The Christian Community

Perspectives

September–November 2020

Confronting evil

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Deadlines:
December 2020–February 2021 issue: September 28, 2020
March–May 2021 issue: January 4, 2021

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

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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
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San Francisco, CA 94115
(Cheques payable to: The Christian Community San Francisco)

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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 90 No. 4
September–November 2020

Evil is a destructive manifestation of power. When we experience this destructive potential, we can become suspicious of all power, including our own. We may feel shocked how easy it is to exercise domination—for the power entrusted to us to be turned to evil. On the other hand, shrinking from taking up our power for fear that we might abuse it feels cowardly.

This complex relationship to power with its creative and destructive sides seems to be grounded in reality itself. The Bible tells the story of God's power in creating, redeeming and consecrating the world. At the same time, the world cannot evolve as it needs to without adversarial, evil forces, who exercise power in a way that hinders the divine will. In the Book of Revelation, only the Lamb who has been slain can open the book of life and set creation in motion (Ch 4 and 5). This picture is echoed in the cosmogonies of some of the earliest Christians: the retrograde forces are there to give us the possibility of becoming free. Our pathway towards self-giving, creative love depends on our being in a world which divides power like a prism divides light. Terrible and awful though the events are that are contained in the book of life, they seem to describe the reality we know, with its variety, struggle and strife.

The public health crisis has exposed us to the power of a virus to cause suffering. Does this mean that this virus is evil, or even that all viruses are evil? That would be a hard

position to maintain, as viruses are a part of creation and they play a vital role in our own biology and also in evolution. We might see evil at work in the conditions that allowed the virus to spread: a virus has its place in a particular ecological niche, but it can become a power for evil if social, economic and ecological breakdown places it in the 'wrong' setting.

The crisis has also exposed us to the power of the state in our various countries. Unfamiliar measures have been taken that reach into the most intimate aspects of our lives. This has been a shocking awakening for many, as well as a great reassurance for others. We have been living through experiences that the philosophers have pondered on for centuries: why do we give our power away to the state, knowing as we do that it can wield this power both for good and evil? Thomas Hobbes called the state Leviathan, after the great evil monster of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, he upheld the fact that human beings need the protection that only the state can afford us, if their lives are not to degenerate into the state he famously called 'the war of all against all'.

Some see sinister forces at work in the way that states have wielded their power during the pandemic, and surely no-one would disagree that a huge amount of vigilance will be necessary once the crisis is over: states rarely choose to relinquish powers they have taken on, even when the immediate justification has passed. Alongside this, it is possible to wonder at governments who had been convinced of the neo-Darwinian ideas of laissez-faire economics and neoliberalism, and seem to have attempted—often with clumsy methods—to protect their populations from the virus and its consequences.

Perhaps the recognition that our own use of power can turn to both good and evil can help us to understand the complex world in which we live, to unite with what works for health and healing, and to embrace the resistance that degenerate power provides, so that we can develop our own capacities of self-giving love and creativity.

Tom Ravetz

Transforming evil

Understanding — Confrontation — Redemption

Bastiaan Baan

Redemption of evil is a far-reaching goal that seems to be unattainable, especially in our time, where evil is omnipresent. In this article, I will try nevertheless to illustrate how we can make little steps to prepare for a future where eventually evil might be redeemed.

The very first step in this long-term process is that we diagnose the nature of evil in order to recognise how it works, like a medical doctor who has to make a diagnosis before he develops a therapy. Only with the tools that come from understanding evil will we be prepared to confront these forces. This step—recognising evil—presents us with a huge challenge, because many forms of evil step in at the moment where we are somehow asleep. This is shown by an etching by Francisco de Goya, entitled: 'The sleep of reason begets monsters.' The person who is asleep is surrounded and attacked by all kinds of demons.

Indeed the demons are waiting for the moment when we are not fully awake and conscious. Then they insinuate themselves into our life. Medieval depictions of the Fall often showed Eve in a dream-like state at the moment when the snake tempted her. A relief in the cathedral of Autun, France, shows this moment of temptation. The snake, hardly visible, offers her the apple from behind, while she looks elsewhere.

The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters, Francisco Goya, etching and aquatint

Expressed in the language of the twentieth century:

> *We can only develop the right resistance against demons by recognising these forces; that we KNOW that they exist. These forces only become destructive when we remain unconscious about them, when we don't know them.*
>
> Rudolf Steiner, January 19, 1915. GA 157

However, we probably all understand that knowledge of evil alone is not enough to withstand these forces—let alone to overcome them. We need a faculty that includes the help of the spiritual world. Our knowledge needs to become wisdom in order to find the right way to encounter evil. In the Jewish culture of the Chassidim, a rabbi asks his students: 'What is the difference between a zaddik (a wise man) and a sinner?' The answer: 'A zaddik knows that he sins as long as he lives. A sinner knows that he lives as long as he sins.' Indeed, with a little bit of wisdom we begin to realise that we are not only surrounded by evil, but that we all have tendencies of evil in us. Regarding evil, we are all in the same boat—at least in our subconscious life. The only relevant question is: are we awake? This insight is the beginning of wisdom. It makes us very modest; and perhaps less judgmental, when we are confronted with crime and violence. When in June of this year the

The Temptation of Eve, Gislebertus of Autun

news of the death of George Floyd was released, there was an uproar of horror and protest all over the world—a protest for obvious reasons. My wise colleague Jonah Evans, seminary director in Toronto, wrote a contemplation in the weekly newsletter of his congregation, in which he tried to understand from within what had happened:

> *As painful as it was to watch the video of the murder of George Floyd, I made myself look in the eyes of Derek Chauvin, the man who knelt on George's neck. And as I looked into his eyes, I saw no shame. No shame. And yet, I also knew in that moment, that I too could do what Derek did. That darkness also lives in me. Derek could be me. This is because I know that there is no evil on earth that is not possible in me.*

Evil in us has a name. In psychology, we usually call it: the shadow. It is defined as 'suppressed characteristics that are not admitted by a conscious person.' In the spiritual language, it is called the double or the doppelgänger. Awareness of this spiritual reality can make us even more modest when we think about redeeming evil. Whatever we say about this redemption can lead to delusions.

Our very first little step on this path is what I call 'the royal art of working with evil.' We need to look at it from a higher point of view, so that we are not overwhelmed or paralysed by it. When we have to deal with evil, humour can be an excellent tool that helps us to step back and make ourselves free from its overwhelming power. Humour is a faculty in us that cannot be conquered by it. Under all the terrible circumstances of persecution, the Jewish people are often masters in humour. As an example, here's a joke about a conversation between an SS officer and a Jewish prisoner:

> *Officer: If you can tell me which of my eyes is a glass eye, I will set you free. Guess wrong and I'll kill you.*
> *Prisoner: The left one's a glass eye.*
> *Officer: You're right! How did you know?*
> *Prisoner: It looks so human…*

Of course this little step is again far from redemption, but when we use humour in evil circumstances, we step

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back from the destructive forces that want to imprison us. In a certain way, we are set free—just like the Jewish prisoner.

People who were able to redeem evil to a certain extent in their own lives sometimes express their hard-won wisdom, as Ita Wegman did, after being the victim of false accusations over many years. When a group of young students asked her: 'Why don't you respond to these accusations?', she said: 'Rudolf Steiner taught me: one should not feed the demons—one should starve them.'

Something similar is expressed in a quote that I once heard in Australia: 'When you are in the zoo, don't feed the animals!' And in Germany, people used to say in circumstances of being confronted with evil: 'Geduld frisst den Teufel'—patience consumes the devil. This can be practised first of all with all forms of evil that live within us. Only with the patience of an angel (or, if you can't manage that, with the stubbornness of a donkey) can we overcome the forces of evil. The devil is extremely clever, but he has no patience. In the confrontation with evil, all the faculties mentioned above are needed if we are to work with it in a royal way: insight, consciousness, wisdom, self-reflection, humour and patience. Then we might see light at the end of the dark tunnel. A person who went through this tunnel once distilled her experience into a tiny, modest poem:

When I
with concentration
and full of love
look
into the darkness
then I see
light.

Overcoming evil

Two painters' responses to the evil of mechanised war

Deborah Ravetz

Very often when I have been faced with challenges it has helped me to remember the lives of individuals who faced disintegration, and have been able to counter their fears and anxieties with what has been called an 'obstinate vitality'. David Bomberg and Max Beckmann faced the challenges of their lives in exactly this spirit.

