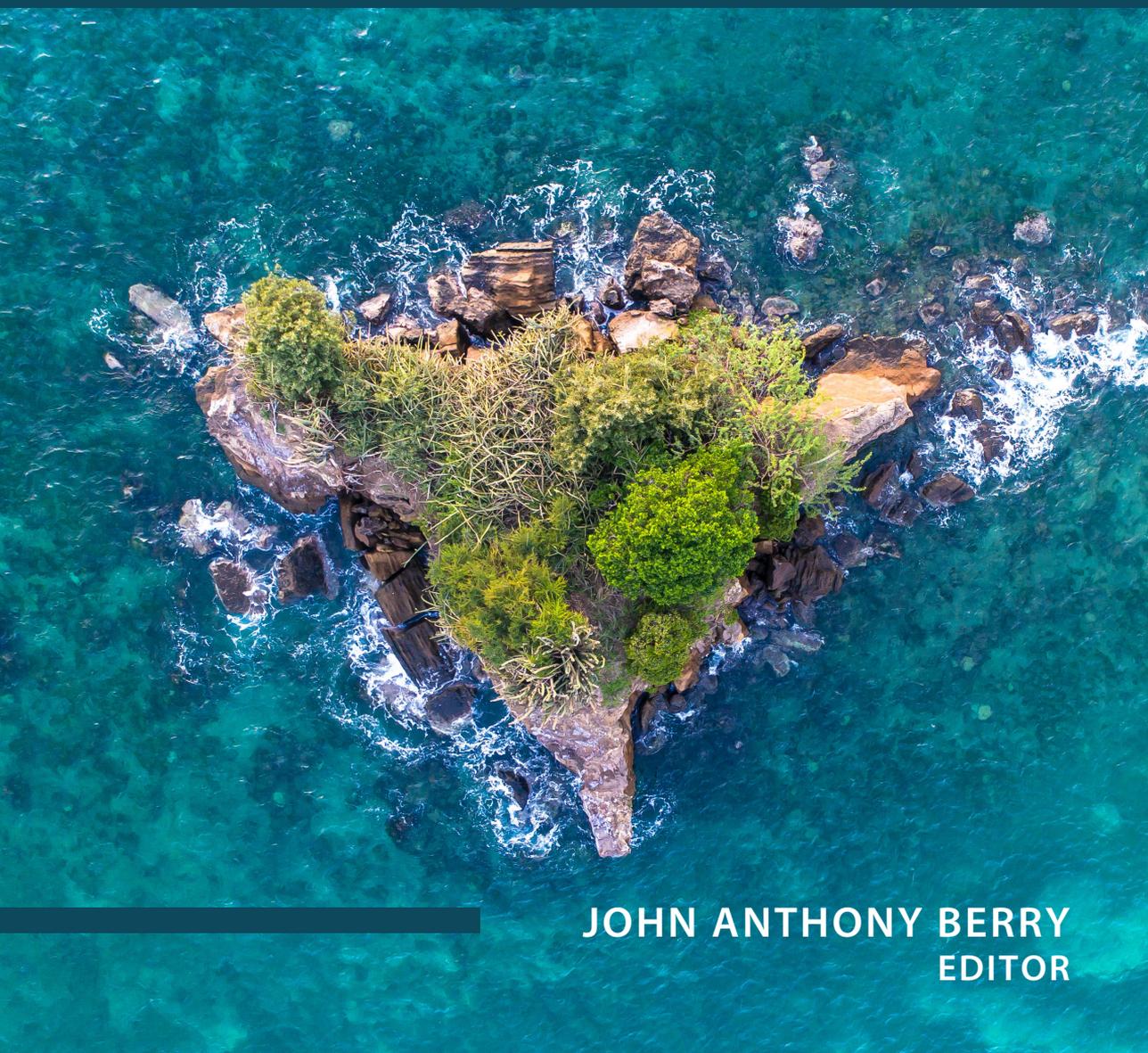


Resilience in a Troubled World

Proceedings of the Malta International Theological Conference III



JOHN ANTHONY BERRY
EDITOR

Resilience in a Troubled World

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www.kitegroup.com.mt
info@kitegroup.com.mt

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Contributors:

Ambrogio Bongiovanni, Joel Burnell, Dorianne Buttigieg, Charló Camilleri, Mariella, Catani, Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, Eamonn Conway, Nadia Delicata, Nikki Felice, Joshua Furnal, Juan Pablo García Maestro, Kerry Greer, Tyrone Grima, Tomáš Halík, Mirosław Mróz, Piotr Roszak, Carl Scerri, Hector Scerri and Mark Joseph Zammit.

