

21. Philosophizing about evil (27 p.).

(a handwritten text by priest A.T..)

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Click on the chapter you want to read.

Content

1. Metaphysical, - physical- and moral aspect of evil.....	2
2. The normal and anomalous course of finite realities .	2
3. Voltaire and the problem of evil.	5
4. "When people are deeply wounded, reasoning doesn't help much."	6
5. The evil mood.	7
6. The final interpretation of evil and suffering.	8
7. Further philosophy of evil.	9
8. Hegels' 'deduction' -.....	10
9. Objectifying suffering according to Buddha.....	13
10. The escape attitude of hedonism.....	15
11. The psychedelic awakenings as an escape pose.	15
12. The suicide as an attitude of escape	16
13. The revolt as defense posture.....	17
14. The Marxist interpretation of evil as a defense posture.	18
15. Christian charity as a defense against evil.	19
16. Suffering as a condition of the good.....	20
17. The humanistic interpretation of the connection "suffering/ good" ...	21
18. The Book of Job.	23
19. The theme of Jesus as the God-man who dies but rises.	24
20. A concluding remark.	25

Of course, untold amount has been written about "evil" but we will limit ourselves to one text from which we start to develop our own thesis, i.e. G. Maertens, *God and Suffering*, in: *Collationes*, (Ghent) 1973: 4 (Dec.), 359 / 481.

Suffering.

"Unsatisfaction, displeasure, pain experienced as better imperfection. To suffer is to undergo: one may call it the passive side of the mystery of evil." (A.c. 459). In other words: suffering arises in response to evil. It can all be summed up in a scheme of thought: "If evil as the reality to be undergone (the given), then suffering as the response to it." In a common formula: "stimulus (stimulus) response (response)".

Evil.

Maertens, a.c., 475 cites G. Leibniz (1646/1716) who designed a metaphysical theodicy. 'Theo-dicee' means 'justification' (-dicee) of God (Theo-) concerning evil in creation and immediately suffering as its transmission.

God, according to Leibniz, is "pure perfection" (pure act, in his still medieval language on the subject). As a person - he reasons strictly monotheistic - he is omnipotent, i.e. he creates a world, an omnipotent, i.e. he creates a good world. According to Leibniz, what he calls "the world" is "the best possible in disposition": "if the world could not have been the best of all possible worlds, God would not have created one at all." This is called Leibniz's optimism.

1. Metaphysical, - physical- and moral aspect of evil.

Leibniz as a metaphysician strikes as the possibility condition of physical and moral evil in creation, which he establishes as an obvious fact, his optimism notwithstanding: the finiteness of all that is created by the all-good and all-powerful God.

Definition of evil.

To properly understand this metaphysical condition - finitude - we must first properly define the evil that causes suffering (it involves a close causal process).

2. The normal and anomalous course of finite realities .

Maertens cites, a.c., 469, Albert Camus (1913/1960) who is counted among the existential thinkers, including in his philosophical novel *La peste* (1947), in his essays *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1941), *l'Homme révolté* (1951).

Doctor Rieux, the central character in *La Peste*, with Paneloux, a Jesuit, witnesses the impressive agony of an innocent child. The evil in the course of an innocent's life is emotionally at least a high point in existential philosophy that rather emphasizes the mind (among other things to the detriment of modern reason or even Christian faith).

The child in question had a normal course of life until before dying. The cause of death is the evil that deviates that normal course at first sight as a coincidence. Let us put it this way, "If a course undergoes a coincidence as a deviation, and that deviation is experienced as the cause of suffering, then there is an evil coincidence, i.e., evil."

Coincidence.

The definition of chance, i.e. of what is unforeseen and immediately unpredictable from a limited - finite (to speak with Leibniz) - perspective at least, is a necessary condition of the definition of evil. - We explain.

Physical evil.

Suppose an acorn falls from the tree in October. It waits in the grass until the following spring to germinate and, in time, become an oak tree. This is biologically and scientifically the normal, i.e. essentially prescribed course. Coincidence, however, springs from the fact that as a finite being, the acorn is not alone in the world.

(1). A lady passes in the grass and with her weight his somewhat crushes the acorn. In the spring it shoots up but writhes growing. The physical weight of the lady is a physical evil to the acorn and its process or developmental progress.

(2). Even worse: a squirrel - hungry - simply eats the acorn. There is not even a beginning of the growth process. Do we still count being chewed up by an animal as physical evil in the sense that the squirrel is a part of the physical -biological world. 'Physical' means "what exhibits no moral responsibility," but is natural process.

Compare with this the child in La Peste.

A death-causing factor makes the child's normal course of life deviate, indeed, simply interrupt it. With the pain for the child resulting from that non-normal and therefore unpredictable, accidental course, let's say alien to its nature.

Moral evil.

Compare with a boy who is constantly bullied by a group at school. The normal, this is in its very being a nature-necessarily prescribed, course of a boy's life at school is, among other things, that he completes his learning in a comradely manner. Being bullied, however, is a coincidence and a pain-inducing coincidence, as a deviation from the normal course: it is evil and this time moral evil because the cause of being bullied in a being gifted with insight and conscience, the school comrade.

Gifted with insight and feelings

What do we say: "gifted with insight and feelings". That would be the normal behavior of the comrades but they deviate: the evil lying in that deviation causes the evil lying in the bullying of our schoolboy.

