

RELIGION AND COSMOLOGY IN THE 20th CENTURY - 19 July 1966

Last night we realized we were moving into a kind of super-autumn, historically speaking, which means either the reaping of the crop, or its failure. Today, we will think of the good crops of our cosmological world and work on the foundation of astronomy and what that offers.

There was once a close union between religion, art, and science—a triune that was cultivated in the early mysteries—but this is of a totally different character today. In the Greek civilization, cosmology was still conceived of as being related to spiritual beings working behind the spheres of the planets in the divine worlds. This included not only the visible stars that we deal with so materially today, but also that which worked behind them into our world. In ancient times there was also this conception of the spheres, wherein they saw the physical planets as secondary elements of the larger sphere, meaning everything included within the orbit of the planet. It is even possible that they knew of the heliocentric viewpoint in the Egyptian temples.

The planet can be regarded as no more than a chalk mark in its invisible sphere, when moving around its orbit. In ancient times the sphere was seen as the habitation of divine beings who manipulated this “piece of chalk.” It was then that astronomy was united with religion, but it eventually began to change. Ptolemy of Egypt was an exponent of the geocentric, and yet he also clung to a kind of imagination of the spheres. Copernicus finally put the Sun in the center, with the planets circulating around it, and the spheres were finally discarded. However, it was not so much by Copernicus, who was a kind of astronomical schizophrenic, proposing the heliocentric in his book but frequently working from the Ptolemaic viewpoint. Kepler and Newton came later, but still this idea of the spheres clung on to the fringe. There was still talk of the harmony of the spheres by Kepler, who discovered ellipses and spoke of the planets as musical instruments; but finally Newton threw this out, and there were no more spheres.

Ultimately, humanity created perspectives and a mechanical universe ruled by gravitation. There was no longer any need for spheres, nor any insight into the divine nature of the background of this study of planetary movements. Religion continually moved away from science and art, leaving only faith. As Augustine said, “We have only documents left, but we must cling to them.” As late as the 18th century in England, attempts were made at a kind of astro-theology—it was the title of a book of that time—which was an attempt to work with scientific concepts of the Copernican (quantitative) astronomy, while still retaining an element of divinity. Astronomy has now become purely quantitative, a matter of gravitation, electricity, and magnetism in the universe.

I have already spoken of the strange resurgence of a kind of astrology called solaristics, or lunaristics, for the old name has become unfashionable. We have recalled the radio, meteorological and other disturbances that have been correlated right down to physiological phenomena associated with sun spots and cosmic cycles, including planetary cycles. We have also discovered that these cannot entirely be regarded as satisfactory solutions. This new statistical astrological computer-science doesn't give us any explanation of the interaction of cosmic rhythms and earthly phenomena. It is maneuvering us inexorably toward a ghost universe.

As a move toward the future, there is a need to create a new position for cosmology within the unified complex of religion, science and art. Humanity can no longer live with this division. Through science we are faced with a dissolution of our image, so that we are becoming robot-like, without dignity in the universe, a mere coincidence. Religion, at present, seems powerless and feeble, without conviction.

Rudolf Steiner, at the opening of the first Goetheanum, I think around 1920, said then how necessary it had become to unite art, science, and religion again on a higher level. He both pointed toward the need and gave practical advice as to its attainment. As he said, one cannot say, “This must be so” unless one lives with it, otherwise it has no substance. We must live with the “Astronomical Course” of 1921, and maintain it by facing the adversaries with astronomical facts of this kind. In short, we must evolve our faculties to the stage of Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition.

After Dr. Steiner had spoken on these things, one student remarked; “But Herr Doctor, if all this is required of us, we must evolve spiritual insight.” And Rudolf Steiner’s reply was simply, “And if that were so?” It is, as always, a question of inner courage and persistence. Such a book as *Cosmology, Religion and Philosophy* is good to live with in relation to all this. There, Steiner describes, from such premises, the development of higher faculties in order to come to a real cosmology, linking both philosophy and religion. He has said, “Through cosmology we must come to Inspiration.”