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III

John Anthony Berry

Editor

Kite

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Nothing Can Stop God from Reaching Us. Transcending Aggressive Popular Sovereignty: Romano Guardini and Raphael Tjhuis, O.Carm.

Charló Camilleri, O.Carm.

Resilience. Truly? Musings from Guardini

In *The Humanity of Christ*, reflecting on Jesus' actions, characteristics and attitudes, namely his volition and deeds, Romano Guardini points out that Jesus's will "was of great power" and in full union with the Father's will, so much so that he acted fearlessly in the face of adversity and strain.¹ Yet, concludes Guardini, the source of Jesus' fearlessness

is not merely an expression of individual temperament. It does not mean that he had strong nerves, that he was cool-headed, resilient or enterprising; that he viewed danger as an intensification of life or felt himself to be carried along by fate. His fearlessness lay in his calm identification with reality.²

¹ The original title of the lecture for the International Theological Conference on Resilience in a Troubled World (University of Malta, 7-9 November 2018), was *Nothing Can Stop God from Reaching Us. Resisting Aggressive Popular Sovereignty: Romano Guardini and Raphael Tjhuis, O.Carm.* However, the author thought of changing 'resisting' to 'transcending' to be more in line with both Guardini's thought and Raphael's experience.

² Romano Guardini, *The Humanity of Christ. Contributions to a Psychology of Jesus*, trans. Ronald Walls (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964). To the author's knowledge this is the only instance Guardini uses the term resilience in his works. Guardini uses the term *spannkraft* in his understanding of the human person as a being of tensions and oppositions.

The reality referred to here by Guardini is the “sacred truth” of being rooted in God.³ What might be of interest to our debate in a theological conference on resilience is Guardini’s statement that Jesus’ strength didn’t result from resilience. Resilience has been recently the object of study and discussion calling for the need to develop “emotional, social and behavioural skills for resilience”⁴ as such skills are not a given in today’s world. Clinical Psychologists point out that the percentage of children and youths suffering from “mental illness causing impairment in academic, social and longer-term functioning”⁵ is exorbitantly on the rise. Taking Guardini’s bold statement the mandatory question arises whether theological reflection can positively contribute to the discussion on ‘resilience in an age of conflict.’ Surely theological reasoning compelled by pastoral concerns cannot opt out from the discussion.

“In contemporary debates, it is a commonly held view that resilience is concerned with the ability to cope with stress or, more precisely, to return to some form of normal condition after a period of stress.”⁶ Etymologically resilience comes from the Latin ‘*resalire*,’ namely to ‘leap (*salire*) back (*re*)’ and seems to be opposite to the Pauline ideal of “straining toward what is ahead” (Philippians 3:13).

From a psychological perspective then, there are various views on resilience ranging from acknowledging it to be just a personal trait to understanding it as a post-traumatic dynamic process of recovery, the so-called ‘emergent resilience’ seen as a long-term outcome. Psychology views resilience also as “a dynamic process of positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.”⁷ Resilience can be individual or communal.

³ In Guardini’s writings ‘the living Christ’ and ‘sacred truth’ or ‘reality’ are interchangeable.

⁴ Laura Lynne Armstrong, “The D.R.E.A.M. Program: Developing Resilience through Emotions, Attitudes and Meaning – Program Development and Evaluation through a Knowledge Translation-Integrated Approach,” *Counselling et spiritualité/and Spirituality* 36, no.1-2 (2017): 93-120.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lennart Olsson, Anne Jerneck, Henrik Thoren, Johannes Persson and David O’Byrne, “Why Resilience is Unappealing to Social Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations of the Scientific Use of Resilience,” in *Science Advances* 2015;1(4):e1400217. doi:10.1126/sciadv.1400217.

⁷ Ibid.

