

On Life after death

- A treatise -

Jan Bauwens

On Life after Death

Can just words defeat death? One day I heard someone making a similar remark about numbers. Nevertheless: is it not by the power of calculation that we can overcome illnesses, travel around the world and look into the future? Well then, words are still more powerful than numbers are. We just still have to learn to speak properly.

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§1. The ‘koan’: the paradox as a springboard

Is there life after death? — The question arises until it annoys us. It is often that terrible that many ones, while just hearing about that question, run away, deciding never to come back.

I could agree with them: one must not ask questions of the kind that no one is able to answer. The question whether there is a life after death, indeed is a question of that kind. Alike the question whether God, being almighty, is able to create a stone that heavy that He is never able to lift it.

If God is able to create a stone of that kind — and He has to be, as He is almighty — it will be a consequence at once that He will be unable to lift it. So what about his almightiness? For in this case one asks whether the Almighty is able to deprive Himself from his own power.

Now, don’t be astonished: in Christianity this question is being answered affirmatively! For by his own free decision, the Almighty principally is unable to deprive man from his freedom. God did create us *in his own image, after his likeness*, as the book of *Genesis* says, and this means: as a free being, as a being that is able to choose and, more accurately: as a being that is able to choose between good and evil.

No one can deny it: in Christianity, the Creator has handed over a bit of his might to his human creatures. Yet, his ability to do so isn't but paradoxical from a too narrow perspective on things. For this paradox is being annihilated by a second one. This second paradox consists of the fact that God does not diminish his power by leaving a piece of it into man's hands. On the contrary: his power is being increased by this very act of generosity!

How can this be the case? — thus one could ask. And at this point I may invite you to ask yourself the question which of both of the following 'gods' is the most powerful:

Our first god creates 'human' beings who do not have a free will; they behave exactly as He wants them to behave: they worship Him and they only do what is good. They cannot sin as He does not make them sin. He just imposes his law to them, and they respond it in a most accurate way.

Our second god, on the contrary, creates human beings able to choose themselves between good and evil. For sure, they have full knowledge of the divine law that asks them to do the good and to stay away from the evil, yet they possess the freedom to respond the divine law as they wish. So, under these human beings of the second kind, there probably will be some who obey their Creator.

You already have foreseen the question that arises from this dilemma, and that sounds like this: which one of both the gods is the most powerful: will it be the god whose creatures are being forced to obey him, or will it rather be the god whose creatures are able to follow him by their own free choice? Which one of both the army

generals is the best one: is it the one who has to force his soldiers to fight, or is it rather the one whose soldiers do follow him spontaneously to the battlefield? At least it can be said that the latter one has soldiers much more brave than has the former one. And soldiers fighting voluntary are soldiers whose wishes are identical with the wishes of their leader. The creatures of a 'forcing god' do follow their god just because they cannot act otherwise, while probably it could be the case that they wished otherwise.

The 'forcing god' who, in fact, is a dictator, needs a forcing system in order to be able to assure himself of the obedience of his creatures: he will be in the need of controlling systems, of all kind of laws and punishments, and of an economy with a monetary system and more things like that. Yet the other kind of god doesn't need all this, for his creatures do obey him out of free choice. And we all know that someone's might increases as his needs diminish...

As a matter of fact, one could throw up that the latter god — the one who forces his creatures — in the end is not necessarily obeyed by *all* of his people. Theoretically it is even possible that, in the end, just *none* of his creatures will obey him. It is not unthinkable that even all of his creatures eventually will prefer to reject Him and to do it their own way. Considering this possibility... what about his being almighty!?

I will not run away from this objection, for it is a realistic one — probably it is a more realistic one than we tend to accept. On the other hand it must be said that — at least in Christianity — the not-forcing God has at least one true and faithful adept, who ac-

cordingly is being called “Son of God”. In this way, the Christ in fact is the one who is proving the statement that the non-forcing God is the most powerful of both the gods proposed in here, and that, in this way, He turns out to be the only possible God. In doing so, the Christ just protects the Creator from the ultimate failure of his plan, for a God who has at least one follower on base of his own free choice, is more powerful than a god who has to force his legions to obey him. Perhaps, the not-forcing God must have thought that, anyway, nothing ever could have sense apart from love... And only the obeisance on the base of free choice testifies of true love.

The question whether God is able to create a stone of the kind He cannot lift, is being answered affirmatively in Christianity. Though, this answer does not imply this divine art to be a sign of Gods weakness. On the contrary: the power speaking from this very answer belongs to a higher level than the level of the muscle-power we were thinking about spontaneously at the beginning of this story. And this only means that our initial question was arising due to a lack of knowledge. In asking the question, we wrongly did believe it could never be answered; yet at the moment each difficulty has disappeared: we just mistook the problem.

In asking the question whether there is a life after death, it appears that we tend to make an analogue mistake. Departing from what we believe to know, we also do believe that no one will ever be able to answer this question in a sound way. We might think that we make a trap for the one to whom we are asking the very question. Yet, also in this case, there is no trap at all: it is just our ignorance that is bothering us. So this is at least what we pretend to

be the case: we just need a thought-framework that is broad enough to give us a perspective not determined by just things on the level of the muscle-power. For sure we may not ignore the muscle-power, but at the same time let us remember that there are many more kinds of power in heaven and on earth.

§2. Love gets the ultimate satisfaction from its own being

The question whether there is a life after death is as paradoxical and as unsolvable as is the question whether God is able to create a stone that heavy that He is not able to lift it. Yet Christianity answers both the questions affirmatively: God is able to share his power and to ameliorate it in one and the same movement or decision and, analogously, life can die and simultaneously it can be transformed into eternal life.

Let us first consider the example mentioned: God hands a piece of his power to his human creatures, yet exactly this act is able to illustrate that He is much more powerful than we initially tended to believe. For, initially, we identified power with just ‘muscle-power’, while there exist many other kinds of power apart from just this one. We believed to be dealing with a paradoxical situation because we did not reflect about the possibility of higher forms of power. It wasn’t but on the very moment of our being confronted with an army of soldiers not forced by the whip, that we took notice of this reality. What causes them to follow their leader? — so we did ask ourselves: how do they manage when there is no whip in the whole scene? Without success we chased for the ‘hidden forces’ that made these soldiers fight.

“He who believes in Me, will live forever, although he has died” — thus says the Christ. Again, and without success either, we search the dead body for the ‘hidden life’ — as we stand in front of a disciple, someone who did give away his life for the sake of

the Christ. Indeed, we are being confronted with disciples, and we do so despite the fact that they obviously die like everyone else does. So, where is the eternal life? Where is that ‘hidden reward’? — we ask ourselves. For also in this case, we think about things familiar to our thoughts, about something that could be seen, touched, and taken home by us in order to beware this precious thing from all dangers.

Though, eternal life is fidelity alike — fidelity that makes fight soldiers even in the absence of any reward: it is just an invisible thing. Probably, the visible things have to belong to the things of a lower level; that what, on the contrary, has real value, has to escape from that visibility, and this is a very lucky matter of fact. For suppose for one moment that the valuable were something that could be seen and taken, the pieces of money and gold alike that we need in this world to buy the daily bread: one quick grasping of a thief would suffice to take it all away from us! So, we understand that the real valuable must be kept beware from theft, lies, mockery, death and so on. If eternal life were visible and made of the dust, it were a prey to death, and so it just couldn’t be eternal life any longer.

The fidelity that makes soldiers fighting in the battlefield, doesn’t need any further reward. The devoted one understands that his devotion is the most supreme of all of his values: when it lacks, everything lacks, and the fighting loses its ultimate sense. In the same way, the Almighty God must know that ‘forced disciples’ would be just lifeless instruments or robots. The Almighty undoubtedly prefers the total powerlessness above some kitschy glory. Such a glory in vane can probably be ascribed to worldly

kings, yet certainly not to the Creator of the universe. Therefore, eternal life cannot be just a continuation of this physical life on earth; neither can it be some re-edition of it. Eternal life is not in the need of other pictures and expressions apart from the evident testimony of the one who conquers death by the gift of his own life for the sake of love. In order to exist, it doesn't need something else, for love has its satisfaction from its own being.

§3. Death as a *deus ex machina*

If our story would end at this point, one could ask for the criterion to make the difference between the faithful one and the fatalist — the latter being the unbeliever who nevertheless believes in love, assenting at once the *amor fati* — the love for the fate — a tragic concept used by Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. For what would distinct the former from the somehow arrogant acquiescence as we can find it in Spinoza: the acquiescence that is being told to arise from those matters who are necessary, irrevocable and fatal? In fact, this resignation gives only a deceitful 'rest', while it is being based on the principally absolute recognizability of reality.

This 'love towards the fate' has the fate as its object: it isn't true love while it isn't something person-directed; in fact it's a distorted and hidden form of ego-directed love, which eventually signifies the following statement: "If I do not get what I wish, I will accept this fact in the way of a specific love for this specific misfortune!" But this means a resignation in misfortune, simultaneously hiding a continuous rejection of it — a discrepancy that never can be taken away and that seduces us to accept it as something in which one could find an ultimate solace, an opportunity to make ourselves invisible — something in which we could shelter for the brutality of existence as if it would admit us to hold ourselves for dead in this way. The *amor fati* unjustly dwells in the illusion of a death that factually *is not there*. In that very case, man unjustly longs for death and for nothingness as an ultimate solace which would free him from all responsibility and from the heavy weight of his existence. Man makes himself blind for this fatal 'miscalcu-

lation' just by denying it and by laying the responsibility for what is going wrong in the hands of 'the nothingness'! Although it is a fact that only persons are able to bear responsibility: ideas, imaginations and other products by man cannot do so — notwithstanding the fact that we sometimes wish this so badly.

In this way we come to a conclusion that has some severe implications: the problem that bothers us is not death, it is rather the absence of death, and the disenchanting fact that — 'alas' — it cannot exist, that it is a complicated illusion, a *deus ex machina* that we perform much too easily into our own minds, in order to find some way to escape from the heaviness that is pressing on our deeper thought — a thought that is bearing an consciousness which is actually unbearable: the awareness of guilt.

The point we arrived at will be significant in a crucial way for the totality of our issue. For here arises the extremely important question, asking which of both of the following things is more real: either matter or guilt? This in fact is the question asking for the ground of the being itself, and it shows itself in a more abstract form in the problem interrogating the relationship between ethics and ontology. Already since Augustine of Hippo, and in fact from still earlier periods in history — namely since Plotinos — evil has been said to have no ground of being at all: only the good exists, so says Augustine; the evil isn't but a lack of the good; it is an emptiness, and so it is not a real 'being'. Saint Paul, writing in his famous letter that nothing ever can have sense in the absence of love, factually expresses this particular relationship between ontology and ethics, which is the relationship between the 'being' and the 'good'. More specifically he shows that in the absence of the

good, no being is able to stand and no life is worth to be lived any longer. Especially Judas' suicide is an exponent of this tragic reality and almost it is a dramatic 'proof' for the truth of Saint Paul's evocation.

The fact that we can think about a life no longer worth to be lived — which would be a life that would be no longer capable to free itself from its guilt or a life that has lost hope for a deliberation from it — brings into our mind in an impressive way the fact that the physical or the biological life does not rest on itself: it is in no way autonomous, it needs a benediction originating from a reality that stands above the material world. To be clear: by this world we do not mean some reality that would be situated above that what is evidently present to us in a direct way: on the contrary it is all about real things, things that are certainly true and that are totally inherent to all that is present to us. A person living the life that is being given to him, knows very well that his life is not his own in an unconditional way. When considered purely theoretically, he indeed may speak for his physical integrity; yet at last he has to consider that this integrity will be of no signification if it is not being founded by something more substantially. Persons stand by no other means than by their reciprocal recognition; by the denying of this reality, a person should deprive himself from his own ground. In other terms: as human beings, we cannot neglect the very duty of reciprocal recognition without losing our personality itself. The urgent character of this duty creates the specific guilt that is inherent to principally every person. This is a debt that no one ever is able to redeem, because it is a task for life.

Out of this idea and almost spontaneously, the following question is rising: if, indeed and as we could remark here, a physical life apart from true existence is a thinkable possibility, then could we not turn this statement upside down and ask ourselves why a true existence apart from physical life shouldn't be possible? Expressed by an analogy: we can consider that a coat, as soon as it cannot dress any body any longer, stops to be a meaningful dressing-tool — which means that it just ends up to be a coat. Yet on the contrary we can also consider that a body deprived from its coat still remains a body. Without bodies that can be dressed, the existence of coats is just impossible, because coats get their own meaning and being from the bodies they must dress. Apparently, the opposite is not the case: a body undressed just continues to be a body. The coat borrows its being from the body, but the inverse is not true: without its coat, a body is still a body. In the same way, a physical being deprived from any true existence is thinkable, but it is also meaningless; and so we tend to believe that life needs a true existence while the opposite of this statement is untrue. So the question rises whether someone could give one single *raison* why a true existence apart from physical life couldn't be a real possibility?

§4. About the unity of the body and the soul

Today's world could seduce us to make dangerous comparisons. Already Saint-Augustine said that people, while constructing their own world by the means of basic, natural material, tend to make a specific failure concerning their view on reality as a whole. It concerns a failure that rests on an unjust inductive reasoning. This failure originates from the fact that we tend to assume that, similar to our constructed world, also nature, out of which we recruit the material to build our world, should be nothing more than another construction. Admitted on the one hand that it is possible to consider nature as if it were a construction, and that engineers factually cannot consider it otherwise while it is their duty to submit the forces of nature to man's will as to realise his deepest aspirations — we, on the other hand, must experience repetitively that this 'construction' of nature, time after time, turns out to be very different from what we believed it to be, and it also seems to be much more complex than we had thought before. And this experience warns us not to take our knowledge for an absolute one: we have to stay aware of the fact that our ideas about nature are just provisional creations by ourselves and that these ideas will never lose their provisional character. While constructing the world, we consider nature as our example: we build up our world similar to the wonderful example that is nature to us, tending to consider God as a kind of a 'super-engineer' and, in this way, our constructing activity makes us feel a little divine. Nevertheless, the ennobling effect ascribed so frequently to human work can never result from any similarity with the divinity: the concerned analogy reduces the divine to human proportions rather than it should deify man.