One German and one British, they both suffered nervous breakdowns after being at the front in the First World War. When they resumed their artistic work after the war, they had no interest in fitting in with the prevailing fashions of the art world. Instead, each crafted a new and authentic visual language in response to the wounds and dangers of their time. They saw a great danger which they characterised as the destruction of our individuality. Their decision to work in this spirit often left them without financial support or consistent patronage. They then witnessed the rise of Fascism, and suffered further isolation and poverty. At the time of their deaths in the 1950s, neither was properly recognised. However, they were found to have left behind large bodies of remarkable work and they came to be seen not only as great visual artists but also as deeply moral human beings who enhanced our culture. This article is not a study of their paintings; it is a celebration of the attitudes and values that made it possible to keep making work despite many obstacles and setbacks.

Bomberg was born in England, the child of parents who had been victims of Polish pogroms. Coming from a poor background, he was an outsider who had still managed to establish a reputation for brilliance in the London art world by the time of the First World War. He never belonged to any group formally, but he was seen as a Vorticist because he was intoxicated with the modernist idea that the city and the machine were

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Double portrait of Max Beckmann and Minna Beckmann-Tube, Max Beckmann, 1909

the future. He was inspired by the liberating potential of mechanisation to free us from the slavery of manual labour.

Beckmann, on the other hand, was the child of middle class German parents and was not swayed by the ideas of modernism at all. Instead, his work was grounded in solid academic form and structure in marked opposition to the simplification and abstraction of many of his older contemporaries.

Their shattering experiences of trench warfare led to each suffering a complete mental collapse; breakdowns so profound that no theory could assuage its horror or its reality. Only one thing survived their confrontation with evil, namely an unquenchable belief in the human spirit which would rise up if we only dared to be our true individualised selves. With this as their lodestar they set to work to deepen this insight and to pass it on to the next generation.

When Max Beckmann served on the front he was at first exhilarated. He served as a medical orderly. Rather than collapsing beneath the weight of suffering, he experienced the horrors of the wounded and dying and the multiplicity of human characters in such deep stress as a kind of gateway to another reality that lay below the surface of ordinary life. However, by 1917, the pressure of his experiences resulted in his complete nervous collapse. Still the experience of what lay below the surface of life was to remain at the centre of his work for the rest of his life.

In 1950, the year of his death, over thirty years after that terrible breakdown, Beckmann gave a speech when he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Washington University. In his speech he said to the art students there:

But above all you should love, love, and love! Do not forget that every man, every tree, and every flower is an individual worth thorough study and portrayal... Art resolves, through form, the many paradoxes of life and sometimes permits us to glimpse behind the dark curtain that hides those unknown spaces where one day we shall be unified.

Self-portrait as Medical Orderly, Max Beckmann, 1915

The world beneath the surface of life that he had first glimpsed as a medical orderly in 1914 had by then been made visible by loving observation, which allowed him to construct the fruits of his looking into masterly drawings and paintings. David Bomberg was so horrified by the life in the trenches that he shot himself in order to get away from the front. This act was fraught with danger, not least because soldiers who were found out to have done this were executed as deserters. After he returned home he experienced a complete mental collapse.

He realised that the machine age with all its promise of progress had enabled the horrors of trench warfare. This challenged all his assumptions. His deep belief in the power of mechanisation to liberate us turned out to be a terrible illusion. The dehumanisation of the soldiers, the loss of their individuality and the alienation he experienced in the years after the war—all this led to a completely different ideal built on practice and experience. He said:

We have no need to dwell on the material magnificence of man's achievement, but with the approach of scientific mechanisation and the submerging of individuals we have urgent need of the affirmation of his spiritual significance and his individuality.

Bomberg and Beckmann were known especially for their teaching. Passionately committed to their students, they sought to engage with

them as individuals, getting involved and encouraging them to struggle to make work which arose from their deepest core. They cared that they would be their best and unique selves because only such people could build a just world.

Both artists believed in facing the challenges of their time with open-eyed courage. They made work that could be painful, but which could lead to a place of healing. They were not sensationalists, dwelling on the monstrous or difficult in order to cultivate notoriety. They worked with one aim: to unite spirit with matter and thereby to heal the alienation brought about through the mechanisation of life.

Because they had experienced the destructive consequences of the mechanistic world-view, they tried to live and work in a cohesive way, to bring their whole self to whatever they did.

One of David Bomberg's students said of him:

> *Bomberg had a profound belief in the integrity of the individual: that if the individual would be true to the vision he was given he would be an irresistible force in the world... Against the tyranny of systems, the tyranny of ideas, the tyranny of hopes and fears, he set his faith in the power of individual vision, realised through individual energy and individual work to free man from tyranny from without and within. For David Bomberg, this capacity within the individual depended essentially on the practice of virtue. He didn't believe that a bad man could paint.* Peter Richmond

It is extraordinary that he held to this belief after the Second World War, which had far outstripped the first in its monstrous dehumanisation and destruction. Still he faced our capacity to do evil, and recommitted to fostering our divine individuality.

To work so hard, to remain so optimistic, to concentrate not on fame or glory and recognition but the task in hand makes both Bomberg and Beckmann an inspiration. Their biographies are a picture of what is possible for us. They leave me with a question:

How would I describe what the philosophers call the good life, so that I can live in such a way that I might be what I wish to seem; that I may be that whole and integrated person that both Beckmann and Bomberg exemplified?

Evil in the human being

Milan Horák

The vast majority of the evil that we perceive in the world around us is the result of human action. This statement may seem bold in view of the increasing number of natural disasters in our day. But even disasters that we attribute to nature are usually not so 'natural' in origin. We can almost always trace their scope, extent and sometimes even their emergence back to human influence, often due to our ruthlessness, indifference or incompetence. So when we ask where evil comes from, what it is and how we can deal with it, we must first ask ourselves how we can overcome the evil within human beings themselves.

There is a widespread idea that some people are simply evil and that this explains why they invariably act in an evil way. If this were so, we could eradicate evil by eliminating all such bad people. History teaches us, of course, that this idea is wrong. Many attempts have been made to single out evil individuals and to remove them from society; they always end in even greater evil. The history of many revolutions shows that those who seek to be the correctors of mankind never succeed in eradicating evil, and even those who act on the noblest motives eventually become the perpetrators of the worst atrocities.

Evil is clearly not limited to certain groups of people; it is there in the soul of every human being. We all have the capacity to do evil, and each of us sometimes actually does evil. We will never overcome evil unless we overcome it in ourselves.

The evil enemy

In order to understand how evil arises and works in our soul, we can look at the most extreme example of evil: war. We can begin our observations in its immediate manifestation, in a specific armed clash in which a soldier on one side kills a soldier on the other side. What makes a person, who in the normal course of

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things would not harm a chicken, take aim at another person and kill him? First and foremost, it is because the other is not a human being to him at this moment, but the 'enemy'. In the person he is aiming at, the soldier does not see a person, but rather a being in the uniform of the enemy side that is to be destroyed. Everything that makes us truly a person: our strengths and weaknesses, our behaviour in our home environment, our views and aims in life—all this is left out. In the moment of combat, the only thing that is important is the affiliation of the enemy to the other side.

Without the concept of the enemy, war would not be possible. Wars can only be waged because we put each other in boxes called friend and foe.

An inevitable part of war propaganda is therefore the creation of caricatures of the enemy that blur the individual traits of people and turn them into mere representatives of a type. Personal meetings with members of the other side, which could disturb this image, have to be forbidden as a country moves towards war. Travel to 'hostile territory' may be prohibited; business and cultural rapprochement with the 'enemy' may be shut down; the isolation or violent separation of mixed families may be undertaken. The whole world must be divided into 'us' and 'them'. Whoever does not belong to 'us' must been seen to have nothing in common with 'us'; whoever belongs to 'them' must be destroyed.

This drive to create a caricature of the 'enemy' in the human soul is at work outside of wartime, as well. In times of peace, when we might not think of having an enemy, it is present when we divide people into different groups. On the basis of nationality, skin colour, social standing, age, sex or other external characteristics, we put people into pigeonholes and attribute to them the characteristics with which we describe the whole group. We stop perceiving what really is, choosing instead from the wide variety of phenomena only those that correspond to our prejudices. If we have a person in front of us whom we classify, for example, as 'disabled', we see only the disabled person and overlook their personal abilities, skills, experiences, interests, opinions and habits; we deal with them in the way we would expect to deal with a disabled person, but not according to their distinctive human personality.