Our schoolboy is not alone - finite as he is - he situates himself in the rest of the world and undergoes the evil of it, - a coincidence that neither his parents nor he in the form of bullying desired about expected. The disappointment caused by that coincidence proves that there is evil involved, i.e. a deviation from the normal such that disappointment arises. - Behold a definition of evil: essential deviation from normal.

Metaphysical.

One sees: since all that is finite does not itself decide on the normal course prescribed in its being, but co-determines with the rest of the world that the course must be fulfilled, we have the metaphysical conditions of possibility of physical and moral evil. Leibniz is thus right on a logical level: finitude involves dependence, i.e. influence from outside, happening as the thwarting of a normal course.

Note - It can be seen that our explanation presupposes a steering explanation, A. - B. - C. A. is the normal course, goal-oriented, B is the accidental course that deviates from the goal; C, if the ability to do so is present, is the restoration of the normal goal-oriented course.

Cybernetics since 1950 has mathematized but not invented the primordial steering scheme. Already the earliest ancient Greek thinkers knew this scheme very well.

In which the pre-eminent premise was that being - normal, i.e. not dwarfed by the rest - determines the whole course of things. That metaphysical concept of being is the premise: if things had no being, how would they proceed?

3. *Voltaire and the problem of evil.*

As Maertens briefly summarizes: from the ancient Greek Epikouros of Samos (Epicurus (-341/-270) to Albert Camus, there is a sham dilemma prevalent that Voltaire (1694 / 1778) also holds: either God cannot prevent evil, which proves that he is not omnipotent as Leibniz claims, or he does not want to prevent it, which proves that he is not already good in Leibniz's sense.

Criticism.

This dilemma conceals a very decisive metaphysical fact, namely, the relative autonomy of the created. Which turns the dilemma into its opposite:

Either God respects the relative autonomy of creation, both physically and especially morally (the latter involves the free creature's own irreducible responsibility), which means that while he is primal, he is not simply omnipotent,

Either God does not respect the relative autonomy of creation (especially that of the creature susceptible to morality), which implies that he does not tolerate any autonomy beside himself, which implies that he exercises a puppet government over the universe, in which the radical distinction between him and the created before him is not done justice, - which would be a caricatured God.

In other words:

God, to the extent that he respects the relative autonomy of the created - the deviations from the normal course included - cannot possibly prevent the evil at work in those deviations, but that does not imply that he is not primordial, i.e. pure responsible power and pre-eminence of all other, created power.

God, to the extent that he respects, as just said, the relative autonomy of the created, by no means wants to prevent all evil, but that does not prevent him from being good, i.e. good but full of respect for created autonomy.

In sum, Epicurean reasoning stands or falls in its dilemma with the radical exclusion of the autonomy of creation. It attests to an inability among atheists and critics of God's world policy to think of a God who tolerates and understands a sometimes exasperating dose of autonomy (his own or creature's own lawfulness) alongside him.

4. "When people are deeply wounded, reasoning doesn't help much."

(a.c., 474). Maertens plays off - what he calls - a speculative interpretation, mean: a logical-metaphysical interpretation - against - what he calls existential meaning. In this sense he says: The (speculative) interpretation of suffering usually does not in any way solve the problem of existential meaning. And that's why it goes anyway". (ibid).

An example.

A woman who loses her young husband in a disaster, - parents who know that their dear little one will not live, can rather do little to say that they must look at this from a universal (*op.*: situated in a broader framework) perspective." (a.c., 476). A.c., 477: "Until perhaps one is confronted with a painful boundary case in one's own life. Then one asks for more than insight".

Emotionalism. - Maertens argues that "all these arguments" from some theodicy (a.c., 376) do not touch man's existence. We correct: "do not touch the existence of human beings in a highly emotional stage." All the arguments he cites against "speculative" meaning stand or fall with the emotional of human existence.

It is right, very right: right after incurring a very painful disappointment, man usually loses his inner peace and his reasonableness of all other life moments. When the doctor Rieux and the monk Paneloux experience "the terrible agony of an innocent child" up close, in all involvement, metaphysical and other senses are usually misplaced. From what? Because in the hyperemotional ("existential" called) monuments, the person concerned wants to go through the experience to the depths until the emotional shock and hurt subside and one regains an inner peace.

But any ordinary person with an essential-minimal experience of evil and the suffering and distress caused by it knows that this very strong, out-of-ordinary-balance shocking phase does not last and is "processed. But then the logical-metaphysical sense makes itself felt and the moment of reflection and 'reasoning' has arrived.

Though the emotion may be so fierce, the sense of purpose overtakes it. From the world of grief, one re-enters the ordinary world of every day.

5. *The evil mood.*

It happens that, instead of becoming amenable to reason, people following a shocking evil and suffering are left with a hurt called bitterness. The everyday form of this is called "bad temper." Not without reason, ancient Romans called that soul state - actually that interpretation of what opposes and disappoints - "iniqua mens," unjust soul state.

Try it: someone who is in a bad mood is similar to one who begins to process a thorough evil but without any thorough evil being the immediate cause. Such a person listens but he represses or suppresses in himself the pure - rational - insight that he is wrong with his emotionality. He no longer believes, no longer hopes and is unloving. Until when - for sometimes inexplicable reasons - he thaws out and becomes receptive again to reason and fellow men.