This remark is not just a game with words: in the illusion of any deification of one's self by the means of one's work, the divinity is being reduced just to be a worker and an engineer, and nature is being reduced to a mere construction. Yet no one of us, made of flesh and bones, is able to create flesh or bones. We cannot create any breath of life, any spirit or any living being. Man just makes material constructions. When ever working with living material, our activity is limited to the process of trial and error concerning those mechanisms in life which are subdued to the mechanics of lifeless matter. In this way, man can produce tools that, in their turn, can ameliorate the reach and the efficiency of his actions. Man's tools are a kind of 'lengthening-pieces' of his hands, his body and his mind, but without the body and the mind they cannot function as they do not have any autonomy; they do not have any functionality on their own. Man's tools borrow their meaning and their whole being integrally and exclusively from man himself: without man they have not the slightest utility, and so it is excluded definitely that one ever could ascribe some intrinsic value to these objects, which means that they can never 'exist' apart from man and on their own.

An analogy between man and society has been applied more often in the course of the history of man inquiring the being of his own identity: as we all know, billions of cells constitute the unity of the human body thanks to the specific laws of nature which keep them together, which keep them all functional, which keep them alive. As a consequence of this, we spontaneously tend to compare the body with society that has its citizens as its own specialised cells which stay functional thanks to the existence of social laws. Sometimes, this analogy is being made that far that some of us ascribe

to society a kind of a 'spirit', an 'identity' — even so strongly that one could easily think that its value were superior to the value of the human persons which, in that very case, are being identified with the mere citizens. E.g. in certain forms of communism this failure is being made very often, but also all those kinds of systems which are being subdued to entities even much more difficult to identify, such as an uncontrolled 'free market'-system. In contemporary Western societies, 'welfare' is often being identified blindly with 'well-being', often representing nothing else but an economy which is going 'well', in the mere sense of just 'fast'. As if the quality of our life and our happiness ever could depend on velocity, and more specifically: on the velocity of economical changes. This evil only suggests that Western people are often 'people on the flight', for it is only in this very situation than one can get advantage from the speed characterising his movements. Apart from this, it would be much more natural to identify happiness with rest, which we all tend to do spontaneously. It is true that one can find some sound analogies between man and society, as he can find them as well in comparing the world of the atoms to the world of the stars — countless analogies of that kind are thinkable. We just want to say that thought in terms of analogies is in fact an old and a primitive modus of thought: it has certainly its own qualities if applied well, yet it can also mislead us badly; and it has never been an easy task to overcome the inertia of thought. In comparing the human being to a society, we may never forget that the unity of a man is not in an exhaustive way comparable with the unity of a society. Alike man is not comparable exhaustively with a machine, a computer or an animal. It is often due to the mentioned inertia, laziness or superficiality that there is given

way to misconceptions; yet we can become their victims quite easily.

One of those dangerous analogies manifesting themselves more often in the minds of certain writers, concerns the so-called *mind-body-problem*. For more and more one tends to use the analogy between, on the one hand, the body and the mind and, on the other hand, the *hard-ware* and the *soft-ware*, i.e.: the computer (or: the infrastructure, the internet) and its content. This much too easy comparisons quickly lead to conclusions concerning human existence which consider the human body to be the carrier of its mental content, and in which the human body is being considered as being fully replaceable — and the stuff that it carries were no longer some personal soul or identity, but rather some kind of a ‘common good’ which can be described as a principally ‘immortal’ ‘culture’. In the human considering of himself by the turning of the considering of one of his own products, one makes the same mistake of induction against which Saint Augustine did warn sixteen hundred years ago. In the course of history this failure pervaded thought in a broad rank of various forms and it kept on in doing so until today. What makes the mentioned way of considering so special, is the interplay of some factors which ask our attention for just one moment.

The new technologies have appeared very suddenly: they are the fruits of the work of skilled and specialised people who, in their turn are ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’, as poets expressed it — giants who never before reached so high above us all. At the same time, new technology never before manifested itself in such a quickly, visible and *user-friendly* way for the benefit of almost

all layers of the populations of the whole world. The knowledge and the skills required for the conduction of a motorised vehicle means literally nothing compared to the skills required for the development and the production of it, and this is still truer concerning the most recent of technologies. And so we now can observe that not only the new technology is being sold easily: we also swallow some *ideas* that seem to accompani the mere material products, e.g. the idea that this technology would be that superb that probably life itself could take an example to it. And this remembers us of a story in the Old Testament, telling us about the potter and his clay: “*You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?"* (— Isaiah 29:15-17).

In brief: the idea that the mind-body-problem could be resolved, or at least that it could be explained thoroughly by the means of the perspective of the newest technology, is very misleading: it tends to make us believe that some clear solution for the very mystery of our existence would be on its way. In fact, in this way we do not make the slightest progress — on the contrary, for this mentality only weakens our vigilance.

Ironically enough the mentioned ‘new’ concept of man implicitly refers to an outdistanced and old-fashioned concept, holding that the body and the mind would be separable from each other. Yet man is made of one single piece, while only in the world of our conceptions, man can be divided up into a body and a soul. Analogously, we can speak about the matter and the form of a concrete thing, knowing very well that those two components are mere con-

cepts: we will never find them in reality, simply because they cannot exist on their own — i.e.: autonomously and separated from each other. The body-length has no existence apart from the body that is being measured, as already Plato did remark, and in no way one can ask himself earnestly what it is that makes someone's body longer than the body of some other person: is it because of the head, or is it because of the legs? In the same way, space and time do never appear separately, at least not in the real world, while nevertheless we still need both of the concepts in order to be able to describe our (real) experiences. In though, we divide the unity of the being, we break it up into pieces, exactly in the same way that we break up nature into pieces in order to build our world by the means of them.

But nature has not been built up out of pieces: nature is a unity and we ourselves make part of it — which makes this unity principally unknowable in an exhaustive way. Now, exactly the same happens concerning our language by the means of which we have to describe and to represent reality — which in fact is our thought. Our language is being built up out of its own elements, which we call 'words', 'numbers', and more things like that; yet those elements do not have a vast place in the real world which they try to describe, because, as the first of all poets, Heraclites, said: *everything is flowing*. The 'spirit', building up itself in language, is alike the world which we try to build up out of stones and other materials. But our world is not identical to nature as such, out of which it recruits its building-stones. In the same way, our thought — our language — is not identical to spirit. Nature and the spirit stand apart from the world and language respectively, and it looks alike this gap between both of them will always remain: the world

will never become nature — the most splendid cities with gardens and acres disappear as soon as we stop to maintain and to cultivate them, while nature just remains what it is. In the same way, language and thought in general will never approach the spirit out of which they recruit their ideas by the means of our dreams. The insight that comes out of our dreams precedes its formulation that, in its turn, stagnates, freezes and becomes stone as soon as it is being pronounced or written down. And this is the fate of all thoughts from the moment on that they are being expressed, written down and embedded by the framework of *ratio* which is identical for all of us. The reason why Old Greek civilisation adored *ratio* lays in the fact that, opposite to our dreams, *ratio* is identical for all of mankind. Yet simultaneously this characteristic of *ratio* is its own most tragic restriction. For the dream, once concretised and expressed in a specific idea, has become a dead dream, and the death of our dreams is the price they have to pay in order to be reborn in our common world. For that reason the (personal) dream is eternal, and the idea, the *ratio* that we all have in common, is temporarily — it has to be refreshed regularly, it has to return at vast times to the dream out of which it originates in order to resource; it has to die in order to be able to stay alive. And in this way it does not differ from man himself, for one's individual life must die if at least human existence wants to survive.

§5. *Our life is not ours*

Before starting our exposition about death, we must realise well that life itself, in which we feel ‘home’ in a certain sense and that we often call ‘ours’, in fact is a strange thing to ourselves. We have to make this remark in order not to become a victim of pitiful simplifications originating from the unjust placement in opposition of each other of life and death. But let us firstly explain what we do mean by saying that life is not just ‘ours’ and that in fact it is strange to ourselves.

Let us take the example of the physical activity of the ‘seeing’. When I look up, when I see something, I say that I’m seeing. The proposition: “I’m seeing — this or that”, makes it appear as if ‘to see’ were an activity performed by ourselves, by our own acting. (Take notion of the fact that what we are saying here concerning the seeing, fits as well concerning the rest of our activities, like the hearing, the smelling etc.) In the statement: “I’m seeing something”, the expression requires an active subject — being someone performing the action, and this subjective activity is more or less being supposed to be executed as a consequence of — again — a subjective act of the will. It deserves attention to look at this more carefully for one moment, and to ask oneself the question in what sense, and also in what measure, the name ‘activity’ or ‘subjective activity’ can be ascribed to this happening that we call ‘the seeing’. For it is obvious that the seeing, about which we believe that it is our own seeing each time that we believe that we indeed are seeing, is not something that is self-evidently being brought under the control of our will. Even more: the fact that the

seeing, on the one or on the other occasion, is being subjected to our will, is — at last — an exception rather than the rule!

I want to see something, I look up, I watch and I’m seeing it — this is what we would call the normal course of matters. But do we give attention to the fact that this ‘normal’ course of matters factually supposes many necessary conditions in order to make possible the phenomenon of seeing as such? I will see nothing if it is dark, if the battery of my lamp is empty, if mist is coming up, if my eyelids stick, if someone blinds me with a spotlight or if I lost the sight because of blindness. And as a matter of fact I will be seeing nothing at all if I’m no longer alive. And let us now ask this question: in what sense and measure do we have control over the mentioned circumstances and conditions — which in fact are countless in number and which admit the ‘normal’ situation to exist? Isn’t it true that these conditions and circumstances which are really necessary for our sight, are mostly *being given* to us? And that, consequently, they also can be lacking? And, if this is the case indeed: in what sense do we have the right to go on in believing that our sight is ours and that it is us, watching, as we are seeing?

As a matter of fact: in our attempt to make clear the problem demonstrated, our language is playing an important role; our language seduces us to rely on it - which means: to accept that it just should coincide with spirit. Alike the (cultural) world seduces us to believe that it coincides with the ‘real’ world of natural things. Considering then the statement: “I’m watching”, we seem to be hypnotised by ‘common sense’ and we factually link the significance of this predicate to an active subject that, so to speak, would hold its sight into its own hands. Yet in fact, in these, it is all about

a *process* of seeing, and the subject that sees, is just being involved in it. It is true that in the absence of any subject, no seeing is possible; nevertheless, out of this truth one can certainly not conclude that this subject would produce its seeing out of itself. There is no heritage without an inheritor, but in no way the inheritor is producing the heritage that he is inheriting. There is no present in the absence of the one who has to receive it, but this does not mean that the receiver should be the producer of his present. The power of the receiver does not reach any further than in his possibility to accept, to refuse or to destroy what is being offered to him. The obvious human inability to reflect thoroughly upon the fact that all what he believes to do and to be is in fact something that has been *given* to him, just illustrates our fundamental ingratitude.

All what has been said here about our seeing, as a matter of fact also holds concerning all of our other activities and ways of being; it holds concerning our whole life. The life that we believe to be ours, is just a process in which we may participate, it is something that we just receive, and our power over our own life does not go further than goes our possibility either to accept or to reject it — partially, or as a whole. In the latter case — which occurs most frequently — we require conditions to the life that we receive and, in doing so, we tend to submit conditions to our very own — received — life. In fact we swing around in this form of ‘rejection’ from the very moment that we believe that the received life was ours. If then, suddenly, one or more of the many necessary conditions supporting one or more of the activities occupied unjustly by ourselves, appears to be lacking, we may feel as if we were treated unjustly. The sadness originating from the loss of possibilities we

expected to be present — an expectation grounded in the unthankful perception of matters — is being caused exclusively by our own ungratefulness. To express this in a very simple way, we then behave alike a man looking in the beak of a received horse. As at least a proverb in Dutch says, we should never do that.

All this has been said in order to remember that a consideration of death as a loss of life, factually asks a modified and a strongly nuanced approach. In these, it is not about a loss of something that we once did possess — at the utmost it is about the loss of something we *believed* to possess. In fact, life has never been someone’s possession and it will never be. Alike, the proposition: “I’m seeing”, probably could find a more truthful expression in the next: “I’m participating to sight”. We better shouldn’t say that we are living, but rather that we may participate to life. We receive one day and, after this, a second one, and one more and, in this way we probably receive an amount of twenty-thousand days. It is possible that we react ungratefully to this and that we get used to these daily presents: we may come to believe that we deserve these presents, and that injustice is done to us if one day these friendly gifts just stay away.

§6. *Life as a gift*

The subject of our issue concerns much more than what has been presented here until now: the strange paradox of the identity, in the sense of the ‘being of one’s own self’ essentially is sinister and only in this sinister way it touches the core of our self. The ‘thing’ that we consider so firmly and with so much certainty as to be the ‘ego’, or the ‘self’ — e.g.: remember the great French philosopher and mathematician, René Descartes, who considered the awareness of the being of one’s self to be the very starting-point for his whole further thought (“*Je pense, donc je suis*”, i.e.: “*I am thinking, so I am*”) — this ‘self’ in fact is at once the being of ‘not one’s self’; it is the being of everything possible except one’s self.

Philosophers express it in many ways: ‘blood is thicker than water’. And they all get trapped in the experience of the awareness of the ‘ego’ because it seems overwhelmingly direct and certain. Yet the certainty of the ‘ego’ is one of a very special kind. Opposite to what one should suppose, it is a very conditional ‘certainty’. The reason why we choose the ‘ego’ or the ‘self’ to be the foundation of all of our thoughts lays in the simple fact that the doubt about the ‘ego’ would imply the absolute uncertainty about just everything concerning our thought, our knowledge, our experiences and our being. In other words: we accept the ‘ego’ as an absolute certainty because we simply cannot permit the slightest doubt about it — if we nevertheless did doubt, we would shrink in an absolute and irreversible chaos. In still other terms: if we want to escape from hell (for remember: is a greater horror thinkable than a situation of absolute uncertainty in the lack of each

support?), we are obliged to grasp existence (nevertheless it happens to us apart from our own free will) with both of our hands, and to attach to it, to make it to our most intimate possession. This at once means that, in this way escaping from the mentioned horror, we make an alliance with our existence — an alliance of the highest thinkable intensity: for in doing so, we link our own destiny to the destiny of a life that originally is not ours. And now follows a crucial and not harmless step — the reader now has been warned.