Ignorance is sin

Putting people into boxes plays a great part in the emergence of evil. But it is not the only factor that plays a role here. Returning to the example of war, let us imagine a citizen of a warring country who is not involved in the war, nor do they succumb to the temptation to view the other side as the enemy. They try not to support the war effort; they avoid working for the arms industry and they also take an active interest in the culture of the 'enemy' nation. Nevertheless, they have their savings in a bank that invests in the arms industry. They have not the slightest idea of this. They are unaware of the consequence of their actions; however, unconsciously they are contributing to the continuance of the war.

Of course, war would not be possible without those human beings who, in full awareness, work to annihilate the enemy. But for war to have its full impact, it requires a great deal of indirect support, which is provided unwittingly by other people.

This insidious mechanism of evil is again not limited to war. In almost every area in which evil has an influence, in almost every torment which we humans inflict upon each other and our world, a large number of people take part who had no wish to harm anyone, or who even believed that they were helping others. The world is full of people who caused no small amount of evil for their neighbour, although they had 'good intentions'. We are in constant danger of doing evil in good faith.

The confined heart

A person who does evil neither directly nor indirectly and also makes sure that the effect of their actions does not cause evil unconsciously, may still not be free of it. In the example of war, we can imagine a person who does not participate in the war machine and does not support it in an unconscious way. They live on the other side of the world, far away from the war; they bank with alternative ecological banks and they do not buy products from corporations involved in armaments or from other questionable industries. They have nothing to do with the war, nor do they want to. They are indifferent to it; it does not touch them; it is not their concern. Just this indifference,

however, creates another sphere in which evil can act. When we are indifferent to what others do, we tacitly assent to their actions. Such assent implies a kind of inner approval. Indifference and lack of compassion are precursors to the approval of the suffering of others.

Evil that hurts us or those close to us directly causes us great suffering. The suffering of those further away touches us only indirectly, and it hurts us less. Once a certain spatial or mental distance has been reached, the suffering of others no longer hurts us at all. Our ability really to feel it is limited. What is beyond the boundaries of our heart touches us far less, and so we open up the field for the action of evil.

The connecting spirit

Prejudices, ignorance of our connectedness and limited compassion are our natural inclinations. We are endowed with them at birth; they are part of our spiritual heritage, which each of us acquires because we belong to the human race. They are key components of what theology calls 'original sin'. These three spiritual forces make the influence of evil possible and have accompanied mankind since ancient times. However, since the dawn of culture, humanity has developed methods to overcome the forces of evil step by step. We commonly call this method 'religion'.

The essence of religion is the inner connection with spiritual reality, which permeates all people and also the whole world. True religious teaching instills in us the awareness that, despite our limited, subjective sense of spirit, the world spirit connects us to everything that we encounter. Religious practice makes real this connection with the spirit of the world. The soul learns to transcend the boundaries that restrict it, so that in its understanding of other beings, in its awareness of the world's interrelationships and in its capacity for compassion, it can embrace the whole world.

The well-known sentence of Jesus Christ, 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me', (Mt 25:40) embodies this. The goal of the religious path is to overcome the limits that separate us from other beings and to live in their experiences as strongly as we do in our own.

Three virtues

Against the three limiting forces of the soul, which lead us to do evil, religion places positive forces with which we can gradually strengthen our resilience against evil. The gospels call these forces in the original Greek: *dikaiosyne, metanoia* and *eleémosyné* which we usually translate with the words: 'justice' or 'righteousness', 'repentance' and 'mercy'. As so often, these traditional translations obscure the meaning as much as they reveal it.

What the gospels mean by a 'just' or 'righteous' human being is one who knows how to act towards every other being in the way that is appropriate for that being, without being limited by any preconceived notions regarding its nature. For example, the Gospels describe Joseph, Mary's husband, as righteous. When he could not explain the pregnancy of Mary, to whom he was not yet married , he did not hand her over to be stoned to death, as the law would have required, but he decided to look for another, truly just solution. This openness made it possible for the angel to come to him to guide him to a just decision—one that was aligned with the reality of the situation.

According to the gospels, 'repentance' does not mean regret about transgressions we have committed, but the transformation of our thinking in relation to ourselves and the world. A person who repents is aware of the consequences—both close at hand and far removed—of their actions. As soon they recognise their share in causing evil, they feel inwardly compelled to change their behaviour. Jesus often follows a healing with the words 'sin no more': this shows how important such an awareness is. Whatever befalls us in life has to do with our own actions; external healing can only be real if it is also accompanied by a change in my behaviour towards a world in which everything is connected.

Finally, the 'mercy' described in the Gospels is not 'softheartedness', as it is sometimes understood. The basis of mercy is active compassion, co-feeling, which enables us to see the situation from the position of the suffering person and to act accordingly. To be merciful means to feel the suffering around us as if it were our own. This suffering is not a cause for regret, but for active participation. Everything is our concern. The most famous example of mercy in the gospels is the Samaritan who saw a robbed and injured person by the wayside; he was

Last Self-portrait, David Bomberg, 1956

not concerned with his own feelings; he did not wring his hands over the depravity of the world, but rather provided the poor man with medical care, took him to the nearest inn, paid for his stay for the time of his recovery, and promised to come back after a few days. By doing all this, he took a part of the sufferer's destiny on himself.

Human beings have, as we have seen, a natural inclination to evil within themselves; the most important bastion of evil in the world is in the human soul itself. Evil takes root in the cleft that separates us from God. It gives rise to the vicious 'othering' of prejudice, to our obliviousness about our co-creation of all the evil in our world, and to our indifference towards suffering that does not touch us immediately. Against this, however, we can place the virtues of righteousness or justice, repentance and mercy, with which we can work against the promptings of evil within our soul. These virtues are strengthened in the religious life, where we strive to reconnect what evil has sundered so that the divine and the human can draw close to each other once more.

Originally published in Czech in *Okruh a střed* 2002/3 (i.e. in the magazine of The Christian Community in the Czech Republic, volume 2002, number 3).

Translated into German by Fritjof Winkelmann, edited and abridged by Tom Ravetz

Closeness and distance

Thoughts concerning viral times

Lars Karlsson

For a child even distant objects are near; everything is 'close'. As adults we recall the games of our childhood—through mood, scent, taste, colours and sounds. The Swedish author Astrid Lindgren once spoke about her childhood describing Edit, a servant girl: 'Edit—may she rest in peace—read the story of the giant Bam-Bam and the fairy Viribunda to me and evoked feelings in my young soul which remain with me even now. It was in a small worker's kitchen, no longer in existence, that something like a miracle happened, and from that day onwards there was no other kitchen for me in the whole world.'

We grow into adults by gradually moving away from what was close. There are many aspects relating to the question of closeness and distance, especially in pedagogy, and teachers should always ask themselves: 'How can I work with children to bring about distance from what is close in an appropriate way, and how can I bring what is distant closer?' That this is not as simple as it might seem is clearly demonstrated by the modern experience of alienation, a phenomenon which hardly existed a few centuries ago. It could be that isolation and the psychological problems of many young people today have something to do with the question of closeness and distance.

The fairy tale lives in the present

In her book *Mio, my Son* Astrid Lindgren tells the story of the 9-year-old orphan Bo Vilhelm Olsson who does not have an easy life. A kind aunt, Lundin, sets him a task which takes him to the Island of Green Meadows. There, everything is different yet somehow familiar. This is where he also finds his real father. He realizes that he has been charged with an important task. Finally, he reaches his goal, the Country Beyond, where the evil knight Kato rules. In a decisive battle, Mio overcomes Kato, and the whole world changes.

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This story follows the classic fairy tale structure. The journey to the Country Beyond is also a journey into the soul life of the human being, the realm of archetypes. Mio encounters human beings and animals he has previously known but now in changed forms. The world of the everyday, 'the here and now', has its match on the other side. What is far away is quite near, even within us. An old saying suggests: 'If you have problems with yourself, you need to look for the answer beyond; if you have problems with the world, look for a solution within yourself.' The fairy tale does not just describe the journey of an individual human being; we might also perceive the evolution of mankind within it.

