The Christian Community

Perspectives

September–November 2019

Spiritual Opportunities of Our Time

Contents

Cover pictures by Craigie Aitchison
front: Holy Island
back: Yellow Bird

Deadlines:
December 2019–February 2020 issue: September 30, 2019
March–May 2020 issue: January 6, 2020

Perspectives is published quarterly by The Christian Community, a registered UK charity.
It appears at the beginning of December, March, June & September.

Editor:
Tom Ravetz
11 Upper Close, Forest Row, RH18 5DS
Editorial assistant: Donna Simmons

Editorial Team:
Peter Howe, Deborah Ravetz
Kevin Street

Subscriptions & Advertisements:
Gabriele Kuhn, Tel: +44(1383)821204
subs@perspectives-magazine.co.uk

All correspondence: Perspectives,
21 Napier Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5AZ
editor@perspectives-magazine.co.uk

Lay-Up: Christoph Hänni

Subscriptions:
tinyurl.com/yakwhjgl

UK £15
Europe £18
Rest of World: £22
(not USA, NZ & Australia)
Please send cheque, payable to *Perspectives*, to Subscription Manager (address above), or send for more information.

Subsribe with PayPal on our website:
tinyurl.com/y9qqc9ru

E-Subscriptions are available for £15 per year. You will be sent a link to download the new issue as soon as it is produced. See
tinyurl.com/y9qqc9ru

USA: US$26
c/o The Christian Community,
906 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
(Cheques payable to: The Christian Community San Francisco)

Australia: Enquire for price at:
Matthew Bond
C/- 319 Auburn Road
Hawthorn East, Victoria 3123

New Zealand: Enquire for price at:
Elizabeth Heybrook, 293 Winterslow Rd. Staveley RD1, Ashburton 7771
Phone: 03-3030780

Advertisements:
Send ads five weeks prior to publication to the Editor at the above address.
Quarter page £45,
Half page £75, Full page £140

ISSN: 0967 5485

Perspectives

Volume 89 No. 4
September–November 2019

'Danger fosters the rescuing power'

Hölderlin, *Patmos*

If we look back on our lives imagining how our angels see them, we experience a refreshing change of perspective. What we see as the good times may be less interesting for the angels. What we see as mistakes and calamities may be the times they see as most fruitful and creative. If we imagine that there are angels concerned with the whole of humanity and look at current events through their eyes, we may come to the same realisation: where we see problems and dangers, they sense a spiritual opportunity. From this point of view, we can look back on times when governments and civil society seemed to be progressing broadly in line with the kinds of ideals that we hold dear and wonder whether we were in danger of being lulled to sleep. Now that we are facing what James Howard Kunstler called the Long Emergency, it is clear that every one of us is called upon to act wherever they can, whether that be inwardly or outwardly. This issue of *Perspectives* is intended to live up to its name, providing many different perspectives on the crises of our time and their attendant opportunities.

Tom Ravetz

The Triumph of Death, Hieronymus Bosch

Spiritual opportunities of our time

Luke Barr

Is The Christian Community in crisis? Although there are exceptions, the general trend reveals that not all congregations are being replenished by a next generation. The connection to future generations is weakening. Fewer children attend; families can no longer find time for us. The children's service can only be sustained once a month in some places, and in others, not at all. Confirmation numbers are declining. Many people—at least in Britain—find religion no longer a suitable vehicle for their families' spiritual needs. Our spiritual life has become more individualised—and perhaps less sustained.

People—at least in Britain—find no relevance in religion. Christianity, whose long history is united in the popular imagination with bloody power politics and chicanery, seems particularly irrelevant to the modern mindset. Everywhere, mindfulness, yoga, Buddhism, even Islam with its intense religiosity, are the spiritual paths of choice. Those who cannot endure religion or spirituality can find distraction in the thousand ways that our culture offers, from money-worship to alcohol to technology addiction. One thinks of the words of Yeats:

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Or one is reminded of the picture by Hieronymous Bosch called 'The Triumph of Death'. A hollowed-out culture is overwhelmed by death forces, represented by skeletons—because it has no spiritual backbone.

This is a terrible and ominous apocalyptic picture: Are we already living it?

We live in critical times, it seems. We had many peaceful years after the devastation of the world wars. Then the peace turned into a sleep. We began slumbering.

Luke Barr is a priest of The Christian Community in Forest Row, UK.

And now we wake up, and find that quickly, very swiftly, without our having noticed it, the times are changing, and we are being overrun by forces inimical to humanity—or at the very least, being left behind by history. To echo the words from the communion prayers in the Act of Consecration of Man: have we failed to *unite with the world's evolving*?

Some readers may find my perspective overly pessimistic or too dramatic. But I feel that facing the threat in these days of 'the triumph of death', we are presented with an unparalleled spiritual opportunity.

The Christian Community will soon have been in existence for one hundred years. Three generations have carried it this far. They have done marvellously. More or less all of our churches have been built, styled, thought through, during the tenure of the third generation. They express the *Weltanschauung*—the attitude towards reality—of *that* generation. It was a wonderful blossoming—but it has now come to an end, and a new natural cycle must replace it. The word 'opportunity' can mean '*a favourable time*'; and that is surely what is unfolding now.

Certain forms and ways of doing things that were good thirty years ago, no longer obtain. Not because they are bad, but because the world has evolved beyond them. Children, young people and families require something different. People have changed—their needs are quite different to those of the previous generations. It may seem at first as if our 'ceremonies of innocence' are being drowned—and they will be, if we don't transform to meet people where they are today. We have to find ways artfully and gently to introduce the 'healing medicine' back into a world that hardly has the strength to endure it.

From where I'm standing, at this moment, yes, The Christian Community appears to be in decline in the British Isles—perhaps even dying. But in The Christian Community, do we not profess that death is but a transition of sorts? Death is no longer a tragedy. Christ dwells within death too.

Let us return to Yeats's poem once more. Amidst the collapse, he declares: 'Surely some revelation is at hand; surely the Second Coming is at hand! The Second Coming!' Yeats was a Rosicrucian who knew the tenor of the times we live in. The modern day 'anarchy' that he refers to in his poem, the chaos that we experience today, was something he could foresee. It is the turmoil that accompanies the second coming.

And if we are living within the drama of the 'triumph of death', then we are surely also experiencing the 'second coming' and the great change that may be hastened by it.

If our traditional forms are becoming moribund, then there is probably good reason: we are being challenged to find new forms that will be able to receive what Yeats calls, 'the revelation of the second coming'. It does not mean we have to discard the old forms; rather, that we find ways to work more creatively with them. The initiatives in Stourbridge, described in the last issue, are a heartening example of this.

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross unforgettably and very usefully described the five stages of dying. Denial; anger; bargaining; despair; acceptance. We may refuse to see what is happening and grow angry, finding fault with the world, or with priests, or with congregants; then bargain and offer compromise; then despair and sink into hopelessness. Beyond all this however, the miracle of acceptance can come towards us. The miracle of letting go, of *dying* can come. The Christian Community can *die and become*—we who have so loved to quote Goethe's words can actually do it too! The miracle of the new comes with it. Acceptance, that mysterious gesture that Christ embodies, overcomes death and says, 'behold, I make all things new'.

Perhaps our current apparent general decline—painful as it *must* be—is one of the great spiritual opportunities of our time.

We may look high and low for the great spiritual opportunities of our time. It sounds like an immense task. Surely, it must be something grand and almost overwhelming. And yet, it seems to me that the spiritual opportunities of our time are easy to find. They are all around us, at every turn. The only trouble is being able to endure so many spiritual opportunities in one day! It would be helpful to find some way of being able quietly to place them before one's gaze—and before the gaze of the spiritual world.

In The Christian Community, we have an eminently helpful way of facilitating this. It is the Sacramental Consultation. It is one of the great spiritual opportunities of our time. It is a safe and proven form, and can bear the weight and strain of whatever we may hope from it—if we will it so.

This sacrament is not often used. Perhaps understandably so, as we have become used to the old picture of 'confession' in which one was forced to 'confess one's sins', accept forgiveness from the priest, and submit one's secret self into the arbitrary power of the representative of an institution, the church.

The Sacramental Consultation in The Christian Community is of course quite different. It is important to realise that we are not confessing anything. No matter how bad it may seem, we are not confessing it to an unknowing world. *The world knows it already*. We must simply find the courage to speak it out. That courage already precipitates change.

Our 'sins' are in truth all sorts of things: they range from the seemingly unspeakable to the simply irritable. They encompass every moment when we feel ourselves out of alignment with ourselves. The power that we have to utter them all as *word* can create a spiritual opportunity, a new door forming in our lives, a door which opens to a new path.

Ultimately, we do not seek nor receive forgiveness from the priest. We give it—if it needs giving—ourselves. We do not seek answers from the priest. The meeting facilitates the possibility of finding answers and insights within ourselves. 'Truth is a pathless land', said Krishnamurti, and each must enter that space, each for themselves.

Most importantly, we do not give ourselves up to the power of another when we talk about and reveal something of ourselves. The Consultation creates a space that makes it impossible for the listening priest to hold it in his or her soul, as information about the other. The Consultation creates the listening and speaking space of two autonomous selves; it does not take place on a soul level, but on the level of the human 'I'. One has to experience the sacrament and its text, read by the priest in vestments at the close, to know this. Once one has experienced it, it becomes clear that abuse of this self-revelation is impossible.