Considering that, out of a pregnant need, we did link our own destiny to the life that principally is strange to us — a life that we did not elicit, want or choose, and that in fact is not ours until the moment that we take possession of it — after which this life *seems* to become ours — and it does so *in the amount* that we do take possession of it — considering this all, we factually yet did accept the supposition of a ‘self’ apart from this life. If we were not supposing this, then we could never say that we did identify us with a life — which is not ours. Yet, totally unjustly we did make the supposition of an existence, of a ‘self’, apart from the life that we factually do live. Now, out of this consideration cannot but follow one single conclusion: the ‘self’ springs fully from the paradoxical happening mentioned here as being ‘the life that we factually do live’.

The reader will understand for now that the ‘self’ — which is the inevitable origin and the necessarily support for all of our actions — is not possible in any other way than under the condition mentioned: the self really comes into existence in a happening constituted by the fact that the thing which is totally ‘strange’, suddenly

transforms to the most 'intimate' of all things. It is a characteristic of the being of the 'self' that the 'self' cannot be otherwise than as the strangest and the most intimate thing simultaneously. The 'self' does not have any choice about itself, because the making of a choice presupposes a distance that is not there and that will never be there, while, on the one hand, the most intimate thing or the thing indicated by this very concept and, on the other hand, the thing indicated as the strangest thing, suddenly coincide. The distance between what is most strange and what is most intimate has collapsed and does not exist any longer — it belongs to a 'past' that, moreover, only happens into our own minds. The "I am" simultaneously is an "I am not"; the "I am myself" simultaneously is an "I am not myself"; the identity simultaneously is its own negation. In stating that these paradoxical necessary conditions are the necessary conditions for the existence of the 'self', factually means that the existence isn't but possible in a way of a 'being' and a 'not being' that coincide with each other.

As an immediate consequence of this consideration, we know that by no means a person is able to detach himself from the responsibility for his own existence, while this would mean the detachment from one's own self: already the idea of taking distance from one's own existence is as absurd as is the conceitedness pretending that one should be able to take distance from his own pain. Because pain is by definition the thing we coincide with, we cannot deny our own physical pain; analogously we cannot detach ourselves from our 'self'. (Physical) pain is the experience of the coincidence of our being with something from which we cannot separate ourselves — by definition; analogously, the experience of the 'self' is the awareness of a responsibility or a debt which we

cannot escape — while we coincide with it; while we ourselves are identical with this debt. The 'self' is a debt; the identity is a debt. And for that reason, the 'self' is a 'being' and a 'not-being' simultaneously; something which is there, while it is not really 'existing'. Our 'self' or our 'being' has the character of a debt that has to be redeemed, and by this very necessity it is a fact that our existence cannot manifest itself but by the means of an 'activity', a 'restlessness', a 'being unfinished', an incompleteness, a matter that must be paid of. We now must remark — and this might be important — that in our reasoning we did not depart from the statement that our existence were identical with a 'being in debt of', for the latter is rather the inevitable conclusion of our reasoning. It is so — at least if we do not want to loose the 'being' of our 'self', whatever this might be.

Perhaps we now may synthesise what proceeds, by the next terms: our existence is being given to us, and it has a specific character, which includes that it does not allow us to reject it, however, at the same time, it is not just 'ours'. We get it, we take it in possession however we cannot do this in the real sense and perhaps — who knows? — we are even not allowed to do so and, in this way, we relate to our own existence in the same way as does a man who got something on loan and who wants to keep it, nevertheless bringing up: "Allow me to possess what you gave to me, I will pay it back to you!" So we put ourselves in debt as we took in possession something that factually is not ours. As a consequence, our being inevitably will be a being 'in debt'. In doing so, we behave alike a man who got something undeserved, not being able to receive it for the reason that he was not able to be grateful. For the ability to be grateful is the condition to the ability to receive some

undeserved gift. After all: who tells us that we have to pay or to deserve the gift of our life? And how ever could we be able to pay our existence than by giving it back? Yet could this ever be the intention of our Creator? So, if we made a mistake in this — or be it an ‘unwillingness’ rather than a ‘failure’ — then it is clear, once again, that the origin of this mistake exists of the inability to be grateful. Perhaps our existence is just a struggling to come in tune with ‘the gift’. Yet... why must there still be death! Moreover: is the presupposition of an eternal life not a much too easy answer — in the sense of a condition added up here in order to make this reasoning sound?

But now we have to remember and to realise well that our existence has the character of a gift, and that, factually, we turn out to be unable to comprehend, to grasp and to confirm this gift. Now suppose that we were able to do so, that we were able to grasp our life as a gift, gratefully: what then would keep us away from believing that it could be given to us a second time? For the existence of a ‘life after death’, being an issue for prophets, charlatans, philosophers, theologians or still others — such a ‘life after death’ — if it is allowed to express it in this way — would eventually in no way be more miraculous than the very existence that proceeds death.

"Allí me mostrarías

*aquello que mi alma pretendía,
y luego me darías
allí tú, vida mía,
aquello que me diste el otro día:"*

*"El aspirar del aire,
el canto de la dulce filomena,
el soto y su donaire,
en la noche serena,
con llama que consume y no da pena."*

“Over there, You would give to me the life that You did give me once — You would give it to me another time at once”: thus wrote San Juan de la Cruz in the year 1578. Here we placed the 37th and the 38th verse of his *Canciones entre el Alma y el Esposo*. The *Esposo* — the Beloved One — represents of course the divine Bridegroom. In his own comments, San Juan cites the verse 9:15 from the *Book of Wisdom*:

“Corpus quod corrumpitur, aggravit animam”:

“ The mortal body is a weight to the soul”

§7. *The mortal body is a weight to the soul*

A paradox works as does a ‘koan’ — which is a riddle originating from the wisdom of the East — a riddle that Zen-masters give to their adepts to meditate on. The aim of the ‘koan’ is that a meditation on it would bring the pupil to transcend the usual thinking — and even thought itself. Its technique factually is quite simple: *in se*, the riddle is unsolvable; this makes that it tires out the mind involved that heavy that one in the end gives up his attempts; the riddle is being left aside, unless the pupil succeeds in putting it into a brand new perspective.

The ‘interchange of perspectives’ and, more specifically, its broadening, is also in western psychology a phenomenon of great importance, especially in pedagogy. Concerning her study of metaphor, and in describing the development of abstract thinking, Barbara Léondar gives the example of a child learning the concept of ‘mother’: at the very beginning of its development, the child only recognises its own mother, who means everything to it and who is most unique. Only from the very moment on that the child gets notion of the fact that most other children have a mother on their own, it also gets the ability to grasp the concept of ‘mother’.

Analogously, people do not get aware of their own language until their contacts with others speaking other languages: the people from Old Greece named their enemies at war just ‘barbaroi’ or ‘barbarians’ which means: ‘people who babble’, and still nowadays, arrogance seduces us sometimes to identify others speaking other languages with just analphabets.

In this way, the concept of the ‘self’ doesn’t come into existence but by the confrontation with the ‘self’ of others, for egoism is not been overcome unless it is being known, which means that the insight in the fact that the (own) ‘ego’ is not unique is necessary to it. The monkey that, for the first time, sees his mirror-image in a pool of water, does not understand what it is seeing unless it sees another monkey looking at its own reflection.

Each perspective has to give way to a broader one if it wants to get knowledge of its own limitations and to try to transcend them. E.g. nationalism illustrates the pitiful inability to relativize one’s own ‘being born’ and to become conscious of it. Solipsism is a philosophical tendency originating from conceptions which fail analogously. Also rationalism is not safe for this critique: it is reason going astray and behaving alike the snake that catches its own tail. Scientism is a specific form of the latter: in there, a scientific method is being considered to be the absolute source of knowledge. Some people want to express everything in the form of numbers, into statistic curves, in formulas or just in language, nevertheless daily life teaches us that language, however it is necessary, often fails in the expressing of essential matters.

In other terms, perspectives are necessary for our understanding of things, yet at once they are only well-defined perspectives. The making absolute of whatever perspective on things — which we often name a ‘conviction’, an ideology or a belief — is essentially tragic: it breaks down the understanding that it originally was meant to stimulate.

In fact, the mistake pointed at in here is familiar to the one mentioned by Saint Augustine and adapted by Karl Marx: it switches the means and the ends. The means (the ‘ego’, science, language, the given perspective etceteras) is being taken for the aim and, as a consequence, the aim disappears from the perspective. This can happen quite quickly, while the aim factually has its immaterial character in common with love, faithfulness, beauty, goodness, truth and so on. However these so-called ‘abstract’ things eventually are the only things which do really matter, the inability to grasp them by the mind, causes the tragic ‘relapse’ on the means. The one who has lost his own ‘being’, throws oneself as a madman in the insatiable tendency to ‘possess’ and his penalty consists in the fact that, in his turn, he is being possessed by his own possessions.

One cannot be deliberated from the tragic evolution — described here only in brief — unless the pattern itself that is hijacking him is being broken through or at least is being interrupted. Concerning thought, nothing is more beneficial than the continuous changing of perspectives, nevertheless the danger to take for absolute even this latter method, is still there, for in that case we are facing ‘relativism’, and so, the good is being thrown away together with the bad.

Let us use the example from above a second time: the relativist is similar to the child recovering that other children do have a mother as well; moreover the relativist believes that, from this fact, the conclusion can be drawn that his mother is not as valuable as he had thought first. As a matter of fact, this absolutely wrong conclusion springs from the pity insolvency to bring the mentioned

process of learning — the process concerning the understanding of abstractions — to a good end. In this very case, the necessity to leave the former perspective has traumatised the pupil badly and, in a kind of resentful egocentrism, he in fact rejects the learning-process that should be the result of it: albeit that he accepts a ‘higher’ perspective — he doesn’t do so without mistrusting it thoroughly, while he blames its temporary and non-absolute character. In this way, the relativist essentially is a disillusioned absolutist; he feels harmed while not have found the absolute where he did expect it to be. While having the same roots, both relativism and absolutism can be reduced to the same evil.

In here, it is about the necessity of perspectives which offer possibilities, while they simultaneously have to be transcended in order not to fall flat in contra-productivity. Now, the human perspective par excellence is that of his corporality. It is useful and valuable and it also remains valuable, but it is also clear that it cannot be an absolute one. And probably it is in this context that we must understand the words from the book of *Wisdom*:

“Corpus quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam”:

“The mortal body is a weight for the soul.”

§8. Despair and ‘madness’

Paradox, ‘koan’, riddle and death: they seem to belong to the same kind and in negligence one could easily think death to be a ‘koan’. Yet one innumerable difference is in the play: paradox and ‘koan’ are riddles to thought; death on the contrary is a ‘riddle’ with an *existential* dimension.

Properly spoken, the expression ‘existential riddle’ is a *contradictio in terminis*: it gives us the illusion as if existential ‘problems’ could ever being solved or at least treated in a significant way by thought. By the way, the same remark can be made concerning the expression ‘existential problem’: a ‘problem’ — from the Greek verb ‘pro-ballein’, which means: to throw out in front of one’s self — is something one is related to, or is able to relate himself to, from distance, which means: without coinciding with it. The actual change of climate, e.g., can be called a problem; one’s disease can be called a problem; being short of time is a problem. In all of these cases we indeed are involved in the things considered, nevertheless our involvement is not that close that we couldn’t take distance from the problem as such in order to watch it and to investigate it.

Now one could say that it is nevertheless possible to look upon death from a distance. For we are able to try to postpone our life-end by adapting a healthy and cautious way of living; we can quicken our own painful death; we can consider, prevent or question someone other’s death. And indeed it is possible to consider death to be a problem, as well as we can consider illness and

shortness of time to be a problem. Yet, different from all the things mentioned, death is also more than just a problem. For concerning death there is no justifiable hope that we ever could overcome it. The ‘problem’ of death does not give way to any doubt about the fact that it concerns an unmistakable, obvious and inevitable own end of each living being — especially of human life, that is our own. There is just not one justifiable hope that one of the living beings ever could overcome its own temporality or its death, just considering the fact that one day the sun will extinct. As a consequence, the one who considers death to be a problem factually faces absolute despair.

Nowhere despair is as clear as it is in the light of death. And this despair, being unbearable for consciousness, makes that we transgress ‘the borderline’ and that we suddenly start to ‘believe’: not only do we believe that there will be life after death but, moreover — as it is the case in Christianity — we believe that this renewed life, opposite to the actual life, was eternal and indestructible.

Considered in a rational way, one can never deny that the awareness mentioned — the absolute despair — remits man in a state of ‘holy madness’. It is clearly madness, yet this madness is holy as well, which means: inviolable. No sane man will blame someone other because of this madness, for each empathic human being is very well consent of the unfathomable abyss of this madness. Because death is bottomless — this means: ab-surd. Or do we make a mistake here, and is it only looking as if this were the case? Is our very perspective deceiving us in this matter? So, let us consider well what the case is.

Principally each living being is reproducing itself, or tries to do so. As a matter of fact, it does not do so because it would have knowledge of its temporality and while, simultaneously, it would care for the survival of its species on earth. On the contrary, it does so out of a holy madness which originates in absolute despair.

Worms, butterflies, rats, birds and fishes do not reflect as humans do, but they nevertheless can feel, and also their feeling is a kind of knowledge. We know that thought is in fact a feeling canalised by the cerebral cortex and having its origin in the cerebellum, where the 'true' animal-related awareness is situated. So to speak, our cerebral cortex is a socially induced braking mechanism upon the cerebellum — a mechanism that has to improve social communication. Without a cerebral cortex we indeed would be 'dumb' in the sense of 'unable to communicate properly', but this however would not imply a total unawareness. On the contrary, it is acceptable to presume that the dropping out of the 'sophisticated brain-parts' would even stimulate the rough awareness mentioned.

Different case-studies illustrate this statement: they show how the extinction of certain parts of the brain is being accompanied by the phenomenon that other parts, which might have been neglected before, start to function more intensively from that very moment on. After lobotomy, patients involved may start developing specific faculties. Cases are well-known of people missing artistic potentials, yet developing astonishing graphical talents after lobotomy. In between, clinical experience learns that in cases of aphasia, characterised by the inability to find the right words, mind itself seems to remain, albeit in a very special way. Analogously, one can presume that the extinction of the cerebral cortex

does not take away awareness: the core of awareness is just being *dislocated* to the rougher sphere of more basic feelings.

