



Surrender or Fight 27 -29 September 2019

All the documents

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A) A few reminders from precedent workshops

01) 19.00 – Introduction (15’)

Rules: 1) Try not to go astray in our sharing and discussion. Focus on the theme / on the questions. 2) Contribute with awareness to the evolution of the debate. 3) Do not confront others but you may challenge them. 4) Keep it confidential.

02) 19.15 – W. Ciszek: Will of God (wk Community) (30’)

A) An experience of conversion

Walter Ciszek, a Polish-American priest who spent 23 years in UdSSR, most of that time in prison or work camps in Siberia, writes about his experience and re-discovery of God:

*Through the long years of isolation and suffering, God had led me to an understanding of life and his love that only those who have experienced it can fathom. He had stripped away from me many of the external consolations, physical and religious, that men rely on and had left me **with a core of seemingly simple truths to guide me.** And yet what a profound difference they had made in my life, what strength they gave me, what courage to go on!*

Q: What does it mean: “with a core of seemingly simple truths to guide me”?

B) More details about what happened in Walter Ciszek at that time

Here is the more detailed story of this fundamental change of mind as he recounts it, which happened while he was incarcerated at Lubianka

(prison for political prisoners in Moscow under Stalin). This experience of deep transformation happens after, broken by years of interrogation, he is forced to acknowledge crimes he has never committed while he signs the report as formulated by the NKVD (political police) where they wrote their own version in pretending to summarise what Ciszek had said during interrogations. After signing this report he returns in his cell, deeply ashamed and destroyed. He has then a kind of illumination or deep understanding:

I saw clearly exactly what I must do. I can only call it a conversion experience, and I can only tell you frankly that my life was changed from that moment on. If my moment of despair had been a moment of total blackness, then this was an experience of blinding light. I knew immediately what I must do, what I would do, and somehow I knew that I could do it. I knew that I must abandon myself entirely to the will of the Father and live from now on in this spirit of self-abandonment to God. And I did it. I can only describe the experience as a sense of “letting go”, giving over totally my last effort or even any will to guide the reins of my own life. It is all too simply said, yet that one decision has affected every subsequent moment of my life. I have to call it a conversion.

I had always trusted in God. I had always tried to find his will, to see his providence at work. I had always seen my life and my destiny as guided by his will. At some moments more consciously than at others, I had been aware of his promptings, his call, his promises, his grace. At times of crisis, especially, I had tried to discover his will and to follow it to the best of my ability. But this was a new vision, a totally new understanding, something more than just a matter of emphasis. Up until now, I had always seen my role—[wo]man’s role—in the divine economy as an active one. Up to this time, I had retained in my own hands the

reins of all decision, actions, and endeavors; I saw it now as my task to “cooperate” with his grace, to be involved to the end in the working out of salvation. God’s will was “out there” somewhere, hidden, yet clear and unmistakable. It was my role—[wo]man’s role—to discover what it was and then conform my will to that, and so work at achieving the ends of his divine providence. I remained — [wo]man remained—in essence the master of my own destiny. Perfection consisted simply in learning to discover God’s will in every situation and then in bending every effort to do what must be done.

Now, with sudden and almost blinding clarity and simplicity, I realized I had been trying to do something with my own will and intellect that was at once too much and mostly all wrong. God’s will was not hidden somewhere “out there” in the situations in which I found myself; the situations themselves were his will for me. What he wanted was for me to accept these situations as from his hands, to let go of the reins and place myself entirely at his disposal. He was asking of me an act of total trust, allowing for no interference or restless striving on my part, no reservations, no exceptions, no areas where I could set conditions or seem to hesitate. He was asking a complete gift of self, nothing held back. It demanded absolute faith: faith in God’s existence, in his providence, in his concern for the minutest detail, in his power to sustain me, and in his love protecting me. It meant losing the last hidden doubt, the ultimate fear that God will not be there to bear you up. It was something like that awful eternity between anxiety and belief when a child first leans back and lets go of all support whatever—only to find that the water truly holds him up and he can float motionless and totally relaxed. Once understood, it seemed so simple. I was amazed it had taken me so long in terms of time and of suffering to learn

this truth. Of course we believe that we depend on God, that his will sustains us in every moment of our life. But we are afraid to put it to the test. There remains deep down in each of us a little nagging doubt, a little knot of fear which we refuse to face or admit even to ourselves, that says, “Suppose it isn’t so.” We are afraid to abandon ourselves totally into God’s hands for fear he will not catch us as we fall. It is the ultimate criterion, the final test of all faith and all belief, and it is present in each of us, lurking unvoiced in a closet of our mind we are afraid to open. It is not really a question of trust in God at all, for we want very much to trust him; it is really a question of our ultimate belief in his existence and his providence, and it demands the purest act of faith.

For my part, I was brought to make this perfect act of faith, this act of complete self-abandonment to his will, of total trust in his love and concern for me and his desire to sustain and protect me, by the experience of a complete despair of my own powers and abilities that had preceded it. I knew I could no longer trust myself, and it seemed only sensible then to trust totally in God. It was the grace God had been offering me all my life, but which I had never really had the courage to accept in full. I had talked of finding and doing his will, but never in the sense of totally giving up my own will. I had talked of trusting him, indeed I truly had trusted him, but never in the sense of abandoning all other sources of support and relying on his grace alone. I could never find it in me, before, to give up self completely. There were always boundaries beyond which I would not go, little hedges marking out what I knew in the depths of my being was a point of no return. God in his providence had been constant in his grace, always providing opportunities for this act of perfect faith and trust in him, always urging me to let go the reins and trust in him

alone. I had trusted him, I had cooperated with his grace—but only up to a point. Only when I had reached a point of total bankruptcy of my own powers had I at last surrendered.

That moment, that experience, completely changed me. I can say it now in all sincerity, without false modesty, without a sense either of exaggeration or of embarrassment. I have to call it a conversion experience; it was at once a death and a resurrection. It was not something I sought after or wanted or worked for or merited. Like every grace, it was a free gift of God. That it should have been offered to me when I had reached the limits of my own powers is simply part of the great mystery of salvation. I did not question it then; I cannot question it now. Nor can I explain how that one experience could have such an immediate and lasting effect upon my soul and upon my habitual actions from that moment on, especially when so many other experiences, so many other graces, had had no such effect. It was, however, a deliberate act of choice on my part. I know it was a choice I never could have made, and never had made before, without the inspiration of God's grace. But it was a deliberate choice. I chose, consciously and willingly, to abandon myself to God's will, to let go completely of every last reservation. I knew I was crossing a boundary I had always hesitated and feared to cross before. Yet this time I chose to cross it—and the result was a feeling not of fear but of liberation, not of danger or of despair but a fresh new wave of confidence and of happiness.

Across that threshold I had been afraid to cross, things suddenly seemed so very simple. There was but a single vision, God, who was all in all; there was but one will that directed all things, God's will. I had only to see it, to discern it in every circumstance in which I found myself,

and let myself be ruled by it. God is in all things, sustains all things, directs all things. To discern this in every situation and circumstance, to see his will in all things, was to accept each circumstance and situation and let oneself be borne along in perfect confidence and trust. Nothing could separate me from him, because he was in all things. No danger could threaten me, no fear could shake me, except the fear of losing sight of him. The future, hidden as it was, was hidden in his will and therefore acceptable to me no matter what it might bring. The past, with all its failures, was not forgotten; it remained to remind me of the weakness of human nature and the folly of putting any faith in self. But it no longer depressed me. I looked no longer to self to guide me, relied on it no longer in any way, so it could not again fail me. By renouncing, finally and completely, all control of my life and future destiny, I was relieved as a consequence of all responsibility. I was freed thereby from anxiety and worry, from every tension, and could float serenely upon the tide of God's sustaining providence in perfect peace of soul.