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Olsson *et al.* hold that conceptually there are two meanings of resilience understood as the ability to “bounce back” or to “bounce back and transform.” In both cases these abilities can be perceived as “neutral” or “good.”⁸ The conclusion of this study is that on the level of social theory resilience presents itself as problematic due to its static resistance against change. Thus, even transformation, in resilience, is “for the sake of persistence – rather than transformation for profound change.”⁹

Rulla, Imoda, Cencini and Manenti theorise that from the perspective of spiritual theology, certain forms of adaptation, and hence coping, can result in immaturity triggered by and aiming at self-preservation in personal, social and environmental hostile contexts. They argue that the ideal presented before us in Christ is freedom of spirit as sons and daughters of God – including the freedom to lose life for God and the Kingdom – encouraging us to remain in truth.

Taking all of the above into consideration, one can conclude that it is not a given therefore that resilience is the “key to healing, believing, reconciliation, and solidarity on a personal and a communitarian dimension.” My take is that Guardini would agree with this statement as the context of a “troubled world and divided world” is also a symptom of resilience on a multileveled plane. In *Power and Responsibility* Guardini shows that power is a two-edged sword: it can spread evil as much as it can be used for good.

To narrow our field of consideration, it is our argument that Guardini’s social, political and religious context was indeed founded on resilience to transformations brought by liberal democracy, the parliamentary system and the emerging social changes after Germany’s defeat in World War I. Resilience took the form of adopting social Darwinism, based on the theory of the survival of the fittest – ecological resilience –, scientific racism and eugenics. Not to mention resilience to diversity and plurality through ideological unity in autocracy.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Notwithstanding that ideological unity is destined to perish. Avery Dulles notes, that “to speak of internal differentiation being a contribution to unity could appear, initially, as a paradox. But on reflection it becomes apparent that unity is often enhanced by inner diversity. The unity of a complex organism, such as the human body, is deeper and more resilient than that of an amoeba or that of an inorganic mass of homogeneous matter.”: Avery Dulles, “Catholicity and

Hence in an everchanging troubled and complex world it is imperative to respond with theoretical clarity alongside an adequate Christian anthropology in order to understand the human person, its action and will, as, at least according to Guardini, “the knowledge of what it means to be a person is inextricably bound up with the faith of Christianity”¹¹ namely, a response to “the call which each person received from God through Christ.”¹² This call opened the eyes of humankind and awakened it the first time.¹³ Indeed, argues Guardini, Christ is the “true form of human personhood.”¹⁴ Perhaps, therefore, rather than resilience, transformation in Christ, especially by growing in fortitude as a virtue,¹⁵ is truly the effective catalyst of change.

Awakening points towards transcendence in its original etymological sense from the Latin ‘scandere’ ‘to climb’ or ‘to rise above.’ In Guardini’s view the true path is that of advancement to the transcendental *pneuma* of Christ.¹⁶ From the very opening of *The End of the Modern World. A Search for Orientation* Guardini directs our attention to the ‘beyond’ and to the ‘spingboard of transcendence’ showing that this awakening is only possible in Christ,¹⁷ and consequently in his Church, his real presence in the world. In our own context, even on a local level, this is more and more critical as our world is manifesting symptoms of resilience analogous to those existing in Guardini’s context. Gabrielle Goldworm notices that

Catholicism,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 50, no.2 (April 1986) , 83.

¹¹ Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, trans. Joseph Theman and Herbert Burke (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 122.

¹² Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gil Bailie, *The Subject of Gaudium et spes Reclaiming a Christocentric Anthropology of the Human Person*, Presentations at the conference “The Call to Justice: The Legacy of *Gaudium et spes* 40 Years Later” (Vatican City, March 16-19, 2005), 6.

¹⁵ It is not the place here to discuss the virtue of fortitude, also known as courage. Thomas Aquinas expands on this virtue in the *Summa Theologiae. Secunda secundae partis* Q.123. Fortitude enables the overcoming of fear and empowers steadiness of the will facing physical and spiritual adversity and obstacles. Although not a Theological virtue it is ennobled and elevated by the Holy Spirit to a higher level where the ultimate sacrifice of one’s own life is necessary to stand up for truth and righteousness in the context of faith.

¹⁶ See, Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 2, 70

¹⁷ *Ibid* 112ff.

