# Exemplary Writings by Wolfgang Plenio

On the Occasion of His 90th Birthday

Gordon Marino & Yogi Reppmann, eds.

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## Foreword



Dr. Wolfgang Plenio, a retired gymnasium professor lives near Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. In 1973, Wolfgang, who was born in 1930, was Yogi Reppmann's Latin tutor in secondary school, and since then they have stayed in close touch. One of their most rewarding times together was in 1998, when Wolfgang flew from Germany to spend three weeks in Northfield, Minnesota. On that occasion he proved to be equally impressed by the Americans he met, by the excellent music programs at both St. Olaf and Carleton College, and by the "Deutsches Fest" at Carleton College, at which he presented awards in various categories to the student prizewinners. Plenio commented that

"there is much to be learned from the way this event in middle America celebrates the language of another culture."

Northfield News, May 15, 1998

Excerpts from his body of thought, drawn from the correspondence between Plenio and Reppmann over the years, are contained in this booklet.

#### Introduction

## KAIROI: Lighting Life's Path

By Klaus Lemke-Paetznick

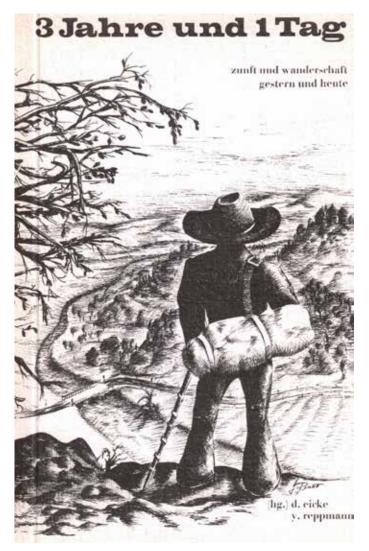
"Athens is open to all. We neither drive off the stranger nor do we keep him at a distance." (Thucydides, Peloponnesian War, II, 39) This clearly idealized assessment of the socio-cultural permissiveness that Pericles expressed for his home city has lost nothing of its challenge in today's world. Our current societal developments and particularist tendencies, hand-in-hand with the various phenomena of globalization, force us increasingly to face the question of whether "openness" can be the goal only of a politically and ethnically unified, moderately-sized entity such as a city-state, or whether it might also represent a manageable option for modern states and nations with their increasingly more complex societal structures. Those who believe that the Athens of Pericles, the birthplace of democratic sensibilities and of political and ethical notions, can be transferred to the present through sustained discourse, can hardly avoid evaluating another oft-quoted saying of Pericles: "The secret to happiness is freedom, but the secret to freedom is courage." (Thucydides, II, 43) This courage praised by Pericles as a necessary foundation of freedom is an essential aspect of the openness toward all that is different, new, and unaccustomed, and-yes, toward the stranger as well.

This kind of courage and knowledge is passed on to each successive generation by teachers: individuals who exemplify the ideals of freedom and inspire young people through their insights into the circumstances of each individual situation. Fortunate were those who had a *didaskalos* like Wolfgang Plenio in their background, a man who was able to combine a virtually stoic attentiveness to the thoughts and needs of the younger generation with an enthusiasm, founded in his innate sense of antiquity, for discovering and enlivening ideals. Wolfgang Plenio himself received his doctorate on the subject of "The Last Speech of Pericles." His commitment to free thought and speech, to analytical discourse on beauty and the sublime, has remained with him ever since and has become an essential part of his life. There is an ancient Greek saying that states, "Consider the *Kairos* (the beautiful, the sublime, the 'right' moment) to be your teacher." All those former

pupils who were fortunate enough to go on journeys of the mind with this teacher, who called forth countless Kairoi in his day, treasure him in their biographical memories; their journeys often ended with the sense of a freedom that led away from empirical note-taking and the making of lists, and toward that "secret of happiness" that the Athenian hero himself was able to experience and to extol almost two-and-ahalf millennia ago. Openness to one's fellow man, the freedom to make use of one's reason on any occasion and thereby continually to resist established determinations and inflexible rigidity: what is required for this is a human role model with the power of forethought. It is the good fortune of entire generations of pupils to have encountered such a person in Wolfgang Plenio. We, his pupils both male and female, greet him now with fond and grateful memories and with the promise that since leaving school the solid foundation of thoughts and feelings he implanted in us, coupled with the desire to always maintain a questioning attitude, has not been forgotten. The present volume is meant as nothing more than an affectionate testimony to this promise.



Pericles' Funeral Oration, from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. The orator, an eminent Atheninan politician, delivered the speech as part of the annual public commemoration of the war dead at the end of the first year of the war, which lasted from 431 to 404 B.C.