Rudolf Steiner has given us advice on Imagination many times. If confronted with a problem, we must first question the facts, and then transform it into a picture. I have already been speaking of the Rose Cross Imagination, which has no earthly affiliations, or relationships. There is no personal tint about it. The human being is bound to the dark cross as an experience of death. But the wreath of roses reminds us of the spiritual regeneration that has entered into the world since Christ. These seven red roses can also live as an inner experience within us. So far, we are standing in front of what is a dead image, and we must break through to an inner experience of it. This means that we must relinquish the Imagination and literally create an inner void in full consciousness. It is the same as falling asleep while retaining one’s self-consciousness. One then breaks through to cognition as Inspiration, penetrates through to a spiritual cosmos filled with Divine Beings. It is in this realm that we find ourselves after death, between incarnations.

How can we relate this spiritual cosmos to the visible one? It is a relationship of spiritual origins with a reflection in the external cosmos. Having reached the condition of Inspiration by experiencing the inner life of the cosmos, this is met by Inspiration on Earth. In *Cosmology, Religion and Philosophy* one reads, “I know that this cosmic life is in me and that I am part of that cosmos.” This is the same experience as after death.

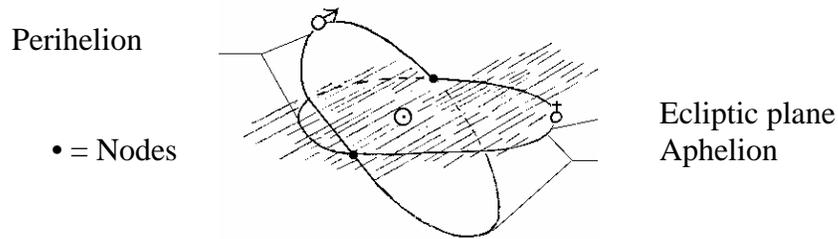
We must retain a capacity to exchange the experience of an inner cosmos with our condition in ordinary consciousness, or we will lose ourselves and our ability to come back safely into a physical body. Then one can relate the experience in the cosmos to ordinary consciousness. It is when we perceive the external cosmos, in planetary positions and relationships to the Zodiac, and to each other, that we can then experience a reflection of an inner spiritual reality in ourselves, wherein the souls of the dead and the hierarchies can echo.

One returns to ordinary consciousness and, surrounded by heavenly configurations, carries this image of spiritual reality like a memory picture of what is experienced within. We can find this new relationship to the cosmos when we harmonize and redeem that split between external nature and the spiritual world.

The greater universe is currently regarded as the result of some vast explosion—the Big Bang theory—whereby galaxies were flung into infinite space, devoid of spiritual reality. We must build a bridge over this gap through our personal experience. The work we are doing here is a demonstration of an external cosmos as the reflection of a spiritual one. It is a memory picture in the external that can fortify the spiritual one within us. This is the meaning of our new cosmology.

What is this reflection of the external cosmos? We have to understand what the ancients meant by the “spheres of the planets”. If we go far enough back, we will find that humanity experienced a spiritual world daily, which we conceive of as experiencing only after death. But we do not have this conscious experience in daily life. We are bred with the scientific approach already inborn, which makes it difficult to believe in this spiritual awareness. We want tangible science, astronomy, etc., in an external way. Does that mean we must return to the picture of Ptolemy and discard the Copernican? No! We must live with this modern world, in order to be taken seriously.

The Copernican view, in fact, can be the means to a new realization of the planetary spheres, which are not perfect circles but ellipses. Tangible evidence can be investigated by computer, such as the nodes and lines of apsides (aphelion and perihelion) of the planets. The plane of the Earth’s circling around the Sun can be extended in all directions. This is called the ecliptic plane, where eclipses can take place. Imagine another planet moving around the Sun. Remember, also, that there are slight deviations in the planetary orbits. The orbit of Mars, for instance, cuts into the plane of the ecliptic, going above or below it because of its tilt, or inclination. It is this that makes the nodes a descending or ascending node, whether the orbit is going below or above the plane of the ecliptic. It is this plane that also results in the perihelion of the planet (close to the Sun) and the aphelion (farthest away) position.



The planet establishes contact with the plane of the Earth when it is standing in its own node as well as when standing in its aphelion or perihelion. We can therefore use the Copernican universe, not as a betrayal but rather to go with the modern viewpoint; this gives us the means to recreate on a new foundation something of the splendor of an old cosmology.

Rudolf Steiner once related that through his own insight, he discovered that one of the teachers of the School of Chartres had declared, “So far, we have lived with the old cosmology, providing great imaginations, but this will come to an end, and one will reduce the universe to a line between Sun and Earth.” This is mechanics. It is also a necessity, because Michael can build a new spiritualized conception of the cosmos on it. We can experience reality through reflection. Hierarchical spirits work into the Earth, even through catastrophes. We now have the backbone of an external science, confirming spiritual science.