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according to *The New Yorker*, in 2017 seventy-one countries witnessed a decline in political rights and civil liberties – a number likely to increase in 2018. Even in the US, leaders utilize authoritarian tactics: exploiting xenophobia, distrust of the media, and the idea that certain officials are above the law. History has already taught us that autocrats make poor long-term leaders. However, it seems many disillusioned with democracy have decided once more to put their faith in autocrats who appear to have all the answers; only time will tell if this time around will be any less disastrous.¹⁸

Experts notice however that

today, the initiation of authoritarianism is far less definitive. Contemporary autocrats are coming to power through a process of ‘authoritarianisation,’ or the gradual erosion of democratic norms and practices. Democratic leaders, elected at the ballot box through reasonably free and fair elections, are slowly undermining institutional constraints on their power, gradually marginalising the opposition (and watchdogs such as the press) and eroding civil society in ways that make it difficult to pinpoint the moment at which the break with democratic politics occurs.¹⁹

And what is more threatening and pressing is that “autocracy is not merely a form of government but a state of mind, and war prepares the public temper for it in a most effective way. Autocracy embodies the attempt, not to apply a theory, but to meet emergent conditions.”²⁰ So what would be a Christian response to such a context? Should resilience be a faith-filled riposte? Indisputably Guardini would be against “confrontation.”²¹ Avery Dulles notes that Guardini

drew strength from his theology. Guardini was convinced that only through union with the living God can a person become fully individuated. Men and women who seek to remain rooted in God may receive, Guardini held, the wisdom and courage to maintain their personal freedom within authoritarian systems, while at the same time avoiding the pitfall of individualism. In other words, theonomy is essential to human life, while heteronomy and autonomy

¹⁸ Gabrielle Goldworm, “The Post Modern Autocrat: The Resurgence of the Dictator in the 21st Century,” *The Diplomatic Envoy* (August 21, 2018) online: <http://thediplomaticenvoy.com/2018/08/21/the-post-modern-autocrat-the-resurgence-of-the-dictator-in-the-21st-century/> (accessed 5 October 2018).

¹⁹ Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, “The Evolution of Autocracy: Why Authoritarianism Is Becoming More Formidable,” *Survival* 59, no.5 (2017): 57-68.

²⁰ William Bennet Munro, “The Resurgence of Autocracy,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 1927) online: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1927-07-01/resurgence-autocracy> (accessed 5 October 2018).

²¹ Avery Dulles, “Catholicity and Catholicism,”: 83.

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retard human development. Guardini himself embodied this insight when he quietly refused to play by the Nazi rules and, as a result, was sent into “retirement” at the age of fifty-three.²²

Refusal to play by the Nazi rules didn’t just mean refusing or resisting their ideology. Refusal goes deeper than that, it is sheer rejection of allowing oneself to enter into their mindset. The Gospels hand over to us a Jesus whose recommendation is to “resist no evil” (Mt 5:39) and who answers to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my officers had struggled that I might not be delivered up to Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence.” (Jn 18:36). Here Jesus repudiates that which Josephus termed the ‘Fourth Philosophy,’ namely the idea, the aspiration and form of piety characterised by zeal and which was the mark of Zealots, the like of Judas the Galilean, fusing “a revolutionary force, making resistance to Rome a religious duty incumbent on all Jews.”²³

Though Jesus’ philosophy of “turning the other cheek” might seem less prevailing, embraced by the few, less efficient, failing to successfully oppose immorality. Guardini reminds us that transformative and efficacious “change always originates from minorities” initiated by “charismatic” forerunners who “take the risk to challenge the *status quo* and test uncharted territory.” “Great values, notes Romano Guardini, are always associated with a small number.”²⁴ For Guardini, ecclesial communion, almost pre-figured in Plato’s Academy, rooted in the Triune God, from whom “nothing can separate us” (See Rom 8:38-39) is “the springboard into transcendence”²⁵ not toughness.

²² Robert A. Krieg, “Romano Guardini’s Theology of the Human Person,” *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 458.

²³ Reza Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (Random House Trade: New York, 2013), 41-42. Aslan, in line with the seminal study by Samuel George Frederick Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), puts forward the thesis that the historical Jesus was indeed a Zealot. Numerous scholars like Martin Hengel and Robert David Kaylor supersede this theory. Brandon himself remains somewhat neutral in his conclusions eschewing any facile, and, above all, any sensational solution, finally pointing out that similarity doesn’t necessarily mean that the Jesus movement was identical to the Zealots.