3 Years and 1 Day: The Guild and Taking to the Road, Yesterday and Today, *Flensburg, Germany, 1982. (Wolfgang Plenio's article p. 78 - 92)* Book in German: www.moin-moin.us/publications (see Older Posts)

#### Chapter 1

## A Journey through the Greek World of Thought

Was the promise not made to men of good will? Did not one of the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount refer to the peacemakers? Does not all hope, the longing of countless, unredeemed millions tormented by fear, point to a peace that grants happiness and well-being? Do we not live in peace? Is this not the result of the nuclear balance of power? Is this the peace that unites all men in brotherhood, or the death-filled calm before the storm that will bring about the end of existence? Do we not owe this astonishingly lengthy peacetime, or, more accurately, the lurking standstill of our weapons of annihilation, to the egregious dropping of two atom bombs that in seconds turned thousands of innocent lives to ashes? Has the sword of Damocles in the form of nuclear rockets bringing thousandfold death not been hanging over us since that time?

"War is the father of all things," Heraclitus once maintained, and he was nightmarishly correct: Without the constant challenge of waging wars of dominance, drawn this way and that in the tide of changing, successfully deceptive ideologies, we "civilized" human beings would never have been so amazingly successful, our human spirit of invention, awakened by the spark of Prometheus, would never have been able to celebrate such triumphs, changing the world, our world, beyond recognition. The ascent of man leads from the hand axe to the intercontinental rocket with millions of times more destructive power, from the smoke-filled stone-age cave to monstrous concrete skyscrapers, from a vague fear of demons to the damnation of absolute freedom in a godless world, detached from its basis in life and rushing headlong into nothingness.

"Everything is inhabited by the gods," said Thales of Miletus at the end of the world's mythic age. "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth," the Bible tells us. Man, created in the image of God and charged in his name to look after the world, has devastated and destroyed the earth. And did all of this happen only because, due to his irrepressible thirst for knowledge, he disobeyed the prohibition of an authoritarian and perhaps jealous God? Was the entire development of world history an unavoidable disaster? Did "original sin" become the horrible fulfillment of the Biblical handwriting on the wall? Is the path of man's thinking, questioning, and constant change the hopeless process of an inherent logic? Will it, following an irrational, terrible law of its own, end in catastrophe?

"Man is a thinking being," able to communicate and use reason, destined to know and fulfill himself. This is what the wise men of ancient Greece call out to us from beyond the graves of time, with poets and philosophers offering variations on this theme, from Thales to the late Stoics and the disciples of Epicurus, passing on the torch of the logos and, with it, the indestructible belief in the liberating power of actions guided by reason, in the ability of man to perceive his possibilities and to achieve his (divine) destiny. A moving, unsettling drama, and yet one that uplifts us. One attempt after the other to reveal the image of mankind that lies hidden in the depths-the Greek word aletheia means "unconcealedness"-wonderfully successful creations and, again and again, tragic failures in the struggle for self-realization, in the determined attempt to comprehend reality, essential being, and to shape it into tangible configurations. Sisyphus, who untiringly pushes his boulder up the mountain of reality and in spite of repeated failures does not lose courage. - Socrates, who-although the search for lasting knowledge and ultimate certainty through dialogue and according to the rules of a self-affirming, concept-guided thought process always ends in the impossibility of knowing, i.e. in the Faustian realization that we know nothing and can know nothing-this Socrates, then, who nonetheless tirelessly begins the search once more from the beginning, who, although he has achieved no logical certainty, nonetheless drinks the cup of hemlock in the indestructible certainty that death can have no dominion over his "soul," i.e. his transcendental self.

#### "Whoever with great effort strives, that person can be redeemed."

Goethe gives the above assurance at the end of Faust. And he further urges us: "Let everyone be a Greek in his own manner, but this he must be!" What does "being a Greek" mean? Certainly not simply to imitate the "old Greeks" with no particular aim. Goethe clearly has the rebirth of humanity in mind. And the Renaissance expressed this same idea in a variety of forms. "To be a Greek" means: cosmopolitanism, a universal curiosity, persisting with a watchful eye on the adventurous journey across the dangerous sea of life without losing the courage of being and thus to be one's self—like Odysseus, the archetype of the world traveler, who puts his life on the line again and again in the face of perils and never gives up, who can temporarily lose his sense of self but finally regains it and returns home: from alienation back to true being, from foreign lands back to his homeland, guided by the starry sky above and his own self-assurance.

"Know thyself!" the Delphian god admonishes us. "Become the person that you (actually) are, by learning who you are (through selfawareness)," the poet Pindar seeks to convince us, in the sense of that primordial admonishment.

I am not, then, when I am first thrust into this world, the person that I am meant to be; I am a person in the process of becoming, who has yet to become myself, to shape and form myself.

