

Religion

When they spoke of a city of the gods, which the heroes of many peoples strove to reach; when they spoke of a paradise where gods and humankind lived together in transfigured original nature; when they spoke of falls and floods, great internal truth was told

Later, the redeemers brought their messages and came to us in double nature to reestablish that lost unity for which we yearned. Then, too, great inner truth was told.

But when all this was spoken of but set outside the mind it was an error or a lie.

However, the fusing of the inner look with the external world forces this look to travel new paths.

The heroes of this age fly toward the stars. They fly through regions previously unknown. They fly out from their world and, without knowing it, they are impelled toward the internal and luminous center”

From the The Inner Look by Silo

1. From Chapter XII, “Religion” in The Human Landscape

3. We can say nothing about God. We can speak only of what has been said about God. Many things have been said about God, and much can be said about all this that has been said, but not because of this are we making any progress on the theme of God insofar as it refers to God per se.

4. This kind of tongue twister aside, religions can be of profound interest only when they attempt to point to God rather than to talk about God.

5. Religions, however, express that which exists in their respective landscapes, and consequently a religion is neither true nor false, because its value is not logical. Its value lies in the type of internal register that it evokes, in the agreement between the landscapes one wishes to express and what is really being demonstrated.

6. Religious literature is often linked to landscapes, both external and human, and the characteristics and attributes of their gods are not independent of those landscapes. Nevertheless, even when these external and human landscapes change, this religious literature may endure into new times. And that is hardly surprising, given that nonreligious literature of various kinds also finds a following and awakens emotions in distant eras. Nor does a cult’s persistence through time say much about its “truth,” since legal formalities and social ceremonies often pass from culture to culture and continue to be observed even when knowledge of their original significance has been lost.

7. A religion bursts onto a human landscape in a particular historical period, and so it is often said that at that moment God “reveals” himself to the human being. But in order for that revelation to be accepted in a given historical moment, something must take place in the internal landscape of the human being. That change has generally been interpreted as if

“outside” the human being, placing it in the external or social world, and there are certain benefits to be gained in doing so. But something is lost as well – the ability to understand the religious phenomenon as an internal register.

8. But religions have also portrayed themselves as something external, and in so doing they have prepared the ground for the above-mentioned interpretations.

9. When I speak of “external religion,” I am not referring to the projection of psychological images as icons, paintings, statues, buildings, or relics (things proper to visual perception). Nor am I referring to projections in the form of chanting and prayer (proper to auditory perception), nor to their projection as gestures, postures, or the turning of the body in certain directions (proper to kinesthetic and cenesthetic perceptions). Finally, I do not say that a religion is external because it has its sacred books, sacraments, and so on. I do not even call it external because to its liturgy it adds a church, an organization, or holy days, or because it requires of its followers a certain physical state or age in order to carry out specific operations. No, that is the way the followers of the various religions struggle among themselves, each accusing the other faction of various degrees of idolatry because of a preference for working with certain types of images. Rather than dealing with anything substantial, however, this only demonstrates the complete psychological ignorance of the contending parties.

10. When I speak of “external religion” I am referring to any religion that claims to talk about God and the will of God instead of speaking about the religious sentiment and the innermost register of the human being. Even seeking support in externalized worship could be meaningful if through such practices the believers were able to awaken in themselves (were able to reveal) the presence of God.

11. The fact that until now religions have been external corresponds to the type of human landscape in which they were born and developed. Nevertheless, the birth of an inner religion is possible, or in order to survive contemporary religions may convert to an internal religiosity. However, this will only occur to the extent that the internal landscape is ready to accept a new revelation. We are now beginning to catch glimpses of this in those societies in which the human landscape is undergoing such drastic change that the need for internal references is becoming a matter of extreme urgency.

12. None of what has been said about religions can remain standing today, however, for both religion’s apologists and its critics have failed to notice the change that is taking place within the human being. If in the past some people have thought of religions as soporifics to political or social action, today they oppose them for their powerful influence in those fields. Where others once imagined religions imposing their message, now they find that this message has changed. And those who once believed that religions would last forever, today doubt their eternity, while those who assumed that religions were soon to disappear are now surprised to witness the irruption of new forms that are manifestly or latently mystical.

13. There are few in this field who can intuit what the future holds, because there are so few concerned with trying to understand in what direction human intentionality, which definitively transcends the individual human being, is heading. If humanity desires something new to “make itself known,” it is because that which tends to make itself known is already operating in humankind’s internal landscape. But it is not by claiming to be the representative of some god that the internal register of the human being is converted into the dwelling-place or the landscape of a transcendent look, a transcendent intention.

2. From “Religiosity in Today’s World,” June 6, 1986, in Silo Speaks

“In my opinion:

First, a new type of religiosity has begun to develop in recent decades.

Second, underlying this religiosity is a diffuse background of rebellion.

Third, as a consequence of the impact of this new religiosity and, of course, as a consequence of the dizzying changes taking place in all societies, it is possible that at their core the traditional religions may undergo re-accommodations and adaptations of substantial importance.

Fourth, it is highly likely that people all over the planet will experience further psychosocial shocks in the coming years and that this new type of religiosity I have been referring to will figure as an important factor in this phenomenon.

Furthermore, and even though it may seem contrary to the opinion of most social observers, I do not believe that religions have lost their impetus. I do not believe that they are increasingly cut off from power in political, economic, and social decision-making, nor do I believe that religiosity has ceased to stir the consciousness of the peoples of the Earth.”

“...It seems very clear to us that religiosity is advancing – here in Latin America, in the United States, in Japan, in the Arab world, and in the socialist camp: Cuba, Afghanistan, Poland, the U.S.S.R. Our question regarding this matter lies, rather, in the issue of whether the official, established religions will be able to adapt this psychosocial phenomenon to the new urban landscape, or whether they will be overwhelmed by it. It may happen that a diffuse religiosity will continue to grow in small, chaotic groups, without constituting a formal church, and if this is the case it will not be easy to grasp the real magnitude of this phenomenon.

Although the comparison is not entirely legitimate, a distant antecedent comes to mind: As Imperial Rome began to lose faith in her official religion, all manner of cults and superstitions began to arrive from every corner of the empire. And one of those insignificant groups eventually became a universal church.

Today it is clear that if it is to advance, this diffuse religiosity must somehow combine the landscape and the language of our times – a language of computer programming, technology, and space travel – with a new social Gospel.”

3. From “The Theme of God,” October 29, 1995, in Silo Speaks

“If God has not died, then religions have responsibilities to humanity that they must fulfill. Today they have a duty to create a new psychosocial atmosphere, to address themselves as teachers to their faithful, and to eradicate all vestiges of fanaticism and fundamentalism. They cannot turn away and remain indifferent to the hunger, ignorance, bad faith, and violence in today’s world. They must contribute vigorously to tolerance and foster dialogue with other beliefs and every person who feels a sense of responsibility for the destiny of humankind. They must open themselves – and I hope this won’t be taken as irreverence – to manifestations of God in the many cultures. We are waiting for them and expecting them to make this contribution to the common cause in this exceedingly difficult moment.

If, on the other hand, God has died in the heart of religions, then we can be sure that God will return to life in a new dwelling, as we learn from the history of the origins of every civilization – and that new dwelling will be in the heart of the human being, far removed from every institution and all power.”

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