Filled with this new spirit and transformed interiorly, I no longer dreaded the next interview with the interrogator. I saw no reason now to fear him or the NKVD, for I saw all things now as coming from the hands of God. I was no longer afraid of making a "mistake", since God's will was behind every development and every alternative. Secure in his grace, I felt capable of facing every situation and meeting every challenge; whatever he chose to send me in the future, I would accept.

The change in me, in fact, was so striking that even the interrogator noticed it. [...]

[The passage that has been cut out here describes how the interrogator makes new proposals for collaboration, i.e. a mission as a spy in the service of the NKVD in Rome]

Through all this, I remained at peace. Where before, the notion of such cooperation would have upset and tormented me, I felt no such distress any longer. If these things were to be, then they were to be—for a purpose God alone knew. If they were not to be, then they would never happen. My confidence in his will and his providence was absolute; I knew I had only to follow the promptings of his grace. I was sure, completely sure, that when a moment of decision came he would lead me on the right path. And so it happened. When at last the interrogator asked me to sign an agreement covering the Roman business, I just refused. I had not thought of doing so in advance; in fact, I had simply gone along with everything up to that point. But suddenly it seemed the only thing to do, and I did it. He became violently angry and threatened me with immediate execution. I felt no fear at all. I think I smiled. I knew then I had won. When he called for the guards to lead me away—and I had no assurance but that they were leading me before a firing squad—I went with them as if they were so many ministers of grace. I felt his presence in the moment and knew it drew me toward a future of his design and purpose. I wished for nothing more.

03) 19.45 - Chr. de Chergé: Evil in me (wk Meaning) (15')

In Algeria in the 90s, there were some Cistercian monks living in Tibhirine, in the Atlas mountains at the North of Algeria. They were living there a life of regular prayer and of extreme simplicity, cultivating their fields; they were a Christian presence among Islamic villagers, not in the purpose of evangelising them but in order to share the simple life of these people. In the middle of the civil war that was tearing apart the nation, they were like a lighthouse for these poor people, a welcoming sign of stability and meaning. Some Islamic fundamentalist groups (GIA - Groupe Islamic armé) were killing

people, especially foreigners. The challenge for the Cistercian monks was to decide whether to escape the death threat or in contrary to stay at the peril of their lives and remain a support for the local community. They decided to stay. Eight of them have been abducted and killed. Christian de Chergé, the abbot of the community, wrote the following will before his death he felt was possibly very near.

Should it ever befall me - and it could happen today - to be victim of the terrorism swallowing up all foreigners here, I would like my community, my church, my family to remember that my life was given to God and to this country. That the Unique Master of all life was no stranger to this brutal departure. And that my death is the same as so many other violent ones, consigned to the apathy of oblivion.

I've lived enough to know I am complicit in the evil that, alas, prevails over the world and the evil that will smite me blindly. I could never desire such a death; I could never feel gladdened that these people I love be accused randomly of my murder. I know the contempt felt for the people here, indiscriminately. And I know how Islam is distorted by a certain Islamism. This country, and Islam, for me are something different. They're a body and a soul.

My death, of course, will quickly vindicate those who called me naïve and idealistic, but they must know that I will be freed of a burning curiosity and, God willing, will immerse my gaze in the Father's and contemplate with him his children of Islam as he sees them.

This thank-you which encompasses my entire life includes you, of course, friends of yesterday and today, and you too, friend of the last minute, who knew not what you were doing. Yes, to you as well, I address this thank-you and this farewell which you envisaged. May we meet again, happy thieves in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both. Amen. Inch'Allah. Tibhirine, 1st of January 1994

04) 20.00 E. Mozes Kor: Forgiveness (wk Meaning) (15')



Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor at the former Nazi concentration camp in 2005.

Even the worst suffering may lead us to forgiving:

Auschwitz, the largest of the Nazi concentration camps, has come to symbolize the singular horrors of the Holocaust. Eva Mozes Kor, now 80, and her sister were among some 7,000 prisoners liberated from the notorious Nazi concentration and extermination camp by the Soviet Army some 75 years ago. She is also among the few child prisoners to have survived Auschwitz after being subjected to disturbing medical experiments by one of the most infamous Nazi criminals, Josef Mengele.

After nine days of heavy fighting near the camp, an unusual silence permeated the section of Auschwitz where Eva Mozes Kor, then 10 years old, hunkered down with her twin sister, Miriam. The relative tranquillity was broken in the late afternoon. "A woman ran into our barrack yelling at the top of her voice: 'We are free! We are free! We are free!' Well that was wonderful. It sounded great," says Kor. But it wasn't until a half-hour later that the reality of

deliverance settled in for Kor on January 27, 1945: In the distance, through the snow, she could see "lots of people, and they were all wrapped in white, camouflage raincoats." "They were smiling from ear to ear," she says. "And the most important part for me was that they did not look like the Nazis. We ran up to them. They gave us chocolates, cookies, and hugs. And this was my first taste of freedom." Later that evening, Kor recalls, the Soviet soldiers of the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front came to the barrack where she and her sister were living. "They drank some vodka, they danced a lot of Russian dances, and we stood in a circle applauding," she told.

The soldiers returned two or three days later bearing massive cameras and a peculiar request: They asked the children to put their striped Auschwitz uniforms back on and recreate a march through the camp. The re-enactment yielded the only images known to exist of the two girls during their time in Auschwitz, showing them walking at the front of a group of children and next to a mother carrying a child cloaked in the prison uniform. Not everyone agreed to put the stripes back on, but Kor said there was a January logic to her and her twin's decision to do so. "I told my sister, 'It's cold outside, let's have another layer of clothing,'" she said. "And so we did. And then they filmed us marching between the two rows of barbed-wire fences."

'We Were All Alone'

Eva and Miriam had arrived at Auschwitz with their mother, father, and two older sisters in May 1944 after spending four days packed in a cattle car with thousands of other Jews being transported to the camp from the Simleu Silvaniei ghetto in the Transylvania region of Romania.

It was on the so-called "separation platform" at Auschwitz that the twins last saw their family. Their father and sisters disappeared into the crowd, while their mother held firm to their arms. Amid the sound of human cries and barking dogs, a uniformed German rushed up to the girls' mother and asked if they were twins. Her mother asked if that would be a good thing. The German said it would be. Her mother informed him that Eva and Miriam were indeed twins, after which they were pried from her embrace. "All I really remember is seeing my mother's arms stretched out in despair as she was pulled away," Kor said. "I never even got to say goodbye to her. But I didn't really understand that this would be the last time we would see her." The twins never learned the fate of their parents and sisters. "Miriam and I no longer had a family, we were all alone, and we had no idea what would become of us."

'I Refused To Die'

The girls joined the estimated 1,500 sets of twins subjected to medical experiments at Auschwitz under the guidance of Mengele, whose grisly practices earned him the nickname "Angel of Death." The sisters, like many of these twins, were subjected to torturous examinations, injections, and other genetic experiments. Unlike most, however, Eva and Miriam did not die after being treated like human guinea pigs. Kor recalls being separated from her sister and being injected with an unknown substance that likely caused her temperature to spike. Years later, Kor says, Miriam told her that during this time the Auschwitz doctors were observing her closely, as if they were waiting for something to happen. Kor has concluded that if she would have died from the injection, the doctors would have killed Miriam to conduct a comparative autopsy.

She also recalls Mengele's words after the fever hit her. "Laughing sarcastically, he said, 'Too bad she's so young. She has only two weeks to live,'" she recalls. "I knew he was right. But I refused to die. So I made a silent pledge that I will prove Dr. Mengele wrong. I will survive, and I will be reunited with my twin sister Miriam."

