The Christian Community PERSBECTIVES

the mysteries of the heart

Advent Christmas Epiphany 2005/6

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The search for images of our future becomes more and more urgent. Certain futures press themselves upon us daily, futures that may be possible through technology: the abolition of illness—at least for those who can afford it—constant entertainment; the end of physical work. More and more, human beings are realizing that all these futures come at a price, and that they leave out of account the most important things. Why should we be glad if we can fly around the world, if the world we fly over is dead? Why do we need to go ever faster and more efficiently about our work, if this work is destructive and abusive of the earth and of our own souls?

Amongst the outer storms and catastrophes of our time, an inner change is being prepared. Some thinkers on ecology and wholeness call our time the time of the great turning. They have realised that outer activism, important though it is, is not enough. Human beings need to find a new capacity to imagine the future—a future where all of our ingenuity is used to co-operate with and enhance nature; where we build a trading system on the idea of justice and fairness; where we create societies that allow individuals to achieve their potential. Only when such visions are there, will we have the strength to advance to a truly human, integrative future. The heart is the place where these visions will form. Cultivating heart-thinking is the beginning of creating a new world.

THE EDITORS

The wild imagining of the heart 'he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts'

Luke 1.52

LISA DEVINE

From the bridge of his ship, Captain Arne Rinnan surveyed the refugees crowded onto the deck below. Despair, hope, anger and kindness rose and fell like waves through this desperate sea of human beings, many of them ill. His crew had rescued them from an aptly named SIEV (suspected illegal entry vessel) in heavy waters between Indonesia and Australia. The democratically elected Australian Government saw a bunch of potential terrorists and refused the ship entry into Australia. The irony that many of them were fleeing the same Afghan regime against which this government would soon go to war, was lost in the rhetoric of fear.

Arne saw these people up close, close enough to see through their desperation to their dreams, dreams of new life worth risking everything for. Withstanding the threats made to his ship and his future livelihood he chose to honour this reckless dreaming of the human heart, and stood firm, defying the demands to leave. Later, nearly 100 of these Afghan refugees would dance for him and call him their angel. He responded that he was only a simple seaman doing what he had to do. Enshrined in the fundamental maritime law known as SOLAS (saving of lives at sea) is the commitment to rescue and care for any person in danger at sea even if they be the enemy. At its foundation is an image of the human being as capable of loving and caring for even the enemy. How reckless is the human heart in its dreaming...

The Virgin Mary is known to some as the star of the sea, the guide upon the wild waters of life. She is the keeper and weaver of the dreams of the human heart that inspire and guide. To the rich, the proud, the outwardly powerful these dreams seem risky and foolhardy. But to the humble childlike heart they are the only dreams worth dreaming. The Magnificat is Mary's serenade to the Lord who awakens the imagination of the true human being in the humble human heart.

Amid the apocalyptic events of our time, Mary gives us the courage to hold onto the true image of the human being and to dare to stand firm dreaming of a new life on earth. In the high seas of our time she can be found in the spaces in between the roar of guns and money, the spaces of dreaming. In the words of Arundhati Roy:

Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.

Divining your own Future

Julia Polter

To put it very simply, the human being consists of two parts: the past and the future. We carry within ourselves all the experiences and insights we have gained in the past, but we also carry within ourselves future possibilities, our dreams and visions. Life constantly demands from us that we leave the acquisitions of the past behind. Letting go of things which gave us safety in the past can be an extremely painful experience. And this is so painful because we cannot see yet what will develop in the future.

The being of our future seems to be very fragile but we feel it in our hearts; it is there when we have dreams, plans, intentions and ideals.

It is very important that we learn ever more how to access and acknowledge this future being of ourselves, because there are situations in which we experience something that we might otherwise consider a complete loss. In such situations, despair and fear are the initial reaction. And then we might not be able to do anything at all, because our strong emotions paralyse us.

Hearing the call of the future can be so difficult because in our modern culture this ability is not consciously cultivated. Why is this?

Common scientific thinking, education and our experience all teach us to look at the world in terms of causal relations. It is generally accepted that these relations have three components: contiguity of time and place, temporal priority of the cause, and constant conjunction. In that sense the events and the things in the world relate to each other like the balls in a billiard game. We experience that if we see one rolling billiard ball hit another, the second must begin to move. That is why we probably would respond to the question 'Why is the second ball rolling?' 'Because it was touched by another moving ball!'

Guided by our sense perception, it seems logical for us to look for the cause of movement or change in the past. For this mechanistic explanation of the world it is quite absurd to assume a cause in the future.

The social and personal life is also strongly affected by this world view. The moment we are confronted with a problem, we usually focus on the past and ask right away: 'Who did that?' Confirming this pattern, most scientists believe that the only way to learn is from the past. Learning from the future is neither possible nor a useful avenue to pursue.

We want to learn from the past in order to understand and solve the problem. Human thinking has not always seen the world in this way. In the early history of western philosophy for example, Aristotle described four types of causes. He acknowledged not only the 'efficient cause' (which was described earlier as predominant in our contemporary thinking) but also declared that a full explanation of anything also has to consider the material, the formal and the final causes.

Material Cause Efficient Cause — Final Cause Formal Cause

The question for the material cause is: 'What is the object made of?'

The material used has a distinctive form (formal cause). And the object itself has a creator which we find when we inquire by whom it was made or moved (efficient cause). Lastly we will explore the final cause which is related to the future when we ask: 'What is an object made for? What is its purpose?'

Applying this theory to an existing object in a simplified way one could for example say: The vase on my desk is made out of glass. (Material) My notion of the vase captures its distinctive form. It was crafted by a glassblower (efficient cause) for the purpose of holding water and flowers (final cause).

The example makes it clear that the purpose of a vase determines its appearance: water-tight and dense material is necessary. The form has to be stable and to allow the vase to be filled with water. The object is thoroughly created for its future purpose. The design was guided by the question: What will the object be used for? Regarding this one could state that there is a force coming from the future which has an impact on the present.

Innovation is always possible when in a creative process past experiences and future possibilities are present. The following statement from the field of Management Studies shows that recent scientific research has come to acknowledge the Aristotelian approach in a new way:

In working with leadership teams across sectors and industries, I realized that leaders could not meet their existing challenges by operating only on the basis of past experiences. I wondered whether there could be a deeper learning cycle based on one's sensing of an emerging future, rather than one's past experiences. I began to conceive of a learning process that tunes in to and pulls us into future possibilities rather than simply reflecting and reacting to past experiences.

I began to call this learning from the future as it emerges: presencing. Presencing is a new term that blends the two words 'presence' and 'sensing.'

It means to sense and bring into the present one's highest future potential - the future that depends on us to bring it into being.

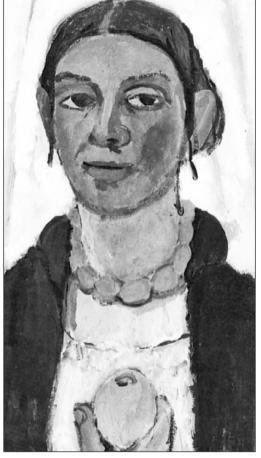
When we try to 'presence' the highest future potential, it is almost inevitable that there are moments when we find ourselves at a threshold, struck with blindness to see what is possible, seemingly unable to build the bridge into the future.

But—as described earlier—it is also characteristic of the future that it has the power to pull. Presencing means that we create a state of mind where we can feel ourselves being carried into the right direction because our presumptions and maybe bad experiences of the past do not interfere. It is also important to understand that the future cannot merely be thought out but that we have to become highly conscious in the realm of our feelings—in our hearts.

Aristotle might have had this in mind when he tried to describe the dynamic between present and future possibilities. He explained that the future has the power to move because of its inherent goodness. God, who is the Ultimate Good, moves the world like the loved one moves the lover.

We can think of that when we stand at the threshold which appears in our quest for the future and look for the right feelings which will build a bridge to the other side. These feelings appear when we find out what we truly love. Surprisingly, as adults we are often not very conscious about the things we love and sometimes it can take years of hard work to develop a clear picture.