In recent decades, we have become used to talking therapies of all kinds. People often seek techniques through these practices that they can receive and use for their further everyday therapy. These most certainly have their place. The Sacramental Consultation is not a therapy. It does not provide techniques for living. I would say that it provides something above and beyond this.

Usually, when we are in a crisis of some kind, we will eventually seek help. We will soon realise that we have to address our needs at three levels: bodily, soul, and spiritual. A change in perhaps one or all three levels may be necessary. For example, a bodily change may be dietary, or in exercise, or a change of environment. Soul or *psychic* intervention can take place with a therapist, counsellor, or even with family and friends—anyone with whom one can *talk*. These days, we are all each other's hierophants in each other's mystery dramas, as Adam Bittleston said. Talk, when it is meaningful, is always moving toward the Word.

It is not always clear how we can find a form for the spiritual in our lives. Attending the Act of Consecration is one way. We listen to the Word, and something remarkable takes place. We are passive, and yet activity stirs within us. However, for the Consultation, we speak—and the Word listens. The Word is passive, receptive. *It* feels activity stir within. The whole cosmos grows quiet to listen and become attentive, because we have activated the form of the Sacramental Consultation. And because we have found the courage to enter the Consultation and undergo its stringent entry requirements. Even if you don't tell the priest everything, it was present there in the room, in the space, in the Sacrament. You revealed it—to the spiritual world. And this creates the opportunity.

Etymologically, 'opportunity' comes from the Latin expression, *ob portum veniens*, which means '*to approach a port or harbour*'. Ancient languages were full of pictures which arose from the natural sense world. The origin of this word can provide us with a helpful image of the context in which the sacrament is meant to be used. When, metaphorically, we spend all day on the sea of our everyday existence in the tiny coracle of our everyday identity, we eventually pull in our nets. We review our day. Sometimes we find the nets of our experiences shockingly empty; and sometimes they are bulging—also with much that cannot provide nourishment. Then it is good to approach the safe harbour, the Consultation, where we can moor awhile and sort out what can be used and what is unnecessary. The catch can be cooked aright, and digested in peace. And it can be taken as offering and libation to the Act of Consecration where it is returned to us as bread and wine.

Then it becomes clear to us that the happenings of our lives are all part of the substance of our destiny—and that our destinies find their right spiritual home in the sacraments.

One last mystery of the Consultation has to do with the sermon in the Act of Consecration. This is of course given by the priest of the congregation. Amongst the many things that go into the forming of a sermon (how the gospel resounds, the mood of the festival, the mood of the times, the priest's own spiritual concerns, events in the locality and church etc.), there is another aspect which is absolutely essential: the spiritual lives of the congregants. The spiritual life of a human soul reveals itself in one's destiny and biography. *The priest needs to know this*: not out of idle curiosity, or desire for power, but in order to serve the angel or spirit of the congregation. Through a strange alchemy, stories of destinies that have been shared are transformed and weave their way into sermons. Not explicitly and often not immediately, but as living substance that makes the Word alive.

The sermon otherwise is in danger of becoming too abstract, too distanced from the lives of those who are listening. The priest has to cast their word into waters that are unclear to their sight.

The sermon can grow out of the Consultations in the right way: as the creating of something *new and fresh and right*, out of the substance that has been brought to the sacramental space. Then it too becomes an opportunity for all those who wish to hear it as a continuation of the gospel—as those 'to whom it shall be proclaimed'.

Within our power

Ioanna Panagiotopoulos

In this short life that only lasts an hour how much—how little—is within our power. Emily Dickinson

Everywhere we look, people are seeking. It is winter in Canberra and in the centre of the city, well-dressed civil workers and shoppers swarm between the countless glass doors, laden with bags and phones, executing their schedules with perfect precision. The wind blows but to those who tighten their scarves around their necks it's merely an unconscious annoyance disrupting the serious-looking work of being comfortably busy. In the lanes between department stores where countless people cross, the homeless and their dogs hold their signs: *money food shelter needed*, while around the corner, in front of the dumpling place, the young ones are still there begging, not for food or shelter but for money, oblivious to the cold while the body trembles as it begins to feel the pangs of withdrawal—it has been hours since the last hit. The young in particular, seized by ice and heroin addiction, will have to face another night in the heart of a loveless city, waking—if they sleep at all—to the mercy of an over-bearing habit that grips them body and soul. By contrast, there are those people, easily discovered online through social media, who already from their work desks are accepting invitations for this evening's countless social meet-ups on offer: *Discover your Divine Purpose, Law and Attraction—Heal and Change your Life, Clearing Spirit with the Mexican Egg Cleansing, The Sisterhood Self-Love Movement…* For these people, it seems, the city hosts an abundance of love, and every one comes to share and claim what they can. It is true, people are seeking: money, success, innovation, self-love, comfort, pleasure, annihilation, relief from unspeakable pain, bliss.

Ioanna Panagiotopoulos is a priest of The Christian Community in Canberra.

Today, we can immerse ourselves on a path of self-seeking spiritual opportunity or we can be caught in the steel grip of a spirit-less, self-annihilating life, and thus seek our death. When we put the two together, we can wonder what possible spiritual opportunity could be afforded by this situation. The obvious answer is freedom. But when the young, fresh-out-of-home walk through the doors of the club, self-annihilation through tequila contests (can you still dance with style after ten shots?) is certainly consciously chosen as the fruit of a new-found freedom, is it not? If our modern spiritual opportunity is freedom either to destroy our body and our life, or in contrast to usurp every good sensation there is to be had from it (because we deserve it), who benefits from freedom's unfolding? The idea begins to dawn that we can contemplate the answer to this question.

In an instant the icy blasts, the lonely despair and the Mexican egg ceremony fade beneath the growing presence of something whose existence lies at the centre of human experience. Indeed, this presence can make itself known only because the powerful extremes of our self-annihilating or by contrast self-possessing experiences are allowed for a moment to fade. The true freedom lies in our ability to silence them and to stand for a time free from the needs of our existence. Divine providence can be felt as the presence that sleeps with one eye open as we dance through life, and which grows to encompass an awe-inspiring *meaning* when our soul grows still.

No matter where we stand on the tipping scales of this modern time, a powerful reality is present. A path reveals itself before us, and as we grow, each step we take, each choice we make, determines how the journey will unfold. *We are free to think it through to the end*, and to know who will benefit from all the things we choose. Our opportunity is the creation of a culture that includes human beings on both sides of the scale, because we know that in the centre, the divine providence looking over our lives is a shared genius of humanity. It breathes us all into being, at the centre of things, and patiently waits for us to arrive, not in spiritual heights or earthly depths, but in the centre of existence, free of need.

During the course of our life, the necessary hindrances are there, strategically placed by destiny; stones on the road that make walking

difficult. But for the modern spiritual seeker, these hindrances are in themselves the means by which we will, over time, win through in our quest for the unfolding of meaning. In ancient times, it was only granted to a select few to reach into the realm of the spirit for the purpose of directing the unfolding of culture on earth. These were the ones who were destined to be the great leaders, the great initiates of humankind. And therein lies the spiritual opportunity of our time: what in times of antiquity was the responsibility of the initiate, today is the opportunity of each human being; the stewardship of our destiny is given into our hands. Our opportunity is to take ourselves in hand and develop our capacity. Each human being today bears within themselves the potential to develop an entire individual culture, at whose centre stands the altar of our becoming. Our own higher genius is the priest and guardian of this special impulse.

Today, a spiritual seeker encounters an open road, often with no teachers or maps, and must undergo the continual breaking away of old ideas and old cultures. Today, a spiritual seeker is free to take any road, whether it means to break from the physical and geographic bonds of family and culture, or inwardly to break the bonds of ingrained cultural thought—nevertheless, the opportunity to carve a path towards spiritual seeker-ship is available to us all in this time. To seek is to track; we can track the inner places where the spirit has touched our experience, and from there begin the great task and opportunity of building the temple of the new culture, out of the treasures of the spirit gifted to us by divine providence in the moments of our awakening. The destination is inevitable. The gates of death stand at the end of the earthly journey. But what we bring to the gates of death as the gifts we have wrought and wrested out of our life lies within our freedom, and these gifts shine as the jewels on the path for others to find, when they find themselves lost.

Crucifixion with Mountain, Montecastelli, Craigie Aitchison

St. Michael's relationship to space and time

Michael Kientzler

We know about the being of St. Michael in his 'spatial' manifestation—inadequate though this may seem for a spiritual being: he was described in the Old Testament as the countenance of the Lord who walks before him. In the Michaelmas epistle of The Christian Community he is characterised as standing before Christ in our time as Christ's countenance.

This image is of course an enormous challenge for our thinking and imagination. How can a being be the most intimate expression and revelation of another being—especially a being with such a strong character of his own and such a strong will as Michael?

A countenance is always the expression of a self (I), from the 'I' upwards we might say. Animals have no countenance. They can have a face but that is something quite different. Out of a face a being looks into the world. A countenance is also very much being beheld. A face is never the revelation of an individuality.

So how can Michael be the countenance of a higher being?

The only bridge for understanding this mystery is to realise Michael's utter selflessness, his total identification with the higher being above him. We feel his relationship to light, that invisible visible-maker. We can also feel reminded of Christ himself, 'I and the Father are one' and 'who has seen me has seen the Father'. Michael is an expression of Christ himself. All of this appears of course in relationship to the human spiritual observer.