'My Childhood Was Lost'

Eva and Miriam managed to survive the medical experiments and the last-ditch efforts by the Nazis to exterminate the prisoners of Auschwitz before it was liberated by Allied forces. Kor says she miraculously survived an attack by four Nazi guards who sprayed the prisoners with machine gun fire a week before the Soviet soldiers arrived. After the camp was liberated, the sisters were initially placed in the care of local nuns, who gave the girls "lots of toys." That to me was in a strange way insulting, because they did not understand that I was no longer a child and I was no longer playing with toys," Kor said. "I'm sure they tried their best, but they really did not understand, at age 11, what we survived. I never played with toys again. My childhood was lost in Auschwitz forever."

After a subsequent sojourn at a refugee camp, the girls managed to make it back to their home in the Romanian village of Portz, where their family had owned land and farmed until they were transported to a ghetto by Nazi-allied Hungarian forces in 1944. Kor had thought that, if she and Miriam survived, someone else must have survived as well. But they found their family home empty and ransacked. "I can tell you that probably this was the saddest day in my life. Because I so desperately hoped that somebody else survived," she said.

'Free Of Auschwitz'

The sisters immigrated to Israel in 1950. It was there, Kor says, that she was able to sleep peacefully for the first time since the Hungarians occupied their village nine years earlier. "I finally slept without the fear of being killed because I was Jewish," she said.

Both she and Miriam built careers, married, and had children, and Kor moved to the United States with her American husband -- also a Holocaust survivor -- in the 1960s. Until her death in 1993, Miriam suffered kidney problems that Kor believes were caused by Mengele's experiments. To this day, however, she does not know what she and her sister were injected with.

*"Echoes from Auschwitz were a part of my life but I did not speak publicly about my experiences until 1978 after the television series *The Holocaust* was aired. People would ask me about the experiments but I couldn't remember very much so I wanted to find other twins who were liberated with me. I wrote to newspapers asking them to publish an appeal for other survivors of Mengele to contact me. By 1980 I was sending out 500 letters a year – but still no response. In desperation, one day I decided to start an organization in which I would make myself President. People are always impressed if they get a letter from a president, and it worked. Finally I was able to find other twin survivors and exchange memories. It was an immensely healing experience."*

It was in the years following her sister's death that Kor embarked on what she describes as another form of liberation: forgiving her Nazi torturers.

"In 1993 I was invited to lecture to some doctors in Boston and was asked if I could bring a Nazi doctor with me. I

thought it was a mad request until I remembered that I'd once been in a documentary which had also featured a Dr Hans Munch from Auschwitz. I contacted him in Germany and he said he would meet with me for a videotaped interview to take to the conference. In July 1993 I was on my way to meet this Nazi doctor. I was so scared but when I arrived at his home he treated me with the utmost respect. I asked him if he'd seen the gas chambers. He said this was a nightmare he dealt with every day of his life. I was surprised that Nazis had nightmares too."

Kor asked Dr Munch to confirm details of the horrors committed at Auschwitz. "It was important for me that it was a Nazi doctor, not a Jewish survivor or a liberator, because the revisionists always said that this was a story invented by the Jews, and if I ever met one of those revisionists, I could shove that document in their face. That was my idea." She asked him also if he would come with her to Auschwitz to sign a document at the ruins of the gas chambers. He said that he would love to do it.

"In my desperate effort to find a meaningful 'thank you' gift for Dr Munch, I searched the stores, and my heart, for many months. Then the idea of a Forgiveness letter came to my mind. I knew it would be a meaningful gift, but it became a gift to myself as well, because I realized I was not a hopeless, powerless victim. When I asked a friend to check my spelling, she challenged me to forgive Dr Mengele too. At first I was adamant that I could never forgive Dr Mengele but then I realized I had the power now...the power to forgive. It was my right to use it. No one could take it away.

On 27 January 1995, at the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, I stood by the ruins of the gas chambers with my children – Dr Alex Kor and Rina Kor –

and with Dr Munch and his children and grandchild. Dr Munch signed his document about the operation of the gas chambers while I read my document of forgiveness and signed it. As I did that, I felt a burden of pain was lifted from me. I was no longer in the grip of hate; I was finally free.”

“The day I forgave the Nazis, privately I forgave my parents whom I hated all my life for not having saved me from Auschwitz. Children expect their parents to protect them; mine couldn’t. And then I forgave myself for hating my parents.”

“Forgiveness is really nothing more than an act of self-healing and self-empowerment. I call it a miracle medicine. It is free, it works and has no side effects. I believe with every fibre of my being that every human being has the right to live without the pain of the past. For most people there is a big obstacle to forgiveness because society expects revenge. It seems we need to honour our victims but I always wonder if my dead loved ones would want me to live with pain and anger until the end of my life. Some survivors do not want to let go of the pain. They call me a traitor and accuse me of talking in their name. I have never done this. Forgiveness is as personal as chemotherapy – I do it for myself.”

05) 20.15 - Eichman’s syndrome (30’)

The Eichmann’s syndrome: We are imprisoned in the logic of our own social context, to such an extent that we accept its destructive behaviour as unavoidable.

Our social context is built on a logic which evolves with time. In the case of totalitarian regimes, this logic becomes

an evident form of madness, but people yet try very hard to conform to it and adopt it as the new rule, especially when violent repression is the price to pay for not conforming. When one looks back at the cruel times of history, one is struck by the lack of resistance of people to evil behaviours, like under the third Reich or under slavery, although it is clear that the violence of repression can explain a larger part of these behaviours, but yet not completely. In democratic systems, the same tendency to conformity exists, which can reveal being very destructive too, although there is no open form of repression. The logic of our society becomes yet the habit and the rule, despite the destruction it fosters.

Adolf Eichmann was the man who, under the nazi regime, was in charge of the transport of the Jews who were sent to be executed in concentration and death camps. Although he was not a very powerful man, he organised with a few collaborators the transport of millions of people to the death camps, with an incredible zeal. In his court case in Jerusalem in 1961, he did not show any regret but expressed only a sense of zeal to conform to what was expected of him in the criminal logic of that time. Hannah Arendt, in her report of the trial, described this attitude as the banality of evil (Hannah Arendt: Eichmann in Jerusalem; a report on the banality of evil). She described also how even Jewish groups had participated in the selection of those to be executed, mainly by fear of being themselves taken to the death camps, but also by zeal of trying to integrate into what seemed to be the new coherence of their society; they tried to adapt to what was required from them, without seeing what was really at stake.

This is of course a deep and terribly difficult subject which cannot be treated in a few lines. For deeper reflecting and

better understanding, one should read the report of Hannah Arendt because it is certainly one of the deepest reflections ever written about the power of evil.

Eichmann represents of course an extreme case of collaboration in extreme totalitarian conditions (nazism). Yet the teaching of Arendt's book concerns also our modern society because it describes a destructive tendency for collaboration with evil acts, which we could call the Eichmann's syndrome, and which we could define as the tendency to conform "freely" with the logic of our society, even when it perpetrates the most destructive acts; the Eichmann's syndrome seems to describe our general tendency for integrating the destructive logic of our social group as part of something we cannot fight against. This other logic seems not only unavoidable, but it becomes a necessity.

This ability to conform with the destructive and evil logic of our social milieu is made possible by our incapacity to adopt a free moral personal stand and by our inability to understand deeply the stand of others, of the ones who think and live differently, because they belong to other social classes, to other cultures or practise another religion or other moral values and therefore have adopted another logic. These other ways of understanding life are excluded as being the peculiar ones of marginal and strange people who do not belong to the dominant social group, to the dominant logic. Conformity means in this case rejection of the ones who are different as well as adaptation to the law of the strongest. The Eichmann's syndrome is more a characteristic of a monolithic society. Diversity is its antinomy or antidote.