The embittered

The embittered - like *Camus' l' homme révolté* - is essentially ill-favored to a serious degree, - a mood that threatens to distort all data into its caricature. Anyone who lives day in and day out with such an embittered one knows that the description above is painfully accurate: compassion - in Biblical language but therefore not "out of time": charity is lost. At so far even that the embittered one becomes for his surroundings a "saw" a gradual loneliness, if he does not - the term is the right one - repent.

Thus one understands (but critically) Camus' thesis', to revolt is to set the principle of "righteousness" that lives in man against this of "iniquity" that is built into the world. "This righteousness people must push through 'against God,' in their own strength" (a.c., 469/480). Thus reasons the embittered one who indwells himself in bitterness and confuses data like God with its caricature.

"Righteousness" with Camus is not "the righteousness" of a deep inner peace that, as in his *The varieties of religious Experience*, William James (1842/1910) expounds, situates evil and the suffering associated with it in a sphere of "the sublime" and thus quietly and in time overcomes every evil temper and bitterness. And "makes it amenable to reason." Not allowing an irresponsible emotionality to disturb further.

6. The final interpretation of evil and suffering.

Maertens, a.c., 462, sees three major attitudes:

1. Trying to escape it,

2. fighting and

3. notwithstanding everything, trying to make sense of it. This third attitude - he says, - becomes a great challenge as both previous ones fail. We situate this triad in a general scheme.

ABC theory. Ellis and Sagarin, two American psychologists, developed a cognitive theory that we briefly outline here as their form of hermeneutics (theory of interpretation).

A. is the given that is set against; **B.** is the mentality (which expresses itself in axiomatic phrases) by which the one who has to deal with the miscalculation interprets A, the given. **C.** is the final attitude that processes the setback. One can sum it up in a logical formula:

"If A. and B, then C logically understandable".

One can see that for Ellis and Sagarin the overly simplistic-two-fold interpretation scheme of the behaviorists is supplemented by what takes place in the mind of the interpreter or interpreter following a disappointing stimulus.

Application.

We can now situate Maertens' triadicity in that ABC diagram: "If A. (setback, evil), and B (trying to escape from it/the edited) seek a meaning), then C. (triadic behavioral type) understandable."

Meaning

Maertens employs the term "sense," but a definition is necessary if we are to proceed logically. Supposedly, 'meaning' coincides with what we used to call "the normal course", then human life becomes understandable: bringing a baby into the world contains an expectation on the part of the parents, namely

that the life of that child will follow its normal course. That is the normal meaning of that life.

One sees the problem: if that normal course, which is the original meaning of the baby's life, is compromised by an abnormality, then the problem of appropriate interpretation arises: one must willfully give some meaning to that abnormality.

This brings us to Maertens' triadic point: one can respond to a miscalculation in more than one way. This is the typical ambiguity of things and, among other things, of miscalculations. In the terms of ABC theory: the same A can be responded to differently (C) for reason of B.

7. Further philosophy of evil.

Once arrived at the question of the "meaning" of an evil, - evil that, seen only from the normal course of given, is a coincidence, i.e. is an unforeseen and unnatural occurrence that is painful, the question arises as to whether that coincidence is as coincidental as it seems.

The Acorn.

If one only pays attention to the normal course of an acorn's life, the fact that it will be crushed by a lady's foot or eaten by a squirrel is unnatural, alien to its nature. Consequence on a logical level: from the acorn as a given alone it is impossible to deduce that it will be crushed or eaten. That is unpredictable. Also: in a text about the oak and the acorn, purely scientific only the normal course occurs.

The finality of the acorn.

Finite, i.e. limited. The jerk is not alone in the world: he is there together with the rest. That entails that the rest may happen to cross its normal course. But then what we call 'chance' changes into a natural or creature-like process but of a compound nature. If one knew both the course of the acorn and the course of the lady or the squirrel, then being trampled or eaten would not be a coincidence but something inevitable, even though we cannot practically predict it. Unpredictability (cognitive) is not yet a denial of necessity (objective).

A comparison.

When the Titanic set sail from Southampton for New York in 1913, no one could have predicted that the boat would sink. But anyone who would have known from the beginning and the course of the Titanic and the course from

the North of the iceberg on which it crashed would have predicted with certainty the collisions as an objective necessity. Though cognitively there is complete surprise and thus "coincidence. That coincidence is but coincidence for those who pay unilateral attention to the course of the boat without situating it as a finite fact in the rest of reality. For those who commit more than the unilateral and limited, i.e. finite, view, there is necessity.

The logical axiom of (sufficient/necessary) reason or ground. - One may be familiar with Platon's statement, "Nothing is without reason." And Hegel systematically sought the essence and existence of established facts on phenomena.

One observes: Platon's axiom can also be understood as follows, namely, "All that is nothing is all that is without reason." M.a.w.: if something, by pure fiction, would be thought without any reason, then it is absolutely nothing. I.e.: all that is "being," i.e. reality (in the sense of not-nothing or "something"), has a sufficient reason or ground, either within itself (entirely certain) or outside itself. It is the sufficient reason that makes something what it is and that it is there.

Coincidence.

Actually, "coincidence," in the strict sense, is that which has no sufficient or necessary reason. In other words: in this sense, it is nothing. - This means that nothing in the proper, absolute sense is chance. There is true coincidence only when one considers something in its course without regard to the rest, but that is relative coincidence, that is, coincidence insofar as something is considered without the rest of reality, - without its framework in which it is situated. Absolute chance does not exist.