Thus the archangel reveals himself as a bridge builder from the divine world towards humanity.

The other aspect is to look at this being from the point of view of time.

In esoteric Christianity, as represented by the German Benedictine mystic Trithemius von Sponheim

Michael Kientzler is a priest of The Christian Community in Forest Row.

(15th century), the historical periods were assigned to seven archangels who alternate their rule in periods of about 350 years.

In the late 19th century H. G. Harrison took this up. He describes in his lectures The Transcendental Universe the beginning of a Michael period around 1879. Before this, Michael was the regent of the time of Hellenism.

What connects our time to the time of Hellenism are tendencies such as the emancipation of women and the emergence of the individual from the generic. Alexander the Great is the first to have his image minted on coins—previously they were images of gods. In the Samothracean mysteries, people were initiated for the first time without regard to their gender, race or ethnicity. All of these are tendencies that we are also increasingly aware of today, even if some people stuck forever in the past are fighting them.

All of this reveals the being of the archangel Michael as 'time spirit' (Zeitgeist), as a being that is intimately connected with time processes; not only in what happens in time, but also with certain qualitative and quantitative differentiations of time.

What we think of as the natural stream of time moves from the past into the future; we occupy a point in the present.

But there is this other stream reflected in the German language through the word for future, 'Zukunft', which means nothing else but 'what is coming toward us'.

Man can be seen as the vortex where the two streams of time meet; our self creates the present as an irruption from above, in the vertical dimension.

Then we have the special moment as a chance, 'kairos', an opening (door or window) for something new to be initiated. If this is missed it may take many years or even decades before the same chance arises; in terms of humanity it may be hundreds of years.

We also have other short moments where one can always have the impression that what I called a 'vertical element' above is connected with a spiritual impact because it has to do with the present, the 'now' and the individual self creating it.

The being of Michael as time spirit encompasses all these elements with a specific emphasis on the here and now. He appears like a rep-

resentative of all spiritual beings who evolve, changing their activity, gesture and countenance in time.

All of this is reflected in the Michaelmas epistle of the Act of Consecration of Man, which refers to the present in a number of different ways. First, it speaks of the Michaelmas Act of Consecration of Man taking place *in this hour* which is already an extended present; then it describes how we behold Michael *in these world days*—this could refer to a whole epoch, like the archangelic period of about 350 years. When the epistle refers to today in this context we feel that this is an extended 'today' which includes tomorrow and the days after, all of which are part of the present. Then we hear how *for moments* Michael changes his gesture—the older or former gesture of holding the dragon in his place is still being practised by him but for short periods he transforms this activity to one of turning towards the human being, directing man onto a new inner path. *Follow me, I lead you…* would imply a transformation from space to time, from threatening the dragon to leading (moving) to divining the reality of the *deed of life and death on Golgotha* and beckoning to man to follow him on this path. This is not yet the full understanding. It is a step on the path towards beholding the reality of Christ's deed.

Through this formulation we may also feel that this will change in the future. Michael and the divine spiritual beings, ourselves and the Act of Consecration of Man, all are in a mighty process of development and evolution, even if the validity of the description *for moments* may still last for several hundred years.

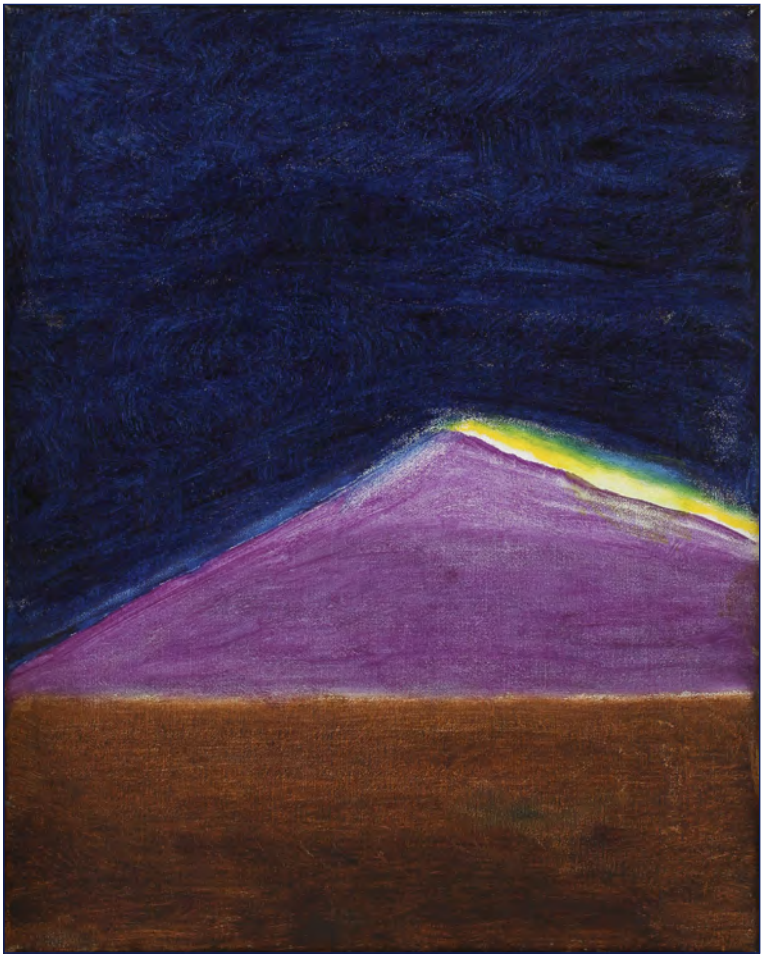
Finally the aspects of the future and eternity appear when we hear that the deed of Golgotha is to create *into times to come* and that the heavenly light that it renews within our earthly light is to continue to shine *through all cycles of time*.

The archangel is rising up to a 'spirit of time' (Zeitgeist) one of the 'archai', whose working spans from the beginning through the differentiated aeons, the cycles of time, with his working for Christ and for that part of humanity that proves itself open for the revelation of his being.

As Rudolf Steiner points out, one can't really pray to St. Michael (which may be a disappointment for many) but if we start working in inner freedom in the direction of the 'Christ-Impulse' he will join in and support our endeavour.

Not only does he respect the freedom of the individual in a most profound way but he supports and strengthens this development towards inner self determination which is an attribute of the human 'I' (self).

Michael is not interested in anything generic, whether it be gender, family, tribe, nation or race. If we try to understand this we will become true contemporaries in the spiritual sense, being in harmony with the intentions of the true 'Zeitgeist' (Time Spirit). This will lead us to the right judgement and decisions in our everyday behaviour.



Landscape with Mountain, Holy Island, Craigie Aitchison

Exposed and unprotected—entering the void

Mathijs van Alstein

Fifteen years ago a tidal wave in the Indian Ocean swept over the coastline of Indonesia. Since then the Japanese word 'tsunami' has become part of global vocabulary. This natural catastrophe is reckoned to be one of the most terrible ever. The earthquake that preceded it was the third worst ever recorded; the devastation caused by it was described in the news reports as 'apocalyptic'.

The word tsunami and what it stands for—an overwhelming, immense mass of water—does not easily lend itself to serve as a simile; all too quickly the comparison becomes hyperbolic. Yet there is something in the phenomenon of the tidal wave that justifies comparison with the events described in the Apocalypse. The power of movement that a tidal wave develops has something of the nature of a surprise attack. Before the wave reaches the coast, it draws the water back into itself. The wave feeds upon the water that is in front of it, less so on the water behind it. At the coast the water's edge is suddenly drawn back, with a dramatic rapidity that signals disaster. The high tide is preceded by an incredibly fast, induced low tide. The whole mass of water is sucked back, only to return suddenly, roaring, full of destructive power.

Such a dynamic of being sucked empty, only to be unexpectedly attacked again, is not confined to tidal waves. In the human soul it is also the hallmark of an anxiety* attack (angst), as anybody who has ever experienced such an attack would attest. In a bout of anxiety we feel initially and primarily an emptying-out. We no longer have a hold on anything, neither within us nor in the world around us. The ground seems to slip away

*The word 'anxiety' does not fully convey the meaning of 'angst'. Anxiety is a feeling of worry, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. Angst is a feeling of deep anxiety or dread, typically an unfocussed one about the human condition or the state of the world in general.

Mathijs van Alsteinis a priest of The Christian Community in Zeist, NL.

from under our feet. As when a bag deflates when all the air has been expelled, we are beset by feelings of something like an inner collapse. Anyone who does not cry out in this anxiety has already been paralysed by it; a sea of reality has already washed over them. They are drowning in an excess of that which is. It is precisely this overwhelming feeling of being paralysed in the face of something that we cannot fathom that differentiates the feeling of anxiety from that of fear. Being anxious is something very different from being fearful. Fear is always directed at something that is immediately present: a lion, a knife, a gun. Anxiety is not fear. In contrast to fear, anxiety is undirected and undefined: the object of its focus is vague and absent. This is not just incidental. That anxiety is directed precisely towards 'nothing' is an essential feature of its arising. For this 'nothing' that we encounter in anxiety is in fact a vacuum that reveals something of a truly other nature. The existentialists, in the course of twentieth century philosophy, were best able to articulate this experience. Anxiety, according to Martin Heidegger, leads us into the inner essence of 'nothingness'. 'That anxiety unveils this nothingness', he writes, 'is at once confirmed by the person themselves the moment the anxiety has left them. With the clear insight born out of recent memory we have to say: that which made us so anxious was, in reality—nothing. In fact, we were in the presence of Nothingness itself—Nothingness as such.' When we are anxious, we are not afraid of something. On the contrary, we stand before the total absence of something. The emptiness of being stares out at us. We experience being caught up by nothingness and are at the same time devoured by it.