The logic of our modern society is in many ways based on exploitation and destruction of natural and human

resources. Our consumption reinforces these patterns, although we know very clearly that this logic is a destructive one. We know about the exploitation of poverty, we know about climate change. We know, but we continue to consume goods out of poor countries, despite the exploitation it reinforces; we continue to drive our car, despite the harmful influence it has on climate. We know but nevertheless it seems clear that we have to conform to the logic of our privileged group and that our needs are such that we must continue to conform to these destructive behaviours in order to satisfy these needs. This is the logic of our society and we remain full of zeal in order to conform to these destructive behaviours. We are convinced that it is our duty to continue to behave in a destructive way because it is what other people do. Yet nothing obliges us. We are free to conform or not to conform. In our case, there is also a form of banality of evil which leads us to the wrong behaviour, despite there being no repression.

As shocking as it can appear, our behaviour becomes an expression of what I have called the Eichmann's syndrome, each time we are conforming to a destructive logic, representation or behaviour of our social group, even if we are not aware of the impact of our attitude. Even if our behaviour is much less harmful than the one of a nazi executor.

06) 20.45 - Resistance / surrender (wkp Observation) (15')

Which are the creative energies that help us thriving? Are there evil forces at work in our society? How can we notice and observe each kind of them? There is a fundamental positive and life giving energy in the Universe: Reality is a Mystery and this Mystery is Graciousness.

“Resist no evil”. Mat. 5:38-42

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, don’t resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 If anyone sues you to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. 41 Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and don’t turn away him who desires to borrow from you.

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SATURDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

B) Is there a will of God? What is it?

07) 09.00 – What is the will of God? (60’)

Warning: In the following statements and questions (for the whole workshop) the name God does not represent the idol we have created in each religion, but I mean by that the Ground of Being, the mysterious source of our deeper being.

Reflect on the following statements and illustrate them by examples out of your own life. Remember: we try to delve in a mystery; on one hand, it is important to try to know this mystery; on the other hand, everything we say is only a false representation of Reality; but it is all we have!

- 1) Does God have a will that concerns us?
- 2) Does the Universe follow an evolution that aims at sthg that is God’s intention?
- 3) Is God in control? Of what?
- 4) Or does God control how not to control everything that happens?
- 5) Does God have a plan, a program for each of us?
- 6) Is the will of God not rather a general quality of Life than a precise plan?
- 7) Is the will of God something like predestination?
- 8) Is the suffering of the world sthg God wants?
- 9) Does God create suffering for us? Why and for what purpose?
- 10) What does Ciszek mean when he says that what happened to him was the will of God?
- 11) The will of God will always remain a mystery. Nobody knows what it is. When we say “this is the will of God...”, we betray Him and ourselves. How do we then tune into it?
- 12) Maybe the acceptance of the Will of God consists for us just in accepting what is and facing it with love and generosity.

Comment Ciszek’s statement:

“He was asking a complete gift of self, nothing held back. It demanded absolute faith: faith in God’s existence, in his providence, in his concern for the minutest detail, in his power to sustain me, and in his love protecting me. It meant losing the last hidden doubt, the ultimate fear that God will not be there to bear you up. It was something like that awful eternity between anxiety and belief when a child first leans back and lets go of all support whatever —only to find that the water truly holds him up and he can float motionless and totally relaxed.”

C) About Good and Evil

08) 10.00 - Tree of Knowledge and Tree of Life (30')

In the Garden of Eden there were two trees: 1) the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and 2) the Tree of Life. The former represents the dualistic knowledge; dualisms such as: us and them, the world and me, good and evil, God and Satan, etc. This is the tree involved in the story of Adam, Eve and the snake. What one calls the story of the original sin. This is of course a symbolic story, a myth, that is yet rich in teaching.

A) Dualist: the Tree of Knowledge or the myth of the Garden of Eden

Two ways: either stealing the fruit, or following the path of our own growth, that allows in us the marriage of feminine and masculine.

The book of Genesis in the Bible tells us about the Garden of Eden. This is a myth that tells us the unfathomable about life. The myth of Eden has been too often interpreted as a moral teaching about good and evil. It is important to understand that the myth of the Garden of Eden tries to tell us much more because it teaches us, when we intend to discover what life is in its essence, about what is true authentic growth for ourselves by opposition to what can attract us but is indeed an illusion.

The traditional story of the fall of man (the story of Adam, Eve, the snake and the apple in Genesis) has too often been interpreted as a moral tale about the dualistic distinction of good (obedience to the law) and evil (disobedience) as two equivalent forces (God and Satan as being equal). This is the simplified popular version which is far from being complete. It is even a very misleading interpretation.

In contrast with this popular version the true meaning of this deep teaching proposes indeed a path of liberation which consists of a process of personal or collective accomplishment where we learn to explore our inner world and to marry our feminine and masculine faculties. Let's examine these two versions in more detail.

- 1) *According to the popular version the tale of Genesis is understood in a moralistic and pessimistic way: as human beings, we are bad and we have all the time the tendency to disobey because Satan (the snake) seduces us. Nevertheless God comes and saves us by wiping off the blackboard where our sins are registered. This fate never changes and we are condemned to the everlasting repetition of this scenario. God and Satan seem to be two equivalent forces which oppose each other. This sad understanding can only generate a deep sense of destructive guilt.*
- 2) *But another understanding is possible, which brings life and hope; according to this second interpretation this tale does not oppose a woman and a man as two distinct people but it describes our personal evolution or more exactly an inner path from an non-accomplished to an accomplished state, from a Yin to a Yang state:*
 - *Yin: it is the feminine principle (the woman in the tale) which is not the evil as the popular explanation describes it, but which is the symbol of water, of inertia; the darkness means the non-accomplished, not as evil but as what still did not become light. This is the womb of our origin, the interiority, the source which has not yet been revealed and has to be expressed.*
 - *Yang: it is the masculine principle (the man in the tale) which is not the good but which is the symbol of dryness, of expression; the light means the accomplished, as what has found its own expression. This is the mature state of*

our own accomplishment in the expression of our vocation.

Of course, we have all, men and women, both aspects in us, independently of our gender; we are at the same time Yin or feminine - i.e. the womb, the origin, the non-accomplished - and Yang or masculine - i.e. the arrow, the expression, on the way to be accomplished. We are all called, men as well as women, to search for our darkness in ourselves in order to bring it to light and then, after maturation, to expression. From an immature non-accomplished being, in our own womb, we have to grow and come to expression in accomplishing our vocation. In a poetic and symbolic way Genesis describes how, in the beginning before the Creation, there is only the indistinct world of water and darkness which has to come to expression. "Let there be light, and there was light" writes Genesis. This coming into light is the process of creation and of revelation. Light reveals what was not yet manifested. Life is in this way our natural move towards light and expression.

According to this second interpretation the snake of the tale can be understood as our life energy (our kundalini) which helps the non-accomplished to become accomplished. It is neither good nor bad as such. It is simply our energy of growth and its quality depends on what it concentrates upon and how it is used and implemented. The tale tells us that there is in fact only one path: the path of our descent into our interiority, in order to embrace our own darkness and to bring it into light as a form of healing of our depth and as a marriage of our feminine and masculine principles. This path is a long path of maturation and of inner transformation; this process is certainly not easy but it is necessary to access life.

Yet an illusory shortcut exists, as the tale of Genesis describes it, which consists in avoiding the slow and painful path of inner growth: under the influence of our inner energy, which urges

us to reach quickly the end of the path, - i.e. under the influence of our own snake whose energy has been side-tracked - we choose a shortcut which consists in stealing the fruit of knowledge (the result) before we have endured the path of growth (the process); it means that we try to get the fruit (the apple) without undergoing the process of growth described above. In doing so, we prevent knowledge to grow in us by slow assimilation through the process of life and inner transformation; only an illusory form of knowledge will be reached by a violent act of false appropriation. We do not grow into deep understanding of our true nature but we steal the apple which is the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Of course, in doing so, we have short-circuited the process of growth. The fruit is not integrated, even if eaten. The marriage of the femininity and masculinity (unity) does not happen. We remain split (two).