We all agree that our feelings of love are accompanied by feelings of joy. But this joy has a special quality. Martha Beck, an author who wrote a best-selling book about strategies to fulfil one's potential, says that joy in the deepest sense does not exclude suffering. Sometimes we have to suffer in order to learn what we love, so that we can pursue our path:



Self-portrait with Lemon, Paula Modersohn-Becker

Pleasure and suffering are antithetical; joy and suffering are not. Anyone who's felt the pain of bearing a child, or pushed past physical limits in some athletic event, or struggled to learn difficult but powerful truths understands that suffering can be an integral part of the most profound joy. In fact, once the suffering has ended, having experienced it seems to magnify the capacity to feel pleasure and delight.

This suffering which teaches us what we love can be compared with the suffering an artist has to endure during a creative process: a piece of art always involves the pain of corrections, alterations and partings, until a joyful feeling of wholeness finishes the work in a satisfying way.

Without the courage to make mistakes and the trust that mistakes may lead to something new—indeed, that they might even be an expression of something higher—the artist could never work. Openness for the unwanted and unexpected is crucial for the successful creative process.

In that sense we can consider problems as a powerful tool to understand what we love. If we long existentially to find a satisfying solution, problems bring us to the point where we have to grasp what is intended by the future.

In this context it can be rewarding to explore the first major problem as it is described in the bible: When Adam and Eve lived in the Paradise, Eve was approached by the snake and tempted to eat a forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that LORD God had made. He said to the woman, Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it, lest you die." But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate...'

Why could Eve be tempted? Because the snake proposed to Eve a future possibility which seemed good to her: she would gain the perspective to be able to distinguish between evil and good and to become like God. So creating out of the future became the leading factor in the evolution of mankind. The price we paid for it was the condition of suffering. The human being was, before Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, an integral part of the divine. Now, out of Paradise, we have the freedom to connect with God and the destiny of humanity through moral imagination. The German 19th Century painter Max Klinger describes the process of Eve's seduction in the following way:

Eve, to whom the temptation was particularly directed, is the mother of the future. Eve takes hold of Temptation—that is to say, the future—firstly in the form of thinking, then as the temptation itself, with the well-know consequences.

The future that Eve imagined seemed attractive to her, and so she bit the apple without really foreseeing the initial tragic consequences.

The romantic poet Novalis, who felt very strongly that each human being can take on an active role in the reversal of the fall of man made the following enigmatic remark:

Adam and Eve. What was brought about by a revolution can only be ended by one. 1

The poet did not characterise that revolution any further. But if an imagination of the future caused the first revolution we can assume that the same technique could also reverse the process. The reversal of the inner gesture of Eve, turned to a positive direction which leads back to the divine is called by Novalis the 'Mystery of the Virgin'

The lovely mystery of the Virgin, which makes her so unspeakably attractive, is the presentiment of motherhood, the inkling of a future world which slumbers in her and which is to develop from within her. She is the most accurate image of the future. ²

What the Virgin divines in her heart is the birth of the Christ-being. The virgin-like human soul has the same ability to let the presence of Christ grow within it, through a mood of anticipation.

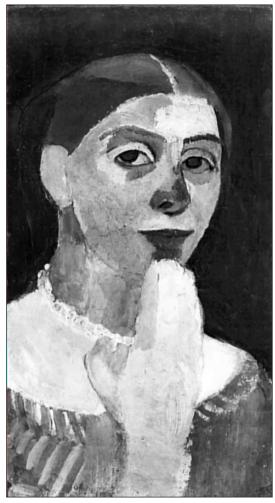
At a certain point in his life, Novalis himself had stood at a threshold, where he was unable develop a future perspective. But he was carried through the darkness because he held on to the beloved image of his deceased friend Sophia whom he was mourning. In the 'Hymns to the Night' he describes how he was able to make the transition into the future:

...he who has stood on the mountain frontier of the world, and looked across into the new land, into the abode of the Night, verily he turned not again into the tumult of the world, into the land where dwells the Light in ceaseless unrest.

On those heights he builds for himself tabernacles—tabernacles of peace;

there longs and loves and gazes across, until the welcomest of all hours draws him down into the waters of the spring. Afloat above remains what is earthly, and is swept back in storms; but what became holy by the touch of Love, runs free through hidden ways to the region beyond, where like odours, it mingles with love asleep. ³

We can have access to the region beyond, from where our future comes, through everything which we love. Our heartfelt love is the starting point from where we can presence the future.



Self portrait with blue-white dress Paula Modersohn-Becker

C. Otto Scharmer, Excerpt from *Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future - Presencing Profound Innovation and Change in Business, Society , and the Self, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 2005, Second Draft, p.5.*

See C. Otto Scharmer, p.5.

Martha Beck, Finding your own North Star: Claiming the life you were meant to live, New York, 2001, p. 210.

Genesis 3:1–6, King James Bible, Revised Standard Version, 1970 Max Klinger, in: 'Eva und die Zukunft' (Ein Zyklus von 6 Radierungen), 1880.

Anyone who had a heart, would look at me...

KEVIN STREET

The room is dim, and in the flicker of several computer screens, a group of young people can be seen, each connected to a computer by a thin wire attached to the middle finger of their left hand... and on each screen is a pattern they are able to control by—relaxation. And as they relax, their heart beat becomes more regular, their breathing deepens, and each teenager becomes more peaceful, more able to cope with the thoughts of their impending exams, and more likely to react positively with their classmates and teachers.

A scene from 'Brave New World Revisited'? Brain washing in some totalitarian state? Or a high school in the north west of England in 2005?

If you selected the last option, you were right—but an explanation is needed, and it is one that has profound implications for the way we deal not only with the pre-exam nerves of our young people, but one which could make us re-think the way in which we best function as human beings.

For centuries, and across all cultural divides, the heart was regarded as the seat of the emotions, and our rich figurative language is awash with images that reflect this. However, from the 18th Century onwards, the heart has been regarded increasingly as a pump for the blood, a component of the human machine that can now even be removed and replaced with a new pump, much as a mechanic might replace a faulty component in your car. This image has been challenged in recent years on a number of fronts, not in the least by Claire Sylvia in *A Change of Heart*. In this, she charts her own quest for the donor of the heart she received in a transplant, which resulted in a considerable change in her emotional life, and which finally concluded in her meeting with the donor's family. They confirmed that the alterations in her own dream life and her cravings for various experiences reflected the preferences and experiences of the young man's heart that she had received. This phenomenon, known as cellular memory, helps give credence to the growing belief that the ancients were right, that the heart is more than a mere pump, and possesses powers that can indeed alter our emotional lives.

Neurologists have now established that there are more nerve connections running from the heart to the brain than the other way round, and that the heart responds to outside stimuli by sending messages to the brain that either lead to the release of hormones to enable relaxation, or to the release of adrenaline and cortisol that put the whole human being into a potentially damaging state of arousal/survival. This is fine when we are confronted by a hungry tiger, but less useful when sitting in a traffic jam.

The heart has now been found to have a powerful electro-magnetic field (EMF) that is capable of reacting with the EMFs of others who are within an 8–16 foot radius. A heart displaying an incoherent, stressed pattern can adversely affect others, whereas hearts that are at peace with each other can create a strengthening and enhancing pattern of coherence. In a 40 year longitudinal study, American researchers have discovered that there is a direct correlation between heart disease in later life and the support received from parents in childhood, ranging from a 25% incidence of heart disease in those who felt they had the loving support of their parents, to a 93% incidence of those who felt they had no loving support.

Christmas

This very night, when heaven Inclines toward the earth, Will Spirit of the Highest In human souls find birth?

The true Son of Mankind— Are we awake to greet Him Within our heart and mind?

> Sophia Turner 24 December 2004

The heart is a highly complex, self-organised sensory organ with its own functional 'little brain' that communicates with and influences the brain via the nervous system, hormonal system and other pathways. ¹

These are the insights that have given birth to the Institute of HeartMath, an American organization that attempts to blend the wisdom of the ancients with the computer technology of our age. They have devised a series of computer programs and software that link heart coherence (when we are able to 'think straight') to visual images on the monitor screen, so that the user is able directly to influence and modify what appears visually before them. Of course, people cannot remain wired to the screen forever, but the experience that an individual can bring their heart pattern into a state of coherence, demonstrated by the very credible images on a computer screen, is an achievement that can then be transferred to other life situations with startling results. In Minnesota, the academic progress of children exposed to just 3 weeks of a HeartMath programme made advances of a year in their reading ability. In a relaxed state, their brains were able to function in a way that made them far more receptive and able to learn. And as important is their scoring in Emotional Intelligence, in which their ability to react positively and non-aggressively with those around them vastly improves.