All this has been said just in order to explain that the awareness of one's own existence and, consequently, also the awareness of one's own individual temporality, as well as the awareness of the ubiquitous danger threatening life constantly, probably is being known by *all* of the living creatures, rather than by just human beings alone, as some have pretended for a much too long period in the past. Animals react on threatening dangers, and even plants do so: individuals of a well-defined kind of a tree that are being threatened by parasites, communicate this danger to other individuals of the same species, located many hundred of miles away from the first ones, and they do so by the means of self-made molecules that are being transported by the wind. The latter react to these signals by the enlargement of the protecting thorns that they wear on their limbs. Each amateur of vineyards who endures the patience to study the growth of these plants carefully, can see how the limbs are scanning their environment in all directions until they get support, and how they go on in this way all the time. If, in doing so, they arrived at a place much too dark, they seem to be aware of this, and they go back and try another route. Everyone can see how the smallest of all animals show reactions of anxiousness when being startled: cats, dogs, rats, fishes, birds and even ants get in panic and go on the flight when life-threatening changes appear in their environment. How ever could these precise reactions manifest themselves if these beings could not feel fear, and — consequently — if they did not have awareness of the fact that their life was being threatened? As a matter of fact they do not think as humans do in normal circumstances, yet one ought

to be blind and deaf when daring to believe that they couldn't at least 'feel' their existence, and be aware, in one way or another, of the fact that their existence is unique and evanescent.

and forefeel it — this despair in which the awareness of our own mortality makes us participate.

Would it be one bridge too far when supposing that all living beings were aware of their own existence and of the temporality of their being? Would it be truly exaggerated when accepting that each living being knew what fear for death meant, and even so had awareness of the bottomless despair and the 'holy madness' mentioned before? We do not state that animals are religious beings, yet we do determine that fear, panic and also the instigation to sexual intercourse is the characteristic of all of the living beings. At its own time, the instigation for coupling takes possession of all breathing and moving creatures, and it does so, not out of some reasonable decision and care, but out of a 'holy madness' that is somehow familiar to fear, combativeness and panic. In fact, this 'holy madness', which eventually guarantees procreation, is an irrational but simultaneously very effective response of life faced to death. In this 'holy madness', the problem of individual death is being taken very seriously, in the sense that in this way one really takes care of it by losing one's self in it, in perfect accordance with the fact that one can never keep distance from it. One has to plunge and to engage in it, to undergo it, not only in its brains but until the smallest fibres of his body. Exactly as it is happening in the 'holy madness' of faith, humans do not accuse one another for the getting lost in these blind impulses that in fact have uncertain and unpredictable consequences. Humans do forgive one another for these kinds of 'holy madness' because, once again, we are all aware of the abyss of despair, which means: we all can experience

§9. Hope and meaning

The attentive reader will have remarked well that in the latter paragraph the cited verse from the book of Wisdom tends to be put upside down: the book of Wisdom says that the mortal body is a weight for the soul, yet some materialists state that God and the soul are not just superfluous in order to declare life but, moreover, they state that they are awkward for the happiness and the pleasure of man: the soul is a weight for the mortal body — that is in fact what they state. Remember e.g. eighteen-century atheists linked to the court of Frederik the Great, having no other aims than making themselves indispensable to that court by the soothing of the conscience of that king by the means of a learned form of flattery of secular excesses.

In the course of history, the despair mentioned above is being grasped more often as an excuse for ‘less holy’ kinds of madness which principally can be controlled and even can be avoided. After all, it is not the case that the abyss of despair one can be seduced to while being faced with death, would miss an opponent. Imagine, e.g., a situation that faces a man with the lost of his beloved one — supposed that in this case true love is in the play: undoubtedly a counterforce will manifest itself in the heart of the concerned one rather than in his mind, and this will more specifically concern a persevering rejection of the belief in the death of the beloved one mentioned. It must be added here that this force is strictly distinguished from the spiritual weakness which obstructs the acceptance of reality in adult individuals. As in the latter case confrontation with facts is being hindered, and as the concerned

one flights into pretexts fundamentally neglecting death and the loss, the confrontation with death will be accepted as soon as the protest of love manifests itself, and it will do so in a continuous struggling. Probably you know the beautiful poem by the Russian poet Konstantin Simonov, in German translation entitled: “*Erwarte mich*”: “*Wait for me*”. The poet dies and he requests his beloved ones not to make the mistake that many others make as they believe that the one who died no longer exists. He requests them not to choose for the resignation and just to wait faithfully. Then you will see, so he says: if you persevere in the waiting, then, one day, I will come back. Indeed, it is essentially impossible for the one who loves, to resign. Not a resignation in the fact of the physical death is in question here, but rather the resignation in the curtailment and the finishing of love that essentially does not accept limitations of that kind. Of course this is madness for them who only adore reason, yet we know that the madman cannot be characterized more accurately than as the one who hasn’t but his reason. The choice between the ‘mad’ third symphony by Mahler and the barren reasoning of the rationalist shall be made very quickly.

The same holds concerning the choice between the belief in love and the belief in death. For, eventually, death is something to believe in or not, and *par excellence* murderers do believe in death. In the course of times, countless people have been killed for the sake of truth, but they couldn’t but be killed because their murderers did believe in death. On the other hand, we can still testify daily that these innocents did not die each time when others did *not* believe in their death. These innocent killed people did come back, and their number has been multiplied. They in fact aren’t death at all: they got a status still above the status of life itself,

while they became heroes. Heroism is a reality by virtue of the belief in life which represents love. The belief in death can never reach this.

As a consequence, the very first novel in history of western literature is not accidentally a novel about heroes — an epic. In “*El Ingenioso Caballero Don Quijote de la Mancha*” by Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra (1547-1616), the hero fights against the proverbial windmills. The sympathy we all feel towards the hero rests on his recognizability, while the certain fact of his eventual defeat is the fate for all mortals. In his brilliant essay, “[God is dreaming you](#)”: *Narrative as Imitatio Dei in Miguel de Unamuno* (*Janushead* 7-2; appeared also in *Portulaan*, nrs. 89 and 90 [2007]), the prominent Romanian-American philosopher, Costica Bradatan, engages in this subject, more specifically in the light of the tragedy of human mortality. More specifically, Bradatan inquires the Don Quijote-approach by Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864-1936) as the latter raises the authenticity of the Don Quijote-character above the one of its author. As is well-known, in his novel, entitled: “*Niebla*”, Unamuno makes a literary ‘tour de force’: he stages a conversation between the author — Unamuno in person — and a character of his novel that is being condemned to death. Congruent with George Berkeley his philosophical idea that our existence depends on the fact whether God is dreaming or thinking us and referring to the concept of ‘Wille’ by Schopenhauer and to the concept of ‘Maya’ in Indian philosophy, in that conversation the mentioned character makes its author aware of the fact that he as well isn’t but a character — in a novel by God: if God just stops dreaming us, we’re gone. For our being has no fundament on its own; at its best, we are fictions; we integrally de-

pend from our author who is our Creator. Nevertheless, Bradatan interprets this fact in an uttermost positive way: the significance and the salvation of our being lays in the solace that, in the footprints of our Creator, we in our turn are able to dream and to produce stories.

§ 10. *The wave-facet of death*

Victim becomes executioner, adept becomes teacher, receiver becomes donor, son becomes father: is it really only in this way that they all can overcome their former situation and get some grasp on themselves? And is it in this sense that we must try to understand the mentioned statement by Bradatan? The characters in the divine novel that, in their turn, start to create and, in doing so, succeed in finding the solace they were waiting for?

It looks as if the different actors in the happenings that follow each other and that we call history are predestined to interchange their positions and to do so in a very particular direction that seems to be as determined as is the direction of time.

The human being does not seem to be pleased with his own individual existence: man wants to experience and to enquire. The foreign and the frightening attracts him and he tends to come as close as is possible to it. The mere observation of things doesn't satisfy him: he wants to possess things and even to coincide with them. His inclination to imitate has its origin in this tendency to possess and that's why he designs what he sees, why he describes his experiences and why he communicates them to others. Man wants to become what he is not, and he does so out of a dissatisfaction that he feels when being on his own, and out of the deep awareness that there must be something more apart from the 'ego': however he seems to find some pleasure in the enlargement of his own self, man has to recognise that he cannot deny the poverty of his individuality. In fact, also the latter tendency of his, originates in the

awareness of his mortality: the awareness that his life, one day, will take an end, while all other things just will go on — this awareness provokes the heavy longing that directs him towards all other things. Aware of its temporality, a living being nevertheless does not want to be left, and so it takes hold of everything and of each one in existence. Man tries to make alliances with others, as if, in doing so, it were possible to grab them in an indissoluble manner, while foreign things always look more certain than one's own self. Man funds societies that will survive the very limited individual lifetime and he invests the very best of himself in it, as if, in this way, he could assure the continuation of his personal life after death: he funds families, cities, nations. The individual transmits and transforms himself by the means of his investigations in some work that may be significant to others and in this way he hopes to make part of these others when he will be gone himself physically. Man — yet also other living beings — tries to break out of his own skin, and so he dislocates himself, he moves in all directions as if, in this way, it were possible to cover more place and space than just a body can do. The body expands itself over a territory and, even still further, it tries to get a sphere of influence, concerning not only the actual presence but also the potential one: the omnipresence as a real possibility, perhaps the threatening.

In his book, "*Het dualistisch en complementair karakter van schepping en evolutie*" (Moregem 1961-Universa, Wetteren 1964), Flanders' great mathematician, René Coppitters, compares the particle-facet and the wave-facet in quantum-mechanics to the physical presence, respectively the sphere of influence of a man, e.g. a tax controller. The man cannot be present but in one place at a time — which is his 'particle-facet' — yet everyone knows that,

absolutely unexpectedly, he could enter everywhere — which is his ‘wave-facet’, his influence. Spheres of influence are immaterial, alike mere ‘possibilities’ are, yet their effect on the material world is often much more pregnant than is the effect of all other material things. The ‘immaterial’ laws which form the constitution of a nation, direct the behaviour of all citizens and the fully ‘immaterial’ threatening of punishments and morals mostly suffices to keep this going on. Knowledge obtained during learning processes directs our working life in its smallest details. The absolute invisible and the absent direct the behaviour of the material world in general. And all these effects, tangible or not, make part of a network of links that we can’t overview since ages of time — a network used by (human) beings aiming to connect themselves to others, aiming to expand their own influence, aiming to a oneness with the All and, in this way, trying to prevent to get lost when suddenly the day of farewell will be there. The most immaterial, ‘unreal’, which is at once probably the most prominent of all these influences, perhaps is... death.

In his theory of evolution, Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) writes about the process of an expanding spiritualization that is going on since the origin of Creation — which nowadays still goes on. Out of the dead material, subject to entropy in a universe principally condemned to death by the increasing of warmth, life raises and, in spite of the laws of entropy, life seems to be ‘neg-entropic’ and of an ever growing complexity. By the expansion of cephalisation, humanity develops and human cooperation gives way to ethics and to the possibility of the transforming of the entire human into a seat for the divine. While natural laws originally tend to the maximisation of chaos, some counter-force — called life — organises

all material things and, out of this organisation spring awareness, consciousness and self-consciousness. Body and mind relate to each other alike the subatomic particle relates to its (immaterial, spiritual) wave.

It looks as if the material aspect of the world continuously decreases in volume and it does so in favour of the spiritual which in its turn coaches the material, educates it and transforms it into more spiritual levels. One can see that in these continuous processes, the higher things manage the lower ones: the mind governs the body and the wave governs the particle alike the conductor of an orchestra directs his musicians who, in their turn, manage their instruments. Now, if death is indeed the most immaterial and simultaneously the most influential factor in our existence, than, at least in the perspective now opened to us, death for sure is comparable to the wave-facet of the subatomic particle and to the spiritual side of man.

As a matter of fact, death is not a being a human alike. Yet, alike body and soul are related to each other, life and death are as well. As the soul, nevertheless being immaterial and invisible, for sure is not just nothing — in the same way death may be incomparably much more than the mere absence of life. For one has to consider well that the ‘non-being’ preceding our life, is in no way comparable to the ‘no-more-being’ of a life after death came in the play. For to say that, after his death, a man ‘will have been alive’ signifies something totally different from the saying that he just ‘is not’. The ‘being’ as well as the ‘non-being’ cannot function as a (relevant) attribute unless it is placed in relation to a being that first has to exist. It is definitely of no sense at all to say that all

what is not, is not, while, on the contrary, it is very significant to say that things that once have been, do no longer exist. These considerations are no games of language at all: death, as the ‘not being alive any more’ or as the ‘will no more being alive’ of a being — that has lived once — definitely is linked to that being and it needs that being in order to be able to exist.

On the contrary, the opposite seems not to be the case: it seems that death is superfluous and that it is even an obstacle for life. But don’t we make a mistake here? Do we not make exactly the same failure of thought ascribed to the materialist of the seventeenth century when the latter states that (the belief in God and in the existence of) the soul in fact is an obstacle to the happiness and the pleasure of the physical human being? Once more: we need to consider that in fact nothing else has such an influence on our life than does this immaterial ‘being’ of death. In this perspective we would even be willing to think that, in a certain sense, death is just the spirit of life.

§ 11. *The continuation of existence after death*

Following the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that is an ordered bundling of biblical wisdom and of the works of the church-fathers, on the very moment of death our soul will be separated from our body, albeit temporarily — which means: until the day of resurrection. (§ 1005) In other religions as well, we can find an analogue statement about a — temporarily or definitive — separation of the body and the soul.

In religions and beliefs that at least connect some significance to it, the afterlife is not just nothing: it is a kind of a ‘rather spiritual’ place or a more tenuous kind of existence than is earthly life. Due to most of those beliefs, our material existence seems to disappear or to become ‘thinner’, so that beings that e.g. originally have been human beings, manifest their selves on the other side of life as mere ghosts, as beings of a ‘more subtle’ materiality, as immaterial ‘power-fields’, as ‘astral bodies’, as birds, and so on.

Remarkably in these is the fact that what rests from the being after death is in fact nothing new: the soul, the mind, the ‘astral body’ or the ‘quasi material power-field’ has been there before as well during earthly life, albeit without getting the attention deserved, while during life it has been hidden in the shadow of matter. So, in most forms of belief in an afterlife, it is being taken for granted that death does not concern the totality of our being: it only concerns the material part of it, and the immaterial part just continues its existence, comparable to our dreams that, during the period of

our sleep, keep on in moving an invisible part of ourselves while the body lays alike dead in a bed.

