

REFLECTIONS AT CHRISTMAS

S.A.R.O.S.
the Science and Religion of Space

The original meaning of Science is wisdom. We take it firstly to indicate a study and understanding of the laws by which the universe operates, and secondly to involve learning and mental effort.

Religion (re-ligare) means to re-bind, which may be seen as a making whole again. It is opposite to the analytical method which breaks down. It is an activity of the heart.

From these two foundations it is possible to extend the space in which we live, both outer and inner. The inner space in which our individual psychological life takes place and in which it breathes and grows, is mirrored by the space containing the life and destiny of Mankind. The earth is currently seen as crowded and in some difficulties: its resources at a low ebb, its breathing and circulation in danger of suffocation and poisoning. Concurrent with this, (not necessarily consequent upon it), Mankind is eagerly charting the greater space in which he lives, making maps, peering with extended eyes and radio-senses, and sending probes like seeds into the far reaches. The most potent seed, the only seed capable of growth and reproduction, is Man himself, who like all seeds, urgently seeks to occupy the larger space and to send out roots wherever they might find a foundation, by catapulting himself outwards in pods and capsules of his own design. It is a process no more artificial than that designed by Vegetable Nature to send forth her seeds. It is a product of the nature and ability of Man.

The situation on the large scale is reflected on the small, including the sense of suffocation, the strangulation of psychological resources which many individuals feel as powerlessness or fear. It can arise from consideration and sensitivity to the state of the Earth as a whole; from entanglement in the huge social and political machinery of all urbanized cultures, involving forces which the individual is powerless to control; and from the consequent loss of clear human values. Further consideration of values is not necessary to the functioning of autonomous organizations regarded as values in themselves.

Powerlessness and fear have many forms of expression: anger, destructiveness, depression, hopelessness, or beavering head-in-the-sand activity-for-the-sake-of-activity, which prefers not to enquire "why" or "whither". All of these manifestations are evident, both as movements in society and within the lives of individuals.

The great bogey Unemployment, makes available more space; space in a person's life previously filled by externally governed activity. Along with that new space arises fear, because the filling of it may require inner muscles which have not been developed, in the absence of a pressing need to do so. Technological gadgetry makes more space in everyone's life needing to be filled with "meaningful" activities.

What is meaningful? Can any activity truly be called meaningful when it is undertaken from an underlying sense of panic, to occupy oneself in order to ward off depression and anxiety; when this "warding off" is the meaning? Certainly such activity is thereby meaningful, but obviously there is a scale of meaning, and the finger-in-the-dyke level of meaningfulness may no longer be sufficient in the future which is relentlessly and irrevocably opening up for mankind.

It will become essential if we are to survive, to look at the roots of anxiety, both collectively and individually, and to embrace the future with vision, not fear.

This is the religious vision. Each of the known religions has arisen as a particular form of this vision in a particular time and culture (or cultures), but the vision, and the need for it, is ever new, and a Constant, not just of the individual human heart, but of the progressive thrust of humankind. In the wake of this vision have come all technological wonders, from the harnessing of fire for cooking to the harnessing of nuclear forces to get us off this planet (one way or another!). In the wake of it; not the other way around.

But the vision and technology, so-called religion and science, emotion and thought, heart and head, are inextricably bound together in the functioning Unity which is Man. It has never been otherwise, despite the labelling which has sometimes seemed to set a separation between them, or emphasize one to the ignore-ance of the other, temporarily. For example, Middle Ages = religion/superstition; 20th Century = science; and so the pendulum swings.

The developing psyche of Humankind, as with each individual being, proceeds with bounds and plateaus, periods of in-gathering and others of quantum leaps, but always within the Unity of the life of that individual, or the life of the whole Kind: Humanity and the earth we have created.

With the perception and the recognition of these functioning Unities, there is a way to a religious vision which can lead us into the future with confidence, and which can enable us to shape the future with awareness that we are doing so. We cannot avoid shaping it, as we have shaped the past, and have made the present exactly what it is, but in that awareness there is wisdom.

This sort of vision does not require belief, nor does it set up Beliefs, but it does demand faith, and the courage to see on a larger scale and with a different perspective from the tiny and personal. Relativity must become part of the intellect, which is the harmonious working of "head" and "heart" together.

To accomplish this, the understanding which is involved requires science (in its true sense), but nothing can be achieved without that commitment of the heart which is true religion. In the age which is coming we must give birth to this spirit again, in a form and with a vision which is great enough to encompass all the worlds we may encounter in the universe we are about to discover, and in the light of it, give meaning and pattern to the changes, upheavals and crises which are dogging the children of earth.