

Features

Velikovsky, Immanuel reconsider

Richard Dubinsky

Every group of believers has its heretics. In this respect, science is often little different from many other belief systems.

Immanuel Velikovsky is one such heretic. The publication of his *Worlds in Collision* brought him such public support that scientists took it upon themselves to condemn Velikovsky and suppress his writings.

Velikovsky was born in 1895 in Russia and died in the United States in 1979. He studied law, ancient history and medicine at the University of Moscow, where he received his medical degree in 1921. He then travelled to Europe, and became an accredited psychoanalyst in Vienna in the late 1920's.

Research changed the course of his life

In 1939 he and his family came to the United States where Velikovsky intended to complete research on a book about Freud which required an analysis of three characters of critical significance to Freud: Moses, Oedipus and Akhnaton.

His research would entirely change the course of his life.

In studying the biblical story of Moses and the Exodus, Velikovsky realized that the account of the Israelites' flight from Egypt some 3000 years ago carries the record of great natural catastrophes. These cataclysmic events had actually taken place and had left their mark in the records of civilizations everywhere on Earth. His study of these catastrophes and of their extra-terrestrial causes led to the publication of *Worlds in Collision*, followed by *Earth in Upheaval*, *Ages in Chaos*, and other scholarly works. In a few months his first posthumous book, *Mankind in Amnesia* will be published.

Central thesis runs against accepted ideas

Velikovsky offered a number of theories in his attempts to explain the history of mankind, but the greatest furor centred around his reconstruction of the recent history of the solar system.

The central thesis in *Worlds in Collision* runs contrary to the accepted idea of stable, electrically neutral planets, moving through a vacuum in space, held together only by gravitation. Velikovsky believed our solar system to be a dynamic, electromagnetically interwoven fabric in which all objects constantly influence each other.

He was convinced that great natural disasters arose as a result of Venus being ejected from the

planet Jupiter a few millennia before 1500 BC. According to Velikovsky, Venus was a comet, not having settled into its present orbit around the sun until relatively recent times. In the 15th century BC Venus twice came close enough to the Earth/Moon system to cause orbital perturbation in all three bodies.

Theories supported by myth and history

He theorized that before 687 BC the Earth, Moon, Mars and Venus all moved in orbits very different from those presently. In the 8th century Venus' still unsettled orbit disturbed the orbit of Mars leading to a series of near-encounters between Earth/Moon and Mars.

Finally, in the course of the 7th century, the terrestrial planets settled into stable orbits essentially identical to those observed today. During the near collision the Earth stopped turning, the poles shifted, humankind was pictured as devastated beyond the worst natural disasters in history.

Velikovsky supports his theories not only with myths, but with a great array of detailed historical, archaeological, literary, astronomical, geological and paleontological facts and records.

Ideas spark continued interest

Dominant scientific thought at present subscribes to the philosophy of Humanistic Evolutionism. There are no interplanetary cataclysms, no abrupt changes in natural order, only a slow evolution over aeons of geological time brought about by processes proceeding as uniformly as they did millions of years ago. Nature makes no leaps of the sort Velikovsky describes.

Yet, the continuing interest in Velikovsky's ideas is exemplified by the recent incorporation of ISIS (The International Society of Interdisciplinary Studies) a non-profit organization founded by Milton Zysman, a Toronto born filmmaker and entrepreneur.

Particularly interested in the relevance of cataclysms to the development of new animal species, Zysman says, "the theory of evolution is basically descriptive. Though Darwin successfully convinced modern scholars that we have evolved from common ancestors, he failed to provide a convincing mechanism for the changes."

Zysman follows Velikovsky's ideas that "random global disasters not only clear the field of older species but provide a variety of powerful forces to trigger wide



ranging mutations." Velikovsky notes that no genuine new species have appeared in the memory of man and that hundreds of existing species have died out. This question is treated by Velikovsky in his book *Earth in Upheaval* where he gives evidence for evolution based on global catastrophes.