The distance increases

The plastic arts are evidence of this change. Perspective in old icons places the viewer into the centre of the image; she is an integral part of the event. In the fifteenth century, Masaccio develops a new, revolutionary phenomenon in painting: linear perspective with a vanishing point. The viewer is removed from the object: 'This is where I stand, and 3D perspective makes me into the observer of the event.' In the realm of language we notice something similar. Western languages are mostly based on the principle of subject and object. A modern person in the West is simply 'here' and acts in the world which is 'over there'—removed at arm's length. When we travel east we find languages with different grammatical forms, such as 'ergative' and 'absolutive', irrespective of whether an event is being looked at by the subject or the object. That means you can be 'here' but also 'there'; it depends on the situation. In some languages (such as ancient Greek) verbs take on different forms which shift temporal categories and enliven them. Alienation, feeling estranged, is a typical Western phenomenon and often figures in modern literature: Verner von Heidenstam's *Hans Alienus*, Albert Camus' *L'etranger* (*The Outsider*), Wassili Golowanow's *The Island or Justifying Meaningless Travel.*

Television—close or far away?

The digital world brings about a strong experience of closeness. Is it real or is it just an illusion? When children begin to think that the virtual tree on the screen is more real than the actual tree out there, we have

to ask ourselves whether the artificial closeness on the screen is but a clever means of taking children ever further away from tangible reality. By comparison to older technologies, the physical distance from the object focused on is ever growing. Nowadays, the technician, closely surrounded by a mass of monitors, works in a glass cage while further down, on the floor of the studio, robots carry out tasks. As the distance grows, so does the ability of human beings to actually change matter and to manipulate it.

Will we succeed?

At present the ecological footprint of a single human being in the West is equivalent to that of a whole village a few decades ago. That's why we can ask ourselves whether we really have the right to develop things with which we have no real feeling connection. In all ages, human beings have expressed their relationship with the phenomena of existence through art and religion—even regarding everyday objects. We can take a simple example: the generation of energy. The tasks of a water mill and a nuclear power station are fundamentally the same. There may well be hundreds of poems or songs about water mills. But has anyone ever read a poem about a power station? If there is such a poem, it is probably influenced by fear or anxiety. It seems as if human beings can identify with a water mill in some way; it is experienced as something 'close' to our heart. But how is it regarding a nuclear power station? We might ask a question which is not totally naïve: Do we have the 'right' to bring something into the world with which we do not have a feeling connection?

A human being is a totality. The Greeks saw in him four fields of activity and influence respectively: *pneuma, psyche, soma* and *sarx*.

- The realm of sarx is governed by separation, causality, birth and death—one or the other. It is not possible for two objects to simultaneously occupy the same space in this sphere. The best example for this is the world of stones.
- In the somatic realm the boundaries are already more fluid. Several human beings in the same room breathe in and exhale the same air. Where might now be the boundary to the neighbour? When looking at plants we find the nearest possible equivalent. You can hardly describe this realm without a temporal dimension.

- The world of feeling, psyche, is even more fluid and more permeable. Neither time nor space constitute absolute boundaries here. Feelings such as longing bring close what is far away. Every human being has their own range of feelings of which they are largely unaware, constantly interacting and engaging with their surroundings. We know that animals also have feelings.
- With pneuma we enter the sphere of human beings—even the divine sphere. This realm can hardly be defined—it represents the search by human beings, striving to discover meaning, relation and significance—in short: to encounter an intimately close You in life. One could almost say that the ego would not exist without this striving.

These different spheres are not separate, but mutually permeable. Understanding these four spheres of man's being can raise our awareness of the idiosyncracies of human behaviour. A dynamic field of tension opens up: the present moment is as significant as extended timelines and even the smallest detail is as important as something out of the ordinary.

Thinking big—thinking small

Medieval natural philosophers, who prepared the scientific thinking of modern times, never left out the dimension of pneuma. Sigfrid Aronus Forsius (1560–1624), a Finnish pastor, philosopher, astronomer, physician and more, never omitted to look for the meaning of every phenomenon. He emphasized that everything is interdependent and that there is no division between the smallest particle and God. As a consequence, he was jailed on several occasions. Nowadays it is possible to meet a genuine scientist who has a true connection with religion but nevertheless thinks that religion and science have nothing to do with each other. You occupy yourself with one thing during the week and with something different on a Sunday.

When considering the wide field of human activity, we see that science, art and religion form a whole, whose different parts do not need to stand in opposition to each other but would like to engage with each other. The purpose of education, where the intimate relationship to the sense-perceptible world is maintained, consists of nurturing all three realms from early childhood onwards. A scien-

tist—like an artist—should be serious in his explorations so that he allows the true 'language' of the phenomena to resound—avoiding pretentious theories or showy religiosity.

Evening in the City of London, David Bomberg, 1944

'Seek the right measure.' This motto of Greek philosophers would mean that we learn to bring closer faraway phenomena so that they can be experienced, and to move those close to us further away so that we can learn to fashion and understand them. Our motto should be: not too much, not too little. Not too far away but not too close either. This asks for a courageous exchange with the world and human beings as well as the attempt to find a common language.

Corona as potential

A tiny virus brought all of mankind to a standstill, something that no world wars, atom bombs, air pollution, tax scandals or any other catastrophes ever brought about. It concerns all of us without exception. It is close and everywhere. It has condemned us to extreme isolation. For how long? No one knows. The best possible outcome could be that this painful, imposed distancing engenders a hunger and thirst in us so that we long for closeness and intimacy again and realise how precious—yes, how life-giving—closeness to other human beings and to the world is. At the same time, it has brutally woken us up to an almost cosmic awareness: we cannot escape anywhere, and we need to do something together—all of humanity—when nature rebels. Human beings can pull the wool over each other's eyes but nature does not lie. Now it has spoken. When the storm has passed, we surely can start again—with regard to matters both large and small.

Translated by Brigitte Marking

Evil and death

Luke Barr

In the Act of Consecration, there are two brief acknowledgements of evil. One is in the Lord's Prayer. It is the culmination of the prayer. The prayer asks that we be helped, because evil will be too much for us to deal with alone.

The other is when we ask in the offering that all evil be eradicated from our speech. I think this could mean that our words grow sullied as we use them. We sometimes use words when we are angry or jealous or dishonest and this tarnishes the pristine purity of the words used. So we ask that our 'fallen' speech be able to carry the words that we are using in the prayerful Act of Consecration.

The service takes evil seriously and even refers to it during its hallowed course. I have always found this striking. I wouldn't have expected it, I suppose—but there it is. The Act of Consecration is a 'revelation of Christ', as we hear right at its beginning. It is his word; he appears to us through it. And evil is there too.

Evil is part of our experience. It is very much part of that which sorely needs consecration. Sometimes it appears harmless. In such cases, I would say that it insinuates its way in when we are not quite awake to what we are doing or experiencing. It can sidle up to us, charm us into a false sense of security and by and by it has got a foothold in our soul, or in our culture.

Other times, it is pernicious. One feels a great injustice being done to oneself or others. We are then tempted to fight it, and are drawn into it. I think of something like the tragic terrorist group Baader-Meinhof at this level.

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It can also be devastating and frightening. I am sure we can all think of things that we have experienced, heard of or read about which make us shudder, question life and keep us awake at night. We then feel that we are helpless and at the mercy of a meaningless, God-forsaken world which cares for nothing.

Rudolf Steiner spoke often at length about evil, and I feel that his insights can be particularly helpful in our grappling to understand its nature. He said that evil is when something is not quite aligned with itself; when, as Hamlet says, 'the time is out of joint'. It is when something manifests too early, or too late. It is too much, or too little. As harmless as that. But when it happens in human souls, the effects can be devastating. Too little love for a child can have calamitous results later on in life for that person and their environment. Strangely, too much can also be harmful. Can we see that?

Many people fear the increasing manifestation of evil at this time. There are many reasons for this—and events also feel 'apocalyptic'. Evil is a reality. The Lord's Prayer should confirm that for us. So what can we do in order to work transformatively and constructively with evil?

I think often of another insight of Rudolf Steiner. He said that the last great cultural epoch (which lasted from the eighth century BC until the fifteenth century AD) had a great mystery at its heart, and the task of that time was to understand it. All of its key cultural questions and strivings related to this theme. It was the mystery of birth and death. Humanity had become aware as never before of the problem of death, and had acquired a conscious (fearful) relationship to it. The main Christian festivals of Christmas (birth) and Easter (death) have arisen out of this dichotomy, of that culture's grappling with birth and death.