Similar to our image of dreams being less vast and concrete than the reality of the wakened, death is being considered as a particular reality which is not nothing, although it is less tangible and also less comprehensible than is life. The idea hidden beyond this generally spread conjecture in which in fact death is being considered as an 'echo' of earthly existence, probably originates from our deep-rooted familiarity to the so-called law of inertia.

The law of inertia as it has been formulated by Newton in his physics, probably can be expressed here as being that law that says that each (physical) body persists in its own state. This holds concerning the state of movement of that body, yet when this movement — in direction or in velocity — e.g. coming in collision with a second body, is being interrupted, it still is a fact that in this new system (now concerning both of the bodies mentioned) the totality of the bodies, movements and other forces being in the play, is being kept constantly. As a matter of fact and once again: apart from the movements, also other factors (e.g. the mass of the bodies) must be adopted in the calculation.

If two balls, flying in reciprocally opposite directions, come to a collapse and stop their movement in this way, then the total 'force' which was embedded in their velocities and masses just *seems* to disappear: in fact these forces are being transformed quickly into warmth escaping from that collapse and from the deformation that the balls have to undergo by this happening. In other terms: in 'Newton's nature' it seems to be the case that the total sum of en-

ergies embedded in a well-defined system and manifesting themselves towards us by the movements of the masses, do not just *disappear* or decrease by the collapses and by some other happenings that take place in there: those energies only *change*. In fact they all will be transformed into molecular movements, which is by definition warmth.

To nowadays physicists, Newton's view might appear to be an antiquity, yet in a specific perspective there is still a core of truth in it: the physical nature is being supposed to obey 'ethical' laws concerning debt and penalty stating that what is being taken away in here, is to be put back in there, and so the 'Old-Testament'-principle of revenge — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth — is being induced in nature by our own mind and, consequently, our knowledge of nature — our physics — is being coloured essentially by it.

Probably it would be extremely difficult to find out in what way and measure the mentioned primitive ethics on the one hand, and our convictions about natural laws on the other hand, are being linked one to another. E.g. David Hume has demonstrated that our thought in terms of causality, in fact can be reduced to the 'law of habits' induced by us in nature, rather than it would all be just a natural happening. As a consequence, it is also extremely difficult to decide whether the next analogy was sound:

Given our 'experiences' concerning the 'law of inertia' described above: can we say that an application of this law in the more abstract area of existence can be justified? Can we say this when we also know that, by the construction of a (Newtonian) physics, we

factually went the opposite way, namely by applying the abstract existence — being the primitive ethics — as a blueprint for physics?

The answer to the latter question would be positive if one could accept that the natural as well as the living and the spiritual eventually did obey to similar laws; in other terms: if a monism — a pure form of materialism or a pure form of idealism — were objectively true. For in that very case, one should be able to justify some image of an afterlife after physical death; more precisely: one could base such an image on the conviction (expressed in a rough ‘Newtonian way’) stating that existence just cannot end abruptly and disappear into nothingness, because somehow it has to answer the law of inertia — a law that commands things to ‘persist in their own state’. In that very case, one should accept that existence just couldn’t disappear at the moment of death: at that point, existence just should be ‘deformed’.

If, on the contrary, it would seem that the laws of ‘dead’ material and the ones governing over spirit were not identifiable reciprocally — otherwise said: if dualism of spirit and matter would be objectively true — the conclusion would be the same, for in that very case the conclusion that existence would necessarily stop at the moment of death were still less reasonable than in the former case, because in the latter case one had to accept from before that spirit is being governed by laws different from those governing over the material world. In both the cases — and in this perspective the two cases mentioned exhaust all possibilities — we are urged to accept that somehow the acceptance of an afterlife turns out to be the only justifiable conclusion of this thought-experiment.

In brief: we induce well-defined ethical laws in nature and, as a consequence, the print of a specific ethics rests on our physics. In these physics we then ascertain that all material things persist in their own state: none of them just disappears, they can only be deformed. And at this point we can see two possibilities: either matter and spirit are being governed by the same laws, or they don’t. In the former case we may accept that also (conscious) life persists in its own state, and then it somehow has to continue itself after death. In the latter case — if consciousness is not being governed by the laws of nature — we of course do not have to believe that existence disappears on the moment that natural laws make an end to physical, material life. So: in both of the cases the idea of an afterlife is acceptable or even binding — at least in the perspective applied in here. The only question concerns the value of this perspective. For in fact the choice between monism and dualism is a nonsensical one because there are more possibilities transcending the pretended dilemma. At least that’s what we defend in “*Trans-atheism*” (2003) and what we shall bring in here when suitable.

§12. *Once more: the Bradatanian statement*

Let's return first to the statement by Bradatan, saying that the fact of the possibility of the creating of stories and myths essentially can be considered as a proof for the existence of God: God just narrates us (and in no other way we exist) and, in doing so, He leaves His footprints behind Him; when, in our turn, we start telling stories, we just walk in His footprints.

At the first look one would believe that induction is in the play in here, and it then looks as if the so-called '*imitatio Dei*' would camouflage the unjustly and *par excellence* materialistic point of view, stating that creation was a mere construction. After all, the telling of stories is a special way of constructing and the one who states that, by his constructing, man imitates God, nevertheless does compare creation to a construction. As it has been demonstrated before, the idea that, in these, nature and human world were mutually comparable, is a most reprehensible one: it founds contemporary materialism, fysicalism and scientism, namely by the making absolute of this superannuated approach of reality coming along with the projection of human criteria into nature. Again as has been said before, human work is not comparable to divine creation unless either God is being reduced to a handicraftsman or divine creation is being reduced to a mere construction. In a philosophical context one may not say that creation was a 'construction on a higher level' or that human work was a kind of 'divine creation on a lower level': 'creation' and 'construction' are essentially incomparable. Indeed man can find some solace in the idea of playing God or in the ability of the childish building of all

kind of things in the approving eyes of his Lord, though in here nothing else is at work but man's mere (solacing) imagination, and it does definitively not prove the existence of God.

At the first look, the statement by Bradatan just covers the purest materialism. Although in that case Bradatan would not be the only one. Just look at the theory of creative evolution by Teilhard de Chardin, mentioned before: it not only seems to commit a similar sin; it even 'digresses' much further than the latter one while considering the creature not just as an imitator of the divine work, but even as the chosen finisher of it!

Yet things can be approached in still another way. Think about the conception that considers creature — man as well as the animal — and concerning creation and nature — as being fully implemented by its Creator. In here we must stress firstly that this implementation is being related to the *nature* of creatures — not to what discerns them (and us) from what is mere natural, and this is: all what we freely decide to happen (albeit on the strength of our natural freedom).

Now suppose for one moment that the freedom of the will were just an illusion, and that what we believed to decide, factually were just the result of all kinds of circumstantial factors — albeit without our awareness: just suppose that this would be the case from an objective perspective. Well then: in that case, free will — being something totally different from our nature — was out of the question. In that very case, there was only nature. And in that very case the creatures that we are, indeed were nothing else but tools in the hands of the Creator. In that case it seems that we could just

state that our work were a reflection or an image of the divine creativity, while we would be mere divine tools — mere links between the divine will and its ultimate result. However in that very case we also would be mere extension pieces of Gods hands; we could even say that in that case we would coincide with the hands — the body — of the Lord. Eventually, in no way we would differ from the soldiers of the first God in the story of the two Gods, told in the very first paragraph of this text. The kind of God that would govern us in that case would be a dictator, an unreal God while being less powerful than God himself whose might is being expanded by the grateful sharing of it with his (human) creatures.

Now it must be clear: because the most powerful God is the actual one, our freedom must be the case as well. And because our freedom is the case, it is even possible that, *concerning our nature*, we are totally implemented by God, while, from that point on, by the strength of our natural freedom we nevertheless are able to transcend nature and to commit acts at just our own responsibility. But the only thing we can do in freedom consists of either the free acceptance or the rejection of creation — which is the work of God. In the former case, we can cooperate *consciously*, and this consciousness, being the joy of our existence, doesn't become a possibility but by the *ability* of our rejection of it. God did not create us in his image in order to allow us to do the evil, yet He did do so in order to allow us to do the good *with our own consent*. For consciousness and freedom just coincide.

In this way, the Bradatanian statement, that the ability to tell stories factually is a (indirect) proof of the existence of God, can be

considered as follows: the ability to tell stories is a proof of the existence of our freedom. And the existence of our freedom proves the existence of God. For we know that, if we were not free, then our God would not be the mightiest one possible, and this would just contradict the definition of God. If we were not free, we would not have any God, and the reverse: if we did not have any God, we would not be free — and in that case it is clear that we would never be able to tell stories.

§ 13. 'Imitatio Dei' and death

Let us first consider again the Bradatanian view, stating that we, human beings, on the strength of the fact that we are able to tell stories, have the ability to step into the footprints of our own Creator.

This very possibility offers us the supreme solace of our life that is in contrast with the inexorable phantom of our temporality — which is death. And now let us ask the following question: for what kind of reason was it a necessity to our own Creator — who is 'the great Creator' himself, God — to search for a solace; for that is definitely what He is doing in creating a world full of creatures, man included, who has been made in his own image, as says the book on the origin of all things — *Genesis*? Why did God need to start up creation, while — in contrast with ourselves — He was not at all faced with the bogey of his own death, as He is immortal by definition? What misfortune made Him search for a solace while He himself became an Author, started to tell stories and created characters? For He himself is at last 'uncreated', as states the Catechism, and fully 'immortal', while He himself created time. Did God find no fulfilment in his own being, while He suddenly took that initiative to create, alike an author starts writing because he cannot bear any longer that everlasting, cruel perspective on the end of life? For it is unthinkable that God would have been created in his own turn by another God, a super-God, standing another level higher than He himself is — a divinity from the mind of whom his existence would be totally dependent?!

Yet let us consider the next. At least in Christianity, it is definitely not true that God was not faced with death: one of the divine persons, namely the Son, dies on the cross and — in the natural perspective — He dies exactly the same death that all of us must die as well. Now God, being the creator of time, apparently must have foreseen this: Also as the Son, who is "uncreated and from the beginning of times one with the Father", he must have known his destiny; and Holy Scripture, from *Genesis* on, tells repeatedly about the advent of the Messiah who will offer his life for the sake of man. So it is not at all true that God did not have to face death — He even faced death although He never deserved it. The question now arises how to chord this with the kind of solace He did apparently 'search', while actually it has been this very solace — namely his creation, containing original sin and the need for humanity to get salvation — which made him long for it! Indeed, if we could call this a divine solace, then we must ascertain that the reason for God's solace couldn't lay elsewhere but in the solace itself!

And in this way we came out at the point we were searching for: the solace that creates the need for that solace itself — which means: the need that must coincide with its own solace — cannot be something or someone other than... the beloved one. For only in love — that we ourselves may experience as well, albeit in a human form — the beloved one is at once the creator of one's own need for his or her solace: he in fact is coinciding with his solace. For without the beloved one, we do not miss anyone; yet once we got the acquaintance with the beloved one and once we do love him, we do need him as well and, further on, he or she will be the only one capable to give us that solace that we really need. In this

way, the wonderful ‘construction’ of divine creation seems to focus on this one question of making possible this unique reality whose reflection may be experienced in human love.

Let us first synthesize once more our interpretation of Bradatan’s statement, which had to ensure us that it could hold in the mere philosophical sense. ‘*Imitatio Dei*’ — more specifically man’s *free* activity that is being carried out in the creative work and *par excellence* in the telling of stories — is comforting us because in doing so we believe to step in the footprints of God himself: in his very ‘novel’ — at least in the literary approach by Unamuno, referring to Berkeley, Schopenhauer and Indian philosophy — we come across ourselves as its very characters. And now Costica Bradatan states that our ability to tell stories in fact is a kind of a proof for the existence of God. During our first interrogation of this statement, we had to point at the fact that the Bradatanian statement essentially grounds a constructivist world-view which — at our point of view and in a philosophical perspective — should be rejected because in there ‘divine creation’ and ‘human construction’ are being considered as mutually interchangeable things which — implicitly or explicitly — allow the use of the unjust concepts of ‘human creation’ and ‘divine construction’. Next we searched for another en probably more acceptable interpretation in order to save the mere philosophical value of the Bradatanian statement that he shares with many other great thinkers. During this research we asked ourselves whether God himself needed some solace, while it seems that He threw himself in the solacing activity of his creation, nevertheless He is immortal and cannot be characterized by us but as the being of ‘all of the good in a supreme measure’. After this we did find out that — at least in

Christianity — God himself is definitely being faced with death, more specifically in the person of his Son who dies totally innocent. As a consequence the conclusion raised that in this very perspective some solace for God was not indispensable, and so He might have started his creation in order to find in it the solace that He apparently needed.

Yet this reasoning doesn't fit unless we can come in terms with something special that is going on here: for it is a fact that in God's case, solace precedes to the happening that grounds his need for solace. For we know that, first of all, God created man — who is his solace — and afterwards man has fallen and needs the salvation that God offered to him by his Son's death on the cross — which is the need. For sure it is possible to clear this problem by referring to God's providence; yet in doing so something else turns up, plenty of mystery: if it is a fact that in the case of God, the need for solace and solace itself coincide in one and the same being, then this has to signify that the mentioned being in question cannot be someone else but the 'beloved being', 'the beloved one'. We know by our own, human experiences that only in the person of the beloved one, the need for solace coincides with solace itself: without the beloved one there is no one missing and there is no need for solace; though as soon as the beloved one enters reality, this need suddenly comes into existence, and it cannot be fulfilled but by the means of the beloved one himself: need and solace coincide in love. Divine reality appears to be a wonderful 'construction' that essentially concerns the possibility of love.

Simultaneously we must be aware of the fact that also this very story — arisen from our approach of the Bradatanian statement —

can be the subject of its very own critique that originally concerned the Bradatanian statement. As a matter of fact, in a second step it transgresses this critique again. In this way, this 'story' — as we may call our philosophical approach in here — does not seem to differ from all other stories that it is woven with in the attempt to explore the known facts. This tissue probably can serve as a breeding ground to the specific intuition that probably might make possible a better understanding of our conception of love — not in the sense that we could solve it but, on the contrary, in the more positive sense that, in doing so, we might get some awareness of the real depth of this mystery.

