

LOSSE FLODDERS? (RANDOM THOUGHTS?)



When I started reading “The Overstory” by Richard Powers, I very soon became aware of a familiar feeling: this is American writing. On page 10, the beginning of the second paragraph:

The farm survives the chaos of God’s will.

Raw religious fatalism, hard-edge with a soft under-belly.

I thought of that famous iconic picture of the “migrant mother” taken by Dorothea Lange in 1936. (Can someone please explain to me why?)

Now I will try to explain what brought me to finally decide to tackle the reading of Johan Huizinga’s *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (*Autumntide of the Middle Ages*).

<https://lup.nl/publications/history/autumntide-of-the-middle-ages/>

Why this reluctance to continue with Richard Power’s book? It occurred to me while re-reading my own writings that a recurring theme seemed to float to the top: my attempt to explain and make sense of the current chaotic state of the world by putting it in the broader context of what I have learned over my life-time.

*For out of nothingness we are not born,
And into nothingness we do not die.
Existence is a circle, and we err
When we assign to it for measurement
The limits of the cradle and the grave*

Manuel Acuna (Mexico)

This quote was written on the funeral card of a friend who died pre-maturely years ago when we were sifting *through* some old stuff to throw out. Anneke Silver’s[1] husband Eddie. It made me think of a little piece I had written when I was busy with Lucretius: nullam rem E NIHILO GIGNI DIVINITUS UMQUAM (Nothing is ever created by the gods from nothing).

But why would I want to make sense of the world around me, the things that I’m aware of, including the things that I am not yet and perhaps never will be aware of? Something tells me right now that this surely is a futile exercise. Yet I know that not doing it is going to be just as futile. It is, or at least seems to be, inherent in the condition of being alive. Some, perhaps most, would say this typically applies to humans and that it is exactly that what defines a human, but I am not so sure of that, as you will know if you have read some of my previous ‘thoughts’.

A considerable amount of time has elapsed between the writing of each of these paragraphs. But on re-reading these what I thought were in Dutch ‘losse flodders’ (blanks, loose cannons), I thought perhaps they are not... Ever since the putting-between-book-covers of my thoughts, it has been very hard to get myself to write down my musings. Certainly they (these thoughts or musings) haven’t stopped in my ever questioning, reflecting and self-critical brain. Only this morning after I had successfully captured and released a rain spider (hunterman) I mused about the chrysalis and how certain creatures shed it and transform into a moth or butterfly. It occurred to me that, in death, humans and perhaps other animals shed their body and release their soul or spirit, which then lives on in another world. That is if you believe in spirits, souls and other worlds, as most people seem to do. At my age death never being far from my thoughts – yesterday we went to a memorial gathering of a

former neighbour we had befriended. Is this shedding active or passive (the act of nature or god if you like) I now ask myself? Or is that in the end one and the same thing, as I understand it is for Spinoza? Interesting, google wants God with a capital G. I didn't as I think (s)he does (should?) not want to be superior to me, but I do want i written with a capital, so for that reason I would be happy to have God with the capital. Trivial? Perhaps... My conspiracy theory has it that Google wanted to be named Godgle, more in line with the correct spelling and meaning of the word googol[2], but the name-givers got scared, wanting to avoid hell because of possible blasphemy accusations – another case of human cowardice?

À propos the word soul: are the French words *âme* and *ami* etymologically related? Probably not. The circumflex indicates the omission of the *n*, so 'anme' as in 'animate'. The Latin word *animare* 'to enliven', 'to breathe life into', *anima* is 'soul', but also 'breath'. *Amare* (*aimer* in French) is 'to love'. 'Soul-mate' can be translated into French as *ami*. Whatever it is, it is pretty close! The point I am trying to make is that we use these words as if what they mean confirms that what they refer to actually exists outside of our minds, even though rationally we may reject that there is such a thing as the 'soul' or that 'love' is nothing but hormonal passion. And now I am reminded of the word 'cathexis' as described by Sigmund Freud... (for your information: his Christian name means 'victorious protector', 'freud' means 'joy' and 'freedom'!). The mind boggles. I suggest you also consult the forgotten much maligned sex liberation pioneer and Sigmund's pupil Wilhelm Reich[3] on the subject.

I attached the above 'losse flodder' to Jetske as I know she, as an artist, is seriously engaged with such issues – currently exploring Taoist ideas – suggesting somewhat tongue-in-cheek:

Verdwaal er maar niet in... (take care not to get lost in that forest!)

She replied (please use google translate or similar):

Nice. Godgle, de allesoverheersende Godgle.

En hier thuis met de jongens **gooien** we ook **natuur over één boeg** met **God**. Hoewel ik zelf steeds meer geïnteresseerd ben in de **Godin**, die wij **gemakshalve** al **een paar duizend jaar overboord** hebben **gegooid**. **Vadertje Zon, moedertje Aarde**. Als die 2 in balans zijn gaat het er in de wereld wellicht wat beter aan toe. Dat is mijn inspiratie uit de Tao. **De polaire werkelijkheid-beiden polen omarmen**, en dan **een derde weg** die in het midden ontstaat. Ook heel interessant!

Nu ga ik even dwalen (to wander), zo niet verdwalen (to get lost):

If you throw, let us say, the God(-dess) completely overboard and replaced that authoritarian dictator with multiple gods and goddesses, nymphs and cherubs à la [Ovid or Catullus](#)...?

Deus sive natura (God or nature)? – Spinoza's question. Natura is feminine as she ends in an 'a'. *Die Sonne*, but *Le Soleil*; *La Lune*, but *Die Mond*. 'Earth' seems to be feminine (terra) always(?). I remember one of our teachers at the Gymnasium making us aware of (the possibility of) a connection between climate and gender!

Maybe better: allowing yourself (passively) to be embraced by the 'polaire werkelijkheid'...?

Or perhaps even better: a combination of the active and the passive. The certainty of uncertainty. The unbearable lightness of being (Kundera).

Instead of 'a third way': the possibility of a multitude of different interesting ways, and of course to get lost. So it is important for you to have a strategy to find your way back (or forward).

DP

Oct 2024

[1] <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=anneke+silver>

[2] Technology giant Google's name originated from **misspelling of the word "googol"** which is a mathematical term for the number represented by the numeral 1 followed by 100 zeros. The name reflects Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin's mission to organize infinite amount of information on the web.

[3] <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=wilhelm+reich+books>