In our cultural epoch (which began with the Renaissance and will run for several hundred years yet), the key cultural problem is the mystery of evil. This is the problem that we will increasingly have to learn to deal with.

You can see that in grappling with both of these themes, the human being as an individual, but also as a society, can evolve—but can of course also regress.

I feel that in order to work in the right way with evil, we need a certain foundation. And that foundation is our relationship to death. We need to have settled within ourselves (as an individual or as a society) where we stand with the problem of death. If we have not settled that question—if we are still afraid of death—then we will not be able to grapple with evil. I have come to the conviction that the only way to work in a transformative way with evil is to be sure in one's relationship

to death. If fear is the predominant element in our relationship to death, then this fear will provide a 'crack' in the soul through which evil may enter in some form.

The previous epoch's task was to provide a cultural foundation upon which a sure attitude to death could be built. Where this sure foundation exists in a person's soul, then there is less chance for evil to creep in through fear.

We have recently seen an astonishing great wave of the fear of death in our culture. It is being whipped up by the media, and there is a fascination with it. This fear seems to make us ready to change the course of civilisation overnight. No bad thing, some will say. But the new course that we are taking seems even less promising, and even possibly quite disturbing.

It is as if the spiritual world now asks us: 'What is your relationship to death? Is death the end for you? Do you have substance enough to trust in us?' Our fear of death reveals a lack of confidence in the spiritual world. How widespread that is in our culture and in our individual souls, will determine the 'success' of evil in our world.

Jacques Lusseyran was a blind man who, during the Second World War, was sent at the tender age of 19 to the Buchenwald concentration camp for his part in French Resistance activities. His short moving memoir called *Jeremy* is an account of a fellow inmate in that death camp. What was so striking about Jeremy was that he moved like a shining warm light through the dark, cold terror of the camp. He was a simple man—and he had been able to see through life to the essence of himself, an essence in which death also lived. Consequently, true joy lived in the man. Not a self-deceiving joy—but a calm quiet acceptance and affirmation of life. As a mere consequence (because Lusseyran describes that it was unimportant in itself), evil was unable to touch him—and his calm confidence spread like a happy contagion to others.

John in his First Letter (towards the end of the New Testament), famously says that 'there is no fear in love, but perfect/initiated love casts out fear. For fear is mutilation, and whoever fears is not perfected/initiated in love.' (4:18) He seems to imply that learning to love is an initiation process that human souls must go through in their earthly existence. Is the current public health crisis an initiation for our civi-

lisation? An initiation in love? An initiation which we may collectively fail? Or will some rise to the challenge?

If we strive to find the right relationship to death, we will be able to navigate a right relationship to evil. These days and weeks and months are the trial period for humanity, the testing ground on how we stand in relation to death. Is death the end, the final insult of a meaningless universe, or…?

The forces which are 'out of joint' (and actually need to be helped and redeemed by us), are indirectly asking us the question too. They are asking that those who 'feel the vanquisher of death' help them too.

What One Sees Without Eyes. Selected Writings of Jacques Lusseyran. Floris 1999

Self-portrait, David Bomberg, oil on millboard, circa 1937

Evil and the I – the I and evil

The revelation of evil through the light of the I

Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen

Once upon a time there lived a man who spent
Much time in puzzling over cosmic truths.
That which tormented his poor brain the most
Was, how to learn of Evil's origin;
And to that question he could not reply.
The world was made by God, so he would say,
And God can only have in him the Good.
How then doth Evil spring from out the Good?
Time and again he puzzled over this,
But could not find the answer that he sought.
Now it befell that on a certain day
This seeker on his travels passed a tree
That was engaged in converse with an axe.
Unto the tree the axe did speak these words:
'That which thou canst not do I can achieve,
I can fell thee; but thou canst not fell me.'
Unto the vain axe thus the tree replied:
'T was but a year ago a man did cleave
The very wood of which thine haft is made
Out of my body with another axe.'
And when the man had listened to these words
A thought was straightway born within his soul
Which he could not set clearly down in words,
But which completely answered his demand:
How Evil could originate from Good.

Fairytale by Rudolf Steiner: The tree and the axe

In the days of the old fairytales the evil and the good were present and visible.

This modern fairytale tells us something different from the old fairytales.

In the past people still had the knowledge of good and evil. They still possessed an ability of supersensible perception or natural clairvoyance, which meant that they were much more intertwined with the spiritual world. The separation between their ego and their I was not as marked as it would become in later times, and so they could clearly experience the forces of good inside them, and those of evil outside of them.

When human beings were living in communion with spiritual beings, they unconsciously carried the good as a divine being inside them. Evil existed solely in the outer world and had to be fought against. Through resisting and overcoming it, they were able to develop as human beings. In the images of myths and legends, fairytales and sagas, people could behold the demons as well as the angels and all kinds of spiritual beings. This is the origin of the fairytales: they are distilled from a consciousness that could perceive the spiritual world as in a dream. They are full of wisdom about evil, which appears in many guises: as a witch, a wizard, the devil, the grandmother of the devil, the wolf, the dragon, the evil stepmother or fairy, or in nature spirits as a troll, dwarf or giant. When we read them, we notice how evil is taken for granted; it is just there. The fairytale gives us no explanation of its origin. However, it provides clarification of its meaning for the life and destiny of mankind. Through the appearance of evil in the fairytales, the story shows the meaning of life. Evil is a substantial part of life and contributes to its development. In the battle against evil we can see how the human being is prepared to act from the heart, to go an inner way. We are challenged to act, which encourages us to overcome evil. In this way, we take up a path of self-development.

Children feel instinctively how fairytales indicate a higher reality in which good and evil take their place. They experience how the good overcomes and therefore it is not difficult to face the evil.

In olden times, when fairytales were told by travelling storytellers, people were much closer to the spiritual world, like children are today. Through the passing of time and in growing up we have lost this natural

faculty. A thick blanket has come over us through the years, covering almost everything, the good as well as the evil!

Revealing of the evil through connecting with the I

Now we are pretty much cut off from the spiritual world, we have to make efforts to reconnect ourselves again. Through our eagerness to understand the physical world and in trying to get to grips with the matter around us, it becomes much harder to recognize what is good and what is evil. The sciences' world-view, which denies the existence of the spiritual world, narrows our view and causes us to lose sight of the bigger picture. Although fields of science and research like philosophy, religion and the arts still exist, as well as little strongholds of a spiritualised natural science, they operate in the narrow margins of society and struggle to survive. It causes severe problems when there is no clear distinction between good and evil any longer. This seems especially the case now, in times of great fear of a possible disease, when death is coming over us and we are brought into deep uncertainty and insecurity. What seems evil for one person appears to be the good for someone else. The unshakeable truth about evil and good is gone; it becomes a matter of dispute, movable, to be interpreted in many different ways. The clear images we used to have of the evil outside us, and the clear distinction we had of the good which we felt inside, have disappeared. Is the giant really dangerous or just a bigger being? Does the stepmother really have such bad intentions or does she just have a different opinion than the real mother?

Evil can also be inside us, just as the good can suddenly be outside us now. We have lost sight of evil because it is so hidden in the substances of the earth, and in us as well. We have lost the natural feeling of the good because we, like evil, have drowned in earthly matter, the de-spiritualised science of medicine and physics, and are forced into a group mentality, denied the courage to make individual decisions and act freely. The acts of the individual, divine human being have dissolved into the sea of the masses of modern society and public opinion. Because of our will to understand and comprehend everything in the world, we have lost the all-comprehending wisdom. And we are lost in the dark forest, which may harm us but could also protect us.

At the same time something else is happening in days of great fear of death and isolation. Something else reveals itself: the essence of existence. When we stopped running around, driving and flying all over the world and were locked down in our houses, we were thrown back on the essential questions. What is really important in life? What is the essence of living? What are my ideals and what has become of them? Am I living out of my ideals; did I manage to create a life in which there is even a place for them?