In Psalm 14, David states—'The fool says in his heart "There is no God".'

Our own sacramental life is rich in positive images of the heart. Throughout his work, Rudolf Steiner was a strong advocate of the power of the heart. Dr. James Dyson writes that the heart is 'the organ through which our soul life meets the threshold of the spiritual world'. ²

In an inner Liverpool primary school, an aggressive and troubled 10 year old, on the verge of exclusion, is referred to the school's 'Quiet Place'. In a beautifully decorated room, soothed by aromatherapy, and receiving a soothing session of reflexology, the child

relaxes, and knows what it is to feel at peace. Later on, he sits at a computer, and wired to the program is able to control the passage of a hot air balloon as it soars ever higher on the screen in front of him—the more he relaxes, the higher the balloon flies. His mother reports a real change at home—and can she have a session with the therapist? His class teacher reports a marked improvement—and can she have a session with the therapist? Both adults have their wishes granted—and more hearts are at peace.

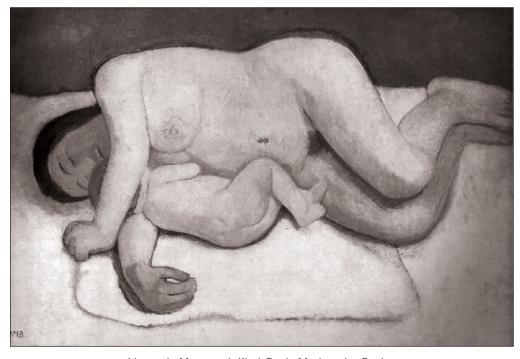
It easy to take our rich legacy in The Christian Community for granted, whilst wondering how we can move forward—and outward—into the wider community. This a challenge we have to face. We need to be mindful that in doing so, we will not be alone, and that the power of the heart is being taken up by others who have also come to an understanding of what it is to be truly human.

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Liegende Mutter mit Kind, Paula Modersohn-Becker

Jesus Christ—God and Man I

The wounded healer

Tom Ravetz

A remarkable book appeared in America in 1999 and quickly became a bestseller. Expecting Adam tells 'the story of two driven Harvard academics who found out mid-pregnancy that their child was retarded ... They decided to allow their baby to be born.' The book describes how they gradually realize that 'they themselves were the ones who would be born,' infants in a new world where magic is commonplace. Harvard professors are slow learners, and retarded babies are the master teachers.'

We can all imagine how we would feel if our child were handicapped. Martha Beck describes the fear and disappointment, the anxiety for her child's well being that grow in her after the discovery. In the end, however, she realises that her greatest concern was not for him but for herself:

What my fears all boiled down to, as I sat with my tiny orange son in the days after his birth, was an underlying terror that he would destroy my own facade, the flawlessness and invulnerability I projected onto the big screen, the Great and Terrible Martha of Oz. You see, I knew all along that there wasn't one label people might apply to Adam—stupid, ugly, strange, clumsy, slow, inept—that could not, at one time or another, he justifiably applied to me. I had spent my life running from this catastrophe, and like so many other things, it caught up with me while I was expecting Adam. (p. 316)

The life changing event of bearing a handicapped child challenged her in her deepest values, and made her change her thinking about what the good life is.

In this regard, as in so many others, my worst fears have come to pass. But as they do I am learning

that there is an even bigger secret, a secret I had been keeping from myself. It has been hard for me to grasp, but gradually, painfully, with the slow, small steps of a retarded child, I am coming to understand it. This has been the second phase of my education, the one that followed all those years of school. In it, I have had to unlearn virtually everything Harvard taught me about what is precious and what is garbage. I have discovered that many of the things I thought were priceless are as cheap as costume jewellery, and much of what I labeled worthless was, all the time, filled with the kind of beauty that directly nourishes my soul.

Now I think that the vast majority of us 'normal' people spend our lives trashing our treasures and treasuring our trash. We bustle around trying to create the impression that we are hip, imperturbable, omniscient, in perfect control, when in fact we are awkward and scared and bewildered. The irony is that we do this to be loved, all the time remaining terrified of anyone who seems to be as perfect as we wish to be.

Living with Adam, loving Adam, has taught me a lot about the truth. (p. 317)

The power of the book comes in part from Martha Beck's honesty, and in part from the fact that a Harvard professor is a symbol, a cultural icon that embodies what we value most. We see a person with education, money, power and influence as having the good life. We want such a life for ourselves and for our children. We want to be protected from pain and suffering, to be beyond danger. We are uneasily aware that we cannot hold death and illness, and the loss of control they bring, at bay, but we act as if we could. This is the brittle façade that Martha Beck describes; a

kind of perversion of values that comes from wrong priorities.

There is another cultural icon that embodies these values: the 'superhero' of modern action films. The superheroes such as Batman, Superman and Spiderman struggle for the good against forces of evil that seem set to overwhelm the world. Through their strength and ingenuity they can deliver the world from any problem, any evil that besets it. We recognise the world that these films show, but it has a crucial difference from ours. For all that we glorify strength and achievement, we know that there are problems that we are unable to solve with our powers. The superheroes can deal with these problems. In their world, we can be saved from the random madness of suicidal terrorism, the threat of destruction by nuclear weapons or the impact of an asteroid. This make-believe world is itself only a projection of our façade and its message is ultimately despairing.

The film Batman begins with a portrayal of Gotham City, a future dystopic New York, in which evil holds sway. The forces of good the politicians and police—have been corrupted; good individuals are pawns at the mercy of the powers of evil. Only Batman, who is blessed with unearthly powers, has the power to do battle with the Joker, the diabolical embodiment of nihilistic power. The ending of the film is desolate: after his victory, Batman leaves the adoring crowd. They are the same as they were before; nothing has happened that has made these people or their society better able to meet evil when it next arises. There is no reason to think that evil will not grow up again. We can only hope that Batman does not go too far away!

The superhero films glorify their heroes. They show themselves as strong, victorious and honourable. They are messiahs, bringers of salvation. But their victory and honour cheat the true messianic hope because they are

projections of a distorted image of the human. It would be futile to wish to be Batman: in fact, he is defined by being other than us, alien. He does not join us in our plight as human beings. His glorious victory over evil leaves an aftertaste of nihilistic despair.

* * *

There is an unnerving similarity between the superhero films and much popular Christian theology. Christ is the otherworldly visitor who does battle with the forces of evil and vanquishes them before returning to Heaven. Unlike *Batman*, the film does not end after he leaves. The fact that the world is still in the grip of powerful forces of evil has to be explained, and this can be done in various ways: we may hope to follow Christ in his escape from this world; or we may hope for the Millennium, when all wrongs will be put right and a kingdom of justice and peace will be established by Christ returned. Christ is the supreme achiever who will eventually overcome all problems.

Popular Christian theology is also pessimistic about the world. Human beings are not changed. They have been 'saved', transferred from the state of damnation to a new status of salvation. They have not developed, so that one could hope that they might start to meet evil—which is still all too evident in the world—in a new, creative way. The otherness of Christ and his subsequent absence mean desolation for human beings. Their destiny on the earth is hopeless.

Great thinkers of the twentieth century rejected this kind of theology. Ludwig Feuerbach saw religion as immature. God and the gods are merely the projections of naïve human beings who take the best qualities of the human and concentrate them in a supreme being who becomes the object of human longing. We do not need the thought of the Spirit to appreciate the supremacy of Man. When human beings liberate themselves from childish fairy-tale

pictures, nothing will stand in the way of their realising their god-like potential. Feuerbach's message was optimistic and liberating: once human beings grasp their potential, they will have untold power to release the world from the forces of sin and corruption.

Karl Marx was moved by the compassion he felt with those who were abused and disregarded by the emerging industrial societies of the West. The churches of Western Europe had failed to see their Christian task in relation to the dehumanising conditions of industrialised societies, and whole populations were left without spiritual or physical nourishment. Marx saw in religion a distraction and diversion of our limited human resources that should be used to achieve social justice.