We can also experience, through Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition, the past stages of the evolution of the Earth. We can read about this in *Occult Science*, with reference to the Spiritual Beings bringing about the Ancient Saturn universe, etc. This spiritual universe is memorized into the whole universe.

The fixed-star constellations of the Zodiac are mighty cosmic chronicles that tell us of these stages of evolution, and this I have already demonstrated in *Isis Sophia I, II and III* (available on this site). One can even find the spiritual origin of the human form as it confronts us in matter, and as originating in the Idea and Thought of the Divine World. In Genesis we read, “Man was created in the Image of God.” We can experience this origin of our form inwardly. We can also find in the constellations a mighty cosmic picture of the stages by which this human form was created.

What is the meaning of this correlation between the inner divine, and the external physical cosmos? Why this twofoldness? The cosmos presents the memory of human evolution and cosmic evolution, of our threefold form of head, nerves, and limbs. Great laws of creation are expressed in this cosmos and through the yearly changes of the seasons, as well as in the greater cycles and seasons related to the planets in growth and decay. Many cycles play into our life and that of Earth; for instance, the Moon rhythm in embryonic development. The Moon is the vessel constantly receiving the cosmic forces and pouring them down to Earth to build up the embryo. This is the world of the Father Principle, the totality of spiritually creative Divine Beings.

Our created world presents itself as a mirror to the external cosmos. Alternatively, we should perhaps call it the vessel that we must fill with substance through Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition. This will give it new meaning. It is important that the artist discover new fields in this external reflection, for there are great possibilities to modulate and form and bring to creative expressions the Imaginations it contains. Rudolf Steiner has already given indications of this. The zodiacal constellations can be met and sustained by the creative treasures of eurythmy. It is equally so in painting. Many are attempting to paint the constellations and the planets, and it is essential that our inner experience should move toward this. In music, too, new overtones can arise to realize that reflection in the cosmos.

The Father Principle manifests as a memory picture that still works on and ever newly creates our human form. We should know this as an image of our true soul being. Our features are an expression of what lives in us as soul and spirit. Similarly, the stars are also like a body in whose features and rhythms and beauty the divine world finds expression. We must preserve the power of distinction when meeting a human being, before coming to any conclusions. Equally, we should not accept the universe without discrimination, as it has evolved through long ages. We speak of planets going around the Sun, but it was not always so. We have our own embryonic development, our maturity and old age, as does the cosmos, equally so. What we see in it does not always point exactly to the spiritual truth. However, it can lead us to a past investiture of the cosmos by a Deity with direct

expression through it. This can be both bond and bridge between religion and cosmology as a modern science. What will we experience through this?

We will experience that the external cosmos of the senses can become both foundation and reflection of our sojourn in the spiritual world between incarnations. We should live by such a book as Rudolf Steiner's *Theosophy* for a lifetime and study the stages of the soul in Kamaloka and the spiritual world, etc. The external cosmos reflects all this in the external spheres and the memory of this sojourn.

Rudolf Steiner describes this life of the soul in the spiritual world in *Life of the Soul in the Cosmic World*, and he says that this is congenial to the experience of the spheres of the planets. Kamaloka coincides with Moon, Venus, and Mercury and the Spirit World with Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Thus the external world corroborates the spiritual. It is obvious that this is connected with religion. Here is a foundation in which religion can participate and provide a new basis for a science so evolving that it helps religion on its ascent from faith to experience.

We can also experience the whole external cosmos—the Body of the Deity—as it is perfectly in keeping with an experience of the human being. We can be confronted by all of this through inner experience in face of the external cosmos, particularly in art and by spiritual science and a true religion. In all this the Son Principle is at work. He entered the Earth evolution at Golgotha, bringing us the capacity to fulfill this “Will of the Father” and to carry this Father Creation into the future. It is exhausted into the beauties of the world around us. However, to move toward a new manifestation, we must now take a decisive share in this work, through all that we have said about making a bridge between the external and spiritual cosmos, by doing our “homework”, in fact, and standing firm in the external world in a continual interchange with the spiritual. (Here again, we may refer to the content of Goethe's Legend.) This is only possible through Rudolf Steiner's ideas, which lead us toward bringing about this harmonious relationship between cosmology and art and cosmology and religion.