Through the absence of the essential things in our life, the things that really matter, we start to feel the urge for them. The presence of other people; meaningful conversation with them. A gentle touch, a handshake, a hug, the warmth of social contact, the closeness to family and friends. To worship together as a community. We start to feel how important it is to be recognized by others in our own being. We long to love and to be loved. When we are cut off from the normal activities of our busy, everyday lives, we can start to feel the absence of a part of us. We can start to realise that we do not only need earthly food and the familiar things around us, but something else as well. Something that will nourish us in a different way. We need spiritual food that nourishes the soul. We have a chance now to wake up and to feel what is missing and to become aware of the essence of life. Through reconnection with the spiritual part of us, we can feel alive again—whole again. We can invite the divine part of ourselves into this empty space inside us. We can develop the faculty to reconnect with our higher I. We are surrounded by spiritual beings. When we endure the void consciously, the higher spiritual I will come and unite with us, and we can let Christ enter us. Then we can feel the light that starts to shine in us. With this light we can enlighten ourselves, as well as the whole world around us. We can let the light shine on the dark places inside and outside of us. This light can take the veil away from evil and we can begin to recognise and face it. This inner light creates a well from which love can flow towards other people and out into the world.

The blanket of progress covered our natural capacity to distinguish good and evil. Plagues, diseases and the fear of dying are causing emptiness and loneliness in a world full of matter. But at the same time, they can reveal the naked truth in which we

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Sunset, The Bay, North Devon, David Bomberg

live. So we are able to see the essence of life once more. Out of this emptiness and loneliness we can reconnect with our higher I and the divine sun can enter us. Our inner sun will illuminate evil.

The tree and the axe

Is the tree good and the axe evil?

The wood that makes up the axe's shaft was once part of the tree. Now the axe is divided from the tree and becomes an individual piece which can do harm to the tree. Like our I, once it was a whole, one divine I. When it separated, the ego and the I, the ego took its place and darkened it. We need the divine sun forces to give the I a place once more. We need the sun to let the tree grow and blossom. With consciousness and love we will look for the truth. The axe can be evil if it is used to harm the tree or to cut it down out of caprice or the hunger for power. But in the case of a diseased tree, the axe could very well be the cure, the bringer of clarity and healthy growth. Furthermore it depends on who is carrying the axe. In these troubled times, where the distinction between good and evil has become so unclear, it is hard to decide when and where we might need to use the axe, and who should be the one to use it. We also need to realise that the axe cannot exist without its shaft, and therefore without its source: the tree. Where the axe is just used to divide us and splinter us, cut us off from the source, our higher I, it definitely can be seen as evil. Where it is used to clear away the smothering growth, it could very well be seen as a tool of the good.

A poem a day to know thy self and thy world in verses of sermons

Jens-Peter Linde

Jens-Peter has written a 'sermon in verse' for each day of the year.

From the Foreword: These poems want to provide a soul-accompaniment for the reader in the course of the seasons and their festivals during the year.

The idea is to allow oneself to enter into each poem or verse in such a way as if one was listening to a sermon—in which every word might count. Indeed, these poems were written as preparations for the weekly sermons in Irish, Scottish and English congregations of The Christian Community.

Michaelmas 1

St. Matthew XXII, 1–14

Verse 12) ...'Friend, how camest thou in hither?'...
13) ...'Cast him into outer darkness;
There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
14) For many are called, but a few are chosen.'

Cast into empty pit's darkness – gnashing
Of teeth and terror's howls cleaving
Incomprehensible space – Joseph's
Journey began, he questioned dry stone:

'Should I have cloaked my dreams with a white
Polite vestment – or silence? But what
Are brothers, what circling stars if not
Integral curves and curbs on my way?'

Risen in Egypt again he was trapped
And deeply cast into prison's dark.
But he grew, till he knew grace from thorny beaks

Of famine. His hungry brothers found welcome.
Their saviour, he proved - where few are chosen –
Called, true friend of his God. And he beckons.

Michaelmas 2

St. Matthew XXII, 1–14 Verse 12) Friend! How did you enter here
Without donning the wedding garment?

Kingly Threshing

Friend! Thus didst Thou come in here,
Self assured — still speechless?
'Bind Him hand and feet. With fear
Cast him into darkness,

Where teeth will gnash and tears will brim.'
(Each breath will feel like torture,
However, I'll remember him,
For he is bearing future!)

The feast may quake, mankind might die.
I need strong souls to hold
On to life, who can defy
Dry law, who are so bold!

Like Joseph's — *(sold as slave he rose*
And read my famine dreams
And thus saved brothers from the throes
Of death) — so be your aims!

Michaelmas 3

St. Matthew XXII, 1–14

Verse 5) They made light of it
And went off…

Too soon
We tend to
Forget messages
From spirit worlds. Our dreams
Dissolve in the mists
Of daily
Living.

To hold
On to our
True being we need
To picture our challenges
And then carve their aims
Into our
Habits.

The Son moves forward
The universe's pursuit,
If we *make one step.*

Michaelmas

Festival of human freedom and responsibility

Lars Karlsson

If you didn't give everything, you gave nothing.
Henrik Ibsen

The Christian year, which begins with Advent, can seem strangely imbalanced. The first half of the year is full of festivals, three during the Christmas period, followed by the dramatic Easter period, the light of Whitsun and then the festival of St John's at the solstice.

Then it quietens down.

If you asked an ordinary citizen what Christian celebrations take place during the autumn, they may not even have an answer. Perhaps they would remember All Saints' Day, when in some countries candles are placed at gravesides, but nothing more.

In the past, there were festivals in the latter half of the year too, but they have more or less disappeared from general consciousness.

It is therefore all the more remarkable that a hundred years ago Rudolf Steiner strongly emphasised that an ancient, half-forgotten Christian celebration which takes place at the end of September should again get the attention it deserves. It is a celebration during our harvest time, when the in the northern hemisphere, the light and warmth recede, when everything is preparing for the cold and darkness. This festival is Michaelmas.

Michael is the Bible's apocalyptic archangel, often depicted with scales in one hand and a sword or lance in the other pointing down at a fire-breathing dragon. He is also called the guardian angel of intelligence and free thinking.

Steiner goes so far as to consider this particular celebration as especially important for people today; he coined new terms such as 'the age of Michael' and 'Michaelic Man'. At the same time he highlights the enormous demands on all of us today. No previous generation has had the knowledge and technology that we have today—which can be seen as either a blessing or a curse.

What may have been his intention when he so strongly emphasised the 'Michaelic' quality today?

We and the cosmos

If we look back in history, for instance to the Middle Ages, people experienced their lives much more as a 'whole'. For them there was a 'here' and a 'there', both worlds were real and interdependent. The 'here' was inhabited by stones, plants and animals, guided by the laws of nature. 'There' dwelled the angels and the devils, who actually controlled everything from behind the stage. Human beings were considered citizens of both worlds. The structure of the first universities reflected this reality: enthroned at the top Lady Theologia and beneath her all the other faculties as if in a protective nursery. This world view was not a paradise, it was ruled by iron laws with, for us, unimaginably brutal methods, yet somehow it all stayed together. Everything had a meaning, a purpose and a face. Perhaps not always beautiful, but a face nonetheless. There was a saint for everyone, not even thieves were left out—their saint was Dismas. If anyone wants to celebrate him, it can be done on March 25.

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment broke down this great cosmic construction piece by piece. More and more people began to doubt. Vast new continents and cultures were discovered, revolutionary technologies were invented, new social groups wanted their share of power, and the old world view was shaken to its foundations. New powers emerged in all fields: economic, social, cultural and technical. Within academia in particular this could be clearly observed. The natural sciences broke out and began expanding in all directions: outwards toward galaxies, novas and black holes, and inwards to molecules, atoms and quarks. Doubt and curiosity, the mother of all research, opened one closed door after another. Theology, which previously represented everything we call morals and values, was slowly demoted from the top table. Now on the periphery of the academic world, many view it as a throwback to an earlier age. Science has taken over the position of theology's dominance. Now, it rides at full gallop towards the sunrise, proud and aware of the enormous latent powers it has managed to release for the good of humanity.

Science is by its very nature amoral, value free. The undiscovered shall be discovered, the unimagined shall be imagined. Nothing and

no one can stand in the way of research, what is to come shall come, sooner or later.

Therefore, unwanted phenomena that no one could have foreseen have also been created. The great optimism about technological progress, which was virtually unquestioned fifty years ago, is increasingly being replaced by doubts about technology's omnipotence. In particular young people, who used to be representatives for advances in technology, are experiencing a rising level of uneasiness in modern society. They are unable to balance the equation. The inner life, which can be thought of as values, morality or even religion, stands in sharp contrast, specifically in the way we treat nature with all the technology we have developed.

The divide

Now, as global citizens we find ourselves in the remarkable situation that we have created a technology which develops itself almost in any way it pleases. Simultaneously, within ourselves, we feel how unnecessary and often how harmful the output is.