It is no coincidence that anxiety only arose as a phenomenon in modern times, the age in which humanity became fully free. Obviously, we are not free when we feel anxious. Nevertheless, it is precisely anxiety that lays bare the foundation on which we stand as free creatures. Anxiety only becomes possible in the soul the moment a human being becomes aware of himself as solitary and independent. Anxiety thus belongs to an age in which the gods and the angels have withdrawn and the world is revealed more explicitly; an age, indeed, that stands in the sign of the apocalypse. It may seem contradictory to say that in anxiety we drown in too much reality, while anxiety at the same time reveals nothingness, but it is not. On a deeper experiential

level it becomes clear that the world only shows itself in its true nature when when we first pass through nothingness—and, likewise, through the anxiety which accompanies it. Nothingness, the great void, is the gateway to being.

The apocalypse is all about this singular gateway. For 'apocalypse' does not only mean being confronted by terrible events; it also means the revelation of what lies in the depths of being. Nothingness is the forecourt to this revelation. It is only through this that the abysses of the twentieth century, with which not only mystics but entire nations and peoples were confronted, can be understood. In the 19th century Friedrich Nietzsche committed himself to a 'reevaluation of all values': what mankind had trusted in and relied upon for centuries—a settled whole, based on Judaeo-Christian principles—would soon prove to be a giant with feet of clay. That was his prediction. The collapse of this value system was self-evident, he proclaimed, and, inevitably, humanity would have to encounter the depths of nihilism. God is dead. We are continually falling backwards, sideways, forwards, everywhere; we are straying through an unending nothingness. This brought Nietzsche to the edge of his own sanity, but with hindsight we can see that he was only ahead of his time by a few years. The moral framework disappeared at a speed that, presumably, would have stunned even him. Fourteen years after his death, Europe was strewn with corpses. And that was only the beginning. Two decades after the First World War, nihilism had so increased in strength that the industrial-scale annihilation of whole peoples became possible. Modern humanity gazed into the abyss as never before and learned what her prophet had already known sixty years earlier: 'Whoever fights with monsters had better take care that he himself does not change into a monster. And when you look into an abyss for a long time, the abyss will look into you, too.'

Although the comparison with a tsunami is often made too quickly and readily, it does not seem overstretched in this case. The twentieth century rolled on like a tidal wave which fed on what it sucked empty. Humanity was laid to waste and then submerged by the flood. Destiny ran its course. Everything Nietzsche foresaw and thought in advance came to be. And the predicament he prophesied is ongoing. The last ordeal still lies far ahead. For who can say that the events of the last

century actually have come to an end? Isn't the world still on fire? We are dragging the previous century along with us like a half-conscious, dark remnant. History moves on, but it is illusory to believe that the forces that ravaged and ransacked the last century have disappeared. The apocalypse is not finished. Those who 'psychiatrise' anxiety—though doubtless justified in some cases—would never admit this. 'Normal' equals being fit and cheerful in our day and age. Anyone deviating from this norm needs to be given medication. In this way a false ideology of happiness ensures that anxiety becomes separated from its fundamental function, namely that of being an organ for the endlessness of emptiness. It is easy to fool ourselves here, but we shouldn't. We miss something when we blind ourselves to the fact that anxiety, in all its darkness and repulsiveness, at the same time grants us access to something else. It must not get to the point that—along with anxiety—the apocalypse, too, becomes 'psychiatrised'! We live in a time of great and fundamental disclosures of the nature of being. And for this we must look into the abyss. This is dramatic, for sure, but it is also an opportunity, and this can be grasped precisely in our anxiety. The dark needs to be recognised and scrutinised by us. Only then can the depths of the world light up. Heidegger writes: 'Our existential anxiety opens up the world to us, fundamentally and directly, as world.' Understood in this way, anxiety does not close us off, but opens us up to just that from which we would all too readily flee: the abyss on the edge of which our world dances—in the last century just as in this one. The fact that anxiety is disagreeable should not be used as an argument against it. If it is the mission of humanity to cross the abyss—since it is only on the other side of it that the spirit can be found—then we will just have to learn to endure the abyss staring back at us in our anxiety—looking into us, as Nietzsche profoundly discovered. Enjoyable this is definitely not, but we will come out of this experience enriched once we have recovered and regained our energy.

With this it becomes all the more clear that anxiety and freedom are interrelated. Could there have been any other way for the gods to set us free than by withdrawing their own godliness? Human freedom could only be attained through its non-perception of the world of spirit. This is precisely the nothingness that first made itself felt in

medieval times by predecessors of modernity such as Meister Eckhart. The spirit-world withdrew just as water is sucked back from the shore after an earthquake. Man lost the spirit that wakens him. This shows that nihilism did not just come into the world 'out of the blue', as it were. The nothingness, the void, is intentional. Only through the emancipation from its gods could humanity come to itself. And it was not man who initiated this emancipation but the divine itself! The cosmos of the Greeks was ordered and harmonious because the gods were experienced as living in it. That is why no Greek philosopher was ever afflicted with any existential disorder. And just the same is true of the medieval soul disposition with its angels. At the beginning of the modern age both gods and angels disappeared from sight—and, what is more, this was due only to the initiative of the gods themselves. Now it is for human beings to be at the helm of reality. As a young Rudolf Steiner wrote: 'In place of God the free human being!' The empty expanse that has come about in this process is truly horrifying, but at the same time it is a harbinger of something new. This we should not forget. Because the gods took the initiative to withdraw, a space was made for the initiative of human beings. It is not by chance that 'initiation' and 'initiative' are related to each other. A truly free deed, a genuine initiative is nothing other than a *creatio ex nihilo*, a creation out of nothing. For what is a free deed? A free deed is a deed without a cause, a deed that cannot be explained by anything that precedes it. A free deed is not a consequence, it is a cause—a question to the cosmos, waiting for an answer. Here, the human being must learn patience. Without the silence of the gods there would not have been true freedom for human beings. That is the hidden creed of nihilism. The spirit world steers us into nothingness, so that at the other end of that nothingness we find ourselves, free and self-aware, as building stones for a world to come. Anxiety is a necessary side effect we have to endure alongside all of this. Anxiety is a catalyst for freedom. In Heidegger's words: 'In existence, anxiety reveals Being for the capacity to become our own, distinctive selves; that is: to be free for our freedom.' This shows that anxiety does not need to make our life impossible. On the contrary, it enables us to entrust ourselves freely to the world, as creators out of nothing in that great apocalyptical void. *Translated by Louise Madsen*

Butterfly in Landscape, Craigie Aitchison

Shaken awake

Deborah Ravetz

Kierkegaard said that our relationship to anxiety determines the failure or fruitfulness of our life.

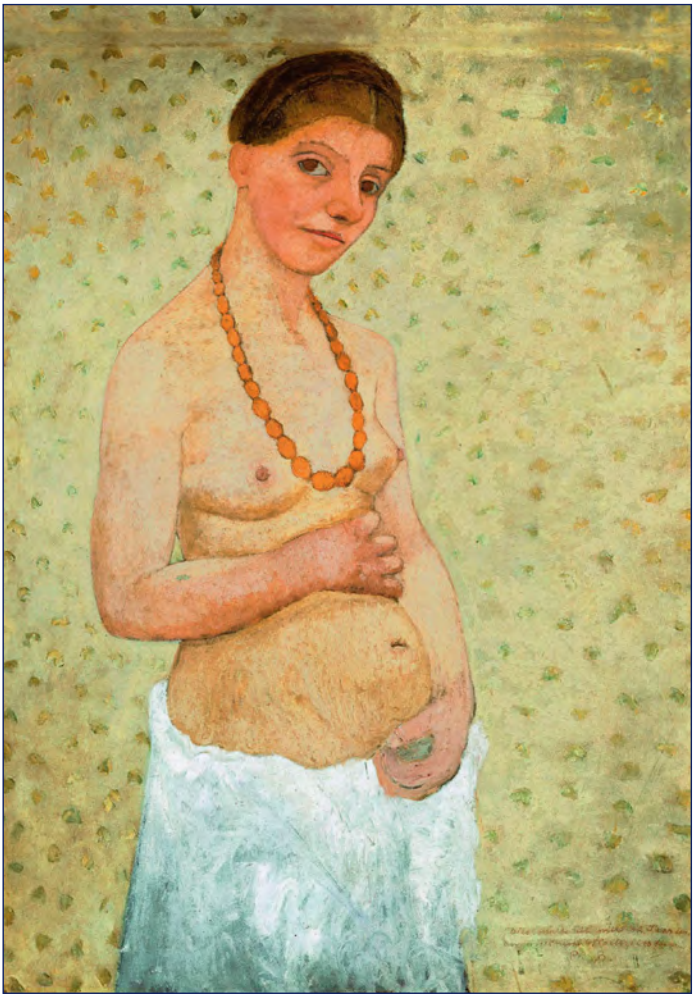
When I was growing up, my mother appeared to be allergic to me. I became the scapegoat of the family. As soon as I was old enough, I left home and found my own people. I studied literature and philosophy and then worked in Camphill, where one of my major roles was helping people to discover their vocation. Despite the break with my family, it seemed important to maintain a thread of connection as a kind of hope for the future by keeping touch around Christmas and birthdays.