8. Hegels' 'deduction' -

she was once reproached to him among others by a certain Herr Krug in 1804 - can be understood as follows.

a. Krug imagined that Hegel meant by his "deduction": deducing the existence and modes of being - e.g., of dogs and cats, of his penholder - from abstract presuppositions.

b. No; says Hegel, - dogs and cats, my penholder is not deduced from abstractions - as a proposition in geometry with all that precedes it is deducible (and immediately provable), - these things are established as factual.

To "deduce" them means to presuppose the possibility conditions of those factual data that express the reason for existence and the ways of being, and from those presuppositions to make the established facts intelligible, logically deducible. Such a deduction amounts to a statement, "If the reason for existence and the ways of being, then the established facts, intelligible, logically deducible." That is Hegel's axiom of the sufficient reason or ground. But there is more.

Totality/ movement/ conflict/ reconciliation.

In order to 'deduce' (make logical sense of) an established fact, one must ultimately - note: ultimately - situate it in the totality of reality. This is 'movement', i.e. progression. Such a course eventuates in conflict with the rest.

Such a conflict happens to find a solution (reconciliation). Thus one sees the explanatory framework that is the Hegelian dialectic. It is a reconstitution of the platonic dialectic.

Application.

Do we now apply this to "the terrible agony of an innocent child" of which the doctor Rieux and the monk Paneloux are the immediate witnesses but only after the intense emotional phase is over and both are - at least in principle - amenable to reason.

Hegel would argue that fact:

1. situate in the totality of reality, that is, in the comprehensive framework of all that ever was, now is, ever will be.
2. He would see that fact as a progression - in his language, "movement.
3. He would see the child's life as progression as a conflict with what disturbs that progression (the deviation).
4. And, if within these finite (and thus presupposing the rest of reality) possibilities of our mind (mind, reason, spirit, will are finite) - a solution - "reconciliation" of the conflict - is findable, Hegel would endeavor them.

Granted it seems abstract but it is "real," i.e. it is reality.

Rationality.

Platon and Hegel - with many others, by the way - stand for the rationality of all that is, - Hegelian: of all that ever was, now is there, ever will be, - of all that is. How to understand such a thing?

They argue that everything that is something has a reason, within it/outside it. Now, in Latin, "ratio" is the word for "reason. Thus one can put it, "All that is, has its 'ratio' and is therefore rational." This has nothing to do with lifelong rationalism: if Rieux and Paneloux are deeply vexed regarding the course (the 'movement') of the child, it is through and through because they find no sufficient reason for it.

Also: Camus is logical through and through. He calls the fact "absurd," i.e., that which shows no reason yet causes rock-hard pain. The absurdism of the deeply vexed Camus, far from refuting the rationality of reality, presupposes it.

We repeat: they seek reason, do not find it (for the time being) and call the situation absurd, irrational.- The term "justice" insofar as it lives in man, is the very absolute requirement to find a sensible explanation, - which they do not find anywhere.

This is then called "the iniquity built into the world" (a.c., 369/370). Indeed the injustice, done to the child, is built into its course, its life course. But whether it is an absolute injustice (which absurdism asserts) is nowhere strictly proven. At most, it is a relative injustice which, according to Hegel's concept of atonement, will find justice somewhere - no matter how hard it may be to find. There is relative absurdity, not absolute. One does not confuse the two.

Again the application

We applied the basic Hegelian schema to Camus' description of the agony of an innocent child. Now, one should note that such a scheme is in fact a configuration of platitudes, which one must fill in with singular-concrete data. Otherwise, one falls into an equal explanation for all cases.

1. Singular.

Hegel knows very well - with the Romanticism of his time restoring the singular in honor against the abstractionism of the rationalists of his time - that life is the central category of Romanticism, always singular, unique, one-off, even if the singular is the singular form of the general concept. In this case: Camus' innocent child is irreducible in its uniqueness to all other realities, children included. In this sense, a platitude falls short and filling that empty shell with individual data is necessary if one is not to "fall into generalities" and into "hollow rhetoric."

2. Specifically.

'Concretus' in Latin is "what is fused to the rest." That rest is also singular and covers conditions that beings somewhere to the singular. In casu: the innocent child of Camus's novel, for example, had parents who had imparted to it a biological nature that helped determine its life course and perhaps included built-in miscalculations. And so on. Hegel's emphasis on the concrete is typically Romantic.

Conclusion:

The basic Hegelian schema, as a configuration of commons, i.e., aspects of a totality that are recurrent and have universal value, is heuristic, i.e., it sets the searching, rational mind on the path to finding singular and concrete data.

In passing.

One knows Aristotle's four causes, in fact: reasons or explanatory grounds:

1. The material aspect (e.g., a sick body),
2. The formal aspect (e.g., the soul as the forma, creature structure, of the body exhibiting e.g., neurosis).
3. The causal or causal aspect (the cause or at least a set of factors that determine the material and the formal aspect in its origin and course.
4. The exemplary or ideal aspect (a residue of Platonism), (any reality, material, formal, causal is not conceivable without its ideal form). - Aristotle thus created a heuristic scheme of platitudes that, as empty shells, await singular-concrete fillings, waiting.

Up to there the general pedestal

on which the second part of our philosophy of evil and suffering rests. The section that follows is a series of common interpretations with singular or at least private and concrete interpretations.

9. Objectifying suffering according to Buddha.

A.c., 462/464 is a brief outline of how Buddhists interpret evil, cause of suffering. "Suffering is reducible to and coincides with man's constant effort to bring his desires to realization."