Science is at the cutting edge of today's world; it reaches out towards distant stellar worlds and thrusts into the innermost forces of existence. It can achieve anything—if not today, then tomorrow. Religion has stopped halfway; it may have just resigned in the hope that everything will go well, as it has done so far. Religion has nothing to do with the structure of an atom or with DNA.

Or does it?

The founders of The Christian Community were seeking for a unitary view of the world, which would take scientific advances and research seriously, whilst fully acknowledging their internal experience: thoughts, feelings, images or beliefs, even if at first these two realities seem to be in conflict with each other.

Several ways to experience

The total human experience of 'everything' is not limited to our senses, even if one often wants to reduce all of our knowledge to what is measurable by the senses.

Our experience of everything that exists is multidimensional:

Our senses are the major gateways to our physical surroundings.

Our sensations and emotions tell us how we react to what happens.

Our thinking is able to wander freely through time and space, regardless of physical restrictions.

Science is an extension of the sensory field. This is clear-cut for the natural sciences. Each new apparatus, instrument, tool or machine the human being invents is an increasingly refined development of a human sense, or organ. Science must explode illusions and misconceptions in order to see things and phenomena as they are, not as we think they are. We will make hypotheses, experiment, analyse, argue, examine, prove, doubt, reject, start over. The main purpose of science is to answer the question, What?

The humanities, which are not necessarily concerned with what is physically measurable, also aim at getting to the bottom of what is or is not.

Art brings us into the large dynamic field that consists of our feelings and sensations. They are often of a much vaguer and more elusive character, cannot be measured by devices, but are therefore experienced much more strongly. At the same time, they are of critical importance for our whole perception of the world. The word art is related to the the word skill and an artistic approach requires an element of practice, whereby rhythmic repetition deepens and transforms what there was in the beginning. But it does not rule out a playful, pleasurable experimentation. How did the composer Jean Sibelius, who was very sensitive to colours, experience that light green is somewhere between the notes D and E flat? Is it the truth or an illusion, a fact or a subjective opinion? Art always touches surfaces in our reality that cannot be measured, proven or fully understood. Thus the big question of art is, How?

Religion has always sought to answer our need to find meaning in big, cosmic, existential questions about the world and our place in it. During the last few centuries, the focus has more and more been on a purely human side: how we feel, whether we are happy or unhappy, whether we are believers or not, whether God exists or not, whether we need religion or whether it is a relic of a primitive stage of humanity. For many people today, life is fundamentally polarised: we are spoon-fed the scientific world view and take it for granted that everything can

be explained now (or will be soon), but simultaneously we baptise our children, and in a very irrational way we get married in churches, as if it were a kind of insurance. You just never know…

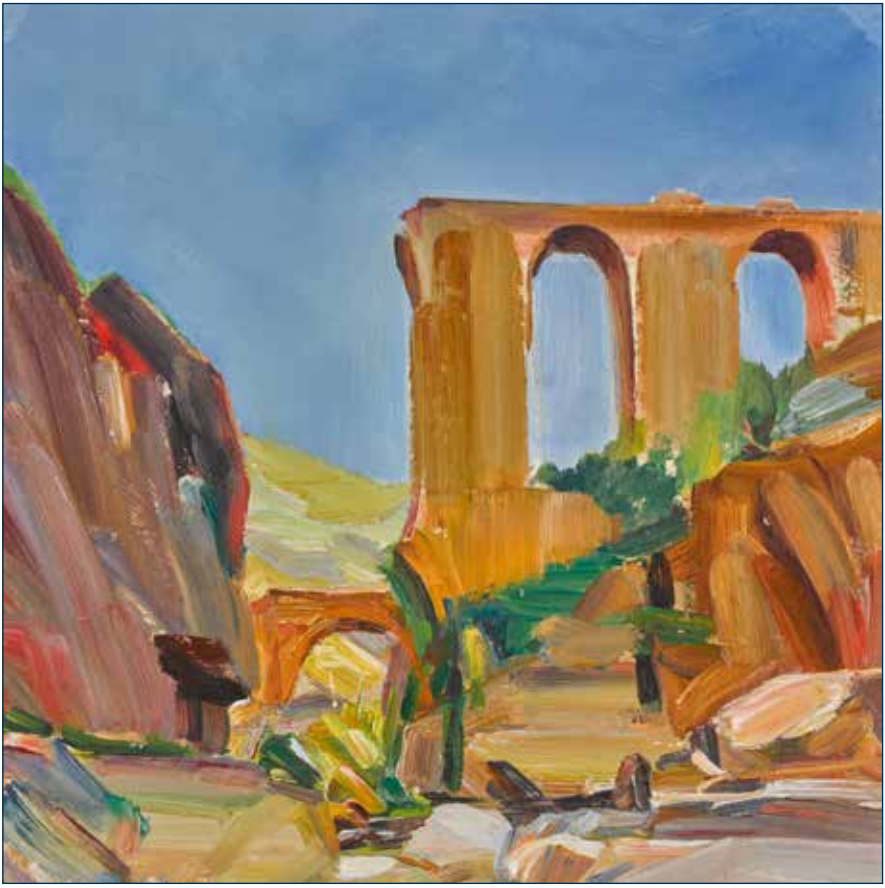
We have naively equated free thinking with science, and so we are hardly able to imagine a combination of free thinking and religion. One just needs to look at all the crusades, holy wars and suicide attacks—no thank you!

To think all thoughts

Let us return to the medieval thinkers: they weren't merely pious men of God. They also took—often at their own life's peril—positions in the most controversial topics: cosmology, politics, social issues, justice issues, economics, women's issues, chemistry, physics and astronomy. They would not have hesitated for a second had they come across an atom or a DNA test, but instead would have thrown themselves into the thick of it. And, whether Christian or Muslim, their religion would have followed all the way into the nucleus of the atom. For them, existence was a continuous whole where cosmic and earthly, spiritual and physical, religious and profane, magic and reality, eternal and temporal, high and low, life and death formed a dynamic field. Human beings are set within this continuum, not as passive recipients or as manipulable objects, but as living actors, whose lives of good and evil have an effect in far-reaching cosmic contexts. The religious human being searches for meaning.

So—paradoxically—a person's thoughts always turn to the great, eternal questions about the meaning of it all. And it is not helpful that the supposed scientific spirit is to ridicule those who wish to think of these questions. Even if we never get the answer, we must have the right to ask the question, Why?

This is probably what an increasing number of people are experiencing today. They feel that we cannot continue to live in a dead end society, where science, with technology as its extension, invents and develops far too many unnecessary things. Where economy lubricates the wheels of the global market and unnecessary cargo criss-crosses the earth. Where art gives us ever stronger sensations. And all while our ecological footprint is becoming heavier day by day.



The broken aqueduct, Wadi Kelt, near Jericho, David Bomberg, 1926

One must be able to find a connection, some sense in all of this, and thereby also transform it into an existential-religious question.

Is this what is required of the 'Michaelic' human being?

In an interview about the disastrous state of the Baltic Sea, the musician Esa-Pekka Salonen said: 'The fundamental error in Western thinking is that we keep the various aspects of our lives separated by technocratic borders. When taking a more holistic view, one realises that both the environment and music are parts of the same life.'

Here, Salonen approaches the vibrating membrane where art touches physical reality. It is not just a 'feeling' or 'art'. It's more.

The Michaelic everyday

Bringing together the three forms of experience—science, art and religion—without mixing them, would be the characteristic of a Michaelic human being.

We can try to do this in our everyday life:

We could be more 'scientific' in what we do. Start small. Choose a neighbourhood phenomenon, like a tree or a street. Observe it carefully. Pause, take a look from another angle, make careful observations. Do the same thing tomorrow, the day after tomorrow; repeat it for a longer period of time. Notice the differences, perhaps by making notes or sketches. Ask the questions: what has happened, what is the same, what has changed?

Vasari writes of Leonardo's approach: 'Leonardo was so inspired whenever he saw a head, a beard or hair of unusual appearance that he would follow such a person a whole day, and so "learn him by heart", that when he reached home he could draw him as if he were present.' *Car mechanic, keep a record of the changing colours of the tree outside your window!*

Art has always been with man without it being a professional area. We are often unfamiliar with the artists behind most older artworks. Modern man surrounds himself with art, but mostly as a consumer. Where has his own artistic practice gone? How many people sing or hum to themselves today? Or paint, dance, sculpt or carve, just for their own pleasure?

