

Gresham Lectures 2017-18

Divinity Lecture 2

Watching the Heavens: Astronomy and the Meaning of Life

Alister McGrath

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Joseph Addison

Th'unwearied Sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Immanuel Kant

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.



IMMANUEL
KANT

1724 * + 1804

ZWEI DINGE ERFÜLLEN DAS GEMÜT
MIT IMMER NEUER UND ZUNEHMENDER
BEWUNDERUNG UND EHRFURCHT,
JE ÖFTER UND ANHALTENDER SICH DAS
NACHDENKEN DAMIT BESCHÄFTIGT: DER
BESTIRNTE HIMMEL ÜBER MIR UND DAS
MORALISCHE GESETZ IN MIR.

ДВЕ ВЕЩИ НАПОЛНЯЮТ ДУШУ ВСЕ
НОВЫМ И РАСТУЩИМ ВОСХИЩЕНИЕМ
И БЛАГОТОВЕНИЕМ, ПО МЕРЕ ТОГО, КАК
ЗАДУМЫВАЕШЬСЯ НАД НИМИ: ВСЕ
ГЛУБЖЕ И ДОЛЬШЕ: ЗВЕЗДНОЕ НЕБО
НАДО МНОЙ И МОРАЛЬНЫЙ ЗАКОН
ВО МНЕ.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

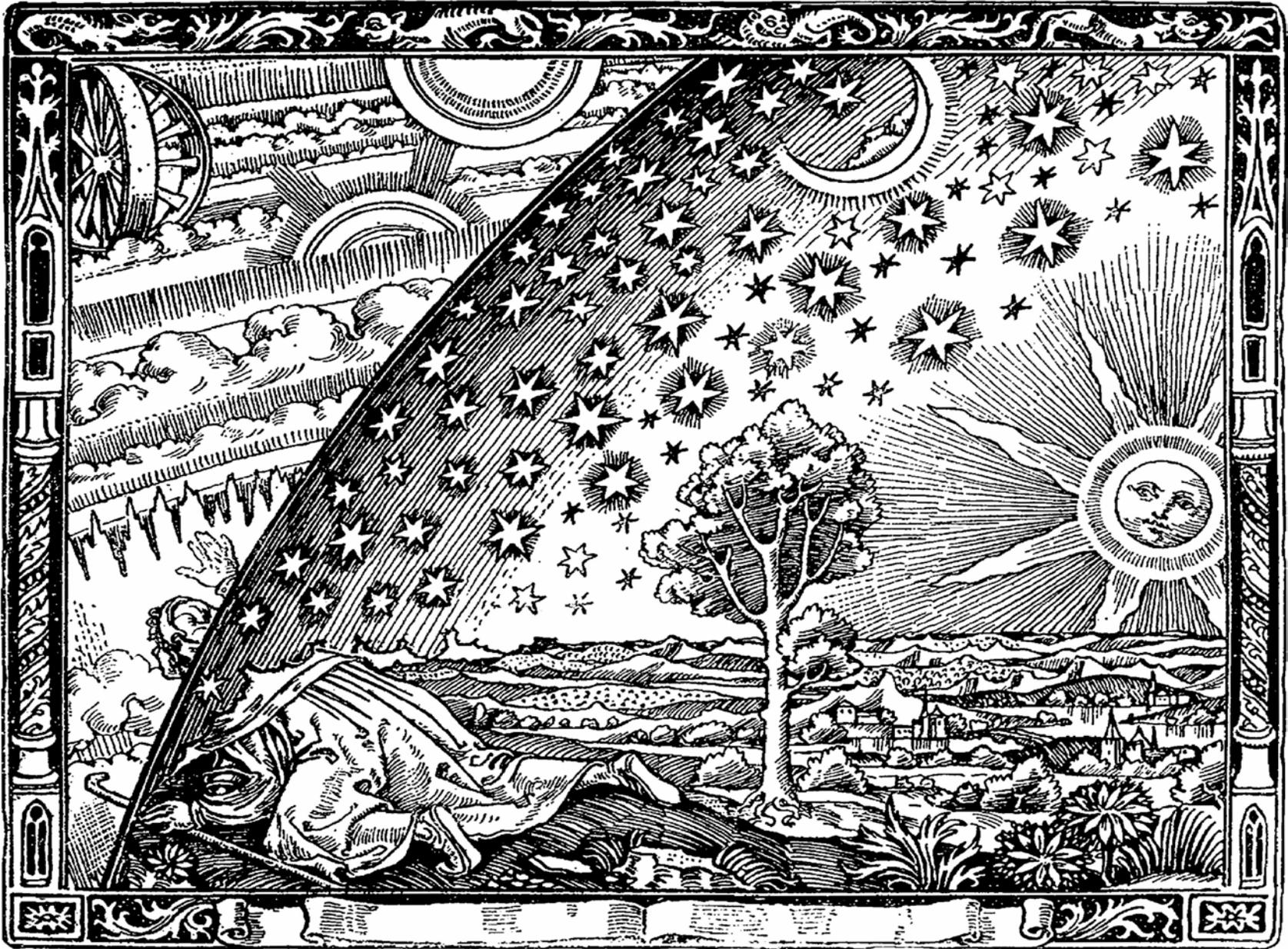
And that inverted bowl we call “the Sky”,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to It for help – for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

Shelley

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

John Gillespie Magee

I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings
...
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.



Ptolemy's System

1. The earth is at the centre of the universe;
2. All heavenly bodies rotate in circular paths around the earth;
3. These rotations take the form of motion in a circle, the centre of which in turn moves in another circle. This central idea, which was originally due to Hipparchus, is based on the idea of *epicycles* – that is, circular motion imposed upon circular motion.

John Keats

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings.



[End]