It is human coveting that gives things their 'reality' and also produces suffering. (a.c., 462v.).

In other words, man is thrown into this world by conception and birth as well as with desires and in the midst of a situation. The course into which the

self is thrown is a necessity. Buddha reasons purely psychologically: the psyche creates what he calls "the reality," in fact: the desires, of the things he has to live with. So apply e.g. yoga techniques in such a way that this desirability of things, especially those that are disappointing, is turned into an illusion, and the suffering from the miscalculations will ease, if not disappear altogether.

Whether this eliminates the causes of that suffering is highly questionable. One can also try to turn those causes into an illusion. Whether the psychic techniques of Buddhism succeed in doing so is also open to question. As Maertens says, technology, medicine, wealth creation and all that humanity undertakes to remove the causes of suffering, evil, seem very second-rate.

Our world

Our world - with its expiration should preferably come about solely by virtue of "purely mental, inner acts" (a.c., 463). The traditional magician practices such a thing. But he does it on the basis of mental deeds (they are the soul of every real magic), but on the basis of psychic deeds which change the circumstances, do not turn the world into illusion, but change that world itself in its course.

But that a Buddhist mentalism succeeds in mentally neutralizing the same world in a turning away from the world and thus reducing inner suffering does seem possible.

What Maertens does seem to underestimate is the *typically oriental mysticism* that constitutes *the main focus* of Buddhism, situating it, except for a few sometimes fundamental differences (e.g., regarding belief in a Supreme Being or ordinary deities) in the Hindu tradition that includes a very pervasive mystical component.

In passing:

who would like to know more about this, read e.g. *M.M. Davy, dir, Encyclopédie des mystiques orientales*, Paris,, 1975 (e.g. *La mystique du Bouddhisme Indien* (o.c. 111/ 140), *Le mysticisme Tibétain* (o.c., 141/167), *La mystique du Bouddhisme Japonais* (o.c., 289/309), or also, but less thoroughly *Bruno Borchert, Mysticism (The phenomenon, the history, the new challenge)*, Haarlem, 1989-1, 1994-2.

Buddha's psychologism on suffering and its causes, from the mystical level of mastery of processes, including the course of one's own life, gains an unsuspected foundation for most Western people.

10. The escape attitude of hedonism.

Aristippos of Kurene (fifth century B.C.), student of Socrates and founder of the Kurenaic school, held that the "virtue" ("aretè," i.e., virtue) of man consisted fundamentally in pursuing sense pleasure governed by reason. With him, sense pleasure reduced itself rather to the momentary pleasure that one would like to make last.

Epikouros of Samos (-341/-270) the father of the pleasure garden, sought inner peace and, more than Aristippos, was mindful of the unpleasant consequences of a life of enjoyment. Epicureanism became a long and enduring tradition.

Is suffering inevitable, try to go through as many enjoyments as possible so that the positive balance, here the enjoyable course of existence on this earth, weighs as much as possible.

Maerten's thesis: "Pleasure remains a very peripheral (*note* : situated on the outside of the life course) definition of happiness" (a.c., 465), seems to us very correct. But as a representation of the actual existence of many people, hedonism is very correct, especially in our welfare societies.

It can lead to selfishness but not necessarily: there are hedonistic people who find their "pleasure" in making others "pleasant" under all kinds of eye points. Although most often refer to "the others," non-equals, as "to avoid" in order to escape woes. Aren't we all at least a little like that? Which therefore is not just flat selfishness, of course. In other words: a justifiable dose of hedonism is conceivable.

Yet it is clear that whoever, out of flight from the unpleasantness associated with all actual life - it is built-in - in the long run makes the enjoyments the main sense of life, shrivels into a fellow human being.

11. The psychedelic awakenings as an escape pose.

Psychedelism is the state of the soul under the topical influence of hallucinogenic active substances. One thinks of the infamous LSD Lysergic acid di-ethylamide (also called lysergamide, or lysergide). 'Psychedelic'

(psuchè, soul and dêlos, making visible -) prevalent since the sixties with the beatniks (1955) and the hippies (1962) - is that active ingredient which 'expands' man's powers of perception and sensation in such a way that one becomes aware of a state which drugless consciousness does not or rarely knows. One's own body, things in the external world, the sense of self: they all change and this in the form of a "blissful experience" until the biochemical effect leaves "extinguished."

The drug scale

The drug scale - Martens says - has become so extensive by the developing biochemistry that it gives rise in a jaded stratum - especially all the alternative youth - to a cultural movement that employs it to "cope" with what goes wrong in everyday life - from work fatigue to depression and related soul states. The great side effect, however, is addiction: one wants to re-energize the "best" state over and over again at the expense of the rest of the pastime.

Cultural criticism

Cultural criticism is perhaps one of the most urgent underpinnings of increasing drug use: "the uneasiness of culture" (one thinks of S. Freud's book and Frans Kafka's works among others) is unmistakable and is a new evil that makes itself felt. Or rather: an evil, apparently built into modern and postmodern culture, leads to a "Weltschmerz," a deep suffering caused by our world.

Nevertheless, it is clear that bio-chemicals - known in part since primitive cultures in which they were often used sacredly and magically - work psychologically rather than addressing the cause, the evil active in our culture, and in this sense their effect is rather dead-end. Even more: for our present societies, drug use has become one of the great cultural plagues.