The Swedish poet Göran Sonnevi should have been an engineer or a scientist, but at the age of 17–18 he began to write poems. This released new powers in him and he became heavily involved in many social and political issues. It is Michaelic when he says 'Artistic work is very much about mathematical and geometric intuition, mathematics is my teacher in structuring thinking but also as a rhythm and as an experience of beauty.'

Here we meet a man who refuses to be put in a box. Mathematics as an experience of beauty certainly sounds exciting!

Accountant, grab a cello and start playing!

If a person such as a scientist or a craftsman, has been occupied with one thing for a lifetime and then tries to put this restricted section of reality into words, he is often forced to use words which do not really

belong to current scientific vocabulary. Instead, the use of religious language is often closer and more to the point for the simple reason that it is the only thing that fits, because the words and expressions are, paradoxically, more accurate. There are books about water, trees, or cows, written by scientists, which could not be called either scientific, theological or artistic books. They can be read from all three perspectives.

Thus religion can be much more accurate than we generally care to acknowledge. Religion is the science of meaning, although its language is quite different. It uses colour, rhythm, timbre, structure, ritual, prayer.

Religion does not have to be something that we possess or own, and thereby to be the point of view from which we interpret things. It can also start from the other end as a question, a doubt or a sense of something which outwardly does not appear to have anything to do with religion. It could also be the journey itself that gradually transforms our relationship to the world into a religious one. In this deterministic-causal world we have seen a glimpse of holiness.
Reverend, chop firewood!

The great in the small

There is no definitive form of Michaelic Christianity, but it is rather a continuous searching, testing, balancing attitude. Nothing is too big or too small to consider; everything holds a secret. When we start with the question What?, it guarantees purity, simplicity and accuracy. The question How? sets the object in motion, gives it a pulse and creates a relationship. The question Why? knocks on the door to meaningful clarity, identity and holiness.

Or as Simone Weil says:

'Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer'.

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Ritual and Routine

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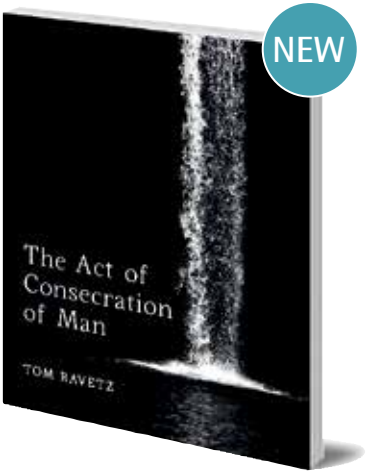
The book will be valuable for both new worshippers and those who have been taking part in the communion service for years.



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Book review

The Act of Consecration of Man

Tom Ravetz

Floris Books 2020

Review by Peter Howe

The Act of Consecration is a vast landscape, sublime and many-layered. It can be daunting to engage with, and those who do so for years, perhaps decades, inevitably have to negotiate times when they lose their way, become stuck, or continually go over the same bit of well-worn track. A guide is needed.

Many wise and knowledgeable works have been written about the service, to instruct and assist. Personally, I have never before encountered a book which felt so much like a companion, a wise and knowledgeable voice by my side. Without over-simplifying the complexities of the service—or the angelic, spiritual realities which it reveals—the author makes these worlds welcoming and more transparent, helping one to orientate and feel at home as an active participant.

Particularly helpful is the structure, which includes 'Contemplations' in each section, nine in all: exercises aimed at guiding our consciousness, in stages, from the everyday towards a condition of receptivity and readiness 'for more intense participation'. For example:

Contemplation: Trinity

The Father-God be in us;
the Son-God create in us;
the Spirit-God enlighten us.

In my imagination I peel away everything that covers over being itself like the layers of an onion. Even the great mountain ranges, which can be seen as symbols of eternity, are in fact continually growing and passing away. What lies beneath all becoming, beneath all change and growth? The ultimate ground of all being is the Father-God. I give thanks for this secure foundation, which gives me security in all the events of my life.

I direct my attention to the forces that keep me alive, far beneath my conscious control. I look back on my life. Everything that I am now is bound up with the mystery of my development, of my becoming. What kind of world would it be if there were no becoming? I thank the Son-God for this gift, which comes from his continuous, creative activity.

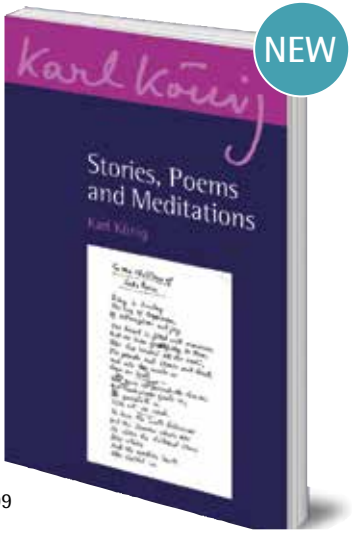
I become aware of the gift of my consciousness, without which this contemplation would be impossible. I notice how rich my experience is when I succeed in paying attention to the things that I see and the people I meet. I become aware that the connections that arise from this attention are the gift of the Holy Spirit and I pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to enlighten me.

Having pondered on these thoughts, which are themselves a starting point for many further ones, I may find that the mood of prayer stays with me. Finally, I let everything fade away. Into the silence I hear the words being spoken:

The Father-God be in us;
the Son-God create in us;
the Spirit-God enlighten us.

Tom Ravetz' voice is one of certainty with modesty, conviction with mildness. It is grounded in, but never burdened by, theology. Importantly, there is never a hint of moralising, but acceptance for the striving soul and fellow traveller.

The latest from the Karl König Archive



Alongside his work with the Camphill movement, Karl König was a prolific writer of stories, poems and meditative verses.

This book contains a selection of his creative work, including verses for specific occasions, poems, short stories and stories for children.

An extensive introductory essay explores the cultural and historical environments in which König was writing and discusses the creative development of his literary work.

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Floris Books

Temple Lodge Club

a quiet oasis in the middle of London

Temple Lodge is a Georgian listed building in the centre of Hammersmith and was once home to artist Sir Frank Brangwyn. The house is now a guest house welcoming visitors to London from the four corners of the globe. The large studio he built for his work has been refashioned into a space for worship by *The Christian Community* in London. The mezzanine floor has been kept for its historical associations and has been home to *The Gate* vegetarian restaurant for the last 30 years.

Many visitors have described the peace and tranquillity they experience upon entering the house as an oasis amidst the turmoil they leave outside. An experience of the garden can be gained from most windows, and this will be enhanced as a redesigning and replanting of the garden takes place.

The work in the garden follows work to build three new double-bedded garden suites, each with its own en-suite facilities. Guests now have access to and through the garden on their way to the dining room. A hearty and substantial vegetarian/vegan breakfast provides just what is needed for the new day ahead.

Upon becoming members of the **Temple Lodge Club** (£2.00 annual membership) visitors seeking accommodation may share in all the facilities the house has to offer. There is the Reading Corner with newspapers and the Library for reading, relaxing or quiet conversation, the well-used Conference Room with seating for twelve around the table and the unique Lantern Room taking its name from the large octagonal skylight which provides an exceptional, comfortable and adaptable space for many and varied meetings.

All prices include breakfast:
from £59 per night single room,
from £93 per night twin room,
from £108 per night double room
To make a booking:
Tel. **0044 (0) 20 8748 83388**
email: ***booking@templelodgeclub.com***
Or please refer to our website:
www.templelodgeclub.com
for full and up to date prices and offers.

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

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e-mail:
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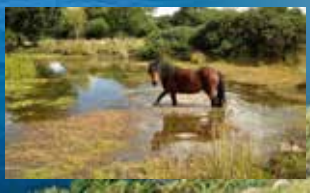

There are four small guest rooms, three single and one double room. Three of the guest rooms have a wash basin; toilets and shower are separate. There is a kitchen for self-catering needs. Local shops and pubs/restaurants are within a couple of minutes walking distance.

Unfortunately we do not have disabled access and there are steps and stairs inside and outside the building. We ask for your consideration regarding the other guests and our events taking place in the house.

Suggested contribution £25 per person per night, one night £30.

Weekly rates available, also pick-ups and drop off for Two Moors Way.

For further information and bookings:

Rev Sabine Haus

01364 64 42 72

Email: *sabine.hauslakeman@gmail.com*

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