No title, no name, nothing, maybe waste

Author:
Johann-Albrecht Meylahn[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Correspondence to:
Johann-Albrecht Meylahn

Email:
johann.meylahn@up.ac.za

Postal address:
PO Box 14885, Lyttelton 0140, South Africa

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There is general agreement that the globe is facing a crisis of the Anthropocene. The crisis has taken on such dimensions that a new way of thinking has become necessary. Or maybe a new way of being has become necessary, or maybe a new way of being thought has become necessary. What transformations (*Verwandlungen*) are necessary to arrive at this way of being thought? Maybe Nietzsche's three transformations can guide towards a new way of being thought towards the *Übermensch* of the Anthropocene.

Introduction

When I was asked to present a paper at this conference with the theme, Practical Theology in Africa and human waste, I was on the one hand eager, as the theme is very close to my heart, and on the other hand very cautious, because what could I possibly contribute to this theme. I realised, as I started reading and writing, that I had absolutely nothing to add, and no matter how hard I tried to think of even a title for my paper, there was nothing. Therefore, nothing is all that I have to offer. Maybe this nothing is waste, a waste of your time, a waste of a precious timeslot on the programme. What I offer is waste, maybe a practical theology of waste.

How does one produce a practical theology of nothing or of waste, as waste is always produced? It is a by-product. It is a by-product, often when one is busy with very important things. For example, the consumption of precious energy produces waste. To live produces waste. To construct marvellous buildings and products produces waste. Is a practical theology of waste a by-product of the construction of beautiful uplifting theologies? Or is practical theology of waste a by-product of various forms of liberation theologies, which seek to liberate or redeem humanity from the imminent doom of the ecological and economic disaster that is facing Planet Earth?

How to produce a practical theology of waste? How to produce nothing? How to produce nothing that is not even worthy of a name or a title?

When trying to get rid of waste, it reminds one that waste is not nothing. Waste is certainly not nothing in the current political context of the global village. The global politics, in the current ecological and economic crisis, is all about waste and the right to produce waste. Does the West have the right to continue to produce waste, and thereby deny the emerging economies the right to develop to the same level of waste-production as the West? The looming fact is that one of the great excesses currently facing Earth is the human, and therefore the human as waste. Thus, waste is no longer nothing, but it is something that has become very disturbing and worrisome in global politics.

How to produce a disturbing and worrisome nothing? Maybe waste production is not only about producing, but about transformation. As things are transformed into waste, something is transformed into nothing. How to transform worthy theology into a practical theology of waste? Maybe Nietzsche's (2000) three transformations of the Spirit, or *Verwandlungen des Geistes*[1], taken from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, can help with interpreting this transformation into nothing, into waste. These three *Verwandlungen*, from the camel to the lion to the child, will guide the transformation to waste and an attempt at a practical theology of waste in the time of the Anthropocene.

The camel

The first *Verwandlung* is that of the camel[2]. The camel seeks and hungers for the heavy load. The camel, like Sisyphus, carries this heavy burden up the mountain. What is this heaviness, this weight that the camel seeks? What is this load that Sisyphus has to carry eternally up the

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1. '*Drei Verwandlungen nenne ich euch des Geistes: wie der Geist zum Kamele wird, umd zum Löwen das Kameel, und zum Kinde zuletzt der Löwe*' (Nietzsche 2000).

2. '*Vieles Schwere giebt es dem Geiste, dem starken, tragsamen Geiste, dem Ehrfurcht innewohnt: nach dem Schweren und Schwersten verlangt seine Stärke. Was ist schwer? So fragt der tragsame Geist, so kniet er nieder, dem Kameele gleich, und will gut beladen sein. Was is das Schwerste, Ihr Helden? So fragt der tragsame Geist, dass ich es auf mich nehme und meiner Stärke froh werde.*'

mountain? There is a fascination with Atlas or Hercules, who carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. Why do they carry it? Is it to save earth, redeem it, or carry it towards truth? The camel and Sisyphus, Atlas have one thing in common: the carrying of the load, the burden of the world up the mountain of truth. This first transformation of the spirit into the camel is certainly a noble transformation, as it is all about saving the world. Is it about carrying the world to safety, protected maybe by truth?

The burden of the camel in the Anthropocene

The world needs saving, especially in this time of the imminent ecological disaster. The world needs camels to carry this weight, to carry this burden. But what is the burden in this time, that some are calling the Anthropocene? I would like to suggest that the burden of the camel is the saving theory that will save the world from the feared sixth great extinction.