By opposition to the traditional version, the second interpretation of the tale shows redemption as the normal progression on the path of life. It reveals to us how our own growth gives us access to life when we undergo the normal process of inner transformation. According to this new understanding we are saved from the illusion of the shortcut. Redemption happens once for ever and is not subjected to the infernal circle of repetition as according to the first interpretation.

In summary the tale of Genesis, according to this second interpretation, tells us that there are two paths for accessing knowledge:

1) The first path accepts the laws of the universe which help us to grow through a long maturation process in unity with the whole Creation, knowing that the sacred force of life is the only energy which can help us to become ourselves in the

expression of our vocation when we remain open to it. It gives us access to the Tree of Life.

2) The second path breaks its links with the Creation and chooses a risky individual illusory shortcut while it tries by force to appropriate oneself the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge which will for ever remain exterior because it cannot be assimilated through the process of self-transformation that is the only way of integration.

It is fascinating to see how the way of growth goes beyond dualism and is rooted in the essential movement of life which has certainly to overcome resistance but has yet no main antagonist. On the contrary, the way of the shortcut is based on, and imprisoned in, the dualism of good and evil as two opposed and equivalent energies, which they are not indeed.

A humorous story by Tony de Mello tells the same truth: A lady goes into a shop and asks: "what do you sell?". God, who stands behind the counter, answers: "we sell everything you could desire!" The lady then orders: "I would like justice, peace and love in unlimited quantities, please!" But God replies: "Oh my Dear, there is a terrible misunderstanding! We do not sell fruits, we sell only seeds!"

The tale of Genesis opposes similarly the way of the seed which grows through a long process of self-transformation and the way of the stolen fruit. The description of the path of the growing seed is a powerful teaching in what concerns our relationship with nature and the whole universe. It opens us to a new form of integration into the cosmos; the growing of the seed invites us to this inner transformation which brings us in harmony with the universe, according to the wisdom of traditional cultures, instead of leading us into an illusory domination which needs absolutely to transform the external

surroundings to the limit of destruction according to the folly of our western civilisation.

B) Unitive: The Tree of Life

Now, apart from the tree of Knowledge, there is also the Tree of Life, which is the true source of Life, i.e. the Ground of Being or God. He is unique. In our essence there is one Reality of unity, and no dualism.

Our Father: "Do not put us to the test"

There is not God and Satan as two equal opposed entities, but there is only one essence: Reality or the Ground of Being. And there is a resistance to it: evil or sin. The word "sin" evokes guilt because it has been turned into a threat to behave ethically. But sin is not an act that goes against moral rules (you should/ you should not); it has nothing to do with moral or ethics; it is rather a denial of the nature of God as our essential source of life. Turning the back to the source and trying to become the master of one's own destiny. It is like trying to fly without wings. God is like our wings; he is our support as fundamental energy.

The relationship between God and evil is rather like the relationship between light and darkness. Light dissolves darkness; it works only this way and not the other: darkness does not dissolve light.

Q: What is our experience of duality? Especially in a world in evolution, where there is no perfect state? How to act on the level that we experience: a perfect essence yet an imperfect expression? What does it mean?

Does the metaphor of the two trees (Tree of Knowledge / Tree of Life) talk to you?

10.30 – MORNING TEA

09) 11.00 – Is there sthg called Evil? What is it? (30')

Distinction between 1) our flaws (sins) = mistakes, and 2) evil as a spiritual force (acting as exterior to us or in us) that consists in a wilful need to control us (to possess us).

Are evil forces sthg much wider than ourselves? An external (?) force in the Cosmos that attacks us? Or is it inside us?

Gerald May: Will and Spirit – visions of evil as demonic

The energetic forces of evil and destructiveness can be subsumed under the general and much-used term demonic. The demonic (which, interestingly, has become a noun rather than an adjective in modern philosophical usage) can refer to a wide variety of phenomena and is no longer restricted simply to disembodied wilful entities known as demons. Depending on one's school of thought, the demonic can be seen as a force, propensity, or capacity that exists within the mind, in human society, in the cosmos as a whole, or as a separate and autonomous agency of evil. Many modern thinkers, such as a number of existentialists and Jungian psychologists, emphasize that the demonic need not always necessarily be destructive, that its energy can be used in very creative ways if it is integrated and directed properly. But there is general agreement that the demonic is associated with energy. It has within it a great capacity for power. Thus it is always a spiritual matter. [...] We can establish that the demonic, whatever its original source, represents a force or power that has the capacity to alter radically the deepest levels of human functioning and experience. With this in mind, it is possible to identify five relatively discrete visions of the demonic in current thinking.

- 1) *The first and perhaps most widely-held view in modern times is that of traditional psychology. Here evil forces are seen as personal psychological phenomena, arising from inefficient interactions among different mental functions (id, ego, superego, etc.) or from some other distortion of psychodynamic adjustment. According to this view, any experience of evil force such as demonic possession or satanic influence is pure symbolism invented by the psyche to defend against a more "realistic" recognition of personal responsibility. Thus the demonic is, in this view, nothing other than a certain category of the workings of one's own mind.*
- 2) *Closely related to this is the second vision of the demonic, the archetypal view. Here the demonic is also restricted to a purely psychological realm, but that realm is expanded. The archetypal vision holds that evil can come not only from personal psychodynamics but also from within the "collective unconscious" or "objective psyche" described by Jung. It is felt that human beings share a common racial unconscious that can influence individuals and groups in both constructive and destructive ways. Here again any actual experience of demonic force is seen as symbolic, but many of these symbols have common archetypal configurations that are not restricted to or solely determined by the private psychodynamics of the individual.*
- 3) *In many modern theological circles, the existential view of the demonic has achieved considerable recent popularity. The work of Paul Tillich has done much to promote this third view, which sees the demonic as an inherent capacity in all things, or in all human responses to all things, that is capable of great energy. According to Tillich, the demonic capacity is expressed*

whenever anything other than God becomes the object of one's ultimate concern in life.

- 4) *Characteristic of some apophatic (awareness-oriented) extremes of spirituality is a fourth, monistic, view of the demonic. This holds that since all things are basically One and because it is only in our minds that we separate "this" from "that," the entire notion of good-versus-evil is illusory. Thus to give any credence to demonic forces is to engage in delusion.*
- 5) *In stark opposition to this is the fifth view, the dualistic perception of the demonic. Here the forces of good and evil are seen as absolutely real. Demons and angels exist in vital reality and are engaged in an ongoing warfare with one another. This perception is characteristic of extremely kataphatic (content-oriented) spiritualities and, as we shall see, of early Western polytheistic religion and magical traditions.*

Each of these five views has something to commend it and suffers only when it claims to be the sole explanation. If one could remove such exclusive claims, a very helpful appreciation of the demonic could be achieved by considering that all these visions have some truth within them. Certainly evil can become manifest in our individual and collective psyches through symbols that reflect deeper psychological dynamics. Just as truly, we encounter evil whenever we willfully preoccupy ourselves with one thing to the exclusion of all else. When anything other than the mystery and love of God becomes our ultimate concern, we dance with the demonic. Further, it is obvious from unitive experiences that we do indeed create distinctions between good and evil out of our own sense of separateness. And yet finally there does seem to be something beyond our self-definition, something at least as real as earth and space and

air that engages in a warfare between creation and destruction.

It is unrealistic to expect that one might be open enough to entertain all these possibilities constantly and simultaneously. But there is something to be said for an open mind. This is especially true in the case of monistic and dualistic views of the demonic.

Five visions of the demonic:

- 1) as personal psychological phenomena,
- 2) archetypal vision: from within the "collective unconscious"
- 3) as an inherent capacity in all things, capable of great energy,
- 4) since all things are basically One the entire notion is illusory,
- 5) as absolutely real. Demons and angels exist in vital reality.