Greek thinking is existential thinking, from oneself through the world to oneself, a constant concentric circling around this center.

Man is and remains—even in an age dominated by the theory of relativity-the central point of all our hopes and endeavors, of all transforming theories and practices, even though the apparent absurdity of a meaningless world may stare us in the face. Even though our existence may be a minuscule moment between empty infinities, the measure of all things and the goal of all efforts is man. This mancentered saying of Protagoras with its enormous consequences and as yet untapped possibilities retains, precisely in the computer age, its validity. What the philosopher meant was that the measure of all things is man, and not God, or the gods. The notion of the autonomous individual was thereby born, and an unforeseen revolution set in motion, one that threatens to overwhelm us if we fail to recognize the other side of the equation: that the measure of all things is man, and not the computer, not a device or machine, a system or ideology, some brave new world! As Protagoras goes on to say: "A man-that is what I am, that is what you are." In other words, it is not mankind or some collective that is the measure, but rather every person bears that measure in himself as a distinctive individual whose inviolable dignity is founded in his freedom to choose for himself and to be allowed to be himself. This is our modern perspective on that ancient Greek principle, which we must consider anew and ponder, like everything else the Greeks were the first to suggest as bold, radical questions. We must do this in the light-or more precisely, in the shadow of our current world balance—or more precisely, yet our world imbalance, if we want to find our way back to man again.

"Become the person that you are!"

This presupposes: 1) that I am not yet truly "I," that I am still alien to myself, or, even worse, that I have become lost to myself under the spell

of the dispossessing, depersonalizing mechanisms and automations of our self-created prison, and 2) that I possess the effective ability to become myself, to the extent that I am able to comprehend—in other words, to make use of my reason.

Our immaturity is horrific, the process of our actual incapacitation, in spite of the lip-service paid to the idea of the "mature citizen," is more imaginable than ever and technically possible. In this context, that Greek commandment "You are a man, so be one, and never forget it!" attains a universal character of unheard-of dimensions, one that expands beyond every individual and becomes a vital issue. We can vary Goethe's saying as "Let everyone be a man in his own manner, but this he must be!" and add to it in good Greek Kantian fashion: "You can, because you are *meant* to!"

All around you, you see the masses languishing, obsessed with fear, bent over without hope, mere shadows of themselves, distortions of that divine image, all of them prisoners, whether of their drives or of their self-deceptions, driven to escape "reality," or themselves, or their life-threatening lives.

Yes, it is true: all life is predestined to die, death speaks the final word, encloses our limited lives. We want to live, only to live, we cling like drowning people to planks of a sinking ship, snatch at them in savage greed, even though the time remaining to us may be brief. And yet it is still true: however it may be, life is beautiful. Or rather, it can still be so wonderful in all it contradictions, if one only appreciates it in all its deeply vulnerable wonder and really dares, for life was and remains a gamble.

To be Greek means to dare again and again the gamble of life, to tear it from the hold of death, for all life that is not lived is unfulfilled possibility and succumbs to death. "Carpe diem!" This saying of Horace has as its goal the fulfilled life, as in the case of Socrates and Epicurus. So when am I alive? When I become myself completely.

For the Greek, thinking is part and parcel of this—not, of course, as a superficial intellectual activity, but as a kind of thinking that permeates the entire person, that is all-encompassing and the foundation of our existence.

"A life without self-examination is not worthy for a man to live," Socrates declares. "I have examined myself," Heraclitus had already affirmed, and in doing this he has experienced the reality of the world, the unity of opposites, being in the process of becoming, the transcendental identity of one's personal reason with the world's reason, of the microcosm and the macrocosm. What follows, then, is this: not simply to be lost in the absurd, but to see the immensity of the whole in unremarkably small things; the small, fragile individual person as an image of the cosmos in its ephemeral body, as a soul, a spiritual energy, a monad, as Leibnitz would say, a leaf on the tree of life that always sprouts new leaves. "Like the leaves of the forest, so are the generations of mankind," as Homer sang with the Grecian sense that understands the transitory as a symbol of the eternal, that recognizes the eternal in the temporal, that experiences in the images of changing appearances the eternal archetypes of that which exists and the incessant change of forms as transformation and restructuring, that views all that happens as cosmic circles, as variations of a constant global concept, as metamorphoses of basic forms that, always new, surge into reality.

All the neuroses and psychoses of our disastrous century are based on an enormous misunderstanding, a profoundly perverse relationship to the existential qualities of life and death.

Millions of people have fallen victim to the delusion that only the meager world that is empirically discernible to us—i.e., the world that is accessible only to science—that only this life with nothing before or after it is given to us, that behind this hall of mirrors reflecting only ourselves and our self-made world there is emptiness and nothingness. – Oh, those poor, lost madmen who have already died in the midst of "life"!