When I was in my early thirties, my mother became very ill. I re-connected with her and began to visit whenever I could. I felt that she needed support to bear the frightening consequences of her terminal illness. Because I had long accepted she was not able to be motherly I did this expecting nothing in the way of personal resolution.

The last time I saw my mother, she was about to go into hospital for a minor procedure. Being with her at this time was poignant because the high tech interventions and drugs with which she had been treated radically changed her appearance and left her very unfocused. As we sat together hardly able to maintain a conversation, the whole atmosphere suddenly changed and my mother seemed to slip back into focus as if she wanted to tell me something very urgently.

She told me about her art training. She had been unable to endure the anxiety of being creative. This had led her to abandon a career in the arts and to send her creative self into exile. She then explained why she had never made me welcome in the family. I would paint and draw, write musicals, read and read and write poetry. Furthermore, I looked very like her. It was as if she had borne a child who was the mirror image of what she was trying to repress. She had responded to me with fear, the opposite of love. This manifested as cold-

Deborah Ravetz is a member of The Christian Community in Forest Row and part of the editorial team of Perspectives.



Self-Portrait on my Sixth Wedding Anniversary, Paula Modersohn-Becker

ness, sarcasm and mockery. Now that she was dying, she regretted not having lived up to her potential. She was also filled with remorse that she had not been the mother she should have been. This conversation ended with our exchanging a look of love and acceptance. Unexpectedly she died as a result of her procedure and I never saw her again.

These revelations gave me the key to understand the painful confusion of my childhood. My mother's behaviour to my youthful self meant that I had always believed that there was something very wrong

with me. Now it was clear that I was not to blame for the unhappy lack of connection between me and my family. I understood as well that despite loving art and despite coming home from school with prizes, I had absorbed and internalised my mother's fear and disapproval of who she was and therefore of who I was. Instead of making art, I helped others to make art; I looked at art, studied it and gave lectures about it but never made any work myself. Just after my mother's death her revelations meant I finally redeemed this state of affairs and started my art training. I was thirty five, which felt quite late; I was comforted by the fact I was the same age as Kandinsky when he decided to abandon his first career in law and attend art school in Munich.

Overcoming obstacles

Making art demands that we live in a constant state of insecurity because to make art means to stay in process. This makes it a fitting metaphor for life. Seeing the impact of the fear of process on my mother's life made me turn to this challenge in my own work as a Social Sculpture Practitioner. In several aspects of that work I have sought out the stories of many people in order to understand more clearly what makes us so afraid to embrace process.

The artist Paula Modersohn-Becker only lived until she was thirty-one. In her short life, she embraced difficult emotions and pushed through to her goal. This meant that she managed to connect with her deepest longing to become an artist. This was in a time when there was no role model for a female artist to follow. She was actively discouraged from taking what was described as an egoistic and unloving path.

Modersohn-Becker wanted to be an artist as well as a whole human being. She wanted to work, to experience love and also to have her own children. In the end she achieved them all even though she died young. Sensing that she would not live into old age, she said, 'Is a festival any less wonderful because it is short?' For her, manifesting her potential was a holy egotism, a manifestation of her responsibility to the Holy Spirit.

When she married the painter Otto Modersohn, Paula Modersohn-Becker hoped that he would teach her all he knew about making art. Because she was a woman she was also expected to be a con-

ventional housewife. She asked what seems to us a simple question: Why can't we find a way of caring for these needs mutually without killing either of our potential. She took four trips to Paris where she expanded on what she had learned from Otto by absorbing all that was both radical and new and all that was ancient in that great city.

It was on her last visit in 1906 that Paula Modersohn-Becker's painting *Self-Portrait on my Sixth Wedding Anniversary* came quietly into the world. It is immensely powerful in its strong gentleness, which embodies Gloria Steinman's insight that what is special about women is not that they are better in some way than men, but that they can show that they are vulnerable. In the painting the artist is unclothed but she is not an object of desire or worship. Instead she is her completely naked self, asking 'Who am I?' She holds herself as if she is with child. She adorns the image with what she called her characteristic runes or whispers: around her neck there is an amber necklace; her hands are carefully positioned around her chakras. The child that is being born is not an ordinary child. After painting this picture Paula Modersohn-Becker wrote that she no longer needed to sign her name. Instead, she said: 'I have become myself.'

To be vulnerable is to be completely disrobed and free of protection. To be vulnerable is to be prepared to face the unknown. It means to be frightened and anxious without numbing out or running away. It means enduring those feelings until they give up their secret.

Why is this so important? This desert place is not a mistake. Only by passing through this realm can we find out who we really are divested of habit and convention. It is important because we need to understand the geography of our souls as much as we need to understand the geography of the world. Only then will we give birth to our unique self and to our potential; only then will self and world be properly connected.

In 1906 Paula Modersohn Becker's embrace of her vulnerability led to her finding herself. When she died in 1907 she left behind a radiant body of work.

For some years my feeling of responsibility and agency has been dulled. It was drowned out by the frantic invitation to be a consumer. It was weakened by a feeling of powerlessness in the face of global cap-

italism. It was made inaccessible by a feast of distraction that enticed me to numb my anxiety in the face of this loss of purpose. The political upheavals heralded by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump seem to have broken through this numbness.

I have noticed how women are embracing feminism again and challenging the old guard in American politics. They seem to be struggling not only for equality as in the past, but for a more loving world. These women speak, they are strong and they are articulate. Their strength comes out of connecting compassionately to the needs of the world. They seem to be acting because they care, not because they are driven by careers and ambition. They are connecting with their deeper selves, not the phantom self of status and power. It seems as if the spirit of Paula Modersohn-Becker that was embodied in her wonderful portrait is becoming part of the zeitgeist in the work of these gentle but strong women.

We are also witnessing the emergence of a new youth movement. Children and teenagers are looking to their elders and demanding action on climate change all over the world. Teenagers who saw their fellow students shot at school are now challenging the gun lobby in America. They were responsible for organising the largest rally ever seen in Washington. It is as if the world is awaking to the need to make democracy rather than to just take it for granted.

All this activity made me feel as if not only I but many people have awoken to the fact that we can make a difference despite the power of the present status quo.

There is a battle for the structures of society, for the environment, for healthcare, education, tolerance and interdependence. There is also a battle for the free human being.

The artist Joseph Beuys experienced the Third Reich as a young man. After the war he had had to face what had been done in the name of the German people. Tyranny is only possible if there is no one to say 'no'. The cultivation of self-making becomes more than a matter of personal fulfilment when we see what depends on it. If we do not work on becoming ourselves in the small things, when we are confronted with serious attacks on the dignity of the human being we will lack the inner muscles with which to stand up to oppression.

When Beuys tried to address these issues he encountered a great unwillingness to face the past or to acknowledge the anxiety that was caused by the cold war, which was escalating at that time. He decided to use aesthetics to break through the silence, to overcome the anaesthetic, the decision to numb out the pain of the past and the challenges of the present.

This meant using art to cultivate our capacity to face our vulnerability. By warming the wound, the artist might elicit a response, a change of heart. To respond in this way is to move from numbness to concern and from concern to responsibility and action. In this way, Beuys sought to cultivate an ethical aesthetic. Art becomes a kind of medicine and the free human being becomes the maker and deliverer of that medicine.

Recently when David Attenbrough showed the consequences of plastic pollution in a nature documentary, there was a spontaneous movement to change some behaviours. This movement is expanding and gathering momentum and effectiveness. Such a change of heart could not have been predicted, because it stems from compassion, rather than from fear or a moral threat.

Society has cultivated an image of freedom which makes it nothing more than the freedom to consume. Individuality is seen as the right to do whatever one feels like. The current crisis of global leadership and values seems to be galvanising people to stop numbing out their anxiety and concern. What seemed like the most disastrous events have actually shaken us awake. If we can endure this vulnerable place of uncertainty, we may finally become ourselves. True selves understand freedom as self-mastery and not self-indulgence and leadership not as a hero who will come and save us but as self-leadership and agency in the world. The poet e. e. cummings says:

> *but the moment you feel, you're nobody-but-yourself*
> *To be nobody-but-yourself—in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else—means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting.*

If our current danger ignites the fire of urgency to become true selves, it may not defeat us. Instead, ever more selves will join together with others to play their part in building and creating a better world.

Making the most of our time

Kevin Street

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know. If I wish to explain to one who asks, I know not. Augustine of Hippo

And of course, we think we do know! After all, our lives seem to be ruled by time—a time to be born, a time to die, and in between, our lives are relentlessly dissected by important dates such as anniversaries or significant birthdays. Each day is accounted for in hours, minutes and seconds. We now talk of nanoseconds, and modern electronic equipment can time to within a hair's breadth the acceleration times of newly launched cars, or the winning time of the first over the line. It's on our wrists, on our mobiles, on public transport destination boards—we certainly don't have any excuses to be late!

