

COSMOS AND CREATION - Part 2

AFTERNOON FOLLOW-UP

Consider these quotations:

The dead do not praise the Lord; neither do they who go down into silence.”

“All that is needed for the forces of evil to succeed is for enough good men to remain silent.” Edmund Burke

So silence is not always golden ?

The little fable I read this morning, (Reflections on the Power of Silence) made the case for ‘ruthlessness’. Quite a lot in that lovely word—‘ruth’ = compassion/pity. Ruthlessness as a virtue sits uneasily in our sentimental age. It is generally given a negative cast and applied to dictators et al.

But quite simply, if I were not ruthless in my garden, it would not exist, the space gone, the organisation reverting to chaos, and my home swallowed up in vegetation like Sleeping Beauty’s castle. With my shears, I am Ruthlessness incarnate. And don’t mention slugs!

Without a similar ruthlessness, my interior castle would likewise disappear. St Teresa’s instructions about how to maintain an interior ‘garden’ are as valid today as ever. She compares degrees of prayer with four ways of watering a garden:

‘At first the water has to be drawn up by hand as from a deep well; a great deal of human effort is called for. Then things become easier. The senses have been stilled and it is as if the well had been fitted with a windlass ...Later still, when all voluntary activities of the mind have ceased, it is as if a little river ran through the garden. In the last and highest degree it is as if God Himself watered the garden with His rain.’

So the silence we spoke about this morning and experienced in meditation, is not to be confused with the absence of speaking when speaking is needed. It is Presence, not absence. A substance, fullness of possibility, not absence of any.

The opposing force to this type of positive silence can be characterised as Noise, a weed-like incursion needing to be firmly attacked.

It can perhaps be summed up as the difference between the Word and words/noise.

The *Word* emerges from a deep & silent place.

Words can most easily be generated from the froth of life, and like foam, blow about the world we live in, sometimes totally ephemeral, sometimes, unfortunately, setting into a concrete-like substance into which many folk become embedded, and from which they can carve chunks with which to hit others over the head.

The *Word*, however, never lends itself to violence. And unlike *words*,-- in which we are drowning by courtesy of media & technology, the pace of modern life which leaves little space for silence, and the rat-race in the brain which leads many into mental chaos, undermines the immune system and generally makes us forget who we are and where we have come from,--unlike this excess, contact with the true principle of the Word is rare. It has to be worked for.

You could say, however, that it is our responsibility to do this, and to expand the framework through which we see, interpret and respond:

Arthur M. Schlesinger

Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our response .

Henri Poincare

Science is facts; just as houses are made of stones, so is science made of facts; but a pile of stones is not a house and a collection of facts is not necessarily science.

It seems obvious to me that we structure and frame our perceptions and reality through both science and myth as the secular and the spiritual routes to knowing more and being more. And I am so glad to be living at a time when both have drawn back together, where they belong, in the one Cosmos of human life.

My final quote from science may not earn its originator a Nobel prize, but it says a lot about being human:

Mark Russell

'The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline luggage.'

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