Looking back on the secular totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, we can see it was not so easy to build a brave new world with purely human

powers. Their tyrants embodied an image of humanity as invulnerable and omnipotent. Their descent into demonic nihilism shows the limitations of this image.

The hope of the Messiah

Over the course of two millennia, the Jewish people developed the idea of the messiah in a rich tapestry of images. In one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible, Isaiah speaks of the coming of a 'servant of the Lord':

As many were astonished at him—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his



Life composition with self portrait
Paula Modersohn-Becker

form beyond that of the sons of men—so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand.

Only those who are open for something new and unexpected can grasp what is meant.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and

rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has horne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

One by one, our assumptions seem to be held up and overturned. We have already seen how for us, living a good life means being successful and attractive, well thought of, and enjoying comfort. Even idealists prize effectiveness and power, used of course for noble ends. Like the friends of Job, we see in affliction the just deserts of sin. In deepest irony, Isaiah convicts us of dismissing the one who brought salvation as unloved by God. The prophecy reaches its climax:

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (RSV, altered)

In action films the hero often faces the final showdown at some terrible disadvantage, handicapped by an injury or some finer feeling that prevents him acting as forcefully as his unscrupulous adversary. However, he triumphs in spite of the setback—his strength is greater than his wounds.

The wounds of the Wounded Healer are quite different. A writer on pastoral care used the following words to describe wounds:

A wound is an opening in the walls of our body, a breaking of the barrier between us and the world around us. ... [it] is 'a passage through which we may become infected and also through which we affect others'. Naturally, then, we view wounds with distaste and alarm. The sight of blood and of gaping flesh creates sensations of nausea and fear in us, because it warns of pain, permanent damage to the body and the spread of infection. Our instinct for self-preservation leads us to avoid wounds whenever possible and, when they are sustained, to seek immediate remedy.

Yet paradoxically our fear and nausea would be much greater if we encountered a body which could not bleed, could not be wounded. Blood is a sign of life for us and the softness of skin and flesh reveals humanity. (Hence the poignancy of Shylock the Jew's question: If you prick us, do we not bleed If you poison us, do we not die?') This means that open wounds and flowing blood evoke other associations: the break in the body's walls can bring the wounded person closer to us. We respond to vulnerability, seeing before us 'a fellow creature in pain'. Thus blood and wounds have important positive effects in creating a sense of community. The opening in the body is a channel of communication from one isolated individual to another; the hazardous outflowing of blood an ultimate risking of the self for others...

... Surprisingly, then, wounds, which seem at first frightening and nauseating, can also be 'open and beautiful'. For wounds reveal that fine boundary between living and dying, which makes human life so precious and so revered.

Alistair Campbell, the quotation in the first paragraph is from James Hillman.

Our vulnerability is our humanity. Without it we may stand alongside each other, but there is no true encounter. In the superhero film *Terminator* we see the android peel back his skin and take out the bullets from his arm; and we feel the horror of invulnerability that Alistair Campbell describes.

The disturbing image of the Wounded Healer reveals a deep truth: The superheroes are inhuman in their invulnerability. Ultimately, they cannot cure the situation. Their promise is counterfeit; as much as we long for the delusion they offer, we know deep inside that only a human healer, a wounded healer can help, as we know deep inside that we can only become ourselves through our vulnerability. Adam, the infinitely vulnerable child of the successful Harvard academics, is a far truer image of the human than the superheroes; his vulnerability shows us what the vulnerability of our saviour must be like.

The Reenchantment of Art

An artist and her search for the Sophia

DEBORAH RAVETZ

The belief that the world was ensouled only came to be questioned with the development of natural science at the time of the Renaissance. The consequence of seeing the world not as a living being but as a vast clockwork mechanism has had positive and negative effects. The fruits of materialism, the Enlightenment and the consequent modernist and post modernist world view have made many things possible. We now have the freedom to find out who we are and what we think, free of tradition and looking beyond our own culture. We are also free to spend our day doing more than merely survive as science, technology and the modern state make practical life possible in a way that frees us from drudgery and the struggle to exist. Living in Germany not long ago and hearing about life in Romania, where the whole infrastructure of a modern democratic state are simply not there, made me realise anew how much we all owe to the system that provides us with water, heat, roads and law and order. All these things, and many others, make it possible for us to function.

However alongside all these gains, the loss of a sense of meaning and therefore a feeling of responsibility mean that there is also much to regret. In a world which is not ensouled we may be freed from superstition and tradition, we may be more and more individualized, we may live within a certain order that makes many activities possible, but the gains may seem pointless if they lead to nothing but the exploitation of nature, consumerism, alienation and a desperate need for distraction.

This is the background to the book *The* Reenchantment of Art, written by an American

artist and teacher, Suzi Gablik. In this book, Gablik describes the values of modern western democracy and how they affect the attitudes and role of the artist. Quoting many of the leading figures of modernism, she says,

For Jean Paul Sartre, the basic truth of the human situation was its contigency, man's sense that he does not belong—is not necessary to the universe. Since life was arbitrary, meaningless and without intrinsic value, Sartre advised that we must learn to live without hope.

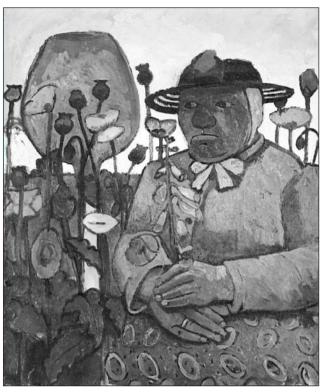
She goes on to quote the English critic Cyril Connolly who wrote the famous words.

It is closing time in the gardens of the west. From now on an artist will be judged only by the resonance of his solitude and the quality of his despair.

In a world without value and a world where we are isolated and alone the artist begins to make statements about his work where he feels he is free not even to communicate. The painter Georg Basilitz said:

The artist is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial; his only responsibility consists in an attitude to the work he does. There is no communication with any public whatsoever. The artist can ask no questions, and he makes no statement; he offers no information, and his work cannot be used. It is the end product which counts, which in my case is the picture.

Describing this mindset as described by these artists and intellectuals, Gablik shows how it has consequences for every aspect of life. She describes how the artist's aloneness and freedom from any received values has led him to free himself not only from tyranny but also from community, from obligation to the world and from relatedness. This isolation leads to a



Old woman from the almshouse with glass bottle
Paula Modersohn-Becker

similar problem within every profession and and activity.

Gablik describes this bleak scenario because she wants to set next to it what she sees as a possible new future, a future she is trying to bring about as an artist but which all people may contribute to in their different fields. Describing this world she goes on to say that unless we move beyond our sense of ourselves as individuals to include a sense of our equally pressing interconnectedness, the whole earth is at risk. For her it is now the time for us to find a new vision which is based on openness and a need for contact and wholeness. This means freeing art from the product orientated market place where we have become addicted to fame and sensationalism. We need to move towards making

art whose success is measured not by its monetary value but by its ability to renew within us a sense of wonder for nature. Such art also has the potential to create new communities.

Gablik then goes on to describe the process of talking about this to her fellow students and her fellow artists and she describes some of the successes of her new vision. For artists it is difficult to give up the career model of the modern artists, for students it is hard to dare to believe there is a different future. However for Gablik this future is almost not a choice anymore. We have to decide whether to change our attitudes; if we do not, we will destroy the earth and fail our children.

Ancient peoples saw the earth as a being, or as a relative. Everything that took something from the earth was always done

in mindfulness of that being and of generations to come. Rudof Steiner says that natural science resulted in the murdering of the Sophia who has been exiled to the farthest reaches of space. Perhaps another word for the Sophia could be the soul of the earth. Rudolf Steiner says that it is possible to give the Sophia back her life by looking at the world once again as if it was a living being—as if it was ensouled.

We know that there are two ways at looking at the individualized human being. There is the negative and limited way which says we are all different and that the future is hopeless because we will never agree and everyone naturally is only out for themselves. This is the individual of the modern western state whose freedom is protected in order that

they may keep consuming the products of the system, but who is still lonely, miserable and dissatisfied.