Like so much else in our modern lives, we assume that time is constant and is an intrinsic part of nature. We know that we know it all—computer programmes, loaded with data, take the past and cleverly predict future scenarios or explanations for how things are, that millions accept. Is there any room for doubt? Might not the edifice of infallibility be built on something less than the rock of utter certainty? Is time constant, measurable and totally predictable? Is past time an indication of future time? A possible way to explore this is to examine the experience of time as shown in child development.

During a child's gestation the development of the foetus is rapid and the first three years of a child's life proceed at a pace which is not 'in sync' with simple chronological time, as the building blocks of its future are laid down. What then follows is a slowing down that can't be measured on the same scale as these early years, and the completion of the brain's development is now known

Kevin Street is a member of The Christian Community in Stourbridge and edits the UK Newsletter. He supports the education of Looked After Children, and is the author of 'School as a Secure Base.'

to occur in the early twenties. The experience of time in this context is very different from the mechanical division of hours, minutes and seconds and could reasonably start us on lines of enquiry concerning the evolution of the earth.

The use of carbon dating is widely accepted as the way to place found objects on the earth's evolutionary time scale. However, it assumes that the time scales laid down are even and constant. Instead—for a moment—allow yourself to look again at child development and wonder whether earth evolution might reflect something of this uneven process. We can celebrate with certainty each birthday of a child as being twelve months further on from the last, but what has happened within that twelve months might be rapid development; it might be sluggish development; it most probably won't be the same as other children of a similar age. And with the earth? Can we assume that what has been carbon dated reflects what might, in fact, be a very uneven evolutionary process?

Into this cauldron we can add the two major concepts of time that have come to us from ancient Greece—*chronos* and *kairos*. In chronos we have the notion of chronological time, quantitative, which gives rise to genealogies and a sense of past and future. With kairos we have the idea that this is the right time, the right moment for something to take place: a qualitative aspect of time. In the New Testament, *kairos kis* used to indicate that this is the appointed time for God's purpose to be manifested, especially regarding the coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

If we look further afield, say into Hinduism, we find four major cycles of time: Satya Yuga, the Treta Yuga, the Dvapara Yuga and the Kali Yuga, each of varying lengths (from 1.7 million years to 432,000 years) and reflecting the changing relationship between humans and gods. The Act of Consecration of Man refers to the 'cycles of time' but not one that has a direct link to Hinduism. Just what do these cycles refer to? Are the suggested vistas too vast for us to comprehend?

It is in the light of this vastness that we can more readily understand it when Dag Hammarskjöld writes:

> *The present time lives in eternity—it is a point of crossing between time and timeless; a moment of freedom from past and future.*

In one sense, the present time is all we have—our own past has gone and the future is totally uncertain, for despite the threat of climate disruption, over-population and the catastrophic dwindling of natural resources, they remain threats that have not actually become reality. For if these three grim scenarios have any reality, our response to them can only be from where we are in the present, the eternal 'Now'. It is this that Eckhart Tolle has explored in his widely read book *The Power of Now*, and the whole Mindfulness movement flows through this—though we have to note how much this has in common with the principles laid down in Goethean Observation. Being in the moment and understanding that this moment is all we have.

Our consciousness of time changes and with each change comes the certainty: 'Yes, this is it'. As recently as the eighteenth century, figures such as Newton and Kepler could subscribe to the notion that the earth started to evolve at its creation in 4,004 BC, and swathes of the American educational system maintain this today. Alongside this now sit ideas that see the earth as a being in her own right,—Gaia—and the need to exercise compassion for this being, expressed in ways ranging from veganism to Extinction Rebellion. Again, though, such movements are underpinned by time-heavy predictions that might not be entirely accurate if we subscribe to the idea that our understanding of time is socially and philosophically determined as well as being scientifically based.

> *The one way to perceive time is with the heart. Time is life itself, and life resides in the human heart.'* Michael Ende, *Momo*

From the absorption of a childhood game, when time seems to stand still, to an adult's perception that each year time flies ever faster, we have a very human response to time that is well expressed in the quotation. But even as an adult, I find that time spent in my studio—painting, planning, remixing, erasing, creating—has a duality of being, static and yet speeding. Both experiences are held, again, in the Now, in this moment; both are held by what beats in the human heart, by the pulse of life itself.

It has been suggested that this present moment might be the utter reality of time, however it is measured, socially or scientifically, and that rather than thinking of time as *chronos*, we might be nearer to the truth if we can somehow think of time as being vertical: that at any moment

the whole of the past and what is still to come, is held above and below this moment, this eternal present.

Such an exhortation is given in how Jesus speaks of time in Matt 6:34:

Therefore do not be concerned
About tomorrow
As tomorrow
Will take care of itself
Enough for today
Are its difficulties

Translation by Kalmia Bittleston

However, the prerequisite of this is detailed in the preceding verse, for we have first to seek the kingdom of God, a kingdom which, elsewhere in Jesus' teaching, is to be found within each one of us. (Luke 17:20)

This is perhaps the greatest way we can think of time and all that it brings to us—that whatever the outer trappings, predictions, anxieties and hopes, it is from within us, moment by moment, that time—that life, that love—is most fully realised, and that in this way we can move ever closer to fulfilling our destinies in co-creating a glorious future.

This article was written by Kevin following a discussion with Erhard Keller, and supported by quotations suggested by Rosie Phillpot.

Boat at Sunset, Craigie Aitchison

Unlocking Your Self-Healing Potential

A journey back to health through creativity, authenticity, and self-determination

Joseph Ulrich

Floris Books 2018, £12.99

Review by Anna Phillips

Unlocking Your Self-Healing Potential takes the reader on a journey of recovery. Ulrich sets out to explain what is meant by self-healing, how it is activated and where it can lead us. He first addresses the meaning of the concept health, how it is perceived by health professionals, therapists and patients. Joseph Ulrich, a pupil of Bernhard Lievegoed, works professionally as an art therapist in Germany and in that capacity meets many people with life-threatening illnesses, particularly cancer. Therefore, cancer is the illness constantly referenced. This book is based on a life observing and researching the link between creativity and the immune system. True life experiences round out the research.

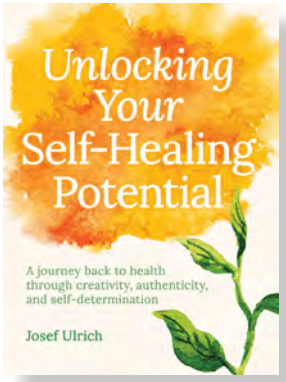
With creativity is meant that 'anyone can shape and configure their world'. Ulrich's premise therefore, that 'the processes of the psyche have an affinity with the body's life forces', which can, when awakened, bring about healing, could have unlimited potential. What is untreatable is not necessarily incurable. Thus a separation comes about in our consciousness between what the medical world offers as medicines to treat observable symptoms and our inherent health-bringing forces activated through our thinking.

It is especially in crisis, which is what illness often generates, that we are confronted with the essence of our lives and ourselves through many questions. For some people who survive a life-threatening situation it is their spiritual or mental outlook which was key to their survival, thus indicating that the person themselves is the vital active force of cure. One does not have to be an artist to find this force, it is not a question of being 'good' at anything. It is more a matter of examining one's ideas when negative and positive thoughts, concerns and anxieties are expressed. This leads us to being more authentic.

Because we are individuals there is huge variety in people regarding outlook and constitutions and therefore medicines will affect people differently providing different outcomes. By only looking at measurable objective phenomena medicine can tackle symptoms and extend life but if we want to go deeper into the underlying causes we need to look at the individual's life-circumstances, their real experiences, in a supportive environment. This is because on the journey to healing, our inner state will be affected by how we feel about our treatment by health professionals.

For within us health and illness are always present. Beyond, before or behind our illness we are human beings first and foremost. In order not to be swamped by one's illness or becom-

ing a number in a hospital bed, we can be led to make what is healthy in us still healthier. To go on this journey Ulrich offers three guiding lights: healthy common sense, openness to reality and our inner physician.



First of all, we need to look at our relationships. These are also given as threefold by Ulrich: the one with ourselves, the one with others and nature and the one with God/the universe. Throughout the book Ulrich asks us many questions based on this threefold relationship. It is in times of recovering from illness that this threefold dialogue needs to be consciously created. The book has a pleasant steady pace and comes full circle at the end when the main points and this triangle are looked at again, hopefully in a new light for the reader.

Health doesn't just mean we are devoid of illness. If we learn to live in the right way with an illness we can be healthy. This comes about through a creative relationship with our illness within the limits of our ability. To push beyond our limits in order to achieve something driven by loss, fear or desire means we are behaving as if we don't have bodies. Ignoring our bodies' absolute needs creates imbalances which lead to illness. We are trained to adapt to the status quo and conditions imposed from the outside. Our inner voice however, knows what is best for us if we only learn to hear it.

Once we become aware of what our needs are we find the capacity to change things for ourselves and the world around us. Thus illness can lead to change in the broadest sense of the word. This includes changes within the health care system where top down decisions and lack of patient autonomy is no longer appropriate. If we want to self-determine our lives we can be motivated by a picture of what our life could look like; a future vision, larger than the one we carried before. To do this we need to establish a foundation of inner peace and tranquillity which brings us back to ourselves and lets us stand in equilibrium with the outside world. We become composed, at rest within ourselves and from there are in a better position to address a diagnosis of serious illness.