The burden in the time of the great ecological disaster must be to seek a universal *oiko*nomic ethics that will transform the current economic system that produces waste to a system that produces less waste, and therefore saves the planet, the human home: the *oikos*. Or the burden is to seek a universal *oiko*logical ethics, of how humanity should live in harmony with nature or face the revenge of Gaia. As a camel theologian, the burden could be to seek a liberation theological perspective, which seems the theological thing to do when faced with a theme like theology of waste, and seek to proclaim a liberating message, a message of how humanity can be liberated from the dictatorship of the destructive forces of the market. A perspective of how those, who are perceived as waste, can rise up against the system that transforms them into waste. This is the burden of the camel, the burden of Sisyphus, the weight of the world that presses down on Atlas.

How to carry this burden? How to proclaim this saving message? Is it to paint, in the most graphic detail, the darkest, gloomiest and most depressing apocalyptic picture of the end of the world as we know it, in the hope that it will awaken humanity from its slumber? The burden is evangelism, to evangelise the world into the truth, to tell them that the choice is to turn or be destroyed. Turn, convert, change your life, or face the revenge of Gaia. It is a heavy burden to scare people into desperate actions, so as to save the world! But that is not possible, as the problem is too overwhelming; therefore it hardly ever scares people into action. On the contrary, it scares them into apathy, and the denialist justifications thereof.

What a terrible weight it is to carry, what a burden! Proposals have been presented and are being presented at various conferences and forums of how the world can be saved. Why then should one add one more? The last two or three centuries have seen a proliferation of grand theories of how to save Planet Earth with or without humanity. Could I be so audacious or presumptuous to presume that I could be *the* camel, by adding something new or even revolutionary to this history of grand theories, liberating theologies, and

transforming revolutions? What would I seek to offer: the ultimate saving or liberating revolution? Why would I presume that my theory would work, when history tells the story of semi-failed or completely failed revolutions?

Have any of these grand theories, grand ethics or grand revolutions fundamentally changed the emergence of Anthropocene or have they speeded up its rise? Well, that is a matter of opinion. The pessimists will say that it has made no difference, and the optimists will say that it has maybe slowed the process down a little, or at least created an ecological awareness. Optimism or pessimism, the march of the Anthropocene towards the sixth great extinction seems more or less a given, and one can fill the time that remains with hectic action inspired by optimism in some answer or *final solution.* Žižek, in turn, would probably argue that such hectic action of optimism only feeds and strengthens the march of the powers that be (Critchley 2012:210f.). What is the alternative: pessimism and utter hopelessness?

To tell you the truth, I am tired of such dark apocalyptic images. I am exhausted of having to live up to some or other impossible infinite demand, of some or other grand universal ecological or economic ethics, that promises to be the *final solution*. I am also tired of hearing the particularist narrative, of how humanity needs to return to a state of being in harmony with nature, how things were believed to be in some cultures before the evil of Western imperialism. Thereby, I am not denying the beauty and tremendous wisdom of these ideas and cultures, but once they are in the hands, or rather the minds of academia, they are transformed or mutilated into philosophies or theories, and consequently they are nothing other than just one more theory in the grand library of human knowledge.

I am tired of firstly having to try and live up to the expectations of such high ethical standards, continually living up to the demand of the great Thou-shall or Thou-shall-not. Tired of not only living up to the infinite demand, but also having to evangelise and convince the whole world, or even just those around me, to live by the same high standards, otherwise Planet Earth is doomed. It reminds me too much of turn-or-burn evangelism. I am tired, and thus, like Nietzsche's camel, I run into the desert with this burden. I run into the desert of failed and exhausted world-saving-theories. '*Alles diess Schwerste nimmt der tragsame Geist auf sich: dem Kameele gleich, das beladen in die Wüste eilt, also eilte er in seine Wüste'* (Nietzsche 2000).

I cannot carry the world on my shoulders, I am not Atlas, nor do I want to place that burden onto anybody else. Is it not arrogant that one even presumes that one could save the world? Are Christians, or practical theologians, called to be Atlas, are they not rather called to be St. Christopher, who carries Christ, and then it is Christ who carries the world?

The lion enters the scene, maybe prowling in the camel's desert. The lion smells the blood and sweat of an impossible

task. It smells the excess, the waste, the brokenness, it smells the wasting away of the camel under the weight of its burden, and it attacks. The camel in his desert is transformed into the attacking lion.

The lion

Tremendous is the roar of the lion, as the mountains tremble at the sound of its ferocity. The lion is the king of the jungle, king of the desert of the camel.

