

Questions for individual reflection or group discussion on

Connie Barlow's chapter "[We Are Stardust](#)"

in the 2009 book

[The Whole World Kin: Darwin and the Spirit of Liberal Religion](#)

1. Before reading this chapter, did you know that you were made of stardust? If you already knew, do you recall where and how you acquired that awareness, and whether it happened in a way that was meaningful for you? If not, did Barlow's essay help you deepen a sense of kinship with the cosmos?
2. Barlow advocates for making the science-based story of an evolving cosmos not just one story among many creation stories but as the story that children in religiously liberal contexts should be given as their own. Did you find her arguments convincing? And if so, would that undermine cherished liberal principles of respect for diversity?
3. Barlow invokes Joseph Campbell's definition of religion, "that which puts one in accord with the universe" (pp. 75-76). She then asserts, "So if religious liberals do not make a priority of guiding our children and youth into an intimate, empowering relationship with the universe, we fail to provide them with religion." What does that statement bring up for you?
4. The author tells the story (p. 77) of a boy's experience in a church "Coming of Age" class that, because he was skeptical about several supernatural belief claims, he regarded himself as "not really spiritual." Barlow then asserts, "Religious advisors and mentors had failed this boy." She continues, "Beliefs, particularly about supernatural claims, are not, after all, the core of what religion in liberal religious circles." What thoughts and feelings come up for you when you reflect on that passage?
5. Barlow amplifies her advocacy by drawing upon an arsenal of anecdotal evidence based on her experience teaching the Epic of Evolution in religious education contexts. How do you regard the rhetorical uses of such stories, rather than relying exclusively on the logical integrity of an argument, perhaps supplemented with peer-reviewed sociological data in support of it?
6. Toward the end of the chapter, Barlow offers suggestions, within this new paradigm of the Epic of Evolution, of how religious liberals can authentically and helpfully answer children's fundamental questions about the toughest spiritual topics: death and God. Did any of her suggestions ring a chord with you?