Then there is another kind of individual, one who knows who they are and yet does not feel well unless they can give something back to the world. Their aim is not only to realise their own potential but also to help others to unfold their true potential. These are the millions of people all over the world who are ready to have less things in order to help care for the earth and for the vulnerable. For them, wealth and spending power are not the primary object, but rather the quality of their own lives and those of the community of the world. These people are like the sun. Their intelligence and interest are not self-directed, but they shine out into the world. Theirs is a Christ-like individuality. It is interesting that Rudolf Steiner also said that it was only through the being of the Sophia that we were able truly to understand the being of Christ.

Suzi Gablik wrote this book as an artist and as a teacher, but she wrote it because she felt these were not only her longings but that they were in the air and part of a much greater longing.

She describes the composer who says that for him music was not about having an expensive meal and then going to a concert. Instead he made it into a pilgrimage so that the people going to hear his music needed to travel to a certain place so that they would arrive at a lake as the sun was rising. They would then hear the music from boats as they watched the night turn to day.

There are countless examples in the book. Some are tender and humble, some huge and ambitious in scale. One moved me especially. It is an art project called The great Cleansing of the Rio Grande River. The artist, Dominique Mazeaud started by walking along the river collecting rubbish with friends, keeping a diary and making sculptures out of what they col-

lected. It developed into a kind of prayer. In the artist's words,

All alone in the river, I pray and pick up, pick up and pray. Who can I really talk to about what I see? I feel the pain quietly, knowing that I too must have been unconscious at one time.

A friend compares Mazeaud's project with the story of Isis who must gather together the dismembered pieces of her murdered husband's body in order to bring him back to life. What is important about the project is that it springs out of empathy with the earth. The longer Mazeaud continued with it, the more people she met and the more joined her in praying and gathering together the garbage so unconsciously thrown into the water.

It seems there are two worlds for us to take on board. There is the world that the popular media presents, which is shallow, self obsessed and addicted to things rather than inner riches. Then there is the world people like Suzi Gablik make visible where conscience and the will bring about an inner turning. Out of this process comes a desire to find a different way to live and make a contribution. I was reminded of the words of the French Catholic thinker Teilhard de Chardin, who says:

We are sometimes inclined to think that the same things are monotonously repeated over and over again in the history of creation. That is because the season is too long by comparison with the brevity of our individual lives... Under the commonplace envelope of things and of all purified and salvaged efforts, a new earth is being slowly engendered.

Suzi Gablik wrote her book about the changing attitude of artists. Many others share the wish for a new attitude to life which will need both new social forms and a new politics. Out of all the aloneness, alienation and destruction of our time, with all of its attendant suffering, the future is being born.

The Reenchantment of Art, Suzi Gablik Thames & Hudson, London and New York, 1991 In Flanders fields the poppies blow Between the crosses, row on row, That mark our place; and in the sky The larks, still bravely singing, fly Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, Loved and were loved, and now we lie In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold on high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae (a Canadian soldier) World War I

Oh! Sleep in hope where poppies grow; The torch your failing hands let go Was caught by us and used to light Mistakes of this our Flanders plight And elsewhere too.

From now we shall not fight the foe By killing others, but will show Where the real battle is fought and why We must not search the earth and sky, Not even Flanders fields.

Flanders

Conversation in Poetry over the Passing Years

Oh! Sleep in peace where poppies grow;
The torch your failing hands let go
Was caught by us, again held high,
A beacon light in Flanders sky
That dims the stars to those below.
You are our dead, you held the foe,
And ere the poppies cease to blow,
We'll prove our faith in you who lie
In Flanders fields.

John Mitchell (a poet) World War II

Within our hearts the enemy lies: Greed, hate, intolerance and vice Clouding our vision as we strive For truth, acceptance, giving, love Towards our fellow men.

We are alive and now we ought
Bring forth what in our hearts we sought:
To share each dawn and sunset glow
With others, whether friend or foe,
Farther than Flanders fields.

Sophia Turner (November 2001) 21^{st} Century

Hope—A Sustaining Element in the Story of the Environmental Movement since the Second World War

VIVIAN GRIFFITHS

The hope of the 'brave new world'—the dream of a disease-free globe, free from want and hunger, of town-scapes full of light and convenient housing, of an open landscape where crops could be grown on a large scale free from drudgery, and of the solving of our plant growing problems by the use of science—this great hope that filled human hearts after the Second World War has been gravely disappointed in recent years.

All those dreams are now broken promises, the convenient housing a block of polluted jerry-built ugly flats, the open landscape at chemical desert, wildlife killed and gone and the soil blown into wind drifts. The Green Revolution—an ideal to feed a developing country like India—is also a broken dream of spiralling costs for chemicals and pesticides, with agricultural labourers' health and lifeexpectancy at threat from chemical related illnesses. These dreams all emerged from a hope that life could be re-created after the war, away from bomb blasted cities, away from 'blood and soil' superstition, away from a reliance on manures and organic wastes and away from the vagaries of nature.

Throughout this time of the new postwar urbanism, the new supremacy of human achievement, a succession of 'still small voices' were asking awkward questions about a number of issues that centred on environmental sustainability. Throughout the last 60 years, these voices have gathered momentum until in our time their chorus calls out a very clear and reasoned question: How do we find sustainable, inclusive, holistic measures that improve society? This question reaches far beyond organic farming, wildlife havens, national parks and park and ride bus systems. It reaches into the regeneration of society, the renewal of housing and the creation of new community forms; it demands an understanding of our multi-faith culture and leads to the recreation of our society on a multiracial, fairer, more sustainable basis—big words that can sound like empty phrases until they are enacted.

Hope in 1945 was a phoenix from the ashes of a world exhausted by war. History tells us that the surplus bomb making equipment from the industrial giants like ICI quickly became the ammonium nitrate fertilizer that farmers started to use to increase yields for the increased population of the post-war generation. The story is of course more complex. Farmers' sons went to agricultural college and learnt the new chemical based practices and the ease of fertilizer application and this played into the immense admiration of science over superstition. There was a relentless movement away from the land, motivated by a wish to move to better paid factory work in the towns. This movement was not new, it just gained enormeous momentum.

What that meant in practice was that the best of rural life—the cottage garden, the trees, the landscape—was brought into the safety of the urban and suburban setting in parks and gardens, sometimes on a very large scale.

The countryside with its gales and snow and more rigorous existence was instead viewed from afar. The agricultural community, bereft of labour and of interest in its work, and reduced greatly by war time casualty and then by depopulation pursued a wholesale chemical agenda to manage crops and livestock with less

people. An easy management scheme of chemical based farming practice was adopted almost universally within 15 years of the war's end.

So where was the hope for a more sustainable future kept alive? The answer is to be found in some surprising places: the establishment of the Soil Association, the Ferguson tractor and the philosophy behind it, the establishment of the National Parks and Wildlife Trusts: the green belts of the town and country planning acts. All of this gave reality to the new discovery by the post-war generation of a more holistic approach to life through an appreciation of people such as John Ruskin and his ideas of social renewal, William Morris' Arts and Crafts movement, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City ideas, Henry Morris' ideas on Community Education, in the village colleges and other initiatives, amongst them Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's work in Florida adapting biodynamic methods to the conditions there and showing it to be a truly modern technique.

The result of all this was a transference of interest in the land into a new relationship with it, for example an interest in wildlife, in precious landscapes, in craftwork and utopian re-generation. The National Parks which where established in 1948 produced a new generation of countryside appreciators who loved climbing, walking, access to wild places. They encouraged a town person's love of the countryside of open spaces. The result of this emphasis was that certain areas such as the Lake District came to be very well looked after while others became prairies of arable landscape. In the Huntington-Cambridge-Peterborough fens triangle one can see mile upon mile of treeless, mechanised crop growing with a rural poverty problem seen in bleak farm cottages with a badly nourished, disadvantaged family whose only source of work, culture and social life was often the town 12 miles away.

Practical action is a key to idealism and Harry Ferguson was important figure in the development of fertility on our farms after the war. He even challenged the notion that it was all down to chemicals: the Ferguson tractor with its special hydraulics opened up for the smaller farmer fields and pastures that horses could never reach. And the replacement of the horse allowed many fertile acres to be ploughed out that were otherwise needed for draught animals. Thus huge increases of crop yield were recorded with the coming of tractors.