In the desert of the camel – maybe it is the desert of the Real – the camel is transformed into the lion. The lion seeks not the burden of the camel, but freedom, and to be master (king) in his own desert. '*Freiheit will er sich erbeuten und Herr sein in seiner eignen Wüste*' (Nietzsche 2000). So the lion seeks the last God in the desert, '*feind will er ihm werden und seinem letzten Gott, um Sieg will er mit dem grossen Drachen ringen.*' He seeks the last God, the last monotheism, and become God's enemy, so as to slay the dragon. Slay the dragon, Thou-shall. The lion no longer seeks to be the servant of anyone. Never again will he follow the command of the dragon Thou-shall. The lion is free, from now on it is only 'what I will' the lion roars in the desert, thereby slaying the dragon Thou-shall. Liberated and free in the desert is the lion. The demanding gods of the camel lie shattered and in pieces; history has revealed their impotence, but even the last God lies shattered and deconstructed. The world has been unchained from its sun, God is murdered. This is the message that Zarathustra brings to the village as he comes down from the mountain. Maybe it is Sisyphus' mountain from which he comes. 'God is dead!' 'Truth is dead!' 'The infinite demand is dead!' 'You are free' he proclaims.

The lion's roar, the lion's violence is iconoclastic. It hunts and smells out images of gods and idols, it smells out dogmas and grand theories, shattering them, convinced of his desire to be free. The lion's truth is to unchain the worlds from their suns. The lion will not rest until even the last God and last truth is destroyed.

The lion's freedom in the Anthropocene

What can the lion's freedom offer this world facing imminent doom? Is he the lion of Juda (Rv 5), who will unlock the seven seals of the scroll, reveal to us the secret of history, and give us *the* answer to the current plight?

The lion in his freedom does not paint dark apocalyptic pictures to scare people into obedience to the dragon's demand. The lion does not proclaim a grand theory of ethics that will save the world, if all obey. The lion offers nothing. It cannot offer a new truth, except that truth is no more. It cannot offer God, as God is dead. The lion cannot offer any values or ethics. '*Neue Werthe schaffen – das vermag auch der Löwe noch nicht*' (Nietzsche 2000).

All the lion can offer is maybe a *Gelassenheit*, the *Gelassenheit* in nothing. Perhaps it is an exhausted *Gelassenheit*, after the burdens of the camel and the iconoclastic battles. But this *Gelassenheit* will not leave the lion in peace, as he will immediately receive the wrath of global villagers, who in their passion to save the world, will accuse the lion's *Gelassenheit* of siding with relativity, and thereby playing into the consumerist capitalist discourse. That might be true, but those who trade in world-saving-gods and world-saving-theories, are they not also playing into the consumerist capitalist discourse? Are their hectic actions, broadcast and assembled over the social media networks, really changing anything, or are they feeding into the grand discourse by offering the grand discourse a necessary outlet for its guilt or bad conscience?

Thus, what the lion attempts, is not to try and evangelise, to try and save, but a *Gelassenheit* or maybe even an ethic of nihilism, what some have called, an ethics of the Real[3]. But, what would that make the lion – the master of the Real, the guardian or the mouthpiece of the Real, like the mouth of Sauron in the Lord of the Rings trilogy? The lion is the mouth of nothing, but this nothing is still something to be the mouth of. Thus, the lion still speaks in the name of something and therefore still *Unmundig*, as he speaks not with his own mouth. That poses the question: Can one be king in one's own desert? Is one not always servant at least to one? So here in the desert, after having killed the last God, the lion discovers his last God, in the name of whom he destroyed all other gods. The lion discovers his last truth, in the name of which he destroyed truth. The lion finds the final monotheism, the final absolute truth, that there is no God or truth. In discovering that final absolute truth, the lion realises that he is still part camel, with one last burden to carry. It is the burden to prowl around the camel that he himself still is.

What is it that calls of nothing? What is it that disturbs the *Gelassenheit* in nothing? To what does one respond if one responds to nothing?

One cannot save the world like Atlas, it is ontologically and epistemologically impossible. One cannot transform back into the camel, but can one fix what is epistemologically or ontologically wrong with the camel, so that it can again carry the load? Or is there something wrong with the ontology and epistemology or the epistemological ontology that thinks about camels, with their gods and truths, saving the world? It is ontologically impossible to carry the world and therefore it is an epistemological mistake to even think that it is possible. The problem is therefore with the ontology and epistemology. It comes back to the ancient problem between thinking and being. Critchley (2012:211) interprets Žižek's (2006) *The parallax view* as exactly that difference between thinking and being. This is certainly not a new problem, but it is the problem of philosophy from its beginnings in Greek thought. It is the problem that introduced the Enlightenment in the thoughts of Kant. It is what defines the discipline of practical theology, the relationship between thought or theory and being or practice.

3.In reference to a book by that title, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, by Alenka Zupančič (2000).