Things to watch out for in a healthy social environment which can support us are: healthy people, laughter and play. Thus the essential ingredient of a healthy social environment is love. Of all the places where we can develop cancer, the heart is not one of them. Instead the heart gives us qualities of strength, generosity, gratitude, joy and love. The heart is also the organ of God in many cultures. If we wish to heal our body, we must connect to the field which connects everything: the realm of the heart. The more we use its strength the stronger it grows. Acknowledging our needs based on self-knowledge leads us to look at how we love and care for ourselves, including who we wish to be.

Delving into our own inner life shows that we harbour thoughts of both hope and despair. If we believe positive thoughts can bring us healing it is easy to tell ourselves: we must not think negatively. However, Ulrich points out that it is not a matter of judging our thoughts but of acknowledging and affirming them. Faith in those who help us and in the bigger picture of our lives helps us with the core task of transformation initiated through life-crisis.

Ulrich invites us to consider the life and death processes in our body through extensive and comprehensible explanations of cell structure and division which are ongoing at all times. Without death there would be no renewal. Or: 'healing happens when health once again permeates the place where the illness currently resides'.

It is a fact of life that death will come and end it. We can live more fully if we can accept inevitable death and prepare for the possibility of death as well as life after illness. Thinking and talking about our fear of death can allow us to have presence of mind to be creative. Ulrich offers different perspectives on a possible transition after death into a new state of being. But whatever our outlook, finding our position towards death can enhance the zest for life and the enthusiasm to fulfil life's purpose.

With this knowledge the fight against illness can turn into fighting for health, challenging illusions and assumptions. It is up to us what we focus on. Thus illness can become an invitation to reflect lovingly on how to be the person we want to be. This gives the illness its place and meaning. The issues of blame, responsibility for the illness, anxiety, anger and hate as well as facing inner resistance towards healing are addressed in this context.

The book itself is a work of art. It has beautiful full page colour photos printed on first class glossy paper which are a feast for the eye and work their own little bit of healing magic. There are quotes and inspiring poems to stimulate our mind and give us courage. Thus the book is a treasure to peruse as a picture book but its good quality printing is also the one drawback as it is very heavy to hold.

Unlocking Your Self-Healing Potential is as much a book for patients facing life-changing situations brought about by their illness as it is for the medical professionals who try to help those patients. Ulrich hopes his book will offer support and courage to all who seek to pursue their individual path towards health and their authentic selves.

Correction

Ernst Terpstra, the author of the article 'Is Easter a cosmic festival?' (March 2019) has asked us to include the following correction. The article states that the duration of the 100% full moon phase was more than 24 hours, but this is not in fact true. The period attributed to the 100% phase is actually the period in which more than 99.5% of the lunar surface is illumined by the sun. The much shorter duration of the 100% phase is about two hours for a non-moving observer.

The Isenheim Altarpiece: History—Interpretation—Background

Michael Schubert

Steiner Books 2018
£54.39, Hardcover
Large format reproductions of the three views of the polyptych are enclosed.

Review by Kate Somerville

In the summer of 2000, on a road trip from Heidelberg to Madrid with my teenage son and daughter, we stopped at Colmar in Alsace to see the Isenheim altarpiece, presumably painted between 1505 and 1516 by Matthias Grünewald and completed with wooden carvings, historically, but possibly inaccurately, attributed to Nikolaus Hagenauer. I was familiar with this work from photographs seen in an art history class and while the images were powerful and fascinating, I know that no reproduction can fully convey the spiritual nature of a painting. I certainly wasn't disappointed with that aspect of the Isenheim altarpiece when I stood before it. It was clearly a masterpiece and the colour and the form left an indelible impression, as did the portrayal of immense suffering in the figure of the crucified Christ and the serenity of the risen Christ. It wasn't until fifteen years later, however, when I attended a weekend workshop on this work that I learned how much I had missed in beholding this abstruse and profound 'tour de force'. It was a transformative experience to be guided to its meaning by workshop leader Michael Schubert, the author of this book—a layman rather than an academic art historian, who has devoted decades to observing and listening to its revelations.

By observation, Schubert has set out, in his own words, '…to cultivate a sober intellectual conception free from theory and hypotheses.' With glorious colour illustrations, this is the first English edition of Michael Schubert's work, first published in German in 2007, and its completely revised second edition of 2013. The English translation is of a very high calibre, so new readers can now share the author's detailed and perceptive analysis of the secrets embedded in Grünewald's magnum opus and its accompanying carvings. And there are secrets galore: a code '…like the letters of a forgotten language', to express the unconventional, heretic and subversive religious views of the artist and of Guido Guersi, prior of the Order of St Anthony and abbot of the St. Anthony Cloister in the town of Isenheim, who commissioned the work.

Following a timeline of the ownership and disposition of the work and the still scant biographical details of Grünewald, Schubert gives a fascinating overview of the history of the Antonite Hospitallers and their mission to care for those unfortunates suffering from what has been variously known as St. Anthony's Fire, hellfire or holy fire (*ignis sacer*) but which is now recognised as ergotism. Caused by the ingestion of a fungus or 'ergot body' in rye and other grains, ergot poisoning resulted in symptoms that were either gangrenous or convulsive. By exposing sufferers of this and other disfiguring conditions such as bubonic plague and syphilis to the Isenheim altarpiece, it was hoped that a cure could

The Origins of a Community

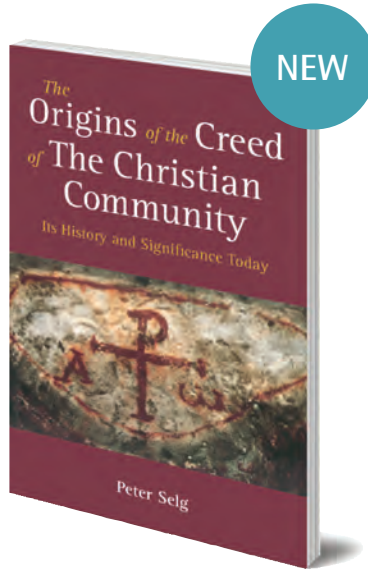
Floris Books

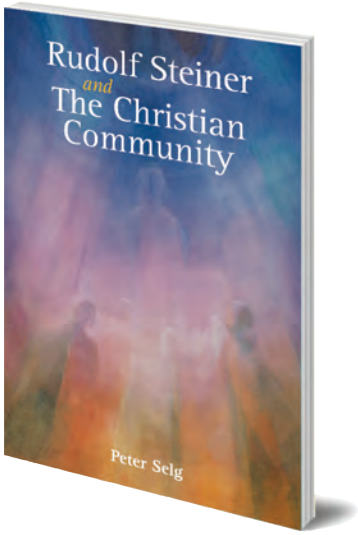
Tracing the roots

This book offers an insightful and informative overview of how, in the time leading up to the founding of The Christian Community, Rudolf Steiner formulated both the creed itself and its founding principles.

Author Peter Selg goes on to examine the history of Christian creeds – including the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed – and compares them to each other, before exploring the ongoing significance of the creed for The Christian Community today.

The Origins of the Creed of the Christian Community
80 pages | paperback | 978-178250-612-6
RRP: £9.99 | OFFER: £7.99





Developing understanding and reconciliation

The relationship between The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society is complex and often misunderstood.

This long-overdue book is a significant exploration of Steiner's legacy which should have far-reaching implications for mutual understanding and cooperation between The Christian Community and the wider anthroposophical world.

Rudolf Steiner and The Christian Community
96 pages | paperback | 978-178250-481-8
RRP: £9.99 | OFFER: £7.99

Visit florisbooks.co.uk for 20% off these books.
Enter offer code **PR0819** at the checkout.

SAVE 20%

Sign up to our mailing list for special offers and a FREE BOOK with every order.

Offer valid until 31/10/2019

take place or, failing such a miracle, a healing of the accompanying mental trauma would be engendered. The author tells us, 'Knowledge of how the life forces and death forces could be harmonized within the human being belonged to the fundamentals of the Antonite doctors.' He also shows that the work contains a message for our time too: 'Truth will set you free!'

The author guides us in glorious detail through the three views of the polyptych. Each panel is described as a whole and the esoteric nature of its details are interpreted and, sometimes, left open to question. Details such as the gesture of a figure, clothing (e.g. the significance of a type of knot in a garment—nine different ones!), the individuals, the backgrounds and articles depicted, are photographed in close-up and shown to be laden with meaning. This is a work of meticulous research and the reader is exposed to subjects as diverse as history, religion, art history, iconography, colour theory, alchemy, astronomy, myths and legends. In particular, familiarity with the Golden Legend, a medieval collection of lives of the saints by Jacobus de Voragine, is, the author suggests, a requirement for understanding the altarpiece. As few of us have such knowledge, the legends are woven in to descriptions of the work. For those of us with a mind inclined to researching arcane subjects, a feast of googling is laid out before us! It is clear that the author is a man of profound spiritual sensibilities and shares this with the reader without dogmatism. He tells us that his observations, questioning and listening to the revelations of this work have led him to an understanding of his own life and he gives indications as to how the reader may do the same. He encourages us to '…look non-judgmentally and without prejudice and allow yourself to be instructed by what you see in the altarpiece panels.' In looking at the risen Christ, for example, '… one's breath regulates and one's disposition softens.' He states: 'Looking at artworks can lead to a living experience if colour and form are not presumed merely to serve aesthetic enjoyment. By drawing on spiritual-scientific observations, an inkling, a hope may be awakened in the reader that culture may again in the future be based on spiritual foundations. The Antonites of the cloister at Isenheim displayed the altarpiece to remind the viewer of their 'godly origins' and Schubert suggests that those of the 250,000 people who visit Colmar each year and are not already cognisant with their spiritual nature may be drawn to it 'by an underlying sense of emptiness.' He posits the question: 'Can the altar, which previously was said to heal St Anthony's fire, also heal the illnesses of our century?' A worthy question to ponder indeed and one that I, for one, will keep in mind when I revisit the Isenheim altarpiece—with this magnificent accomplishment by Michael Schubert in hand.