The wonderful character of the matter that we named a 'divine construction' — in fact this is no proper name, though we got stuck with these terms while sound descriptions seem to be unavailable — actually is yet embedded in the word '*imitatio*', for love can be considered as a kind of 'imitation'. 'To imitate' is what an echo does, and an echo is not the original sound; it is not the source of the sound; it is just a reflection of it in the whole surrounding. We get knowledge of the fact that the sound has manifested itself in his environment, just by the fact of its echo, which is a very *primitive* — an *original* — *answer* to this 'call'. The most 'original' answer is the repetition of the question by its imitation. Now it is in this sense that creature, and especially man — while man himself is not original, for he is not his own source, he is not *causa sui* — is an echo of his Creator, an imitation of God. And so is his free, creative activity. The beloved one is the echo of the loving one; he is his answer, or rather: he is the answer to his love.

Furthermore: love itself does not seem to be just a 'call': it is a question. But it is not a question springing from a lack, from a real need or from dependence: on the contrary it is a creative and a giving question — a question springing from an abundance that it wants to share with others. The call, which is a question, creates its own answer by its echo, by its creature, by the one who echoes or imitates, referring in this very way back to his proper source. In this very context the loving one and the beloved one 'come into existence' in no other way than by their mutual presence to each other — a presence making them aware of the fact that they are each other's echo and source: they are each other's need and solace. And this reality of love is so deep that our thought is never able to grasp and to comprehend it. We just can guess or anticipate that this reality as well must be an echo of the Absolute itself.

But what has this 'echo' in common with death? Must we accept that there cannot be love without death and its tragedy? And that death is a necessary condition for love? Does the opposition of life and death contains a dialectics comparable to the dialectics that are at work in the opposition of need and solace? If this indeed would be the case, then death might get an extremely important signification. We already know that the beloved one causes the need for him or for her and that he is at once the only one who can give solace to this need. If so: would it be thinkable that a reality alike, holds concerning life and death? In other terms: is it thinkable that life itself creates the need for it — a need manifesting itself *par excellence* in the reality of death — while this need for life cannot be comforted but by life itself? By the way, we remember the conclusion that arose spontaneously concerning the subject of death, namely: that it cannot be supposed to exist in a relevant

way unless it is by the means of the specific beings that live, have lived or will live. There is not just death as a concept on its own: death is always someone's death — it is a death belonging to someone who lives, who has been alive or who shall have been alive. Death needs life in order to be able to exist itself, which does not mean that life would stand in the service of death — on the contrary: it is death that stands in the service of life.

In fact death is the echo of life; it is the answer to life, the repetition of it, and its radiation in those regions where the source of life is absent. The horror of death just consists of the horror of the absence of love. And now, spontaneously, Saint-Augustine's words arise: "evil isn't but a lack of the good." When evil is causing pain, then it does so because a lack of the good is painfully, alike the absence of the beloved one puts him in depression rather than does the absence of 'just someone no matter who'. Without the sorrow manifesting itself in the absence of the beloved one, the longing for the beloved one is impossible and fictitious and so is love itself.

Perhaps, and in a similar way, it can now be said that life gets its strength and its energies from the possibility of its absence, which means: from the threatening of death. Just alike consciousness and freedom cannot exist unless the possibility is given for the misuse of them. We repeat: God gave man the possibility to disobey Him — not in order to make him *sin*, yet in order to offer him the capacity to obey consciously and *freely*. Maybe death might just have the special task of offering to life a dimension that can raise the intensity of existence to levels unknown before. Therefore we do not

have to fear death — as we do not have to fear sin... as long as we do not intend to commit it. Yet this of course is one more topic.

§14. Renouncing death

At least a hitch is hidden in the ‘analogy’ above, and it is certainly not just a minor flaw: it is affecting the very analogy indeed. The fact that God, by his offering of freedom to us, simultaneously gave us the possibility to disobey — not in order to make us sin, yet in order to make possible our conscious and free obedience — can be understood quite easily. After all, the conscious choice for the good definitely would be impossible if we did miss the ability to choose evil. But does it still hold to state, analogously, that, in saddling us up with death, God intended — not that we should die, but — that we should live *consciously en freely*, whereby life would reach to a higher existential dimension? After all, in the former case it follows that we nevertheless can choose *not* to do evil, while in the latter case death continues to be an absolutely unavoidable reality — a reality that, sooner or later, will be ours.

And now just watch how a strange illusion is bothering us in here. For the mentioned critique on this analogy is definitely unjustifiable! After all, our ability to renounce evil, does not at all exclude the possibility that evil befalls us; and in exactly the same way, the ability to renounce death neither excludes the possibility that death befalls us.

We can renounce evil just by not to believe in it, by not to lean on evil and, as a consequence, by renouncing to engage in it, even if it promises us many profits in a world constructed by man — profits often described as “the good fortune of the evil one”. Similarly, we can renounce death by not to believe in death, by not to

take death in our advantage. As a matter of fact, the reality of evil and the reality of death coincide perfectly in here. As Saint-Augustine found out, evil is nothing else but a shortness of good things: evil is the painful longing for the good when it is missing. Similarly, death is nothing else but a lack of life: it is the immense longing for life that has been there or that could have been there, on the moment that it isn’t there any longer or that it cannot be there any more. The coincidence of both of these realities — the reality of evil and the reality of death — signifies nothing else but the coincidence of life and the good: “*ens et bonum convertuntur*” (“*the being and the good are one and the same.*”) [This theological statement must be ascribed to Dionysos Areopagita, “*De Divinis Nominibus*” (“*About the divine names*”), Chapter 4, § 7. Later on, it has been repeated by Thomas Aquinas, “*De veritate*” (“*About Truth*”): q.1a.1s.c.2, by Bonaventura and by many others.]

Now still this question is left: if we choose by ourselves for the good and for life, then why can evil and death still befall us? After all this is the piercing question thrown up by the sceptics: we may be able to choose consciously for the good and for life — the possibility that evil and death befall us just remains a fact, undiminished. So the sceptical question arises whether free choice can still have some value in the perspective of evil and death, which are being executed during our life, despite of the mentioned freedom that we believe to possess.

Against that sepsis there is only the weapon of testimony: the testimony of all those people who, ever since Plato and thus some centuries before Jesus of Nazareth, state that the *undergoing* of the

evil is far most preferable above the *doing* of it. As a consequence, and equally, the *undergoing* of death is far most preferable above the *doing* of evil. This truth is that deep that it is worth a serious meditation. All things considered and besides other things, this means that death that can befall us — if it may be called an evil — nevertheless must definitely be an evil of an incomparable minor dimension when compared to the evil that we commit freely by ourselves. Plato's Socrates cries out this truth in several ways in his *Apology*. Saint-Paul, in his famous letter, does exactly the same when stating that life without love is deprived from any significance. (*Cor.* 13:1-8) This can be a solace to them who fear death; simultaneously it is a warning to them who do not fear the committing of evil.

§ 15. A first attempt in the disentwining of the mystery of death

Not death but rather sin is to be feared: the committing of sin. A big source of misunderstandings, as we now can see clearly, lays in the fact that the name 'evil' can be used to define either the committing of evil or the undergoing of it. One often says that "there is a lot of evil in the world", and this concerns the fact of the committing of evil by ourselves *as well as* the fact that we have to undergo evil. Remember e.g. Achilles' sigh, as is been described by Kris Vansteenbrugge in his drama "*De Oorlog van Troje*" ("*The Trojan War*"): "Fate is cruel; though still crueler is man." So, both have to be distinguished well. Yet suddenly a fresh problem arises.

Plato says that no one commits evil voluntary. And if his statement holds, it would mean that evil, seemingly being committed by our free activity — evil we consciously choose — factually isn't but evil undergone by us: we do something and afterwards we get the insight in the evil content of what we have done, while we nevertheless did commit it because on the very moment of our act we did believe that it was good.

In that perspective, evil would be just a *mistake*, and so evil committed by ourselves had to be ascribed to human imperfectness... factually being something that would not concern our personal responsibility.

When driving a car and loosing the steering-wheel and thus hitting a pedestrian, it is possible that, nevertheless being considered to be responsible for that failure and being punished for it, this all happened completely out of my will. I might be driving carefully, yet something was wrong with the steering-wheel and moreover I must have lost my concentration while I took all measures in order to drive fit.

Still another situation can be found in the case of the thief who is stealing for the sake of his hungry children, while on that very moment he believed that he got no other possibility. And what about a soldier in the service of a dictator who *has to* kill 'the enemy' — at least if he wants to escape the firing-squad? Statistically it is a certainty that tomorrow x individuals will be the victim of the traffic in our streets — those victims being human beings, each of them causing real tragedies. Although the one, responsible for the security of traffic, is able to take all kind of precautions to decrease that number x by y percent, the outcome will never become zero, which implies that the responsible one, being perfectly aware of the problem, has to implant a specific percentage of victims in his traffic-security-plan from before, and he has to do so while he simultaneously is being faced with the necessity to take some economical decisions as well, which implies that a (sinful) quantification of the factually irreducible quality of human life is unavoidable.

In brief: the acting without risks is unthinkable, and so mistakes can never be totally excluded; hunger and greediness will always be in the play, and so there will always be circumstances giving way to stealing-practices for the sake of hungry children. There is

an 'evil', a 'not being perfect', that is inherent to life itself, and which eventually is and will always be a source of — not only the evil that we just have to undergo, but also the evil actions that are being committed by man who, at least at first sight, can be supposed to act freely.

Even in the case of an evil that apparently is being committed with no other aim than just the committing of it — e.g. when people commit murder for money, or when they do so to obtain some sick pleasure from it — the individual responsibility of the committer is being doubted still more often. Specialists on the field can judge that a criminal in fact can be considered to be a victim on his turn, in fact being without free choice when lacking education and being deprived from the whole environment needed to develop equally.

Debt and responsibility originally ascribed to, e.g., one single person — being the one committing the crime — is being spread more often over that person's 'environment' concerning time, space and still other dimensions much more difficult to grasp and to define.

The direction in which human judgement over evil evolutes, makes that, step by step, we enter a brand new worldview, extremely differing from the old one that used to recognise the individual sovereignty — as one can bring in: in the good sense as well as in the bad sense. It appears as if this new world tends to liberate the individuals from the evil, or at least: it tends to take away still bigger parts of their personal responsibilities concerning their actions, and simultaneously also the 'good work' of individu-

als is being depersonalised while factually making part of bigger enterprises and being fully dependent on the latter. On the other side, this does not at all mean that personal responsibilities have been 'taken away' or that they should just 'disappear' — rather there seems to be some displacement of responsibilities: what has been taken away from here, has to be added in there.

The specific displacement apparently seen in here, concerns more specifically those responsibilities which in earlier periods of time have been ascribed to one's own individual actions, while nowadays they are being distributed over the actions of many others. In other terms: seemingly there is a gradual evolution towards the awareness that our responsibility not only concerns our own personal actions, but it also concerns the actions of others we are living with. [N.B.: this kind of a consciousness of common debt has ever been recognised by Jewish society, proclaiming this common debt *in group* at special yearly gatherings.] As a matter of fact this implies that the consciousness of our human unity gradually increases, or at least that such a unity is being realised gradually. Debt no longer belongs to just one individual: it principally belongs to all of us and, by the means of this renewing awareness of debt, human consciousness itself is being renewed, or rather: the unification of it seems to be on the way.

A remarkable implication of this evolution is this one: original sin, which is being conceived as incomprehensible in the 'old' world-view — for we did suffer from it without being able to comprehend where our debt was coming from — now appears as a common debt that we can no longer deny or flee from, while no alternative is resting. We have to dress ourselves with original sin —

which means: humanity has no other choice left — and at once, as humanity, we are condemned to the expiation of this common debt.

So, what originally has been situated external to our own self as a mystery not to fathom and even frequently denied, is now making a part of our own being, a part that becomes more visible as time passes by. In the end, perhaps a very similar judgement will be expressed about death: alike we could not understand original sin, we neither can understand death, while simultaneously being its subject. Yet alike original sin, even so death will gradually integrate in our life, and our eyes will be opened up to its mystery.

§ 16. The soul and the self in the perspective of death

These days (December 12, 2006) a new hype has been set up which has to stimulate materialism: "Soul isn't but a piece of flesh", as it is being said. A definitely simplistic slogan, as one can say, yet the problem is that this nonsense is being swallowed by a broader public and, in democracy, as truth is being pushed away still further by all kinds of irrational longings of an anonymous mass, this is not at all without risks. We will look at this in some gradual steps, starting with the mentioned 'hype' that is arising now.

It is being told that neurologists at universities in Antwerp and in Ghent should have discovered that one should be able to localise conscience, or the soul, in the human brain, and so, this faculty would be nothing else but a piece of flesh, the 'soul-lob'. This 'news' should have been spread by the daily broadcastings in the journals.

This has to sound like music in the ears of 'materialists', undoubtedly stimulating the very 'hype': although a 'unity of sciences' is still far away from us, by their specific performance of things, they nevertheless seem to succeed (albeit temporarily and in a mere virtual way) in the taking advantage from serious scientists engaged in quite different branches. Yet let us first look at what has been discovered factually.

By the means of brain-scans, neurologists show how significant stimuli (in this case: stories) administered to test persons — stimuli that, in usual circumstances, give way to moral indignation — activate a specific lob in the brain. This hype already got a predecessor in the story of the so-called 'lie-detector', yet in here things seem to be much clearer:

In the artificial temporarily suppressing of the activity of the 'soul-lob' during the administering of materials that usually stimulate moral indignation, the test person himself says that he experiences a feeling of strange indifference or nonchalance.

Spontaneously the idea arises that the moral consciousness, or the soul, would be something that could be put 'on' and 'out'; the idea that the soul principally could be either suppressed or stimulated. As a matter of fact, some far-reaching consequences concerning our conception of criminal behaviour are being linked to this topic: if this very conception holds and spreads, crime will be seen more frequently as a mere illness and criminals will no longer be punished; on the contrary they deserve medical treatment.

Whatever be the case, one thing is not to be doubted about: if some individuals indeed do have the experience that this very news is stimulating their own 'soul-lob', they have to be aware of the fact that they are just mistaken — because that is what this alleged new interpretation of the soul signifies. For the conception that moral consciousness is a mere case of a fleshy lob, condemns this moral consciousness to be definitely irrelevant. So the activity of this 'soul-lob' has to be considered as an anachronism.