It would be reductionist to reduce everything that is wrong with the world today to a single epistemological or ontological mistake – a reductionism that all the evils of today's world are the result of such a dualist Western worldview, which separates being from thinking. Such reductionism easily leads to the idea that what will save the world is a more holistic non-Western thinking. On the other hand, I am not denying that such thinking (epistemology), and the ontology that went with it, played an important role in the perceptions of the scientific revolutions and the industrial innovations that brought about the rise of the West.

The problem the world is facing concerns thinking, as all the grand thoughts and theories that have burdened the camel have failed, or at least failed to a degree. Therefore, the challenge is indeed to think about thinking, and therefore about being thought. What is sought after the lion's ferocious iconoclastic roar is a new way of thinking, a practical theology that can respond to the call of nothing, a practical theology of nothing, or a practical theology of waste in the desert of the Real. Maybe such a practical theology can offer an appropriate ontology and epistemology, or thinking about being and therefore about being thought, and thus an anthropology to face the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Don Browning (1991) argued that the focus of practical theology is on the theory-practice-theory relationship and therefore he returned to Aristotle's idea of *phronesis*, rather than the strict separation of the two. Or maybe the focus should shift even more towards a focus on being, practice or experience, as a kind of phenomenology of life, without too much focus on theory? Or maybe the focus of practical theology can be seen as a phenomenology of lived religion (see Failing and Heimbrock 1998; Gräb 2000, 2002, 2005, 2012 and Ganzevoort 2009, 2013). What if it develops into an ontological-epistemology, a way of being thought rather than thinking about being?

Bruno Latour (2005) argues that one needs to move beyond any forms of theory-practice dualism towards the realisation that all is mediated, both theory and practice. Back to the lion, the idea that the lion killed the dragon, or that he proclaimed that God is dead! These deeds or proclamations of the lion are mediated to us via texts. Therefore one does not really know anything about the dragon or about God, as all we have is this text about the death of God and the slaying of the dragon, with nothing outside of these texts (Derrida 1997:158). But then again, was this very idea not part of the lion's weaponry to kill the dragon? Was it not the final arrow piercing the dragon's heart? Was this thought not the final murderous blow to God? It was this thought that the lion used to liberate the world from its sun, proclaiming all chains which bind the world to the sun, to be chains of references, chains of social-linguistic construction. All is *poiesis* and nothing outside of text.

One cannot get past the lion's ferocious roar. Whatever weapon you choose with which to face the lion, he will deconstruct. There are no more world-saving-theories for the camel, as the lion's desert has turned them all to waste. He truly is the king of the jungle, or the king of the desert of the Real.

The lion alone has power in the wasteland of what he deconstructed. To be transformed into the child, from the lion, one has to learn to think beyond the thinking and being that was deconstructed, and made nothing, made waste. To be transformed into the child, one has to learn to think with only waste: broken chains of references. The child thinks with shattered chains of reference, threading and weaving waste into a world. The child's weaving is without chains, binding it to truth, God, or the dragon Thou-shall, but alone an imaginative creation (*poiesis*). What kind of thinking is that? How does the child think?

Maybe, for the child, the difference between being and thinking is not important. Dreams and reality or fantasy and reality are not clearly separated for a child into neat categories. To think like a child, is maybe to think not only about what is, but also to create what is not and populate the world with it. What can we learn from the child? What can we learn from Christopher Robin's hundred acre wood? (Milne 1992). We learn that whatever is, is mediated or created (*poiesis*). So whatever is, is mediated and what is not mediated (*an sich*) is not, at least not *für mich*.

Latour has argued that even the so-called hard sciences, those that believe themselves to deal with what truly is, with their so-called objectivity, are creating what is, by a whole network of actors. These actors together compose or construct or create the 'objective facts'[4]. Latour is thereby in no way arguing that we are living in fictions, but he is taking the construction of science, the *poiesis* of science, inside and outside of laboratories, seriously. He therefore speaks rather of factishes than facts (Latour 2010). It is exactly the ecological crisis that has forced scientists to reveal all the mediation, all the creation or construction necessary for the production of scientific 'facts'. The ecological crisis and the debate about global climate change brought this to the fore. 'Facts' do not speak for themselves. What speaks in the science wars are the actor networks. It is the mediation, the creativity, necessary to produce good facts that speak for their reliability and credibility. Which institution produced the fact, in which journal was it published and who is funding the production of these 'facts', has become the proof of 'facts'. In the science wars the 'facts' are defenceless, and the actors in the networks of mediation are the foot soldiers, battling to prove the credibility and reliability of these created facts.

Therefore, whatever is believed to be is mediated by a complex network of actors or chains of references, network of references all mutually influencing each other. Something maybe like James Lovelock's (2007, 2009) Gaia, or the Argentine artist, Tomas Saraceno with his work, *On space*

4.'It is because of so many mediations that they are able to be so objectively true' (Latour 2010:75).

time foam in the Hangar Biccoco in Milan, who tried to give expression to this networked web of existence, to live in a mutually influencing bubble, once again making it absolutely clear that one cannot possibly be Atlas, who can lift the objective world onto his shoulders.