At present Zysman is concluding an agreement with the late Dr. Velikovsky's wife, Elisheva Velikovsky, to produce a feature film inspired by *Worlds in Collision*. Zysman agrees that Velikovsky's ideas always seem to evoke a strong emotional response, particularly from scientists, but he asks, "Why would anybody want to deny Velikovsky?"

Scientists Confront Velikovsky was published in 1977 as evidence against the theories presented in *Worlds in Collision*. Distinguished scientists such as Carl Sagan and Derral Mulholland present rigorous arguments against Velikovsky's

ideas. They do not object to planetary collisions, only to major recent collisions.

If the inner planets were shown to scale, they would be mere grains of dust on a desk top and we could easily see that the chance of collision of a particular comet with the Earth in a few thousand years is particularly low. Further arguments show that the ejection of Venus from Jupiter would be impossible, the Earth's rotation could not stop and start up again in one day, and that the chemistry and biology of the planets do not resemble Velikovsky's predictions.

Debate centers on a petition in time

However, some of Velikovsky's predictions have been confirmed. The surface of Venus, as predicted, was found to be "hot". U.S. Pioneer Orbiter and the Russian Venera series measures the surface of Venus to be about 480 degrees

centigrade, contrary to previous scientific beliefs. Radio emissions from Jupiter also predicted by Velikovsky were observed from this planet in the late 1950's.

There is little question that we have lived through several 'world ages' where drastic changes have occurred; the debate between Velikovsky and members of the scientific community centres on a petition in time. Since 1950 many astronomical ideas have changed as a result of space exploration and theoretical constructs. A great deal that seemed plausible at that time has since been shown to be incorrect. Testimony in *Worlds in Collision* and current astronomical theories will remain unrefuted until new evidence has been gathered by direct manned planetary exploration.

Velikovsky recognized our cataclysmic past as a form of collective amnesia unable to come to terms with its past and perhaps we are doomed to relive it in the present.

Money is the key to food dilemma

Erina Ingrassia

There were many fruitful arguments at York last week, but to John Sokol, a speaker at the Tenth Annual Conference on World Food Production and Distribution, "there is no magic formula to solve the world food problem. There is only hard work and very slow development."

In what Sokol described as the world's second consecutive year in food production decline, Canada is still a power in food production. National statistics show in 1976 Canada exported \$4 billion in food, 70 to 75 per cent of this being wheat. This year the figures may climb to \$8 billion.

For lack of a formula to solve world food problems, Sokol used this example to present a model of possible solutions.

"Providing the price is right," said Sokol, Canada's food production can still double. "The only way the farmers will respond is by having a little more money in their pockets."

"What we have seen in countries such as Russia which uphold

centralized planning and little incentive policies is that it just doesn't work," he maintained.

Profits received by farmers could be used to reinvest in the production unit itself.

"If there are no economic returns," he argued, "there can be no collateral for credit and that is when you get moves into mushrooming cities."

A second part to Sokol's model dealt with the suitability of agricultural yields.

"We must keep in mind the food which can best be grown here," he said. "I'm not saying we can't grow bananas in the Arctic, we can. But at \$15 per banana."

Furthering his economic model Sokol warned that an increase in the amount of government expenditure in agriculture will bring about a higher inflation rate.

"We have to expect higher costs of food, but we can afford it," he said. "The problem is whether countries who really need it can afford it."

Challenging Sokol on this point was Professor Harriett Friedmann

who believes food is a matter of politics.

"The World Food Conference treats this as a technically solvable problem," she said, "but if money was poured into agriculture now, the high prices of food in cities would show up on a political level on the part of organized workers."

Though Sokol's model might work for Canada, Friedmann felt that applying it to Third World countries would have inevitable political consequences.

To Friedmann, the growth of cities and the development of an industrial middle-class was the direct result of the integration of Third World countries into the world market before the First World War. Cities then developed at the expense of the countryside. The consequence, said Friedmann, was that countries such as Peru became directly dependent on American subsidized food aid.

"If government was to sustain self-sufficiency, it would go further into debt than it already is," said Friedmann.

Velikovsky's
right?

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