Q; Do these five categories of demonic help you to better understand the nature of evil? Does it help to identify evil? Is evil inside or outside ourselves?

10) 11.30 - Terrorists: their reasons (30')

The violence in us. What is it? Where does it come from?

Extract from: Phil Rees – Dining with terrorists:

'I have no future. I have no choice but to become a suicide bomber.' As Ibrahim Abu Teir spoke, his grandchildren played at his feet and his son nodded in agreement. Ibrahim's face was reddening with rage. 'When we see what's happening around us and what's boiling inside, why live?'

Ibrahim has lived the recent history of Palestine; the loss of nation-hood and a repeating cycle of war and defeat. He

was fourteen when the land he lived on became part of a Jewish state. He was growing old with hatred, a hatred that he was passing on to his children and grandchildren.

I was sitting on the patio outside his house, sipping dark, bitter Arabian coffee. The house was on the edge of the village of Aum Touba, on the southern fringes of 'Greater' Jerusalem. It had been an Arab village for over two hundred years and its entire population of three thousand had the same family name. On the hillside above, bulldozers were carving the earth, preparing for the construction of the Jewish settlement of Har Homa, where the Israeli government planned to build nearly seven thousand Jewish homes to accommodate thirty thousand Israelis. The whine of the engines pierced the conscience of the village like a dentist's drill, reinforcing its feeling of impotence.

Ibrahim and his son, Aziz, had a portion of their land appropriated by the Israeli government in order to build an

access road to the settlement. They were discussing their plight with an elderly villager, whose chubby hand was banging the table. 'This is torture,' he said. 'Are we expected to sit here and do nothing while the Jews build



cities on our land?' Ibrahim added. 'Look at these children. His hand stretched out to his five young grandchildren. Before he could finish his sentence he broke down and sobbed uncontrollably. Aziz sent his children away; they were too young, he said, to see their grandfather in tears.

Aziz was thirty-four years old and had spent half his life in Britain. He was an engineer with a degree from Brunel University in West London, 'Every day they remind you with their bulldozers that they are taking our land. The people of Aum Touba are being killed by this.' Aziz compared the Israeli policy on settlement building to ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. 'They push us off our land and say we must live in this or that area. They treat us worse than animals.'

I felt sad for Ibrahim as I watched his eyes brimming with tears, his mind lost in thought. His head was wrapped in a black-and-white- chequered kuffiyeh, the Arab headscarf. The scarf was a sign of support for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the motif of its leader, Yasser Arafat. Wisps of blondish-white hair dropped onto his forehead; when he was telling a story, his lively blue eyes danced like fireflies in the night.

Ibrahim was a farmer who herded sheep and goats. I joined him on horseback as he led his flock up the hillside that would soon become Jewish homes. While the Israelis called the settlement Har Homa, Palestinians referred to it as Jabal Abu Ghneim, or 'the hill for grazing', although only a few patches of coarse grassland remained. On the other side of the hill lay the holy city of Bethlehem.

The construction of Har Homa was the first serious tear in the already tattered 1993 Oslo peace accords because it forced a debate that had been postponed: the disputed

status of Jerusalem, a city sacred to the three Abrahamic faiths, and claimed as capital by both Israel and Palestine. In the peace initiative Israel agreed to trade occupied land for peace, but a decision on Jerusalem was delayed, both signatories hoping it would be resolved at a later date when sufficient trust had built up.

When the United Nations voted in favour of the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state in 1948, Jerusalem was designated an 'international' city, but the war that ensued left Jerusalem chopped in two. The Six-Day War (1967) brought Jerusalem under Israeli control, including this hillside. The 1993 peace deal failed to clarify the issue, and trust between the two sides never congealed; the opportunity for peace effectively died with Yitzhak Rabin, the progressive Israeli Prime Minister who was murdered in 1995 by a Jewish assassin who opposed the Oslo accords.

The Israeli Prime Minister in 1997, Benjamin Netanyahu, asserted that the Har Homa housing project was a legitimate expansion of Jerusalem, but it was twice condemned at the United Nations by all but the US, Israel and Micronesia.

In the 1990s, illegal Israeli settlements continued to grow despite international condemnation. Har Homa became the final piece in a jigsaw of projects that surrounded Jerusalem and restricted Palestinian access to the city. The settlements and the bypass roads that served them became physical barriers that dissected Palestinian communities, forming a ring outside the traditional city limits that redrew the map of Jerusalem.

Ibrahim said that the land he'd lost had been in his family for generations and produced title deeds from 1923.

Postage stamps bearing the crest of King George V remained glued to the bottom. An Israeli lawyer whom Aziz had hired to contest their case in court joined us in Ibrahim's house. Daniel Seidemann was part of a large, liberal Israeli community whose voice was rarely heard at senior levels of government. Mostly secular in instinct, Jews such as Seidemann probably constituted half the population of Israel and yet were seemingly marginalized by the electoral system. Proportional representation had granted inordinate influence to tiny radical religious parties, who often ended up holding the balance of power in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset. Daniel Seidemann told me that the Supreme Court rarely dismissed Palestinian land claims as invalid. 'Instead they usually rule that it's a political issue, they say go somewhere else to sort it out.' He offered Aziz little expectation that the building programme could be stopped. By 2001, Har Homa's first synagogue and nursery had opened. A supermarket was built a year later. The Construction and Housing Ministry offered special mortgage incentives and grants to entice Jews to move into occupied land.

The Israeli government often disguised policies involving national - expansion as purely technical, legal manoeuvres underwritten by the courts. Israel has the institutions of a Western political system: democracy, an independent judiciary, a free press and safeguards for human rights. But these do not apply to the stateless Palestinians from the occupied territories. Israeli law is often administered arbitrarily, usually through bureaucratic interventions or court decisions. In most cases, policy within the Palestinian territories is considered a matter of Israeli national security. Military commanders in the West Bank and Gaza use forcible measures to control Palestinian communities

and individuals, including administrative detention, torture and the destruction of property.

Israel has carefully used language that encourages a perception of legitimacy in the Western media. The activities of the stateless Palestinians who challenge the Israeli state are described as illegal because they have no institutions to validate their activities. Media reports rarely emphasize that Israel has illegally occupied these territories for over [five] decades and that her mere presence is a breach of international law. Instead of implying the brutality of seizure and subjugation, the phrase 'occupied territories' has become in the news media a non-moral cliché. Israeli soldiers intimidate and sometimes kill Palestinians on territory that they have no legal authority to retain and yet their actions are often reported as self-defence in response to Palestinian aggression: when a Palestinian carries a weapon he is a gunman or a militant. Israel has created a lexicon of the conflict that the Western media has mostly copied, conveying to audiences that Israel's actions are legal and justified. This extends, of course, to the use of 'terrorism' to describe the actions of Palestinians who are resisting the occupation of their territory. Israel's media pronouncements often remind me of the Declaration of Independence of the thirteen united States of America on 4 July 1776: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights'.... while it was overlooked that nearly one in four of the population of the new nation were slaves who had no rights at all.

Q: Where is the real source of violence in this description? Who are the terrorists (Ibrahim does not look like a terrorist!)?

How can you identify, or at least feel a connection (common humanity) with this man, especially in the anger we all feel more or less in us?

11) 12.00 - Our participation in evil (30')

Refer to texts by Christian de Chergé (his will) and about the Eichmann's syndrome.

In our society marketing is a form of whitewashing: it hides the conditions in which goods and services are produced, and how we are all, as consumers, co-responsible and profit of these conditions.

Q: How do we participate in evil doing, in violence, in hate, in exploitation?