Visit florisbooks.co.uk for 20% off these books.
Enter offer code **PR0819** at the checkout.

SAVE 20%

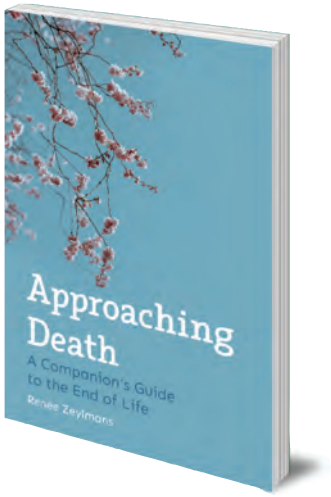
Sign up to our mailing list for special offers and a FREE BOOK with every order.

Offer valid until 31/10/2019

Enlightening contemplations on the end of life

This special book supports the companions of those on their dying journey by offering insights, contemplations and information, rather than methodologies or theories.

Author Renée Zeylmans spent over 30 years helping people to cope with dying and bereavement. Here, she encourages the reader to view the dying journey as reciprocal, asking not only 'how can I travel with the dying', and 'what can I give them', but 'what can they give me?'



Approaching Death | 160 pages | paperback
978-178250-603-4 | RRP: £14.99 | OFFER: £11.99

Dear Friends,

At Floris Books we constantly strive to publish books you want to read.

So we'd like to take this opportunity to ask for your advice:

- What fascinating books would you love to see translated into English?
- What works or essays should we rediscover?
- Have you written a manuscript that we should read?

We're also interested in hearing about books and authors writing on:

- religion and spirituality
- all aspects of anthroposophy
- biodynamics

Please get in touch by email or post (details below) to share your recommendations with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

The Floris Books Team

Email: floris@florisbooks.co.uk

Address: 2a Robertson Avenue, Edinburgh, EH11 1PZ

Floris Books

Temple Lodge Club

a quiet oasis in the middle of London

Temple Lodge—a Georgian Listed Building in the middle of Hammersmith—was once the home of the artist Sir Frank Brangwyn. Whilst his studio has been converted into a chapel with a **vegetarian restaurant** on its former mezzanine floor, the house itself is given over to accommodating bed and breakfast visitors. They come from four corners of the world to enjoy the quietness and tranquillity of the house. Many have described it as a really peaceful haven, despite being a stone's throw from the centre of Hammersmith and its busy traffic interchange. The absence of a television in the house and rooms adds to this atmosphere.

There is a quiet secluded garden. Most rooms look out over this large and sheltered garden. Two rooms look out over the front courtyard and garden.

Upon becoming members of the **Temple Lodge Club** (£1.00 annual membership) visitors seeking Bed & Breakfast accommodation may share in all the facilities the house has to offer. Breakfast is served in the ground floor Dining Room looking out over the quiet, secluded garden. A library provides a space for relaxation or quiet reading. All the rooms are well appointed and comfortably furnished, the two double rooms being deluxe rooms.

All prices include breakfast and are per room:

Single room from £64 per night, with/without shower and second companion bed;
Twin-bedded room from £88 per night.
Deluxe double room from £102 per night
(£75 for single occupancy)
All rooms have hot and cold water.

For any further information or to make a booking, contact:

Temple Lodge Club
51 Queen Caroline Street
Hammersmith
London W6 9QL

Tel: 020 8748 8388

e-mail:
info@templelodgeclub.com

www.templelodgeclub.com

Guest Rooms

The Christian Community, 23 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh TQ11 0AQ

The Christian Community in Devon is situated in Buckfastleigh, halfway between Exeter and Plymouth. It is located on the edge of Dartmoor and is 40 minutes drive from the coast and South West Coastal Path. The attractions of Cornwall, including Tintagel & the Eden Project, are within 1 to 2 hours away by car.

There are four small guest rooms at the top of the building. Three of the guest rooms have a wash basin; toilets and shower are separate. There is a kitchen for self-catering needs.

Unfortunately we do not have disabled access and there are steps and stairs inside and outside the building.

Suggested contribution at £20 to £25 per person per night.

Further information and reservations:
Sabine Haus: 01364 64 42 72
sabine.hauslakeman@gmail.com

Centres of The Christian Community

AUSTRALIA

Adelaide (08) 8339 6466
3 Anzac Ridge Road (P.O.B 216)
Bridgewater, S.A. 5155

Canberra (02) 6295 3752
Civic Square P.O. Box 651,
ACT 2608

Melbourne (03) 9029 2769/7812
319 Auburn Road, Hawthorn East,
Victoria 3123

Sydney (02) 9810 6690
PO Box 965, Rozelle, NSW 2039

CANADA

Toronto (905) 709 4544 901
Rutherford Road,
Maple, ON L6A 1S2

Vancouver (604) 415-0600
5050 Hastings Street,
Burnaby, BC V5B 1P6

NAMIBIA

Windhoek +264 (61) 225791
Uhland Street 3, (Box 11359)
Windhoek

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland (09) 525 2305
10 Rawhiti Road, Onehunga

Hawkes Bay (06) 878 4463
617 Heretaunga Street East,
Hastings

SOUTH AFRICA

Camphill Village
(021) 572 5922
PO Box 1451 Dassenberg 7350

Cape Town (021) 762 0793
39 Timour Hall Road, 7800
Plumstead

Johannesburg (011) 789 3083
46 Dover Street,
Randburg 2194
(Box 1065, Ferndale 2160)

KwaZulu Natal (031) 768 1665
148 Kangelani Way, Assagay
Box 1093, Hillcrest 3650

UNITED KINGDOM

Aberdeen
8 Spademill Road,
Aberdeen AB15 4XW

Botton (01287) 661 312
Danby, Whitby, N. Yorkshire, YO21 2NJ

Bristol c/o Meyer: (0117) 9502 512
20 St. John's Road, Clifton,
Bristol, BS8 2EX

Buckfastleigh (01364) 644 272
23 Chapel Street, Buckfastleigh,
Devon, TQ11 0AQ

Canterbury (01227) 765068
57, Wincheap or 730882
Canterbury, CT1 3RX

Edinburgh (0131) 229 4514
21 Napier Road,
Edinburgh, EH10 5AZ

Forest Row (01342) 323 205
Hartfield Road, Forest Row,
E. Sussex, RH18 5DZ

Holywood (028) 9042 4254
3 Stewarts Place, Holywood,
Co. Down, BT18 9DX

Ilkeston 07716229409
Malin House, St. Mary Street,
Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 8AF

Kings Langley (01442) 245603
The Priory, Kings Langley,
Herts. WD4 9HH

London (020) 8748 8388
51 Queen Caroline Street, London
W6 9QL

Malton/York (01653) 694 391
The Croft, Highfield Road,
Old Malton,
N. Yorkshire YO17 9DB

Mourne Grange (028) 4176 0110
Newry Road, Kilkeel, Newry,
Co. Down, BT34 4EX

Stourbridge (01384) 377 190
22 Baylie Street,
Stourbridge
W. Midlands DY8 1AZ

Stroud (01453) 762926
73 Cainscross Road,
Stroud, Glos. GL5 4HB

IRELAND

East Clare +353 (061) 640967
Dewsbororough
Tuamgraney
Co. Clare

UNITED STATES

Boston (617) 277 6266
366 Washington Street, Brookline,
MA 02445

Chicago (773) 989 9558
2135 West Wilson
Chicago, IL 60625

Denver (303) 758 7553
2180 South Madison Street,
Denver, CO 80210

Detroit (248) 546 3611
1320 Camden at Wanda,
Ferndale, MI 48220

Los Angeles (818) 762 2251
11030 La Maida Street,
North Hollywood, CA 91601

New York (212) 874 5395
309 West 74th Street,
New York, NY 10023

Philadelphia (610) 647 6869
212 Old Lancaster Road,
Devon, PA 19333

Sacramento (916) 362 4330
3506 Eisenhower Drive,
Sacramento, CA 95826

San Francisco (415) 928 1715
906 Divisadero Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Spring Valley (845) 426 3144
15 Margetts Road
Monsey, NY 10952

Taconic-Berkshire Region
christiancommunityhillsdale.com
10 Green River Lane,
Hillsdale, NY 12529

Washington, D.C. Baltimore Area, also Chapel Hill, NC
(301) 935-2727
The Parish House
4221 Metzerott Road
College Park, MD 20740

OTHER CENTRES IN:
Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Japan

September–November 2019

£ 3.75

ISSN 0967-5485