12. The suicide as an attitude of escape

Maertens, a.i., 467, again quotes Albert Camus: "*Albert Camus* was actually not wrong when he began his philosophical essay *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) by saying, 'Il n' y a qu' un seul problème philosophique: le suicide. (there is only one philosophical problem : suicide). The question of whether life is worth living or not is the core philosophical question". Yet Camus rejected suicide and opted for "engagement," commitment, active involvement, one of the main existential themes.

Luc Debraine, L'OMS établit pour la première fois une carte mondiale de la santé mentale, in: *Le Temps* (Geneva) 10.10.01, 41, ties in with the World Health Organization report published in 2001. It states what follows.

a. One in four of the world's population suffers from "mental disorders." Nearly two-thirds of them do not get care.

Depression is on the rise and - according to projections - will become the second most common ailment after heart disease by 2020.

WHO. list includes depression, schizophrenia, retardedness, disturbances during childhood and adolescence, addiction (drugs, alcohol) Alzheimer's disease, falling illness (epilepsy).

These ills are called "universal": all countries, societies and individuals can contract them.

b. The World Health Organization also mentions that one million people commit suicide each year and some ten million attempt suicide.

Curious: the report states that the mental state is physical as well as genetic or social or ecological.

The motivations for suicide are quite varied, yet the opinion predominates that says that "most suicides stem from an 'irrational' sense of powerlessness in the face of a supremacy of suffering" (Maertens, a.c., 467).

Let us note that most suicides and attempted suicides occur in the acute emotional phase - briefly described above - in which one is not (yet) amenable to reason.

This shows itself quite clearly: the ten million who dare, once recovered from some emotional shock, do not commit suicide afterwards: they reconciled themselves to the existence in which evil is built in.

13. The revolt as defense posture.

Maertens, a.c., 468/470 clearly distinguishes this interpretation from flight attitudes.

Albert Camus, in *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1943) states that "everything is completely irrational" and therefore meaningless, absurd. Yet not the flight from life, into which we are thrown with our inner "righteousness," understand: the demand that reality be meaningful, but freedom, i.e.

consciously detaching oneself from the suffocating-subjugating pressure - like pack ice - of the "unjust" world, and revolt, i.e. living in constant revolt against absurdity.

Only in this way can man try to still organize his existence in a worthwhile way. One must install oneself lucidly - *note*: well aware of what it is about - in the absurd, dragging rocks upwards continuously and pointlessly "et imaginer Sisyphe heureux" (a.c., 468). And portraying to us that Sisyphos, notwithstanding the futility of his efforts, is "happy. Or - we correct Camus - feels happy.

In passing:

Sisyphos is the mythical king of Corinth, notorious for his crimes. As a great criminal, ancient Greek myth condemns him to push a boulder up a mountainside in the underworld - hell. Yet time and again, the boulder fell down when he almost reached the mountaintop.

In light of such a myth, Camus sought to construct "a positive humanism."

Maertens.- To my knowledge, Camus is the author who best interprets the sense of life of man who, placed before suffering, must choose position without a god, which, incidentally, he refuses." (a.c., 468). Camus interprets this literarily in the figure of the doctor Rieux who wants to live as "a saint without God."

Paneloux, the Jesuit, on the other hand, as a "believer," is outlined by Camus as one who "accepts everything. He dies in that "active fatalism."

If Camus intended to portray the Christian processing of the absurd in that figure, he is confusing one type of god belief with other forms of it that are more than and different from "active fatalism." Jesus taught anything but "active fatalism."

14. The Marxist interpretation of evil as a defense posture.

While Camus neglects the evil in individual man himself that he seems to define as "justice," Marxism wholeheartedly acknowledges the evil in humanity but reduces it to the evil called "capitalist exploitation.

Consequence: change that skewed capitalist substructure of society, and immediately the whole superstructure (the whole culture) will change for the better.

As with the atheist Camus, religion in Marxism - understood as God-faith - is a substandard solution. Religion is opium for the people, i.e., it diverts consciousness from the capitalist exploitation of the proletariat in order to pin it down in the numbed state of God-faith and the expectation of true salvation in an afterlife.

Marxist socialism thus also sees in religion and all that accompanies it an "Entfremdung," a consciousness alienated from itself and from the world in its course that must be actively eradicated.

The collapse of the communist regimes in the 1990s have exposed that that extermination has become a bloody and deadly praxis for many believers.

Martens admits that actual Christianity and the official churches were often up to "opium of the people" and that there is truth in the Marxist critique.

But he countered that Christianity does not necessarily become the opium of the people.

But above all, he emphasizes that forms of evil and Entfremdung, unreal consciousness, exist that can be found outside of capitalist exploitation; guilty moral behavior, sickness and death are therefore not abolished by a communist planetary sanctuary state and demonstrate its finitude very clearly.

He names intellectuals of Marxist persuasion such as Machovec (Czechoslovakia), Geraideg (France), Solzhenitsin (U.S.S.R.), who boast that they do not know "how the problem of deathbed can be solved in a Marxist way" (a.c., 471).

In other words, despite all the socializations, people continue to get sick and die.

15. Christian charity as a defense against evil.

"It is impractical to mention here even what Christian caritas has accomplished over the centuries, including institutionally. Nursing the sick -

opm. and assisted dying -, helping the poor, asylum, without mentioning all forms of moral assistance." (a.c., 471).

Martens insists, however, that combating evil through charitable activities of all kinds was done "essentially" at the level of individual help (ibidem).