Comment the sentence by Chr. de Chergé: *I've lived enough to know I am complicit in the evil that, alas, prevails over the world and the evil that will smite me blindly.*

In our daily life we consume so much more (maybe 100x) than these 2 Indian women and child or goat. What does these 2 photos teach us about the way we live? about evil?





12) 12.30 - Love and forgiveness (30')

Refer to the text about Ewa Mozes Kor, about forgiveness.
On one hand forgiveness, on the other the horror of Auschwitz.
Is there a reality, or do we make everything up?

Quotation (Sri Prajnanpad):

Knowledge is the annihilation of the separation between me and the other.[...]

How does seeing the difference permit unity? Quite simply, because physically speaking there cannot be unity, since the physical plane consists of shapes, and all shapes are different. Unity only exists in the heart. It is feeling love.

And in love the notion of self disappears; only the other remains.

Q: How does forgiveness fit with the will of God?

What is expected from us when confronted to intentional evil doing?

Do we have to forgive the unforgivable? Where is the "limit"?

Does it mean we have to forget the past?

Do Aboriginal people have to forgive white Australian? what does it mean?

13.00 – LUNCH

D) Discernment and judgement

13) 14.30 – Discernment: do we know what good and evil are? (30')

We need discernment in life, in our everyday choices and attitudes. Yet we do not really know what is good and what is evil.

Q: A fundamental question never asked: How do we know what good is and what evil is?

How do you deal with evil in daily life? How to you discern the attitudes, the actions, the fruits?

How do we discern between people and their attitudes or actions?

How to discern the true quality of events and not to judge people?

What is the difference between discernment and judgement?

15min personal reflection, then sharing.

14) 15.00 - What is surrender? (60')

Go for a walk and read these two texts and reflect on them:

Gerald May: Will and Spirit – Bedrock surrender

In the face of fiercely risking trust, one is forced into the fundamental contemplative statement concerning good, evil, and God:

I DO NOT KNOW. I do not know what is ultimately good or evil, nor even what is real or unreal. But I do know that there is no way I can proceed upon my own personal resources. In this as in all things, I am utterly and irrevocably dependent upon a Power that I can in no way objectify. I call this Power God, and God is beyond my understanding, beyond good and evil, beyond doubt and trust, beyond even life and death. God's love and power and Spirit exist in me, through me, and in all creatures. But God is unimaginably BEYOND all this as well. I also know that in my heart I wish to do and be what God would desire of me. Therefore, in humility and fear, I give myself. I commit my soul to God, the One Almighty Creator, the Ultimate Source of reality. Good or bad, right or wrong, these things are beyond me. I love, but I do not know. I live and act and decide between this and that as best I can, but ultimately, I do not know. And thus I say, in the burning vibrancy of Your Love and Terror, THY WILL BE DONE.

If contemplatives can be said to have a common "leap of faith," this is it. But if this is a leap of faith, it is beyond the kind of faith that addresses belief. Instead, it is a commitment toward the most essential intent of oneself in the face of what is known and unknown. It is a conscious risking, a fearfully and fiercely willing surrender to a God who is One and Ultimate but who is not fully known. It is in

this extreme surrender that one comes to feel that all spiritual realizations, including even the faith and hope that undergird one's searching and even the very search itself, are given as gifts. One can do nothing but deepen one's willingness to receive these gifts. In this unknowing willingness, one offers all of oneself, just as one is, to the divine and mysterious unbelievable power of God. Everything that makes up self-image is dedicated to the will of God.

In actuality one will of course find aspects of self-image and personal willfulness cropping up repeatedly. The intentional surrender of self-image in no way destroys self-image. Nor should it be destroyed. Instead, self-image needs to be placed in its proper perspective in God's light. Our willfulness will repeatedly eclipse this perspective, substituting self-image for God, and no amount of restating the above credo will prevent this. But, upon reflection, one can know that the intent of this surrender is and remains absolutely complete; there is nothing that would consciously be withheld.

Once such a complete surrender of intent has been recognized, doubts about one's own potential for personal, willful evil are considerably cleared up. It is fully realized that this potential is there and presumably always will be. But in the light of God's reality and one's own desire toward God, vigilance against personal evil becomes more of a business than a life-and-death crusade. God's love for the person and the person's love for God form a bedrock upon which serious, practical efforts can be made to promote good and lessen evil. This becomes a very important task in life, a task undergirded by confidence in God rather than in one's own autonomous deliberations.

There is no longer the fear that the fate of one's soul depends upon the outcome.

At this point, then, the fierceness of one's spiritual life rests at a level deeper than that of the struggle between good and evil. All doubt about the ultimate goodness of God has been essentially eradicated. Doubts about one's own susceptibility to evil have been confirmed. The power of God's love is accepted with no great need to solve or explain it. This is by no means the end of the human spiritual journey. Far from it. Ahead lies the potential for even greater subtleties of discernment and many more confusing challenges. In fact, it is generally understood that the onslaughts of the "evil one" only really begin in earnest after one has made some headway in appreciating a true, willing surrender to God. But the bedrock is there. It has been seen, felt, and stood upon. And it is solid.

[And further, six criteria for discerning the legitimacy of spiritual surrender:]

- 1) It is conscious. One is wide-awake and aware of everything that is happening at the time of surrender. There is no dullness, no robotic mindlessness.*
- 2) It is intentional. It is the result of the free and unencumbered use of one's will. It is a free choice. It may be called forth from one's heart, but it is never forced or compelled in any way.*
- 3) It is a responsible act. One is willing to accept responsibility for the act if it turns out to be a mistake, if in fact the surrender has been misplaced.*
- 4) It involves responsibility for the consequences as well as for the act itself. If the surrender at any time or in any way results in destructiveness, one is willing to accept the responsibility for this. There can be no blaming of any other person, cause, force, or entity.*

5) It is not directed toward any fully known "object". Thus it cannot in any way be a means of furthering one's self-definition or self-importance. It must be directed toward the true Godhead, existing beyond all image and conception. Thereby, it becomes the giving of one's own mysterious soul to the Ultimate Mystery that created it, energized and sustained it, and calls it forth.

6) It represents a willingness to engage the fullness of life with the fullness of oneself. It cannot be an escape or an avoidance. It must be a yes rather than a no.

Charles de Foucault's prayer:

*Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.*

*Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures –
I wish no more than this, O Lord.*

*Into your hands I commend my soul:
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.*

Q: Go for walk and reflect on this material. How does it fit into your life? Back at 15.40 for sharing.

15) 16.00 - Two perceptions: unitive / dualist as simultaneous dimensions (both/and) and surrender (30')

Gerald May: Will and Spirit – Unitive and dualistic

THE COINCIDENCE OF UNITY AND DUALITY

It is far more important to recognize one's duality than to gain repeated realizations of unity. The course of life is characterized by constantly changing states of awareness that vacillate from unity to duality and back again. In the unitive state—which consists not of an imposed state of mind but of the absence of dualistic distinctions—no personal rules apply. There is no need for considerations of right or wrong, nor for any discriminations of any kind. What happens just happens.

It is in duality that rules, judgments, and discriminations are necessary. And while I can have nothing to say about what happens in unity, I must utilize all of my faculties in the best ways I know how in duality. And it is really exquisitely simple to tell the difference. There is no need for any complex system to discriminate between duality and unity. If you wonder what state you are in, you are in duality. If you think you are in unity, you are in duality. Further, there is no question about whether you should use your judgment or not. If the possibility of using it occurs to you, you must use it. Thus the reality of oneness can never legitimately be used to avoid confronting the problem of good and evil. If the problem arises at all for you, you have already made the distinctions and must do your very best to deal with them.

