

Reflection ‘Storm as Precursor to Life and the Art of Imagination’

Honour the Mind, Live the questions and Explore the Human adventure

Was Jesus of Nazareth the Storm that brought about change?

A poem to start our thinking.

'Amidst the discordant noises of the day we hear the Spirit calling;
We stumble as we tread Earth's way; asking that we be kept from falling.

Our eyes are open but often they cannot see for the gloom of night:
We can no more than lift our hearts but for an inward light.

The wild and fiery passion of our youth consumes our soul;
In agony we turn to God for truth and self-control.

For Passion and all the pleasure it can give will die the death;
But this of us eternally must live, it is for sure God's borrowed breath.

'Amidst the discordant noises of the day we hear the Spirit calling;
We stumble as we tread Earth's way; asking that we be kept from falling.

Science reminds us of the Anthropocene and warns us of the ending of the sixth civilization that we are currently experiencing, and the challenge it raises is that if we don't risk hoping, if we don't change direction we are going to end up where we are headed. Very much like the parable is saying to the people back then. When John Steinbeck wrote "The dawn came, but no day" and of dusk keeps slipping "back toward darkness," he was bearing witness to the cruel reality that hope is hard work and delayed hope is risky ground. He was highlighting that more tragic than the loss of security that comes with the loss of hope is in fact the loss of the capability to imagine the totality, and to imagine it as something that could be completely different. My proposal today under the title of Storm as the precursor to imagination or as the catalyst for

imagination is a claim that the violence of some storms is an awakening of crucial importance. An awareness of the crucial part imagination plays in the life of the planet, our life on it and our relationship with it. We can no longer imagine human life as superior to or independent of all other life forms that constitute a living planet. It sounds obvious but we don't actually live like it is. And why do I think imagination of so important? It is because imagination is required to bring order to, to remember, to orientate, to re-construct, to make one aware of, to story, to appraise both our past and our present. To imagine is to engage in shaping the future, the possibilities yet unmade, to make real what is otherwise absent. To engage in imagining is about a hope as yet unrealized it is always marked with risk, with self-deception and even the possibility of self-destruction. We know this because of where we are in our relationship with the universe right now. Charles Peguy writes;

“it is she (Hope), this little one, who carries everything,

For faith only sees what is,

But hope, she sees what will be.

Charity only loves what is

But hope, she loves what will be.

Faith sees that which is.

In time and in Eternity.

Hope sees that which will be.

In time and for all Eternity.

And Victor Havel reminds us that Hope is a dimension of the soul and not dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. It is an orientation of the spirit, of the heart. My claim today is that imagination is no longer mere imitation of imitations. It is no longer a part of the world of fiction or fantasy. It is rather akin to that of Hannah Arendt's claim in that imagination is 'The prerequisite of understanding'. It is the coupling between thinking and judging. She also goes on to claim that commitment to human community calls forth a responsibility to attend to the important relationship between understanding and imagination and that imagination is indispensable for achieving the possibility of any shared meaning at all. One must be able to imagine the world from the other's perspective or community

remains impossible. A romantic poem I wrote that speaks of the importance of imagining the other.....

The truth is that I need you as the other
I need you to ask me why I care for you this way.
I need you to wonder how I could smile every day.
The truth is that I need you as the other

..... The truth is that I need you as the other
I need to be able to say, "I could be the one that loves you like you love me.
There's nothing I would do better than to be able to keep it this way,
Wishing that you would know all the secrets I've kept,
Especially those that have kept our friendship sure and true.
The truth is that I need you as the other.

In a world obsessed with a reasoned definition of the matter of things, such as the ending of the sixth extinction or the Anthropocene, escatology and the hermeneutics of imagination are important for understanding. The art of religion, the art of Imagining, the art of poetry are no longer alternatives to reality they are intrinsic to it. One way of thinking about imagination is to see it as a way of thinking, of responding and acting. Shot through the whole array of our human engagement with reality. This means we need to challenge any distinction between 'being imaginative' and deploying 'reason' because to make that distinction is unhelpful. To further support this is the recent studies of McGilchrist and Johnson who claim that this relationship between imagining and reasoning is far deeper than we ever thought. It is interesting in that the most basic conceptual and linguistic units that we use to think or speak about anything at all, are not produced by reason but are rather products of acts of imagination. They require right hemisphere activity as well as Left and maybe even a right hemisphere priority.

The Trump Election, the media struggle with spin and authenticity, the War in Ukraine are like storms upon our sensibilities and upon truth in this age of post covid, impending extinction, increasing interdependence politically and

socially, and the heightened awareness of our part in the change to our climate. It is imperative that we employ our whole human capabilities in response. As Dr Lowe reminded us recently, this world is almost over, almost about to be different. If we want it to be different, to be almost new then we must imagine a new Jerusalem.

Imagine if you will that the word God is a verb not a noun, an action not a thing perhaps loving rather than love itself. Imagine God as not an objective thing or person but rather a dynamic action of loving that is always vulnerable in its exposure to life. Imagine perhaps the name of God being an....

Almost Moment

The 'Almost Moment is always meditating
until the fingertips of work touch,
embracing the possibility of the impossible,
and living the poetics of the possible,

The 'Almost" moment is the hyphen,
The hyphen in the im-possible
The hyphen is the proximity of our distance,
and the distance in our proximity.

The 'Almost' moment is the moment
The moment of reconciliation,
the deeper, richer, more mature
concretization of moments

The 'Almost' moment, taken by itself
is one-sided and abstract.
theism—atheism and anatheism;

losing the 'Almost' to simplicity.

The 'Almost' moment, taken by itself

As faith–doubt–second faith;

position, opposition, composition.

Is lost in the different

The 'Almost' moment held together with others

displaces positions before they arrive

not as higher or better, but decomposed

each one in its place of health-filled ambiguity but not of need

The 'Almost' moment when before and beneath

as opposed to after or above

enables deconstruction without destruction

undecidability and the weak become truth with authenticity

The 'Almost' moment is more than positive

Affirmation displaces the dividing distinction

Not as arbitrary relativism

But in the name of authentic affirmation

In the 'Almost' moment the divine becomes victim

The divine, crucified, humiliated and weak

Become the 'Almost' and the moment becomes truth

a weak force, weak strength, of uncompromising forgiveness.

The 'Almost' moment is when its empty yet power-filled'

An empty power more sovereign than might

A potent weakness that acquires actuality

The 'Almost' moment humanized and real.

Unconditional loving.

And just in case your imagining is being tested and teased by reasoning about now and we know that once we explain poetry, we lose its meaning but some materialisation might help? Another poem.... This time about language and other words for God.....

A Serendipitous Presence

Words are without completion

too small for the task that eludes all.

How can we speak of a gentleness within,

the warmth of heart in response to call?

How can we name you 'Storm' and understand?

How can we know you, ocean of love,

Words fail to be enough, this we know true,

strong as forever, soft as a dove.

living within and without is our clue.

We know times of spiritual blindness,

when excess and pain distort our sight.

Something within and without us,

shows us how darkness can turn into light.

Nothing we know will be wasted in derision,

yet all of our living is grounded in grace.

Gently taken down are the walls of division,

leading us on to a larger place.

Words are creative completion
small and yet enough, for the task of call.
They speak of the gentleness within,
and warm the heart in response to the call.

Being confused is ok because as Iris Murdoch said: 'The world is not given to us on a plate, it is given to us as a creative task. We work and make something of it' So let us "Honour the Mind, Live the questions and Explore the Human adventure" Let us imagine a new Jerusalem. Amen.