For sure, a lot can be said about this item, yet already this simple internal contradiction can show us that all thinkable attempts to subordinate moral consciousness to an alleged sober *ratio* are definitely improper. On the contrary, serious philosophers know very well that cognition is necessarily subordinated to morals — by which is being meant: the appreciation of values — because truths are being grounded on truth-values (specific criteria, which are specific evaluations) while values cannot be considered to be either true or false.

Once more, the mentioned hype is a show of a kind of 'rationality' that is being guzzled by itself and which tends to loose the comprehension of what it really signifies: as has been explained in our text: "*De gijzeling van Mithras*" — more specifically in the chapter about 'nowadays 'pharisaic erudition' — it must be clear that the question concerning the 'significance' of things is a more fundamental one than the question about their 'being'. Also in *Het goede zoeken* we made a 'philosophical exercise' about the very problem and in here we will repeat some central outcomes of it in brief.

The question for the ultimate significance cannot be asked in a relevant way within the borders of narrow scientism, while nevertheless, in our worldview, the concept of 'sense' is much more important than is e.g. the concept of 'object'. A brief analysis shows that an object, e.g. a chair, is essentially being defined — neither by its form nor by the materials out of which it is made, nor by its colour, etcetera — yet by its function: the *essential* about a chair is that it is something in which one can sit down: the definition of the *essence* of a chair refers to its signification. Further on, this signi-

fication always explicitly or implicitly is being linked to our own *acting*. Even more than that: objects whose signification (— which is factually their essence) is unknown to us, can also not appear into our perception. A person who does not know what it means to sit down, does not see a chair; he just perceives an object about which he can ask himself what could be done with it. Even so, our perception is being determined by our knowledge. As soon as we can notice 'something', we start to ask ourselves what it is, what it is meant for, what it could have been meant for, what could be the possible signification or the sense of it. As we are just able to make the totality of existence of which we make part to an object of our perception, we ask ourselves spontaneously whatever could be the meaning of ourselves and of all other things as a whole. As a consequence, the question for the sense or the significance of things is not just a mistake; it is one of the most important questions to the human being. The question about the *being* is in fact a question about the *sense*.

For now, as the object named 'chair' essentially coincides with its function, our 'self' as well coincides with its function. Concerning the conception we can have of our 'self', it holds that this function is a necessary one, because it is being enforced by society — in its absence society couldn't function at all. So it is a must that we ourselves can be considered to be responsible persons — persons principally able to answer the question to what ends we are acting so and so — if not, the social functionality would be disturbed thoroughly. The necessarily aim — namely: social life, out of self-conservation and the conservation of the species — obliges the recognition of the 'self' — there is no escape.

In this way, there is no essential difference concerning the obligation to recognize the true existence of both of the following things: the chair and the 'self': both of them factually do exist because they are being recognised, and they are being recognised because their function (they coincide with) is necessary for existence as such. We just cannot *permit* ourselves to deny the existence of the chair as well as the existence of the 'self'. For sure: we cannot isolate the 'self', and the question that asks what it might be, cannot be answered in a relevant way in terms of physicalism; yet, in the end, the reality of the 'self' turns out to be an imperative no one can escape from — exactly as are the existence of chairs and tables. Concerning its existence, the concept of 'self' is not of a lesser value than is the concept of 'chair'. The difference between both lays in the fact that each of them apart appears in an own perspective on reality. If, as the mentioned neurologists did do, one should 'dissect' the brain, he would not be able to find something the 'self' alike, just because the 'self' does not make part of the physical world. What one eventually could find was a (material, biological) factor within the totality of necessary conditions that permit the manifestation of moral conscience.

The reader, who is interested in a more extended explication of this matter, is being invited to take a look at the texts mentioned in this very paragraph. By the way, it is in these contexts that is being demonstrated that robots (— while being human constructions) to which consciousness is being ascribed, are definitely impossible things, exactly because of the fact that one's existence is fully dependent on the act of recognition: a human being is not able to recognise the existence of (the self of) his robots, alike he cannot deny his own existence when others are convoking him.

Moreover, the recognition, by man, of the 'self' of a robot, implies that the maker's responsibility (which is man's) could be transmitted to his fabrication's (which is the robot's) — e.g. in the case that his 'robot' should commit a murder. For exactly the same reason, robots do not die and man is not replaceable.

§ 17. *Death is always personalised*

Robots do not die, chairs do not die, and things in general do not die: they just disappear and their perishing is a totally natural change as we see these things change until they are not at use any longer. Also concerning plants and animals, it is a mistake to believe that their individualised (in fact: personalised) death could be real: only the death of a species (its dying away) can be considered as a real death, and the extermination of a species can be named a murder. In healthy societies, individual plants and animals are not being personalised — meanwhile species are: the farmer sees 'the fox' in his coop or he has observed 'the screech-owl', and when his cat has died, he takes another one, that is still just 'the cat', which, as such, is the principally immortal species. The species as such gets the same statute as does the human individual — yet not the individual animal.

The domestically animal, e.g., is a mere construction of human imagination that induces its wishes into that specific copy of the species; the animal can never respond the human need that brought it into the play as a domestical animal: at most it is able to satisfy the animal aspect of it — e.g. the feelings of togetherness — and it does so, only because it gains some profits from it. Moreover and as a matter of fact this does not mean that humans wouldn't be able to relate to each other similar to the way animals do, and this behaviour definitely is an essential component in each human contact, as is the case where humans keep on to relate likewise mere physical bodies do (e.g. as being able to collide physic-

ally). It just becomes problematic when humans are not able to manifest their human dimension in this whole of interactions.

So, things don't die, and the reason is that they have never been there 'an Sich': their existence is or was just something that happened by man's interference, for it is by and within his own recognition that these things are being transferred into 'existence'. I can fabricate a hammer that I recognise as such, but when this tool is damaged, I will make firewood out of it. Unfortunately, people as well can be considered in this way — which means: as being mere instruments — and so, e.g. on the occasion of a recollection at a funeral, one can hear words of praise for the regretted one who has been a good employee, a good soldier or whatever good functionary. As such there is nothing wrong with it, on the contrary, but if attention for the mere human person who is not reducible, is missing, something is thoroughly wrong.

As has been said before, there is no death unless there has been a personal (human) existence. Death is always *someone's* death; it belongs to an existing being, as life as such does. Death is always someone's death and, speaking about the death of a group of persons, we factually miss the essence of death, while in that very case we restrict ourselves to the specific signification of the 'being not alive anymore' that we could accredit to animals as well. It is not at all easy to express by words this dimension of death that nevertheless can be experienced, albeit a very accomplishable one, but, on the other hand, this specific dimension is the very axis of the matter.

§ 18. No death without sin?

The biblical statement that there is no death without sin, expressing that it is sin which causes death, is difficult to grasp, as it seems to suggest that a sinless life would suffice in order to escape from death. On the one hand it is nearly impossible for one to imagine a life free from sin and, on the other hand, one can ask oneself why babies, who just never were able to commit sins, nevertheless can die. If it is a fact that sin causes death, why then can unborn children be aborted and why do people who are considered as not being responsible for their own deeds, have to undergo the same fate as the mortal people who are able to sin? According to the Holy Scripture, only one human being ever escaped from death, namely the Holy Mary: She didn't die as She has been transferred to heaven. The reason why She had not to die, would lay in the fact that She was free from sin and, more specifically, She was free from *original sin*.

So, in order to escape from death, one has to be free — not only from personal sins, though from original sin as well. In the latter paragraph it already has been mentioned how we probably could imagine original sin. As a consequence we finally can comprehend as well why it is that we are not just able to free ourselves from it: as human beings, we factually are co-responsible for the sins of all of our fellow-men, and this is a fact because things are going wrong all the time: on the one hand, we demand that someone should bare the guilt of it while, on the other hand, we seem not to be able to bear that guilt in the case we are being accused ourselves. In this way, we abdicate debt, or at least a part of it, if it

concerns our own failing acts, but we also tend to lay debts on other men's shoulders and to spread these debts over as many people as is possible.

The imperfectness of our existence is a fact that we seemingly cannot easily accept — obviously because our soul cannot feel at home in a world that differs from paradise. This 'point of view' that has been ours a long time before we started reflecting on it, obliges us to blame 'something that differs from paradise' to be the cause of the imperfection of all things: we demand a life in paradise, and if paradise seems to be lost, we accuse specific members of its habitants for having disturbed the good order of things. Obviously we cannot accept the very idea of an imperfect world just including the fate of our suffering and death as its normal components. We do not take in our restrictions and our mortality, while we somehow keep on in believing that we *deserve* paradise, in this sense that this would be one of our rights; and so we want to find the culprits, which are people responsible for all those troubles — people that, principally could be either 'transformed' or 'liquidated'. Though, history itself shows us that the direction we went in doing so, can never comfort us, and so we return from that path and, in our new considerations of evil, we more often tend to spread debts — over principally all of the people.

In this way, we leave the hidden conception that it would be individuals disturbing the good order of paradise; nevertheless we maintain our belief in paradise — and as well we maintain the belief that we deserve it: debts are being transmitted from the individual to society as such, being humanity. If we want to maintain our belief in paradise, then we have no alternative but engaging in

the amelioration of our own behaviour, *as* humanity, *as* a whole. In doing so, the acquitting of debt because of original sin, which is a collective debt, cannot happen unless by a specific engagement focussing at the inter-human love, which means: the treatment of the fellow man equal to the treatment of one's own person — nothing more and nothing less than just that.

Probably, such an 'unification' that has started in such an unexpected way by its own 'negative', which is our debt, cannot do something else but just resulting in an humanity that, in the vision of Teilhard de Chardin, finds its key-stone in the Christ. The Christ means the 'Anointed Man', the Messiah, the Saviour: only by love — by human unification — man is being saved from his debt and, consequently, from his death. This seems still unimaginable, but we have to take notion of the fact that our imagination can never reach far enough to anticipate to the facts. A suited example of this fact is the following one.

In general, the book of *Job* is being read as a lawsuit concerning the question about the reason for debt and for the human suffering (and death): Job finds himself without sin, nevertheless he is being 'punished' or at least 'tested', as it has often been expressed. The essentially sinful man has to bend before the almightiness of God, and that's all — so this story has often been explained.

Though two important remarks can be made concerning the mentioned explanation. Firstly, it is *not* the case that God Himself should test man: it is 'the sons of God' and, more specifically, it is Satan who asks and even demands the 'test'. Yet there is a second and even still more important remark to be made: when God in-

deed is *allowing* this 'test' to happen, He does not do so without knowing that factually the 'tested one' — being Job himself — is *approving* this test. For in this very story, on the one hand Job is protesting loudly against the whole testing-affair but, on the other hand, we are also informed indirectly about the fact that Job gives his consent to it. He does so because, on a given moment, Job wants to know from God himself what it is that he has done wrong and what has caused his debt, while he has to suffer so much; and so, Job asks for a meeting with God; he wants a trial. Exactly in doing so, Job factually shows not to have objections in the putting of reason above love: essentially, in these, he just imitates Satan.

Consequently it is not God who is 'testing' man or who is causing his suffering: it is man himself consenting in it, and he does so out of his mistrust, which is a shortness of love. In other terms: if man had a blind trust in his Creator, then God would never have consented in Satan's plan to test man. God provided Job's shortcomings while simultaneously He wanted to leave him totally free. (At least we tried to explain this fragment from the book of *Job*, in the story, entitled: "*Het argument*" (cf. "*De laatste reis*", in: Bauwens 2006).

Similarly, God obviously has provided man's failure, as He allowed Satan into the world. For indeed there is no death without sin — which factually means the same thing as in the saying: if indeed we deserve paradise, then the perfection of love must make paradise a possibility. Yet, while human love is not perfect, humanity rests with a common, spread debt — the so-called 'original debt'.

In one way or another it seems that — at least in terms of law and order — it principally is not impossible that one of the 'sons of God' — obviously another one than Satan who is demanding law and order — in the end takes the decision to take this debt on his own shoulders. To believe in the Messiah then just means: to believe in the fact that one deserves paradise. Still otherwise: if we do not just accept the imperfectness of our existence and if, consequently, we believe that we *deserve* to live in paradise rather than being the subject of suffering and death, then it must be clear that we cannot mean this without — simultaneously — the consequent accepting of the fact that someone has to be able to take away the debt that weights on humanity. So, when in history of humanity, a person appears, proclaiming to be ready to take this debt on his shoulders and to pay for it, namely by the undergoing of a death that he even does not deserve, then this is something at least worth to be examined seriously; moreover because we know that this historical person is being judged to be free from all debt, by the judges of his time, while indeed he has been condemned to the cross and he died on the cross. But this of course asks for some more words.

19. Life and death

The existence of our 'self' is totally related to the fact that we can be convoked for our (conscious, free) acting: the 'self' cannot be appointed in the brain, it is immaterial and spiritual, in the sense that it is something or someone that has to exist in order to make possible the act of convocation. *Idem dito* concerning the existence of the will: *nolens volens* yet we must be considered as being able to act freely if we also want it to be possible that we can be convoked for our acting. Although what is causing the necessity of convocation?

Suppose for a moment that people could not be convoked, e.g. because they would not be accounted to possess some form of free choice. In that very case, it would be senseless to speak of the good and the evil. For the good and the evil refer to the good and the evil *acting* while this acting presupposes the *freedom* of the one who is acting, in order to be able for one to consider it as being either good or evil. Yet: if the opposition of the good and the evil would become irrelevant, and so if it would disappear, then truth itself would disappear. This is a fact since we know that truth is being measured by the means of (truth-) *criteria*, which are necessarily *values*, which means: things defined by our awareness of the good and the evil. If values disappear, then necessarily also *truths* will disappear. And if truths disappear, also *reality* as such will disappear. The latter is even a quite comprehensible fact: in "*Transatheism*" (Bauwens 2003) we gave the example of the command that asks us to speak the truth: if everyone would start lying, then not only truth would disappear yet also language, while in

that case language would lose every signification, while it is the signification — and so it is the essence — of language to bring truth to the light. The reader will recognize Kant's categorical imperative in here, and even so he shall understand why the stating of it is just right as soon as it is being understood that the essence of things coincides with their signification — which is their sense. In this way, we can state with the uttermost certainty: if the good and the evil could no longer be considered to be mutually different, then reality itself would disappear into nothingness. And this is Death.