Into this situation came Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring. It described the vanished landscapes of chemical farming that had killed so much wildlife. Published in 1963, it came just right for a new generation that was beginning to question the priorities of their parents who had themselves been formed by the waste and devastation of war. The generation which 'never had it so good' who had had a new primary school to enter, their university fees paid for and a great hope put on them, proceeded to even the very roots of the civilisation that was presented to them. Their rebellion is one of the main reasons why we have such an active environmental movement today. Rachel Carson's book was a call to do something.

The response of this generation was contradictory, its legacy too recent to survey objectively. Its criticism of existing forms and its decision in part to opt out and seek self-sufficiency can seem negative responses. With time, more positive relationships came about with the parents, who were themselves only doing what they could in the aftermath of this dehumanising war. They created families and children and in many ways these so-called happy children screamed the silent frustrations of the parents. That is borne out by the very close relationship many of these 'dropout' children later had with their parents, once dismissed as conventional.

This may seem a long way from hope in any environmental social history. Yet it was only when peace across the generations was made

that something remarkable happened. In the 1980s, it became commonly accepted that the environment mattered—maybe the beautiful pictures of planet Earth from the 1969 Moon landing were the first real signs that Rachel Carson was right in her observations; maybe the awful taste of the chemically grown supermarket carrots. An instinctively sceptical public grew convinced that organics may be better, that we couldn't go on pouring a vast amount of foreign bodies into the ground to grow rubbish. Hope began to flow again.

And then came the scares. First were the scares of salmonella poisoning resulting from eggs laid by battery chickens kept in inhumane conditions. A blind eye could not be turned any more to animal welfare conditions on our farms. It was then the turn of the pigs and another scandal over inhumane conditions was uncovered in herds with swine vesicular disease, with wholesale slaughter and the closing down of piggeries. The issue of horses being exported live for meat became a national concern, and Britain's human conscience over animals (others would say our sentimentality) brought about an awareness that organic production was a safe, humane and economically effective option. At first it was at trickle with some organic vegetables in some supermarkets in wealthy areas, and the coming together of growers in areas like Devon and Herefordshire to increase organic production.

Then came the drop in farmers' income owing to the ending of subsidies, followed by the crises to do with marketing produce in which farmers and growers were told that only the large producers could survive supplying the supermarkets. This gave rise to the farmers' markets, where one could obtain local produce—often organic meat, at which you knew the producer on the stall. This provided much-needed income for farmers and growers and was a complement to the vegetable box schemes that had already been established.

Something was happening which was making social, environmental and even political statements. The farmers started to feel they were part of the vital supply chain again, rather than sanitised food factories.

The BSE scare in the late 1990s, in which cow had been fed to cow in an ultimate insult to nature, served to emphasise the crises in the food chain. Again, there was a huge increase in the demand for organic produce—a shocked public and an accused farming community.

What are you doing with the livestock, and what are you doing with the land, our birth right?' That accusation would have changed into a condemnation of the rural community if something had not happened in the spring of 2001 that showed the vulnerability and difficulties that smaller farmers and growers faced daily—the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Cumbria which spread north and south and even across the Channel in a rampant hurry to cut farmers off from society. Farmers had to slaughter their only means of livelihood, in many cases the result of generations of careful breeding; and moreover the government blamed them for their folly. The public responded in a very heartfelt way, and something of a new relationship between the land and the town engendered a real bond between producer and consumer. Hope again had found a place in the new century and again a hope for renewed rural communities, for organic production to be given help and more research support, for a better awareness of animal husbandry and moral responsibility in the realm of growing the food we eat.

What has happened? From eccentric periphery, organic farming has become mainstream, again leading a movement that includes alternative medicine, taking into account a spiritual dimension in our busy and overstressed lives and again linking this with a sustainable future.

That could be seen in the summer of 2005 in some remarkable moments, as when the G8

economic Summit put the future of Africa on the top spot of its discussion points. The feeling of linking arms with some of the most impoverished countries came in concerts and an 'Africa calling' event with African only bands at the Cornwall Eden Project, which is itself a beacon for environmental sustainability across the world. That would have been a beacon of hope itself for a new relationship between farmers in the 'first' and 'third' worlds. Then, a small article in the Sunday Times at the end of July meant that the biodynamic farming and growing movement crossed the threshold of recognition when it was reported that Prince Charles had

commissioned a holding of field vegetables on biodynamic principles. Apparently encouraged by his new wife's former husband, Tom Parker Bowles, Prince Charles, who has been a mainstay of the developing organic movement, had commissioned the trials on Duchy land, thus confirming to many that he has an interest in the more spiritual approach to land management. A note of hope indeed to bring these articles to a conclusion and hope indeed that what began with a few smallholdings of faithful families became a new world movement.

The first of these two articles was published in Perspectives March—May 2005

Man and The Stars

December 2005 - February 2006

HAZEL STRAKER

December starts with a New Moon so that there are two New Moons this month. The first takes place on the 1st at 15.01 near Antares in the Scorpion and the second on the morning of New Year's Eve, 31st, at 3.12 in the Archer. For the northern hemisphere the Sun passes through its lowest point with the solstice on the 21st at 18.35; the opposite being the experience for those living in southern regions. Two days before the solstice the Sun enters Archer. On the 15th at 16.16 the Sun lights up the Full Moon as she moves in the region of the horns of the Bull between Mars in Ram and Saturn in Twins. All the planets are visible in the night sky this month, Venus and Mars in the evening, Saturn still visible most of the night and Jupiter and Mercury in the morning eastern sky.

On the 4th the three day old Moon passes below (above for southern viewers) Venus in Archer setting about three hours after the Sun. The Moon overtakes Saturn in the Crab on 19. In the morning a few hours before sunrise she meets Jupiter on the 27th who has just moved into Scales and on the 29th shortly before sunrise she passes Mercury who is scarcely visible in Scorpion.

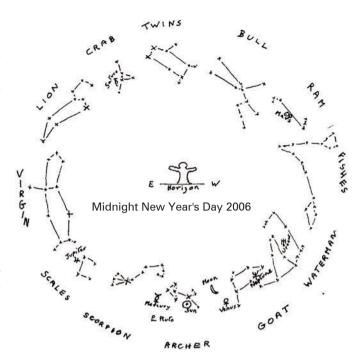
January starts and ends with a meeting of Venus and the Moon. On the 1st the little new crescent of the Moon passes 7° below (above) Venus, both setting about one hour after the Sun. Venus moves retrograde on the 3rd going back to let the Sun catch her up on the 13th in inferior conjunction. Venus moves between Sun and Earth but not on the same plane. Because Venus is then 5° above (below) the Sun's path she becomes visible again two days after the conjunction but now as morning star in the eastern sky very shortly before sunrise. On the 14th the Full Moon at 9.48 in Twins is opposite Sun and Venus in Archer. The Moon passes Mars on the 8th, Saturn on the 15th and

Jupiter on the 23th. When she comes again to Venus on the 28th she is nearly as far below (above) the ecliptic as Venus is above (below) so that they are separated by 12°. New Moon is at 14.15 on the 29th in Goat. Mercury is not visible this month.

In February the five planets are still visible at times during the night and Mercury joins them again at the end of the month now as evening star setting very soon after the Sun. After meeting the Sun in Goat on January 26 he has moved through Waterman becoming visible again on February 25 in Fishes. The Moon passes the

five planets with marked different distances between illustrating the different planes of the planets' movements including that of the Moon. On February 5 she passes Mars with only 2° between them; on the 11th she meets Saturn at 4° apart; on the 20th she overtakes Jupiter 5° below (above) and Venus on the 25th with 10° between.

In the last edition of *Perspectives* we spoke about how the task of the Mars beings to help us to know and experience the physical world had reached a crisis point at the time of the deeds of Christ on earth. Mankind was in danger of losing touch with the spiritual world and Christ laid a seed whereby this excessive experience of the material world could be transformed into a harmonious balance leading eventually into a totally new experience bringing something new into evolution. During Advent and the Holy Nights, Mars shares with Saturn the predominance of the night sky being visible most of the night. We have also spoken of Saturn challenging us to experi-



ence the further evolution of Christ since His death on Golgotha; His Resurrection and increasingly possible manifestation in the world of life—that world which is now so thinly veiled by the physical material experience of our outer senses. All the classical planets join this challenge by showing themselves to us in the morning or evening sky; even the illusive Mercury is visible in the morning sky from the beginning of December to Christmas Eve. Also the Moon greets them all between the two New Moons at the beginning and end of December.