Attempts to impose unitive insights on dualistic thought do not work, and neither do attempts to explain unitive experiences in dualistic terms. Properly recognized, this

leaves us in a state of perpetual ambivalence, not just in terms of good and evil, but in every dimension of being. We vacillate between unitive and dualistic mind, and sometimes this may make us feel as if we are vacillating between two different universes, two separate realities. Yet we are reminded, by our own unitive experiences as well as by the contemplative literature of history, that it is All One World. "The Absolute," said D. T. Suzuki, "is in no way distinct from the world of discrimination."

By ambivalence here, I do not mean the psychological paralysis of uncertainty, but instead a sense of the true etymological roots of the word: ambi, meaning "both," and valens, meaning "to value" or be strongly affected by. To value and be strongly affected by both "realities" can result in wholeness and a goodly measure of peace if one is only willing to allow the dichotomy to exist without trying to solve it. It is possible for the paradox to be embraced without being resolved. The fifteenth-century Nicholas of Cusa said, "And I have learnt that the place wherein Thou art found unveiled is girt round with the coincidence of contradictories, and this is the wail of Paradise wherein Thou dost abide."

It is possible to conceptualize unity as being the fundamental reality that underlies, undergirds, and becomes manifest as, duality. Reflecting this kind of approach, Carlos Castaneda reports that Don Juan Matus sees the tonal, the daily world, as an island in the sea of the nagual, the spiritual world. Alan Watts saw unity as an ocean, with people as waves viewing themselves separately and dualistically. Some contemplatively oriented Christians see heaven or the Kingdom of God as unitive and can embrace the paradox that the kingdom is not only here within and among us already in Christ, but that we must

also hope and strive for its future coming,

To be successful, any attempt to deal with the unity/duality dichotomy must preserve the paradox, for this is the only way in which realization of the existence of ultimate mystery can be protected. Any other attempt “solves” it. We must nurture a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” attitude. In valuing and being affected by both realities, one remains ambivalent in the very best sense of the word. To side with unity against duality will destroy one’s capacity to function effectively in the world, and sooner or later it will trip upon its own duality. To side with duality and disavow unity is to strip life of meaning and to rip all creatures from their ultimate groundedness in creation.

For Christians, the prime example of “both/and” is found in Jesus himself. Christian orthodoxy holds that Jesus was both human and divine, but the words and actions of Jesus are more revealing than any theological interpretations. Of all things, Jesus did not minimize his humanity. He spoke of God as Father in a way that dearly saw God as other, even to the point of feeling forsaken by God. Nothing could be more grounded in human separateness than this. But he also could say, “I and the Father are one. . . . The Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

“Both/and” is the only attitude through which human mental functions can address the nature of reality with any hope of accuracy. The Heart Sutra of Buddhism attempts to reflect unity by saying that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. But it immediately goes on to affirm duality by proclaiming that form is also form and emptiness also emptiness. Of course even these paradoxical affirmations can be seen as dualistic because they involve comments about reality. But this is the nature of human thought, and there is no reason to disparage it. Our fundamental

inspiration lies in the fact that the true nature of reality can never fully be described. Things at bottom remain an eternal mystery, and the thinking mind can only paint pictures and point directions. Duality, at its core, is every bit as mysterious as unity.

Q: How do you live in two worlds at the same time: the unitive world of essence, and the dualistic world of incarnation?
Describe the tension between both.

16.30 – AFTERNOON TEA

16) 17.00 - Do not resist evil (30')

(See quotation from Matthew).

A few remarks:

- 1) When we resist evil we have to adapt to what it does, i.e. to its strategy, means and spirit. We have to counter-attack, which means we have to use the same weapons or at least equivalent means that counter its actions. When we do not resist evil but live in our free spirit (rooted in Truth) we stand in the way of evil as a free standing resistance but we do not have to adapt to the way it uses its own forces and energy (resist it). Our resistance is then stronger.
- 2) Light dissolves darkness. Our own light gets its energy from our own source. It is free and radiates on everything (good and evil). Our mission consists in living to the full: this is light, the true light that dissolves darkness. There is no (or less) duality good-evil in this understanding.

Which are the creative energies that help us thriving? Are there evil forces at work in our society? How can we notice and observe each

kind of them? There is a fundamental positive and life giving energy in the Universe: Reality is a Mystery and this Mystery is Graciousness.

Q: What is the will of God when it concerns resisting evil?
Is the will of God not opposed to evil?



17) 17.30 - Metanoia – repent and change your mind (30’)

Our spiritual path consists in a radical change of mind (metanoia) = a revolution. Christ is not a requirement of efficiency but rather a challenge for being able to live a full life not hampered by false creeds.

Metanoia means in Greek: 1) after-thought, 2) change of feeling, change of mind, 3) change of way of thinking, 4) regret, repent, 5) atonement.

Q: What is the role of hope and trust in this inner revolution?
Without falling into a depressing description of “sin”, describe how repent is a revolution.

18) 18.00 - Judgement: seeing what is as it is (30’)

The will of God (see Ciszek) and our own will: How do we judge?
When do we surrender? When do we fight?

The Christian tradition has described the end of time as a time of drastic Judgement that should take place as a kind of gigantic divine tribunal where everybody will be judged by God who will decide whether each of us goes into Hell or Paradise. This is evidently a threatening picture that has haunted people since the Middle Age (see the paintings by Hieronymus Bosch) and that has been used to frighten and control the sheep of the flock. How could indeed God, who is love, condemn people to destruction, when his whole work consists in delivering us from our own guilt and anxiety? Hell and Paradise do not exist because they are products of our own making.

The “final” judgement (which happens in fact all the time here and now) is rather our own judgement by ourselves when we see clearly what is: ourselves, the world, the Universe, the Ground of Being, etc.

What we have seen in this workshop tends to demonstrate that we have to adapt to the will of God (accept what is) but that we are also meant to be free spirits who are not determined by our surroundings. We are called to be witnesses of our true nature, and this is a path that is independent from what is imposed unto us; we may try then to reveal our true essence. By being witnesses of our true nature we become prophets and vectors of true life.

Q: In these terms (if they speak to you) or in other terms (yours), can you describe the dilemma: when do we have to surrender? when do we have to fight?

19.00 – EVENING MEAL

19) 20.00 – Of Gods and Men (120')

Video (see above – Christian de Chergé).

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SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

20) 09.00 – End of the workshop

Surrender or Fight

27-29 September 2019

A) A few reminders from precedent workshops

- 01) 19.00 – Introduction (15')
- 02) 19.15 – W. Ciszek: Will of God (wk Community) (30')
- 03) 19.45 - Chr. de Chergé: Evil in me (wk Meaning) (15')
- 04) 20.00 E. Mozes Kor: Forgiveness (wk Meaning) (15')
- 05) 20.15 - Eichman's syndrome (30')
- 06) 20.45 - Resistance / surrender (wkp Observation) (15')

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SATURDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

B) Is there a will of God? What is it?

- 07) 09.00 – What is the will of God? (60')

C) About Good and Evil

- 08) 10.00 - Tree of Knowledge and Tree of Life (30')
- 09) 11.00 – Is there sthg called Evil? What is it? (30')
- 10) 11.30 - Terrorists: their reasons (30')
- 11) 12.00 - Our participation in evil (30')
- 12) 12.30 - Love and forgiveness (30')

13.00 – LUNCH

D) Discernment and judgement

- 13) 14.30 – Discernment: do we know what good and evil are? (30')

- 14) 15.00 - What is surrender? (60')

- 15) 16.00 - Two perceptions: unitive / dualist as simultaneous dimensions (both/and) and surrender (30')

16.30 – AFTERNOON TEA

- 16) 17.00 - Do not resist evil (30')

- 17) 17.30 - Metanoia – repent and change your mind (30')

- 18) 18.00 - Judgement: seeing what is as it is (30')

19.00 – EVENING MEAL

- 19) 20.00 – Of Gods and Men (120')

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SUNDAY MORNING

07.30 – MEDITATION

08.00 – BREAKFAST

- 20) 09.00 – End of the workshop