²⁴ Klaus M. Leisinger, Corporate leaders in times of public distrust, in *Understanding Ethics and Responsibilities in a Globalizing World*, The International Society of Business, Economics, and Ethics Book Series – 5 (Springer: Switzerland 2016), 35.

²⁵ Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, “For I am convinced that neither death

Depravity as Creative Space for the Mysterious

If nothing can separate us from God's love in Jesus' Christ, "nothing can stop God from reaching us." This was the conviction of Raphael Tijhuis (1913–1981), a Dutch Carmelite, stationed in the Carmelite monastery in Mainz,²⁶ who was arrested by the Gestapo police on July 25, 1940, while preparing for Mass. He was charged to be an enemy of the state, and for inciting resistance against Germany due to a trivial comment – on the church bells of the monastery in Mainz – written in a letter to family and friends in the Netherlands. His arrest initiated a five-year journey through a succession of confinements and concentration camps which finally landed him in the dreaded Dachau concentration camp.

Once released he willingly put into writing his experience, first in Dutch, then, back in Mainz he wrote another version in German, entitled *Von Kutte und Verbrecherkluft* (Of the Habit and the Prison Uniform). Hanneke Veerman prepared the Dutch text for publication with the title *Innerlijke reis Dachau - voor bij de grens* (Inner journey Dachau - beyond the border), incorporating into it another text *Met mij komt alles goed* (Everything is fine with me) composed by Br Raphael in the wake of Titus Brandsma's Canonical Process of Beatification and Canonisation. Owing to its success it was translated and published in English as "a diary of a Dachau survivor" in 2009 and seven years later, in 2016, it was again translated and published again in Italian.²⁷

nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

²⁶The Dutch Carmelites played an important role in the re-foundation of a monastery in Mainz. Br Raphael moved there in 1933 in this context.

²⁷The English and Italian translations are used for this paper. The information on the story of the texts and its compilation was given through personal communication by Prof. Hein Blommestijn, O.Carm., Hanneke Veerman and information taken from the personal blog *ASF in Dachau. Reflections on volunteering for peace at Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site* (<http://asf-in-dachau.blogspot.com>) by Roy Scivyer who while working on the *Dachau Remembrance Book Project* conducted some research at the Carmelite monastery in Mainz where part of Br Raphael's documents are kept. Scivyer was also working on an eventual publication of Br. Raphael's biography. The Dutch edition of Br Raphael's memoirs are kept at *Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut* in Boxmeer. It is from this manuscript edition that Hanneke Veerman published *Innerlijke reis Dachau. Voorbij de grens* (Discovery Books Leeuwarden 2005). The English and Italian versions are translations of this edition.

Amidst the atrocities, abuse of all sorts and death, Raphael encounters another Dutch Carmelite, the journalist and Professor of Philosophy and Mysticism Titus Brandsma, later martyred in Dachau.²⁸ Prof Brandsma resilient of character and vociferous activist against the aggressive Regime thought Raphael to transcend, absorbing, as a tree the contiguous polluted air of the camp and in turn emit purer air. From Titus he learned lessons of gratitude for the smallest and simplest of actions. He also learnt how to be true to self and to just “be happy” and not be reactive. Though Raphael was already fervent in his faith his time in Dachau was a purification of sorts. In meeting Titus, he really began to grow into a mature faith. Later on, as evidenced in his letters,²⁹ when suffering from the psychological trauma of those years, he was always good humoured and pleasant to know, and stayed in contact with many fellow survivors, becoming himself unassuming and inspiring person who refused to hate humankind, particularly the Germans, even though he had all reasons to do so.

Why discussing Raphael Tjihuis in a conference commemorating Guardini, Karl Barth and Thomas Merton? It seems to me that Tjihuis can be an interesting case study of someone who lived in person Guardini’s foresight in “The Humanity of Christ” notwithstanding he never read or met Guardini. In the “Diary of a Dachau Survivor” we find a straightforward, horrible yet deep firsthand account of torture, murder, starvation, medical experiments and death. The author physically survived but in truth he never recovered from that life changing experience. His mind continued to be tortured for the rest of his life. In this sense he was not resilient at all. Till the very end of his life, day to day simple actions, like crossing a pedestrian zebra cross, could throw him into agitation. Nonetheless, although not resilient, he felt that he had never felt so close to God as when he was imprisoned.