Can we evolve our experience and understanding of the Christ Being so that we can shine something positive and special into 2006 in spite of what may happen in the physical realm? 'In Him was life and the life was the light of men' (John 1:4) 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' (John 11:25).

I wish all you readers a light-filled New Year.

All times are given in G.M.T.

The Caravan

SIBYLLE THACKRAY

She loved this time of day, when the dawn gently spread its light in her room. Leaning back in her favourite armchair in the window niche she looked proudly at the collection of Christmas cards on the Christmas table. They made a colourful picture of the joy of this festival with all their many colours. The noise of an engine interrupted the silence and with it the beam of the headlight of a parking car broke the twilight which had now spread in the room. The light moved along the walls and lit up for a moment the Christmas cards that stood on the table. Her gaze fell on a picture of the three wise men from the east, three silhouettes on camels, on the edge of a landscape without trees and bushes, following the star towards their goal. 'Three lonely wanderers' she thought to herself, 'who set off on such a long journey to an unknown country, alone and without any followers? A myth...It could not have been like that!'

At that time it was the caravans which brought the spices, cloths, salt, and also groups of travellers in safety from one continent to another; caravans that knew the tracks, and knew where the resting places were with their oases. Surely the three wise men from the east had also joined such a caravan, on their way to the holy place.

Today there are still many Bedouin tribes, living as nomads in the Sinai desert. They journey with their families and their few belongings they possess from well to well, from oasis to oasis. They pitch their goat-hair tents and then when the season changes, take them down again. They roll them up with the guy-ropes, they stack up their kitchen utensils, pack their few clothes and fasten their earthly possessions on the leather saddles of their camels. Then they herd their goats and set off on their way. The adults walk beside the procession, but the children and the weaker members of the tribe, those who would not manage to go by foot, follow on the back of the smaller dromedaries behind the pack animals, who lend them their shade. They follow paths ploughed by wind and weather, paths in the stony mountains of the Sinai, hardly noticing its wild beauty because their eyes have already grown too much accustomed to the colours and bizarre outlines of the rock formations. They notice rather a Radjoum, a monument made of three large stones lying on top of each other, which was perhaps built by one their ancestors to mark a watering place or some special feature, a welcome sign of human nearness and solidarity in this wilderness.

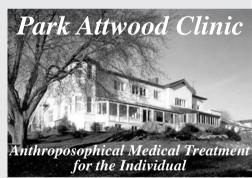
The picture of the three kings reminded her of a discussion that she had once had with a priest shortly before his death. She had asked him what being Christian meant to him. For a moment he hesitated, before answering. 'To be Christian,' he said, 'That means to be on the way.' Actually she had been a little disappointed by this answer, because she had expected from this learned man a short discourse about the hope of Christian salvation and its fulfilment. Could it be that the key to heaven just lay by the wayside, accessible to everyone?

The more she thought about being 'on the way,' however, the more she understood what the old priest had meant. The image of the three wise men from the east and the caravan had helped. Were they not the first ones who made their way to the promised king out of their own initiative—to a king who didn't even belong to their religion? How often do we wish that He might come, above all if we are in a state of crisis, instead of making our way towards Him. The knowledge that the heavenly world expects this of us as our mission can live in us as our guiding star, even if it is ever and again darkened by other desires and expectations.

The place that we must traverse is the desert, a place of crushing size and loneliness, which takes us out of our everyday world and leads us into another reality. But it is also the place of connection, where the Word became real and God spoke to Moses and the prophets.

We can try to find him completely on our own, but it is far easier if we travel with a caravan, in the community of fellow-seekers. This doesn't mean that we may not build some Radjoums of our own, as the sign of our secret experiences, revelations, expectations, dreams and doubts, which belong to us alone, and which mark the path of each individual. We can visit them at any time and be refreshed at them as at the permanent wells in the desert, because the goal of the journey is the way itself, and not the end.

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Outlook

Caring for our Food and Water

CHRISTOPHER COOPER

In an age in which saints and initiates are in short supply, it must be very challenging for the spiritual world to find ways of introducing new impulses and new insights into life on Earth. It can happen that they choose people who at first seem to be unusual or even maverick characters or those who have carved out careers in areas which probably don't get the full endorsement of spiritual beings.

In recent months, we have seen some interesting examples of this, but as this article hopes to show, one needs to retain sharp powers of discrimination when looking at certain events. Let us look at Jamie Oliver, the celebrity chef, who has begun to revolutionize school dinners, and at pop stars like Bob Geldof and Bono who helped to focus the world leaders' attention on the plight of Africa.

Let us take the young chef who battled for a month in the east end of London trying to persuade dinner ladies to cook better quality food with live ingredients and, even more challenging, to change the taste of hundreds of school children. He went through periods of near despair when all his early attempts went awry. And then the tide began to turn. The amounts of wasted food in the bins diminished, teachers noticed improvements in concentration and behaviour in the classroom. Even asthma symptoms decreased in many children.

Although Jamie Oliver's colourful language of persuasion may never be heard in The Christian Community in a month of Sundays, he has set in motion an important revolution in school dinners all over Britain. Even the Education minister was bounced into giving many millions of pounds to fund this farewell to so much junk food in schools.

Now one could easily be led into thinking that the celebrity pop stars have achieved similar breakthroughs and have managed to soften the hearts of the captains of capitalism who met at the luxury hotel in Gleneagles. Hugely ambitious concerts, marches through Edinburgh, demonstrations in London's Trafalgar Square—all this seemed to galvanize a nation into demanding a fair deal for Africa. At the end of the week there was a widespread feeling of triumph that the G8 leaders had at last been converted into Christian charity workers. Was this the moment the spiritual worlds had been waiting for? Were millions of African destinies now at last able to unfold? If we read the newspapers and saw the television reports we might have believed this. Sadly, the reality was very different. Certain key statements from the not so converted G8 men were so easily overlooked in the euphoria. Take the following: 'debt relief to poor countries will be granted only if they are shown to be adjusting their gross assistance flows by the amount given.' In plain English this means that their aid will be reduced by the same amount as the debt relief. Even more sinister is the statement: 'it is essential that poor countries boost private sector investment and ensure the elimination of impediments to private investment.' This can means that big water companies in the northern hemisphere can privatize African water supplies with the inevitable result that very many Africans will be unable to pay for their drinking water. At this very moment the privatization of water in Ghana is being forced through by our own British Department for International Development. One may be sure that Western seed companies such as Monsanto will also find new ways to promote GM crops all over Africa.

This huge piece of deception has been so skilfully masterminded by those powers and principalities (in the St. Paul's words) who manipulate truth on a global scale.

Let us turn to a third example of an individual who may be the bearer of new impulses. Floris

Books recently published the first volume of communications between a German anthroposophist, Verena Stael von Holstein and the elemental beings who live in and around her mill in north Germany. This is no common channelling but a new approach using a specially trained consciousness which can reach into the world of these powerful beings. She honed these new capacities in years of painstaking effort before she was approached by a publisher who believed that these significant communications should be made available to a wider public. She reached the point where she was able to put leading questions on world issues and world events to the appropriate nature spirit and receive answers which she could formulate in ordinary language. It appears that certain elemental beings are very willing to share their 'insights' as this is part of their new destiny role on earth. They want to work with humans in new ways.

The insights about aspects of our food are varied and sometimes quite disturbing in their implications. In a recent volume of these conversations which has not yet appeared in English (Flensburger Sonderhefte 22) the elemental spirits express their concern at the quality of grain that makes our bread, especially the bread used in communion: 'The adversary powers in our present time are attempting to manipulate the bread so that as little of the Christ Sun as possible flows into it.' (Page 47) Hybrid seeds and GM seeds play a role in this.

