

## (139) SUFFERING AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY

### A first try for a short paper

1. It is clear that the world is full of suffering, suffering of humans and suffering of the whole of nature. In the Western part of the world we could for some time forget or at least try to forget it. We lived in some sort of peace and prosperity, certainly compared with the situation our ancestors lived in and with the situation of the population in the rest of the world. Our bodies and our material needs were taken care of in an unheard of manner. We forgot, more or less, the atrocities of the two world wars and the genocides, especially of the Jews.

We forgot too, that this abundance and safety was and is acquired at the cost of unheard of suffering, of peoples in the Third World, of nature, of the victims around us, on the roads, in the families, everywhere.

2. It is now perfectly clear that life in our culture, the culture of the mimesis of desire, only is possible at the cost of extremely much suffering, of unbearable suffering for endless many. Culture always was built on suffering, on the scapegoat-mechanism, on suffering and murder. That in fact never did change in any manner. We hid and hide it better than so-called primitive people did, but the mechanism is exactly the same as it always was: Peace, relative peace only is always bought by blood.

3. That means that we all, who are recipients of the "profits", consequently all are responsible for the suffering in this world. We live on and from it, if we know it and wish it or not. As long as this culture will last, that will not change. That means that we never can have any right on happiness, on prosperity, on an easy life. When we think that we have rights on all this, we in fact are asking for again more, new victims. All these privileges are at best gifts, for which we only can be grateful, always knowing that necessarily there are people, elsewhere or around us, who in some manner are paying for it. Being happiness and prosperous, being healthy only can make us humble, grateful.

4. All suffering is, in one manner or another, man-made. Of course there is not always a direct line from the suffering of a certain person or a certain group to somebody who is the cause of the suffering, the "figures" of the responsibility are very often very complicated and even inextricable, but the suffering in any case is man-made altogether. Being in the mimesis of desire and in the culture which is built upon this mimesis, means that people and the whole of living and even dead nature is suffering, suffering at our hands. Both the Old and the New Testament are clear about that.

Consequently, however nice people we are, loving and caring, we are in some manner certainly part of the problem, torturers with all the others, people for whom Jesus is praying for forgiveness on the cross, because we don't know what we are doing (Luke 23, 34). Whenever there is outright torture in this world, and of course there is much of it, we only prevent to be hypocrites when we acknowledge that we are part of this horrible problem

5. Of course one of the questions was and is, time and again, how God can permit, or stand, that there is so much suffering. How can he permit that humans do so much evil, that innocent people suffer so much? It is fundamentally a religious question, a question about the gods of the victimizers. JHWH, the Father of Jesus, clearly is lost in this world. He only is in this world in the suffered, who has given up, who does not any longer belong to culture, is in some manner outside of it and thus in the world of the god of the victims. The suffering on this earth is our doing. We don't get rid of this responsibility. There is no *dues ex machina*, who frees us from it, or a god whom we can scapegoat because of it.

6. The suffering in this world in fact is a clear sign that culture, that we all are rejecting JHWH, are rejecting God. We chose and choose for (the mimesis of) desire with all its consequences, we chose and choose suffering, if possible for other people, and in the end death for ourselves. The suffering as a consequence of the mimesis of desire, now sharpened in the situation of internal mediation we all are now living in, the suffering as a consequence of the endless scapegoating, the dying without a future, without hope.

7. God is near when there is suffering. Not in self-inflicted suffering in order to be a sufferer and in that manner excellent, neither in masochism, but in real suffering, the consequence finally of scapegoating. He is near to the sufferer, just as the sufferer, the scapegoat is near to him. The scapegoat belongs to two worlds, the world of culture and, more and more when the suffering, the hopelessness deepens, the world of God. Sufferers are the doors between the two worlds.

Because of that, sufferers can find peace, the peace which transcends all understanding. This peace transcends understanding because understanding belongs to this culture, the peace the sufferer receives belongs to the other one. The sufferer, who is in the door to the other world and is the door, he can find the door, can be found by the door. In that situation God shows that he is almighty, saving out of the hands of the torturers of this world, even if it is through dying, into life.