One cannot escape this web or network that one is part of as one co-creates it, to get a God-eye view. One certainly cannot climb out and try and fix it from the outside. Thus, one is always already implicated, as much as one implicates others. It is a network of responding and being responsible. Heidegger (1996:283f.) describes *Dasein* as a state of guilt, to be indebted. One is no longer indebted to the dragon Thou-shall, nor indebted to an infinite demand, but still indebted (guilty), as one is always responding and being responsible in an intricate web. This debt can be thought differently, in terms of being implicated and expected to respond as one is already responding to others who are responding to one.

So what calls? To what do humans respond so as to be (*Dasein*)? Maybe the question can be posed differently, taking Latour's (2005) thoughts into consideration: How are humans associated or implicated or networked into this actor network? How are humans mediated to themselves and how are they mediated to others? To what calling do humans respond? If the modern dream of responding to the calling of the other is lifted, what is left? It is no longer the modern scientist who discovers the neutral objective other. The self only comes into being in response to infinite ethical demand placed on the self by the Other (Levinas 1969). There is relationship of mutual influence and it is no longer a one way vector from objective scientist (subject) to object. The so-called object insists on being, and has all sorts of actor networks in place so as to be able to insist on existing. This places the so-called subject into the responsibility to help the so-called object to exist, by for example naming it or identifying it. Thus, the object is no longer a neutral object, but animated and therefore a 'subject' in its own right, as it calls the other subjects into being responsible. The 'objects' implicate the 'subject' in their insistence of being.

In Lovelock's idea of Gaia one is no longer dealing with an inanimate earth, but an animated earth, or in the work of neuro-scientist, Damasio (2010), where he argues that the self comes into being by ever more complex feedback loops of responding to the 'environment'. The difference between Lovelock and Damasio is that in Lovelock's thoughts the environment is animated. In other words, the self responds to the environment, but the environment is responding to the self in ever more complex feedback loops. The result is that one is in this web, where no outside view is possible at all, and every move is a response and a responsibility. These are beautiful 'discoveries' mediated to one via texts, the lion roars. These texts are 'as if' representations of the way things are. These texts are mediations, or reference chains made up of various complex networks, from laboratories, computers, to scientific conferences and papers, to research themes and agendas of institutions, who in turn are seeking international

rating, to politics and funding agencies. Thinking has changed completely. Epistemology has transformed and with it ontology. The knowing subjective or objective subject has realised that she is also known as object and part of a web of mediation that she creates, as well as being created by it. In a sense it is a form of total immanence, but where immanence and transcendence as opposites do not really make sense anymore, as the proclamation of total immanence is mediated via language.

The child born of the lion in the desert of the Real needs to move beyond that which was destroyed by the lion's roar. Therefore, the child cannot seek an ethics of the Real, but if anything it might be an ethos, which is not an ethics based on some or other theory, but an ethos as a way of being (ontology), based on a way of thinking (epistemology) or maybe a way of being thought (epistemological ontology or ontological epistemology). Maybe a way of *being* lost in thought as they often say about children, or lost in their own thought or dream creations. When parents ask, 'What are you doing?' the child responds, 'Nothing!' 'Such a waste of time,' the parent retorts. It is maybe a way of being in nothing and thus a way of being thought in waste, or a way of being in waste. It is a child's *Gelassenheit* in nothing, but with a difference. The Lion cannot create new values in this *Gelassenheit*, but the child can. '*Neue Werthe schaffen – das vermag auch der Löwe noch nicht: aber Freiheit sich schaffen zu neuem Schaffen – das vermag die Macht des Löwen*' (Nietzsche 2000). The absolute freedom of the lion is necessary for the transformation into the child, and with the child new creations, new imaginations, *poiesis*.

An interruption of the *Verwandlung* of history or a revelation from the book of Revelation: Not the lion, but the lamb can unlock the seals of the scroll of history

But wait, this story of the camel and the lion is not new; one has heard it before. It sounds strangely familiar, but yet different. It is an ancient story told in a different language.

Why is this story known, although told in a different voice? Well, it is a story that has the same fathers (parents). It is a story born of the affair between Jerusalem and Athens whose offspring populate the West.

Where does one's help come from in the desert of the camel transformed into the lion's wasteland? The people gathered in the throne room were (Rv 5) expecting the lion of Juda to enter and unlock the seven seals of the great scroll of history.