The Tall One (an elemental with a wider perspective than most of the others) reveals an otherwise unperceived after-effect of the Iraq War in a region where the grains were first introduced in ancient Persian times. The original cradle of bread is now invaded by very destructive forces and this has a spiritual effect on the quality of food throughout the world. This is not such a far-fetched idea if one considers the earth's body as a unified organism. (page 154)

As a counterbalance to these destructive influences human communities should strive even more vigorously to improve the quality of the cooked and prepared food through cultural, artistic and other willed activities. A further com-

ment by the Tall One is that the diminishing of the quality of our food also affects the quality of what is offered in the communion service. Transubstantiation can be disturbed. Congregations and priests must now celebrate the communion with a greater inner intensity so that the damage is wiped out.' (page 155)

Rudolf Steiner clearly foresaw that the quality of our food would diminish by the turn of the millennium and spoke of people starving in front of full pots. That this has not happened everywhere is due to growing awareness of the quality in food and what it means for millions of people.

The Green Elemental speaks of how one can improve food by bringing the greatest possible loving care to its preparation. (page 46) He adds: 'thinking about the Last Supper can also increase the nutritional quality.' This can be a comfort to all those who cannot afford or have no regular access to biodynamic food or even organic food. It can also be a stimulus to develop a new culture of eating together. This is something which our congregations could promote more strongly than is usually the case today.

Though totally different in their approaches, the effort of a Jamie Oliver and a Frau van Holstein can lead to us to new habits and a new awareness of how precious our food should be. The deception practised on the pop stars in their earnest mission will one day be fully revealed if sufficient people wake up to the real truth.

When we hear the words of the Trinity epistle, which speak of how the Holy Spirit receives our knowing 'into His life shining with spirit' we can remember just how important it is that we nurture a true knowing about earthly and cosmic life as far as this is possible for us.

References:

February 2005: Channel 4 TV series on Jamie Oliver

Living with the Nature Spirits Verena Stael von Holstein, Floris 2005

The G8 Summit: a fraud and a circus John Pilger writing in the New Statesman 28 June 2005
Tell Me No Lies John Pilger, Jonathan Cape 2004

Around the Christian Community

Seminary greetings from Chicago

By Gisela Wielki, joined by Richard Danceyand Oliver Steinrueck. Seminary Directors

This past year has been filled to the brim with riches. If our three first year students in the fall of 2003 felt like we were still in the womb, the second year of seminary existence was one of firmly putting our feet on the ground. The size, eleven students, and the youthfulness of the group made this a much more extroverted year, without diminishing the earnestness that comes with being on a path. On Sunday, Sept. 18 we welcomed nine new students into the third year of seminary life. At our communal breakfast after the Service we now listen to graces in different languages, and in the classroom and hallways, we hear and enjoy English tinged with the flavor of many different accents: Australian, Dutch, Polish, British, German, French, Austrian and then there is plain American as it is spoken in California or in Detroit. Only two students were born in the US, the others emigrated at some later point in their lives to the US, where they found The Christian Community. Our two students from Holland and Australia found the seminary brochure in their home congregations and packed their bags to be with us. Two of last year's Chicago students have gone abroad for a year to the seminary in Stuttgart joining four other Americans already there, one of whom is now going towards Ordination. Our two students from the Hamburg seminary, who joined us last year, have returned to Germany. To see the beginnings of this cross fertilization is very encouraging and so is the result of so many Americans being at the moment in our seminaries.

In the course of our second seminary year we were joined by forty-one guest students. These members and friends from our congregations in North America shared seminary life with us for one of the Open Course Weeks and two students are with us now for one semester for the sole reason of reorientation and redirection

before embarking on a new phase in their lives. We are glad and grateful that the Seminary can serve.

Our doors are open. If you ever need a week of active rest, an experience of inner 'homecoming', or a whole semester of living with the Act of Consecration of Man, come and join us. We look forward to your arrival and are sure that leaving us again, you will take the seminary with you in your heart. We are in need of such apostles returning to the wider Christian Community on this continent.

Web: www.seminary-chicago.org Email: info@seminary-chicago.org

Ordinations in 2005

In March and in May Ordinations took place in Berlin where there are two churches, one in the western part of the city and the other, newly built, in the former East Berlin. Ten candidates from the seminary in Stuttgart were ordained in the rather monumental church in the Ruhrstrasse in Passiontide. The black of the season lent the proceedings an austere and stern mood. The music, specially written for the occasion by Lothar Reubke, conveyed a feeling of gentleness and joy. At Easter the newly ordained were inducted into the congregations into which they had been sent out. These were, in the main, in Germany; one went to The Hague in Holland and another to St. Gallen in Switzerland.

In May the four candidates from the seminary in Hamburg were consecrated into the priest-hood in the smaller, more intimate church snuggled in between large blocks of apartments still bearing, in part, the signs of neglect and dilapidation of the former GDR. This event took place at Ascension when for a few days in the year red and gold set the mood of the ritual. Three of them were destined to go further afield: to Lima in Peru, Järna (Sweden), Vienna, and one to the Black Forest.

Louise Madsen

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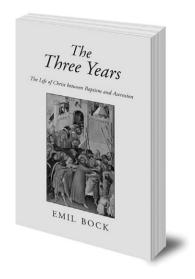
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Extract from The Three Years

The polarity in landscape, which can be traced throughout the life of Jesus, governs also the raisings from the dead. The raising of Jairus' daughter and of the widow's son at Nain took place in Galilee. The town of Nain lies among the foothills of Mount Tabor, that mountain of mountains which, by its very form, was predestined to be the stage for the Transfiguration of Christ. The town of Capernaum, where the house of Jairus stood, lies on the shores of the sea of Gennesareth, not far north of Bethsaida, the Town of Fishes; there is no other place where the wonderful life-giving atmosphere of Galilee is more strongly evident. The tossing waves of the lake of lakes are here at the height of their elemental activity.

The third awakening, that of Lazarus, has an exactly opposite setting. The stern country of Judea surrounds it. The little town of Bethany lies on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, on the side away from Jerusalem, leading down to the depths of the Dead Sea. Here the great Judean desert begins, and the name of the little town, The House of Poverty, expresses the quality that expands to cosmic dimensions in the whole landscape.



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Gospel Readings 2005–2006

Advent Sunday, November 27	Ascension Thursday May 25John 16:24–33 Sunday May 28John 16:24–33 Whitsuntide
Christmas Sunday, December 25 Midnight	Whitsunday June 4
Sunday, January 8Matthew 2:1–12 Sunday, January 15Luke 2:41–52 Sunday, January 22John 2:1–11 Sunday, January 29John 5:1–18	Sunday July 9
Sunday February 5	Sunday August 6 Luke 15:11–32 Sunday August 13 Luke 9:1–17 Sunday August 20 Luke 18:35–43 Sunday August 27 Mark 7:31–37 Sunday August 29 Mark 7:31–37 Sunday, September 3 Luke 10:1–20 Sunday, September 10 Luke 17:5–24
Lent Sunday March 19 Luke 11:29–36 Sunday March 26 John 6:1–15 Sunday April 2 John 8:1–12	Sunday Sept. 17
Holy Week Palm Sunday April 9 Matthew 21:1–11 Maundy Thursday Apr. 13 Luke 23:13–32 Good Friday April 14John 19:1–15 Holy Saturday April 15John19:16–42	Sunday, October 1
Easter Easter Sunday April 16Mark 16:1–8 Sunday April 23John 20:19–31 Sunday April 30John 10:1–16 Sunday May 7John 15:1–27	Sunday, October 29 Revelation 1:1–20 Sunday, November 5 Revelation 3:1–6 Sunday, Nov. 12Revelation 7:9 to 8:4 Sunday, November 19 . Revelation 14:1–20 Sunday Nov. 26 Revelation 22:1–9
Sunday May 14	Sunday, December 3Luke 21:25–36

There is a basic annual pattern for these readings within which there can be variations. Thus readings in local centres do not always correspond with the list above.

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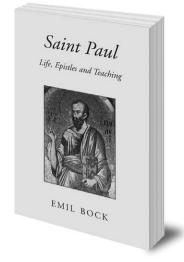
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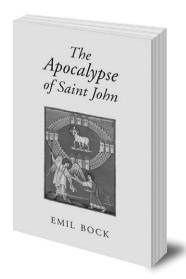
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Omission in our last issue:

The interview with Taco Bay, on page 17, *Perspectives* September–November 2005, first appeared in *In Beweging*, Michaelmas 2005. Its author is Bastiaan Baan, a priest in Zeist, Holland.

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