In other words (and here the influence of socialist religious criticism is very palpable as it broke through in the 1960s and 1970s also in church circles): "Too little thought was given to altering the structures of society in such a way" (a.c., 472) that social justice in the Biblical sense became a reality.

Historical Situation.

Compared to pagan antiquity two thousand years ago, Christian caritas was already a tremendous step forward (ibidem). Indeed, Jesus - following a lead in the Old Testament - combined God- and charity into one indivisible axiom of Christian praxis.

Liturgy: his miracles! His salvation message of acquiring treasure in heaven, Jesus preached by getting rid of earthly misery to begin with.

The sinners - sin is also an evil in Christian interpretation -, the poor, the sick, - we add: outcasts (think of his defense of the adulterous woman e.g.) golden his constant missionary attention.

Maertens: all this does not prevent active efforts in the form of science - e.g. medical science -, improvement of law, technical development, - we add: general development (e.g. in the developing countries) are also a form of charitable approach to evil and suffering in the world. The faithful are not left behind in this.

But Jesus - and in his wake his followers - was never a "socialist revolutionary" as some believers, among others, want to dub him: the cause of evil, cause which is itself an evil, is too much situated in the mysterious depths of earthly existence for that.

16. Suffering as a condition of the good.

"Let us understand that evil and suffering are now conditions for bringing about something better. So in the nature of: the burden of an examination period leads to joy of graduation; an illness leads to purification, to consideration for others. (a.c., 476).

They Jesus did not say, "If the grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it does not bring forth fruit." This is ancient wisdom that even pagans and unbelievers recognize. Thus Maertens calls "the reward for the next generation of a Greek insight" (a.c., 477). Is such not the interpretation of just about all true parents who "do it for their children?"

All conscious sacrifices are evil endured because out of them emerges good. Maertens does not seem to appreciate this very much because immediately he points out the twofold finiteness of suffering as a condition for solving problems.

1. *Suffering is very ambivalent.*

Besides some compensations, it brings much mischief and sometimes there seems to be no counterbalance. I.e.: either good does not emerge or the sufferer comes out more degraded.

2. *Suffering: a scandal for thinking.*

Even if one moves the "compensation" (i.e., the good achieved through suffering) to an afterlife, suffering remains a scandal "for thought" (a.c., 477).

We would improve, "a scandal, indeed, for mere emotional thinking, following moments of crisis in the life of the mind."

His decision:

"In any case, the creativity (*op.*: that suffering creates something good) of suffering remains an insufficient explanation. (a.c., 477). If "insufficient" means "partial," agreed; but if "insufficient" means - with a Camus for whom Maertens shows much sympathy - "illusory," this is unprovable.

The sacrifices made by so many people who consciously suffer for others - parents, socially-minded people (think, for example, of Mother Teresa in India) - are a very sufficient reason for them for the time being.

Maertens also tried to debunk this sacrificial doctrine by arguing that it is "logos," rationality, that only provides insight. As if insight would not ultimately be very much, indeed, everything.

17. *The humanistic interpretation of the connection "suffering/ good"*

Maertens does not define so sharply what he means by "humanism. For there is e.g. Christian humanism which, with roots from the Bible, has

emerged especially since the Renaissance period, and there is atheistic humanism (e.g. the existentialist humanism of Jean Paul Sartre).

The godlike exploits the relative autonomy of all created things, especially human beings, to elaborate a world and a course of life that testifies to human creativity. The atheistic of J.P. Sartre defines autonomy as "délaissement," i.e. radical autonomy in a universe without the sacred or without God.

"If God does not exist, then everything - at least in principle - is permitted" was Sartre's interpretation of the basis of his humanism.

On that humanistic basis in an apparently godless sense, one can - according to Maertens - understand the causal relationship "suffering/compensation" as follows.

1. An incentive.

Man shows his fundamental freedom by overcoming the pressure of the environment - "all kinds of determinisms, all kinds of obstacles (o.c., 478), indeed seeing in it a challenge rather than fatalistically resigning himself to it. Suffering is a value in the growth process of man" (a.c., 478). Thus Maertens. One sees then e.g. in the upbringing that "pampers" children: the result risks being that they become too soft in the struggle that already comprises a life course.

2. An alarm system.

"Dizziness - says Maertens - helps us avoid a fatal fall by giving us the illusion of it before we actually fall (o.c. ibid). Shame alerts us about our honorless behavior. Our organism has pain, among other things, to alert us that something is not right.

3. An offering.

"Even outside the religious context, sacrifice can be experienced as a value" (ibid) One can even see death as a sacrifice of the individual in the service of the species. Yet here again Maertens' strong caveat: "But what if one denies oneself everything for years for a purpose one finally misses?" (a.c., 479).

Similarly, e.g., what if a mother gives birth to a disabled child? Maertens concludes with the finiteness of logical insight: so much remains tragic that cannot be made intelligible.

Our criticism is: That we cognitively fail to gain a sufficient understanding does not prevent the fact that objectively a sensible structure in evil and suffering is at work.

18. The Book of Job.

A Maertens limits his exposition of what the Old Testament says about evil causing suffering to this world-renowned book. To first summarize what he says, the following.

1. Maertens first views Job's reckoning with a traditional interpretation. If one has lived unscrupulously, God punishes this by sending evil across and by making suffering pay. This he calls "the traditional doctrine of suffering as punishment." This still lives on in *John 9: 2/3*: "Who has sinned?"