In the same time, this never is a mechanism. There is endless much horrible, voiceless suffering in this world, in which never a door is found or opened. As long as we insist to live in this culture, having the fruits of it, we have to live with this horrible and as such insolvable fact, for which we are responsible, together with the possibility that once that suffering will be ours. We can only hope or even expect that God is waiting for them "on the other side", although for those who suffer in that manner that is a very small consolation at best.

We all together carry the guilt for this situation and its consequences, for which there is no consolation at all. There is at best forgiveness, which takes away the guilt, but not the responsibility for what we did and will do. Forgiveness gives us the freedom to change our lives, the world, or it is no forgiveness at all, only some religious pious feeling.

8. Who are we, how do we "react", when we really meet sufferers? Suffering is threatening. We might like to turn away from it, try not to see or to forget it, or to do something, something "good" in order to ward the suffering (and the sufferer) off. Or we become very angry, indignant about the suffering, cursing, if they are known, the perpetrators, or cursing life itself.

All this does not really help the sufferer. We only can be with her/him, with them, accepting their suffering, trying to understand it with our being, carrying it with them, not warding it off in any manner. This means that we love the sufferer and don't leave her/him in any manner.

We can only stay free, being with the sufferer and with the suffering, if we really wish to be with the sufferer and, if that is possible, being with her/him, to do something in order to alleviate the suffering. We are part of the problem, although we eventually did not cause this particular suffering. When we meet the sufferer, she/he belongs, with this suffering, to our life. Our only human possibility is to be with, or go with her, with him.

9. Who are we when we think about, read about, and suffer ourselves because of the suffering of people in the past? Because e.g. of the suffering of the victims of the holocaust? Although it is all too understandable when we become excited, indignant, angry, enraged, hopeless, all the reactions which are possible when we think about such atrocities, it does not help. In a deep sense in that manner we are warding the unbearable suffering off. Finally we try in that manner not really to cope in a spiritual manner with the incredible suffering which then happened by the hands of men and women. We might not be able, to react in another manner. We are overwhelmed. If we never were overwhelmed, we have to ask ourselves if we ever even openly slightly understood. It is a phase and, in order to have the possibility to find ways into the future, we have to find another possibility to find our place amidst of all what happened.

Really getting along with all this in a spiritual manner would mean that we try to understand in an existential manner what and how they suffered and that, in the end, we are, in freedom, prepared to go with them. We certainly are not any better than they were. That we still live is fortuitous, something like grace, it certainly is not earned. Probably we only can go with them if we are prepared, if life brings us in that situation, to bow our heads, with theirs under the hands of the torturers and the killers.

10. And the perpetrators of these atrocities? First of all they are a mirror. They show us who we could be, although we can't believe that that ever could be true. They show us the last consequences of our culture, the culture of the mimesis of desire, with all its horrible fears and cruelties. So, first of all and again, to become only angry, indignant, enraged, without knowing about ourselves and our possibilities, finally is hypocrite. In a sense they are not human, of course, but in the same time they are all too human, as inhuman and all too human as we could be and maybe sometimes were.

This does not mean that what they did, and all over the world do, is not horrible. Of course it is. And they certainly are responsible for their doings, as we all are for ours, although we all try time and again to get rid of our responsibility, by "explaining", and, finally, always by scapegoating. They are responsible and they have, if possible, to be punished, be it eventually only to give them a little bit of human dignity back just by punishing them. But that again only works when it is very clear that their deeds are punished, that they are not scapegoated for what they did, because in that case the senseless suffering simply goes on.

11. The holocaust is a sign, a horrible sign of the possibilities of our culture, when the fears become too big, the scapegoating becomes too violent. It remains a sure proof that religion does not have any longer real possibilities to keep human life going in a responsible manner. Under the aegis of religion we all are able to become devils for our neighbours.

The holocaust is now going on all over the world. 3,500,000 deaths every year, on the roads, mostly children, and by murders. Many more maimed forever. Genocides all over the world. We destroy people around us, making them neurotic, mad, ill. We ourselves are likewise destroyed.

Again, we have to punish evil deeds, without doubts, as far as we can. More and more it becomes clear that we can't, that evil people just go on, as we do ourselves. If we don't change culture fundamentally, culture, that becomes obvious, will destroy everybody and everything, humans and the whole of nature.