Perhaps what transpires most in his diary is the emphasis on forced re-education *Umschulung* of inmates called *Haftlingen*³⁰ into the perverse Nazi *Weltanschauung*, which “was the opposite of the Enlightenment

²⁸ For a better comprehension of the diary one should also read Constant Dölle’s *Encountering God in the Abyss*.

²⁹ See for example his letters from 1946-1951 addressed to fellow prisoners and reproduced by the IKLK Archiv on https://www.karl-leisner.de/reinhold-friedrichs-blockwater-im-kz-dachau-auch-fuer-karl-leisner-21/#_ftn1 . Retrieved on 15.10. 2018.

³⁰ Tjihuis, 75.

ideal, the man deprived of spirit and mind, the man reduced into an unthinking body.”³¹ Tjihuis narrates, for example, being almost forced to read *Mein Kampf*, Josef Goebbels’ speeches, and persistently *The Sacred Fire. The Story of Sex in Religion*. There is no sign of resistance in Tjihuis’ response, he gently and silently takes the volumes and places them on the small table in his cell.³² In chapter four with psychological finesse, Raphael narrates the process captives had to go through to be enrolled in the prison camp. The entire account revolves around terms and phrases like: “transformation,” “we were all unrecognisable,” and “dressed anew.”³³ In quasi-religious terms reminiscent of Dante’s *Inferno*’s “Lasciate ogni speranza o voi che entrate” Tjihuis clearly says that inmates were dead to the world, inexistent. There Tjihuis stayed in hell without despairing. It is interesting to note here the parallelism of a similar experience, albeit mystical, existential, of Silouan the Athionite (1866–1938) a contemporary to Tjihuis who “was conformed to the Lord descending into hell without never despairing.”³⁴

In this context of forced re-education, where Nazi ideology forcefully hammered the idea that there are two types of humans: the pure/Arian and the poison, the man (German) and the beast (Jewish and non-German worm, rat or pig), and where the former was duty bound – a religious necessity – to purify the land from the latter who like the pestilence of the Black Death was a threat to God’s work on earth,³⁵ Raphael’s Diary emphasises, perhaps unconsciously the secret revolution brought by simple – in the context, heroic – acts of compassion, solidarity with others,³⁶ decision to “just be happy” for the

³¹ James W. Underhill, *Creating Worldviews. Metaphor, Ideology and Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 155.

³² Tjihuis, 40-41, 79-82.

³³ Tjihuis, 75-80. It is our opinion that this is the central *leitmotif* of the whole diary when considering the original German title of the memoirs: *Of the Habit and the Prison Uniform*.

³⁴ Archimandrita Sofronio, *Silvano del Monte Athos. La vita, la dottrina, gli scritti*, with an introduction by Enzo Bianchi (Milano: Gribaudi Editore, 2008), 9. Titus Brandsma the mystic companion of Brother Rapahel in Dachau emphasises the mystical conformity to the kenotic Christ over the physical conformity to his sufferings: “Compared to this internal image, finally, the external image of wounds and stripes is something secondary; it is of value as the confirmation and deepening of that internal image.” As quoted in Dölle, 171.

³⁵ Underhill, *Creating Worldviews*, 142.

³⁶ Tjihuis, 28, 50, 89-91.

gift and grace of the present moment³⁷ and mostly by the Eucharist, smuggled in the prison camps by a mysterious child who came daily to buy flowers from the *Liebhof* (Garden of Love) where more than 1000 priests were stationed into forced labour – many of them perished there – growing flowers and medicinal herbs.

As Guardini advocates for in *The End of the Modern World*, the “springboard of transcendence” here once again is communion brought about by the eucharistic³⁸ presence of the Risen One, the One who transcended hell in daring to consciously and wilfully plunge into it and pass through it. Constant Dölle, companion of both Raphael and Titus notes that

The priests now received Holy Communion very differently from the way they were used to. They experienced it entirely anew as an unknown source of strength. The Bread of Life which they ate together in the shadow of death gave them the strength to break with all confidence in the external world, the walls and ramparts which we surround ourselves, and to enter the free space within. This little field of the soul would never be entirely pure. Traces of overly strong self-seeking will always remain. These traces can be found in the inclination to ensconce ourselves behind trifles, tiny attachments, but also in the urge primarily to secure our own existence even at the expense of fellow human beings. The mystery of evil will be part of this existence to the hour of the harvest. This no longer unhinged them. The confidence that they were the good seed of the field increased. They would fall into the dark bosom of the earth. Many of them would die here and open up in the newness of life, of union with him whom they had sought their whole life.³⁹