2. Job knows himself to be innocent

He therefore strongly protests against interpretation by his friends who apply a traditional scheme of thought without dealing with the question of Job's guilt. The author (...) thus clearly poses the central problem: this of innocent suffering.

This problem remains modern: even today all manner of innocents are beset with misfortunes (a.c., 480). - This keeps Maertens within the bounds of Camus and his terrible agony of an innocent child, - along with the very emotional reactions to it.

'Existential'.

As a result, the book of Job is "existential," i.e. it remains within the emotional reaction following misunderstanding misunderstood, "absurd," suffering. Maertens therefore emphasizes that Job too calls "God cruel, a human guardian, a lurking lion" in the rebellious phase of his reaction.

Paradox.

"In the midst of this - 'emotional' (we add) cursing of God, Job paradoxically continues to believe in Him" (a.c., 486)- "I know that my 'goel,' my defender, is alive - that he will act as the one who has the last word. After my awakening (*op.*: after my death), He will administer justice to me with Him. In my flesh (*note*: also with my body, cf. *Psalms 16 (15): 9/10*) I will see God." (*Job 19: 25/26*).

In other words, this is similar to what Peter will later experience as a grace in the midst of an emotional situation: he emphatically denies more than once that he was Jesus' disciple (*John 18:25/27*). To which the rooster crows! But Jesus' prayer for him has the effect that, the means of emotional confusion, his faith is preserved.

In other words, that paradox is the result of faith because of man but at the same time of grace - pure grace - because of God who in the midst of emotion (annoyance, general confusion) makes man susceptible to reason. In other words: in the midst of cognitive incomprehension, the sense of the objective sense at work in evil and suffering is revealed. God-like expressed: God has his reasons that our even believing reason does not simply grasp clearly.

19. The theme of Jesus as the God-man who dies but rises.

Maertens a.c.; 482: "There is the tremendous new fact that Jesus, God's son, suffered himself. (...). All the Passion stories culminate in the resurrection and a new beginning. What naturally recurs, given the foregoing, is that "He who is innocence by definition also took upon himself human suffering in all its forms: physical and moral pain, loneliness and fatigue and death." (a.c., 482).

The traditional interpretation "sin debt / punishment."

In *Mark 2:1/12*, when Jesus heals a paralytic, a connection is evident: "My child, your sins are forgiven you" (*Mark 2:9*). Explained to show, visibly - immediately to all present, that Jesus "has power on earth to forgive sins," (*Mark 2:10*) he commands the paralytic to take up his army steps as a healer.

In passing:

When Jesus institutes the Eucharist, his wording is abundantly clear: "for many as forgiveness of sins (*Matthew 26:28*) and for a foundation of the new covenant (*Jeremias 31: 31/34; Hebrews 8: 8:12*), precisely in the wake of that forgiveness of sins.

A radically new sense of purpose.

"To be a Christian now is to take seriously the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, the son of God. And taking them together. In this way a new perspective is opened on suffering. (a.c., *ibid*) - What Eastern Christians called: the unity of crosses and resurrection passes.

However, the exasperation remains.

In a first reaction - Martens' predominant, existentially' stated position - "one rebels against suffering itself. Christ's attitude in the olive garden is telling in this respect. (...). Job's rebellion even receives a dramatic echo in one of Jesus' last words in which he cries out his utter desolation." (..)

Act of redemption.

By - as Paul will say - dying with Christ and rising with him, we share in the redemptive effect of Jesus' paschal event, which, as the "servant of the Lord," he accomplished not so much for himself alone (he did not need it from himself as radically sinless), but as a kind of summary of all men in what he is and does: he took upon himself our death but bestowed upon us his resurrection glory.

20. A concluding remark.

Before saying goodbye to our text that served as our stimulus, one more point. Maertens talks about the specificity of Christian ethics (a.c., 486). He finds it in our attitude toward suffering, in the radical form of love even toward those who make us suffer, in the mystery of a love with which we also reach people we do not even know. This is all correct but still an impression of vagueness remains.

Return to *Mark 2:1/12* (the healing of the paralytic). When - after discussion with the scribes - Jesus arrives at the moment of action, i.e. treating the evil, the paralyzed condition, and the suffering, the daily suffering that paralysis entails for those who are lame and even more so for those around them, under the prompting of his heavenly Father and carried by the life force represented by the Holy Spirit, he says: "So that you (*opm.*: primarily the disputing scribes) might know that the Son of Man (*note*: Jesus) has power on earth to forgive sins, - here he spoke to the paralytic: - "I say to you, get up, take your bed and go home." Immediately this man got up, took his bed and went in front of all so that all were amazed, praised God and said, "Never have we seen anything like this."

What is happening here?

Jesus first deals with the ethical ground situation: the man was not in agreement with God and his commandment. He therefore underwent - according to mechanisms that do not concern us directly here - the unpleasant consequences of his "sins. Only when the real cause is removed can the added consequence be removed, in this case: an abandonment.

Note: Jesus acts on earth.

He does save from heaven in which he is at home, but well on earth he is active, taking away the evil that clings to sin, the causing evil, and the suffering associated with it in a substantial way.

No question of denying "the other world" but also no question of abandoning "this world" to its fate: it is precisely from "the other world," which is ultimately the Holy Trinity in its supernatural life force, that "salvation" is wrought "on earth.

This is the paradox of believing in another world as Christianity advocates.