They were expecting the lion, but what if it is Nietzsche's lion, who would then be on the throne? It cannot be the old dragon, as the old dragon is powerless; he cannot break the seven seals and unlock the great scroll of history. But it is not the old dragon, rather it is a father of love, who so loved

the world, that he emptied himself of the divine to enter history as the son. The great wholly Other who is every other (Derrida 1995:76) has become mediation. It is the great I am who I am (Ex 3:14), beyond names, beyond nomination, beyond language, yet revealing himself within human hi*story*, the story of humanity, the language of humanity, revealing himself in language as the prayer inherent or incarnate in language. He cannot be named by human language, and therefore reveals himself as the infinite desertification of language (Derrida 1995:56), a language deserted and yet filled with prayers and tears. The one on the throne reveals himself in the waste of the desert of the Real, in the infinite desertification of language, as the prayer and supplication in language, calling things and world to come and by calling them bringing them near, as they remain distant[5] (Heidegger 1971:198), that is to say unchained to their words.

They are waiting for the lion to enter. And who enters? Not the lion, but the lamb, the slain lamb, bleeding from his wounds. Who is this slain lamb? He is the One, the One comes to reveal the Other, to tell humanity to no longer seek the Other, but in the One (Jn 12:45; 14:9). He is the way, the truth and the life, and nobody comes to the Other but through the One (Jn 14:6). He is mediation, he is the mediator, but this mediator, this mediation is the way. He is the way not to the truth, but he is the truth, *Sola Christus*. He is the mediator who through his birth proclaimed Zarathustra's message: God is dead. The God of infinitely beyond, the God of Thou shall, is dead. He has become nothing in a cradle of a stable to shame all that is (1 Cor 1:28). He became nothing to shame what is, to be folly to the grand universal theories and a stumbling block to the particular signs (1 Cor 1:23). That is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). But then even this way was crucified. The cross is the death of the death of God, the death of nihilism, and therefore the opening of a space for the impossible possible (see Meylahn 2013:289). The death of nihilism is not to return to positivism, but the space to create anew and thus the birth of the child of Easter. A child is born of the cross, a child transformed from the lion and the camel.

The last *Verwandlung,* the child: How to think about thinking and how to think about being thought after the interruption or revelation

How to think in the desert of the lion and not despair in its nothingness? How to think in the desert of the lion as a child born in freedom? How to think in a desert of waste and still believe in tomorrow? That is the gift of the child!

Maybe it is time to accept the roar of the lion, without it scaring anyone, and accept that the Other is not, as all there is are infinite chains of reference never reaching anything, but weaving together that which one is part of. The child, as post-nihilist, the child born after the crucifixion in the hope of Easter, accepts the gap. After having accepted difference, after

having accepted the Real, the child plays in the wasteland of the lion's desert, to discover not the difference between thinking and being, but différance in thinking alone. The child discovers herself as the being of thinking, the being of mediation and of being mediated. The child also learns that this being of mediation is fragile. It can so easily be disturbed and shattered by the Father's 'No!', as the dragon Thou-shall-not rears its head to disturb the play of the child, telling her to stop her childish ways.

But the dragon is dead, thanks to the infinite desertification of mediation. The dragon is dead, the father is dead, and thus all that is left is broken chains of mediation, wounded words, crucified Word, and so the child plays on in the scrap-yard of the dead Father's backyard. The mediator is a lamb that was slain. The child accepts the brokenness of words, the waste, therefore not expecting them to bind the world to the sun or anything else, but plays with the broken words and is amazed how the tears and prayer in words call, and thereby allowing God incarnate in language to call, create (*poiesis*) a world, maybe the kingdom of God.

How can one learn to play like a child and pray like a child? How does one become a child of Easter after the crucifixion of the Word? How does one learn to live in a world prayed into existence by the woundedness of language?

The time of imminent doom brings one closer to the Pauline communities, who were living in a time of the eschatological end, and all they had was faith, without certainties. One can learn from these communities of faith, who were called into existence by the preaching of the Word of the Cross, the preaching of Christ alone and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2), communities prayed into existence by the broken crucified word.

The church has sadly transformed Paul's epistles into a born-again dragon with numerous moral demands of Thou-shall and Thou-shall-not, thereby returning the heavily burdened camel. But as practical theologians and not moralists, what can we learn from Pauline communities? What can one learn from Paul about thinking and being?

Practical theologians focus on the everyday experiences and practice. In the everyday language one does not live in Saraceno's *On space time foam*, but one lives on a stable 'hard' earth, where one works with one's hands, and daily deals with 'objective facts' that populate the world with things: the computer, the air-conditioning, the cars and trains used to commute with, et cetera. It is this kind of 'concrete' thinking that gives the world the necessary stability, certainty and predictability to make it liveable. Thus, one lives in a world as it appears to one and not as it might be according to scientists and philosophers. One lives in a grown-up world and not in a child's fantasy.