So, Life itself *demands* that the good and the evil exist, and the knowledge of the good and the evil demands on its turn that we could be convoked, that we possess a 'self' and that we as well possess the freedom of choice concerning our own acting. So, the principally rejecting of debt essentially is not separated from the rejection of — consecutively: the own freedom, the own self and the Living reality as such. The rejection of debt results in Death. And the acceptance of all debt — what the Messiah does — results in Life.

§ 20. *Fate is cruel...*

Truths as such are being determined by truth-criteria, and these are measuring-staffs which originate in the force of our valuations. Knowledge is valuable if it merges with truth and, consequently: if the truth-criteria have been chosen well, which means: if the valuations that lay on the base of them are valuable themselves, or rather: if they are objective. The statement that values would be subjective, neglects the fact that the valuating person eventually does not coincide with himself: he is not just himself; he has received himself, and his life (as well as his valuating activity) are in fact *participations* to life as such which transcends himself. As has been explained in "*Transatheism*", in the unavoidable fact of the suffering itself (and, *in extenso*, also in death), that the knowing one and the known thing merge: pain itself is being defined as the thing one coincides with while one is never able to take distance from it. The refusal of pain — which is the 'not-willing' of it — is as factual as is pain and, consequently, the *will* is a fact as certain as is pain. In this way, the statement that we, humans, would not dispose of a will, has been proved to be nonsensical once and for ever. The one, who has to endure torture, recognises that his will not to be suffering is even so true as is pain, and we are factually condemned to this will for life. Man cannot *choose* suffering and death without deceiving himself, without making himself insensible to his own 'deeds'. From the factuality of pain originates the factuality of the will that is necessarily the will for life and the repugnance against death. The good is being determined fully by this basic fact. Free choice, at last, originates from the given facts, being, at the one hand, the will for life and, at the other hand, knowledge

— which is knowledge of the 'external order' — an order imposed to us by the nature of things. E.g. we cannot simultaneously want to eat sugars and have healthy teeth, because objective, natural laws hinder the co-existence of the fulfilment of both of these *wishes*. Knowledge of natural laws is one thing, the *recognition* of them — manifesting itself only in the acting according to this knowledge — is a totally different thing. Acting is principally *good*, only if it relies on the recognition of the objective order of things as its fundament.

Though, things are not as simple as one could believe at first sight. Considered superficially, it seems as if pain and death would be the ultimate criteria determining our acting, though this does not correspond to reality: such a thought is strongly reductionist and it leads to the tendency called 'sentientism'. For not only in 'external' nature there is order; there is also 'internal' nature, often called the soul, which has its own laws that are not rarely in conflict with the laws of external nature, and even with the laws of natural life. E.g. in the submitting of one's self to painful restrictions, the primautair character of the inner laws upon the brute outer laws is obvious: it is allowed to and even preferable to restrict one's natural freedom — although this can be painful — just because the laws of the soul must reign over the laws of nature. For what is natural stands in the service of what is good, while natural things exist within the good because the existence of the good is a necessary condition to the existence of life as such. Freedom and consciousness do not increase unless dead nature is being put in the service of the living; and the living, on its turn, is being put into the service of the good. This holds necessarily because dead matter gets its signification — and consequently also its very essence

or its being — from the spiritual, while the spiritual stands in the service of the good. Dead ink cannot form characters without the eye that is reading them; so, the written words get their significance from life and from spirit and, moreover, all words and language as such would become totally useless and would disappear at last if lies were the rule. Once more: the good (e.g. truth) gives sense to the spiritual (the word), and the word on its turn gives signification to the living and the dead material. Without the intrinsic value of absolute Love, which is the aim of all that exists, ethics, the spirit, life and matter degrade to an absolute chaos that is simultaneously evil, false and ugly. As a consequence, it does not belong to us to make decisions about the content of the good and the evil: each arrangement by the means of rules that deny love, is evil, while love as such is evident: we must learn to give way to this evidence and to obey it, rather than constructing laws and rules that just hide the deprivation towards others from their freedom and eventually also from their lives. In "*De gijzeling van Mithras*" we tried to prove that mainly those organisations that pretend to stand in the service of some 'higher goal', are responsible for the misery originating from the shortness of love that all kinds of ethical rules and laws factually expose. The distrust of love that ethical rules try to compensate is essentially satanic, as one can learn from the mentioned book of *Job*. The resistance to the gift of a minimum of human dignity to people who do not respond fully to up-to-date norms — norms that are being created just by those 'institutions of distrust', is even growing all the time and creates either visible or invisible extermination-camps celebrating nothing else but Death. Let us listen once more to Achilles' words as spoken in the mentioned drama by Kris Van Steenbrugge: "*Fate is cruel, yet crueller is man.*" There is not the slight-

est reason to complain about our fate — included death — where it is put in the shadow of the evil originating from our own acts. As long as we murder, we do not deserve life, and then death is just the fate convenient to us.

§ 21. Death, Life and the End of Times

The question whether there is life after death sounds paradoxical; yet it is not — similar to the question whether God is able to make a stone that He cannot lift: for 'life' and 'death' refer to realities differing strongly from the things that come up into our mind spontaneously. We can think about a (mere biological) 'death' that can be significant and preferable above a (mere biological) life without any signification, as already Plato stated implicitly by his saying that it is better to undergo evil than to do it, and this is true because, as Saint-Paul said, only love signifies life. The offer of one's life is uttermost preferable above the gaining of it at the prize of one's beloved ones. Moreover: life undeserved is death in such an amount that it cannot undo this death by the means of a biological death, as the Scripture states in saying that there will come a time that some will search death yet they will not find it: in those cases not (biological) death is the problem but rather its absence is.

However body and soul can be useful concepts in the service of our thinking, in reality both are mutually woven, and moreover: they are woven with something that does not belong to ourselves, while life is not the possession of the living ones: we participate to a life that has been offered to us. During our life, nature and supernature merge as we are obeying the command to do what is good, because exactly in the recognition of the good, the reality of our own life origins: reality demands the existence of truth, and truth demands the existence of truth-criteria, which are values that have to be recognised in personal freedom. The duty to do the good

loads us with a debt that is even so real to our soul as pain is real to our body. *The mortal body is a weight to the soul* — exactly while it connects us to this debt, namely by the means of the inescapable duties inherent to physical life that, in this way, connects us to nature as well as to the fellow-man.

The reality of death transcends the problem and is unsolvable as such: this fact turns natural life into a holy madness manifesting itself in the natural drift to self-containment and continence of the species, yet against this madness there is still love that, out of its own being, does not support death and that *claims* eternity. When the beloved one dies, at once and in the same movement the originally deterrent death is being adapted by life itself and, in doing so, Life tries to transcend Death. Love forces us to recognise the person-related character of death, alike it demands from all individual living human beings to connect themselves to a proper 'self' — and, in this way, life and death relate mutually, similar to the body and the soul. As the neglecting of the good contains the neglecting of the 'self' and, eventually, brings reality to its end, even so the recognition of the good forces us to recognise the real character of (individual) death as being a reality totally different from nothingness: the fact that some beloved one 'has existed', is being recognised in the reality of his death that is connected to him and in which he, as a beloved one, however not alive any more, nevertheless continues his existence. As the church states that it is the gathering of all of its saints — who are in fact 'death' — it does nothing else but adapting this continuation of existence after death into a Life which transcends the mere biological one. By the way: it is quite easy to comprehend that this statement holds as soon as we realise that factually nothing else influences and guides life

that much than precisely death does (— death, referring to individuals who died). This is so according to the science that the (tangible) matter is being governed by the spiritual, as the spiritual is being governed by the good. In this context we have called death the 'wave-facet' of our existence while, analogously, life can be called the 'particle-facet'.

Considering the (creative) activity of life as a comforting *'imitatio Dei'*, one can ask one's self whether God Himself did need some solace, while He Himself seemed to feel the need for some creatures and, in this way, it becomes clear that only in the mysterious reality of love, need and solace merge. Indeed, in our own existence we can discover a clear reflection of this mystery, in the fact that love is simultaneously the need for love as well as its solace: the beloved one causes the need that only he or she can solace. Manifestation of love seems to require a continuous wave-movement of need and solace and even so the twofold character of life, while simultaneously it must be mentioned that divine love cannot be described exhaustively in this way and still will transcend these descriptions.

Alike life, death is a component of existence, as in their turn body and soul are two components of life as well, and both the components seem to keep each other alive and they seem to strengthen each other — at least in the way that our mind probably can get some grasp on it. Consequently it is not biological death that must be frightened — it is rather Death that hits us through sin: for the Being — Life — and the Good merge, and the question whether there is life before death, is inherent to this very question.

Though, eventual inevitability of death shows that the sin mentioned here has not necessarily a personal character: it rather concerns what we call 'original sin', which is imaginable as a common responsibility and, consequently, as a common debt concerning everything that can go wrong in life. The general and increasing tendency to move debt from the individual towards society, enforced by the awareness of the eventual impossibility in the individual to carry debts, not only accomplishes the coming up of a common debt, yet it also brings about a unification of all the members of humanity that by the weight of this debt is being *forced* to a higher form of life in the moral sense.

Exactly the latter movement is significant for what is being called 'the end of times'. As has been stated before concerning a discussion about the probable signification of Islam for the West, we may repeat here that the changing accompanying the last phase of humanity, in our view, can be described perfectly by a terminology prepared by Saint-Augustine, as following. (N.B.: the next sentences have been taken over almost literary from a work of ours published before, which has been entitled: "*Over de opkomst van de Islam in het Westen. Enkele speculaties.*")

Let us start from the probably most important difference between Christianity and Islam, which at our own advice is the question of freedom. Christians are being invited by God — they are in no way forced — to life faithfully, while Muslims seem to confess their faith under a seemingly pressure. In the more fundamentalist tendencies of Islam it is even being intended to set up Islamic theocracies with a specific law extorting faith.

For now the question is whether this kind of compulsion can be justified. According to some authors, 'terror' is embedded in Islamic principles as such, and it would count all believers to its 'victims'. Yet we can consider the rise of Islam still otherwise, more specifically by the means of Saint-Augustine's thought and at once making the presupposition that we now have arrived in the so-called 'end of times'.

For Saint-Augustine distinguishes two periods in history of human kind: the period before original sin and the period that follows to it. Let us accept moreover that in Christianity the latter period slowly is being transmitted to a third one, namely the end of times. Due to Saint-Augustine, the situation before original sin is being characterised by the human freedom either to sin or not to sin: God invites man to be faithful, though man is able to sin (— "*posse peccare*"). This is no longer the case after original sin has been committed: as Saint-Augustine himself declares, he wants to do the good, yet he is not able to do so by his own strength (— "*non posse non peccare*"). Nowadays, in the mundial rise of Islam we can see the beginning of a third period — the end of times — characterised by a condition that asks man to give his freedom back to God and, consequently, he will not be able to sin any more (— "*non posse peccare*").

In that case, the latter condition would inaugurate the just divine ordeal, because people with a true faith would *not* consider the rise of Islam (which would mean the 'impossibility' to sin) as a terror; only the godless ones would experience the obligation of a faithful life as a torture. By this fatal and irreversible process in sacred history, in this way the good ones should be rewarded while the bad

ones should only experience punishment. This can sound fantastic yet; referring to Shakespeare, the turns of history always go beyond our bravest fantasies. And that's just a paraphrase on the words of the Christ, stating that we have eyes while we don't see, and that we are guilty because we pretend to see.

§ 22. The Last Judgement

As a matter of fact, the great repression that, following the Holy Scripture, will characterize the end of times, ought not to be caused by Islam: it can also be communism, pan-Islamism, or rather a brutal form of capitalism that is already rising. The idea of a 'repression' evidently originates in the belief that God is testing his people in order to separate chaff from wheat in the 'Last Judgement'. Though we think that this idea definitely might be a misconception for the reasons given next.

It cannot be possible that a good and loving God, taking care of his creatures, even more than a mother loves her own children, as says the Scripture, would submit his people to a 'test'. A man experiencing that he is being 'tested' by his beloved one, immediately, and justly, will see in this a fundamental shortcoming of faith at the side of the beloved one, and this can be a just and even an urgent reason to end up the concerned relationship. The one who has to experience that his beloved one is testing him in a serious, not joking way, will experience in it a real shortcoming of love and faith, and the lacking of the unconditional character that must signify love. On the occasion of our former discussion of the first part of the book of *Job*, we have seen that not God was the one willing to subject Job to a test, yet it was Satan. Moreover: most likely God would have hindered this testing if not Job himself allowed it and even demanded it, as is being shown by the fact that, evidently, and Satan alike, in his turn he wanted to weight God's justice by the means of a trial that should make him conscious of what he had done wrong. If at the end of times some last

judgement will come, it is impossible that this would be a kind of a sequel to such a 'testing' by our Creator; if ever there will be condemnations, then these condemnation will not be executed by God yet by man himself, just like it happened in the book of *Job*.

Simultaneously it has to be said that this nevertheless cannot be a soothing; the self-condemnation by man is still a condemnation, as we definitely lack the power to wipe away from our memory those things that we know with certainty; in other terms: our consciousness continues to be ours, as does our own self, while the consciousness and the self coincide. The loaded consciousness that tries to annihilate itself, will never find the searched death. So, Achilles' saying, that fate is cruel though man is still crueller, holds here too.

Nevertheless one cannot deny that our end as a human being will be at once our end as a free being: we will not be able any more to make corrections. Already faced with the death of others, and probably pre-eminently in there, man finds himself in front of this severe reality, being unable for ever to revoke things done to the deceased ones. In this way, death enters most perceptible, irreversible and irrevocable into our life, sometimes long before the own life-end has arrived. Man's failures pile up and they have condemned him a long time before death has made his entrance. These condemnations can even weight so heavy that one doesn't care about his life-end and that he even longs to it, in this way hoping that his life-end will also stop the tortures of his self-condemnations. Yet the concerned one can know — by the strength of his consciousness — that neither his life-end is able to take away these debts, nor he can deny the specific knowledge that he gets in

this way. In these matters, fate is cruel, for even the self-declared unbeliever will get the certainty about the continuation of existence after death, and this is even so less ignorable as is physical pain, in which he just had to believe.

Knowing in this way that the 'end' will signify the impossibility to decide some more things in freedom, we can understand that life definitely is all about the saving from death as many things as possible, especially concerning our own deeds. As a guideline in these, perhaps an old Indian proverb can be recommended, saying that "*all what has not been given will be lost*". All we want to save from death, must be given a good end before death takes away our opportunity to do so, obliging us to take it with us for ever in the grave.

J.B.