In Raphael’s diary, although present, it is not “the forced nature of anxious self-assertion,”⁴⁰ nor the human and psychological qualities of being witty, focused, sharp enough to take the right decisions in the right time to escape death, and resilient in face of adversity which ultimately saved him and his peers from becoming beasts, not even the search for meaning,⁴¹ as advocated by Viktor Frankl – which can be a form of illusory form of coping⁴² – but the spiritual ability to

³⁷ Tjihuis, 74. “My dear we have all the time in the world, now.”: Dölle, 175.

³⁸ Tjihuis, 74.

³⁹ Constant Dölle, *Encountering God in the Abyss: Titus Brandsma’s Spiritual Journey*, 177.

⁴⁰ Dölle, 180.

⁴¹ Dölle, 175. Finding meaning remains senseless.

⁴² In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl relates how the thought of his wife, imagining her talking to him, smiling and responding to him, turned then into disillusion once he was free when facing the real truth of the death of his wife and of not having no one to wait for him at home. The hope that sustained him and others in the camp,

allow God's breakthrough in Christ transcending hell through the communion of the just. In these hostile circumstances where one captures existential littleness and helplessness, Raphael like Guardini advocates acceptance and abandonment to divine providence⁴³ keeping that freedom of spirit⁴⁴ which turns out to be a catalyst in his transformation from being a passive victim to consciously and willingly become the owner of his condition.

As Victor Frankl notes inmates like Raphael, albeit few, "they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."⁴⁵ And "the way in which man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances – to add deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish."⁴⁶

This transformation was so radical to such an extent that later on, in freedom, he confesses nostalgia for those terrible five years where paradoxically he felt so near to God as never he did in his whole life.⁴⁷ In maintaining the spiritual qualities of always speaking truthfully and objectively with detachment,⁴⁸ of dwelling in one's inner spiritual

was now gone. See Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*, London: Ebury, 2011, 132-133.

⁴³ Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 210; Tjihuis 48.

⁴⁴ Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 209; Tjihuis 29.

⁴⁵ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (London: Ebury, 2004), 75.: "We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. And there were choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or you would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance, renouncing freedom and dignity to become moulded into the form of the typical inmate."

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁷ Tjihuis, 203.

⁴⁸ Tjihuis, 27.

depth of faith,⁴⁹ of constantly praying and remembering God,⁵⁰ of giving always good example with success,⁵¹ of abiding in oneness with Christ⁵² and being free as a child of God⁵³ to act with rectitude and courage⁵⁴ he was able to appreciate to the full the beauty of Christians living to the fullest their faith deprived of everything.

Conclusion

The last word I'll leave it to Guardini and Raphael:

Further, we must learn again that command over the world presupposes command of self. For how can men control the growing monstrousness of power when they cannot control their own appetites? How can they shape political or cultural decisions affecting countless others, when they are continually failing themselves? ... An ascetic is a man who has himself well in hand. To be capable of this, he must recognize the wrongs within himself and set about righting them. He must regulate his physical as well as his intellectual appetites, educate himself to hold his possessions in freedom, sacrificing the lesser for the greater.⁵⁵

From the moment I arrived in the camp and my habit and everything else were taken from me, my ties with the past were broken but I felt more and more guided by God. He is the One with whom I feel connected in all circumstances. His omnipresence, a truth that once was not much more than theory, is an intense experience here and takes shape in a way that often feels benevolent. His providence is the pillow where we lay our tormented souls at rest. You know God will lead you. No matter what may happen, it only happens according to His will. In the absence of human satisfaction, one achieves the complete surrender to God's providence, and thus to God. Lack of everything that is needed to live creates more room for the Mysterious. I must confess that every now and then I look back to those difficult years with some feeling of nostalgia. Never have I felt closer to God. The electrified barbed wire could not prevent God from reaching us.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Tjihuis, 28-29, 50, 89-91.

⁵⁰ Tjihuis, 37, 73, 90.

⁵¹ Tjihuis, 47.

⁵² Tjihuis, 48.

⁵³ Tjihuis, 63.

⁵⁴ Tjihuis, 70.

⁵⁵ Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, 216-216.

⁵⁶ Tjihuis, 203.

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