The focus is on what is 'real' in everyday experiences and in everyday language, but with one small but important

5. 'The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order to set it down in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it here. The call does indeed call. Thus, it brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness. But the call, in calling it here, has already called out to what it calls. Where to? Into the distance in which what is called remains, still absent' (Heidegger 1971:198).

difference. Practical theologians, following Paul, know it is as if it is not. Theologians learn from Paul that they live in this world as if not (1 Cor 7:29–32). They also learn from Paul that it is the things that are not that shames what is (1 Cor 1:28). So this everyday reality is disrupted by waste, understood as that which is not. It is disrupted by what is not to show the foolishness of what is, to be a stumbling block to the signs. Maybe Paul's theology is the key to a new way of thinking and being or being thought: To live in the world *as if* it was not, but to still live in it, to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world (Jn 17).

But what can one learn from all this, what can one learn from living in the world as if it was not? One learns that everyday language is made of broken words, crucified words, waste, as they do not bind anything but are infinite chains of references and network of mediations. In their brokenness, in their prayer, in their broken tear-filled supplication, they call out a world. Broken words are praying and thus calling and in calling weaving a new tapestry or network into existence. This praying, weaving, mediating, responding is fragile and can never stop, as it needs to be continuously prayed into existence, re-called, re-created, like the fantasy of a child which only exists as long as the child imagines, and can so easily fade into oblivion. The child needs to play in the wasteland and out of waste prays a world in which to be, in which to be happy, a kingdom where the lion plays with the lamb.

Maybe the new South Africa, still a child in the global village, can help in understanding the thinking and being and being thought of of the child. In South Africa one is acutely aware of how fragile everything is: how fragile democracy is, how fragile reconciliation is and how fragile relationships are. South Africa teaches one to choose words wisely, because the metanarratives of the past that authorised and sanctioned hard words are gone. One realises also in family relationships how fragile relationships with spouses and children are, once the metanarratives of power are gone. If respect and honour is not a given because of a religious or ideological-cultural norm, then love and respect need to be crafted all the time, love is prayed into existence.

The struggle of the church tells a similar story. The church is no longer in a position of power, but has become acutely aware of the fragility of her existence. Pastors know that the church and Christianity is no longer a given, nor does it have a guaranteed or privileged place in society, but her place needs to be crafted, it needs to be prayed into existence. Thus, one lives in the knowledge that so much that is important to one is no longer a given (love, honour, respect, reconciliation, democracy or even Christianity), but that it needs to be wisely and delicately crafted and created (*poiesis*), like a child creating her world in which to be happy.

One is no longer called by a truth or essence, but called to create truths and temporary essences that are workable and liveable, and one does this with the prayers incarnate in words.

What calls the self is not the great Other from beyond mediation, but the weakness, brokenness within mediation, the fragility of human mediations, the fragility of human actor networks. In the wasteland of the lion's desert the child prays together a world of her imagination, using the broken words, the broken infinite chains of reference; she uses the waste of the wasteland to create and pray her world into existence, which in turn creates her as part of that prayed-into-existence-world.

The child in the time of the Anthropecene

The Anthropocene is not an age that can be dated to the last couple of decades or even the last century; it has always been a human constructed world. What is different is that today humans are the greatest ecological and geological force determining the earth. What could be another difference is that today, maybe humanity could slowly become aware that our worlds are our constructions, and maybe hear Zarathustra's call that there is no God or truth, but that it is time for the birth of the *Übermensch* or the last *Verwandlung* into the child. The *Übermensch* realises that she is only accountable to herself and that the world is in her hands. The *Übermensch* can destroy Planet Earth, and maybe humanity is, but it is not the *Übermensch* that is destroying, as humanity is not taking responsibility for it! Humanity is blaming capitalism or nature or global warming for it. The true *Übermensch,* the child, knows the fate of the created worlds, the-prayed-into-existence-worlds. Therein is the greatest threat as well as the greatest opportunity. But, is that not the definition of both responsibility and freedom – to truly have that choice? Realising that the world is about liveability and sustainability and that this is not something that is out there to be found, but something waiting to be created and sustained. The responsibility of the liveability and sustainability of this world cannot be shifted to nature, economics, or some or other transcendent truth, or even God. It is a human responsibility to create a world that will be sustainable for generations to come. The gift of the child is to pray a world into existence in hope and faith.

