of cosmic and Earth evolution drawing on the latest scientific knowledge, in a way that makes it profoundly relevant and deeply moving to the viewer. What emerges is an intensely poetic story, which evokes intense emotions of awe, excitement, fear, joy and belonging.

This story is a dramatic one. Throughout billions of years of evolution, triumph and disaster have been only a hair's breadth apart. Violence and creativity are pervasive. The ability of matter to organize and re-organize itself is remarkable – from the formation of the first atoms to the emergence of life. The audience will come to realize that the energy released at the very beginning has finally become capable of exploring its own journey of change. Simple hydrogen has become a vibrant living planet, with beings that now are able to investigate how this has happened.

By re-telling the story in this way, the on-camera host, Brian Swimme (a scientist himself), kindles a keen sense of wonder in the audience – and a sense of respect for the astonishing universal process of which they are a part.

Waking up to our fundamental connection to the cosmos will be a means of re-engagement with life. *The Journey of the Universe* will enable us – the audience – to connect emotionally with the universe and the Earth of which we are a part. In doing this, we will appreciate the need for a sustainable human presence on the planet.

Executive Summary

The Journey of the Universe is a remarkable, awe-inspiring, science-based film that narrates the story of the universe. The project will also include an accompanying book, a website and educational materials.

Drawing on the latest scientific understanding, the film tells the story of the development of the universe, from the Big Bang (known here as the Flaring Forth) through the formation of the galaxies, stars, and planetary systems to the emergence of life and Homo Sapiens. It brings the viewer right up to the present day, thereby creating a powerful link in the audience's mind between themselves and their cosmic origins.

Although the project is science-based, it will be distinctive for its poetry and visual imagery. The aim of the producers is to create a feeling of awe and delight. It is projected that *The Journey of the Universe* will be seen in one or more media by several million people.

Project Elements

The project will consist of the following elements:

- A film for national and international distribution (90 min)
- A thirteen-part educational DVD series (13 x 20 minutes)
- An illustrated book (150 pp, with diagrams and color plates)
- An educational website, with general information, bibliography, and teaching materials

Each of these elements is self-contained and will stand alone, but each will enhance and add further depth to the audience's enjoyment of the others.

The Project Creators and Producers

The project is being created by **Brian Swimme** (*The Universe Story*, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos*) and **Mary Evelyn Tucker** (*Worldly Wonder* and Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology) in collaboration with internationally recognized producer-director **David Kennard** (*Cosmos*, *The Ascent of Man*, *2001:HAL's Legacy*, *The Heart of Healing*).

The Timeline and Budget

- The Development Stages of the project (2003) were fully funded
- The Scripting and Scouting Stages (2004-5) were fully funded and a script was completed
- The First Stage of Production was funded, allowing shooting in Greece in April/May 2006
- The Second Stage of Production was funded for initial editing (July-Sep 2006)
- The Third Stage of Production was funded for filming in Greece (Oct-December 2006)
- Special & archive photography and final editing are now being completed
- The producers plan to have the project ready for launch in 2009

The Journey of the Universe

This film is an awakening to the creativity of the universe and our participation in it. Using story form and a host of engaging images and animations, Brian Swimme narrates the central events of our cosmic evolution - the birth of the universe, the emergence of stars and galaxies, the evolution of Earth and life, and the portentous appearance of the human.

The film's story unfolds on the historic and enchanting Greek island of Samos, where Pythagoras was born. On one level, it takes us through the arc of a single day of island life, as experienced on-camera by Brian Swimme, our host and companion.

Set within the story of this day is the vastly larger story of the last 14 billion years of evolution. Vivid imagery and special photography depict some of the most momentous events and dynamic processes that have shaped our universe. On this deeper level, we will discover that things are, by their nature, creative and destructive. They cluster together into communities and are blown apart by violent forces, only to re-assemble into something new. We will learn that the cosmos is self-organizing and self-shaping. Some structures are more energetic, dynamic, and enduring than others.

In spite of the violent energies constantly released, however, the universe seems to move towards ever-greater complexity and consciousness. Particularly since the emergence of life, the pace of this change has been accelerating on Earth. The arrival of *Homo sapiens* has further accelerated the change on a local level. Brian Swimme poses pivotal questions: will our powers outstrip our intelligence, as sometimes seems likely today? Or will the universe come to know itself more fully through our conscious imagination?

As the film (and the day on Samos) conclude, a distant clock strikes midnight, and Brian ventures forth into the future, setting sail with local fishermen into a mysterious, star-lit Mediterranean sea. His voyage signals the possibility of a new beginning for the human venture, in the midst of tremendous challenges.

“We are all stardust,” Carl Sagan reminded us in *Cosmos* (a series co-created by the director of this film). Twenty five years on, *The Journey of the Universe* will show us how that lineage of stardust can shape the way we feel about our own planet, so that we might better cherish and protect what gave us life and nourishes us.