It is not about thinking and being, but about being thought. It is not about how we think about the world, nor is it about how the world thinks about us, but it is the world that is created through the prayers incarnate in language, that creates the thoughts about it, and all the while creating the world the thinking and praying live in. That is a tremendous responsibility – not the ethical responsibility of Levinas's Other, but the responsibility that there is not even an Other to whom humanity must account, but absolute responsibility towards only mediated worlds and the future thereof. Everything depends on the *Übermensch,* and yet not, because whatever the *Übermensch* crafts is only as if, and the call to live in the as if as if not. Thus, although the whole responsibility is on the shoulders of the *Übermensch,* she cannot carry the world as Atlas does. She is a child, playing in the backyard of her father's broken home, playing amongst the waste, with

the waste, and no longer in the name of the father, but in her own name. The child is *Mundig,* as there is no Other. It is the prayers uttered from her mouth in the broken language inherited from her fathers and mothers.

Liberated, thanks to the lion's ferocious roar, the child is free from all and yet she is a slave to all, because all that is depends on her, as much as she depends on all that is, but all that is is as if not, and there, in between being and not-being, in the wasteland, the child plays, praying a world into existence which in turn prays her into existence. This is a continuous prayer. The child is liberated from the desire to reach the other side, reach the Other. The dragon Thou-shall has been slain. No longer guilty is the child, but free to begin anew and proclaim a holy yes to her created worlds, insisting to exist:

> Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen. Ja, zum spiele des Schaffens, meine Brüder, bedarf es eines Heiligen Ja-sagens: seinen Willen will nun der Geist, seine Welt gewinnt sich der Weltverlorene. (Nietzsche 2000)

Is the above not the Trinitarian story told, but in a different language, the Wholly Other becoming flesh and living amongst us, crucified, and then placing the responsibility of that Word, through the outpouring of the Spirit, onto the church, the children? The Word of God in protestant tradition is nowhere else to be found, but in the Word proclaimed through sermon and sacrament. It is in words, language, mediation where God or Christ is found. The treasure is not found out there – in space or in the past, but it is placed in jars of clay (2 Cor 4:7) that are cracked and fragile.

The child no longer seeks to respond to an infinite demand, but rather seeks out others to pray/play together and thereby create friendships and associations (love and fellowship) so as to pray a world into existence that is fit for living, but a play-play world, an as-if-world without guarantees. It is a world, proclaimed in faith and grace alone, after the crucifixion in the hope of Easter, a world of proclamation as witnessing and testifying to the hope, faith and love that is in Christians, the children of Easter.

This kind of realisation of the fragility of human existence, together with the fragility of the *oikos*, but also the insistence of all that desires to exist, needs different modes of existence (see Latour 2013) and thus different language games. Such modes of existence should be beyond truth claims, but modes of existence that are various forms of playful-prayerful creations, different prayers, and therefore through networks of different mediations, seeking to pray together a world in the wasteland, for all insisting to exist in the desert. Politics as a mode of existence is necessary, politics as praying together with all those who want to play, a world worthy of living into existence: a kingdom to come. This is not a politics in the name of any truth or theory, but a politics of association and fellowship, uniting those insisting on existing together. Politics therefore becomes the art of including; it becomes the art of democracy, including all who insist on existing, all who insist on joining the game of praying a liveable *oikos* or *polis* into existence, of praying: thy kingdom come.

Law is the mode of existence that prays for safe spaces for existence, creating rules for the game and a place for those excluded, the insisting non-existents, to protest their non-existence and thus creating room for justice, always still to come (Derrida 2002): thy will be done.

Science is the mode of existence of inventing facts and thereby transforming insistence into existence. Discovering in remote distant places or in microscopic places or in theoretical analysis, that which insists and thus naming it, helping it be and become part of the web of being through mutual mediation.

Lastly, there is the need for the mode of religion or theology to hear the call, to be sensitive to the prayer in all the modes of existence (law, politics, science and religion), the prayer of what is always still to come, thereby breaking the modes of existence open, crucifying them and opening them for what is still to come, opening them for the prayer of God. Theology recalls, remembers the crucifixion, as it proclaims Christ alone and Him crucified, thereby proclaiming that all that is is as if not. This dangerous memory, that all that is, is as if not, together with the prayer of the future that is still to come, humbles all the other modes of existence with a messianic expectancy, inviting the child to continue playing. The practical theologian opens the different modes of existence for what is still to come. Theology should not seek to compete or even try and become one of these other modes of existence, but rather listen carefully to the prayer, the call of God-become-human, the insistence of God in and from the cracks of each of these modes of existence. Reminding these modes of existence, like Paul reminded the early congregations, that one should live as if things are not, and continuously being sensitive to the messianic call of the insistence of the future still to come. This is a theology of what is not, maybe a theology of waste, to humble what is and open what is for what is still to come, so that earth and humanity have a future.

Does the Anthropocene have a future? Does the child have a future in the wasteland? 'Come, come, yes, please come and play with me,' the child prays.

Acknowledgements

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