To be Greek means to live out of the experience of transcendence, to fulfill our eternal self in this temporal existence, to trust in the eternal against all appearances, to know that all life is only a preparation for death, which itself does not end, but is the beginning of the true life of the soul, held captive as if in a dungeon during its earthly "life" and longing to return to its eternal origin. Where else can the deep desire for deliverance, whether in a Christian or an atheist, come from? Socrates died in the perpetual hope of entering into true life; Christians who are worthy of the name live, as did the Greek philosopher, liberated from the depersonalizing pressure of a transitory "reality" in the joyful hope for "eternal life."

Is this escapism, a fleeing from the world?

To live means: To exist in the face of death. To philosophize means to learn how to die, which in turn means to take death seriously, to take life seriously. Only those who grasp the unity of death and life as theme and counterpoint of a fugue—only they truly live, are able to truly live in their essential being and to experience the profound joy, the profound "yes" to life. "Learn to be happy!" admonished the Stoic Seneca, because he knew that true joy is a serious matter. And precisely for that reason Walther von der Vogelweide sang:

"Without joy, no one is good for anything."

With Homer, this deep, heart-warming, uplifting joy that fills the whole person is the epitome of eudemonia, that blissfulness (which is

the opposite of our material striving for happiness) that at the end of classical Greece radiated through the entire philosophy of Epicurus like the evening sun.

Hedone is certainly not our modern empty search for pleasure, our addiction to the satisfaction of our egotistical needs, but rather the deep joy that comes from sober contemplation, from the realization of the harmfulness of all our artificial, excessive needs that stifle our being instead of nourishing it.

We are like the mythical King Midas, who in his foolishness once wished that everything he touched should turn into gold. His wish was granted and proved to be a curse, but the god was gracious enough to remove it from him. Will a god prove to be gracious to us as well?

We are like the sorcerer's apprentice, who in his hunger for power rashly called on the spirits and could not get rid of them until his old master returned and spoke the magic word. But who is our old master? It seems we don't want to have one.

So is our situation hopeless?

Let us open our eyes, both those of the spirit and of the heart. Let us focus on the logos of the Greeks and examine it for its saving power! So that we can experience once again, as Menander says, "how wonderful man is – if he is truly man."



www.Moin-Moin.us (Cf. W. Plenio in "Archive")

## Aus der Neuen in die Alte Welt und zurück

#### Senderjyllands Symfoniorkester im Deutschen Haus

FLENSBURG, Fröhliche Gesichter bei jung und alt sieht man mach Kommerten, nächt immer. Das attraktive Programm mit Dvoraks zu Recht berühmter "Sinfonie aus der Neuen Welt" und Gerahwins ainfonischen Schlagern lockte auch auf-fallend viel Jugend ins Deutsche Haus. failend viel Jugent in ortikene nachbar-ber sons bei Konzerien des bemachbar-ten "Senderjyllands Symfoniorkeste" zu Umrecht nicht ganz gefüllte große Saal lief diesmal auf die Ränge über, Pand Dvorak noch nicht vollen Widerhall, so ründeten George Gerahwins Alltagsme-lodien und elektrisierende Rhythmen sofort und lösten berechtigte Beifallsstür-BL/S

me aus. Dvoraks Sinfonie aus der damals für Europa noch Neven Welt gebört zu den bekanntesten Orchesterwerken über-haupt. Ob der nier normaler Beitällt tat-sichlich den Kenntnisurnd anzeigtuf Hartnacktiges Husten trübte den Hörge-nub erheblich; dennoch waren bei einäger Aufmerksamkeit neben vorzüglich gelun-men Purgien besonders bei den Streigenen Partien besonders bei den Streichern auch manche Unebenheiten nicht zu überhören.

Warum z.B. 20g Wallez die Tempi so an? Nur weil es den sportlichen Ehrgeiz beutiger Dirigenten entspricht? Sicher bestiger Dirigenten entimpricht? Sicher trieb ihn auch sein gallaches Tompers ment Ein Allegro bei Dvorak attmit be-kannticht anders als ein "fröhlicher Berhoven-Saz. Nattricht weil ein Mann vie Wallez auch, dis dieser oft mich deutster, Sinfonie aus der Neuen Weit von unatilbarer Schnsucht nach Böh-neni Hain und Flur dietert ist, daß am-rikanische Weisen den Komponisten rösen angeregt, vor allem aber hömall-zbe Satten in ihm zum Klingen gehracht aben. Bieses Doppolgesicht, diesen in inander won Alter und Neues Weit kam ucht deutisch genge beraus. Meh den nicht neut wie sons zu khein-flichtlich weisen der dynamischen Ablauf intervolltehen auchte konnte nicht

gliedrig. Wer den dynamiachen Ablauf mitsavollischen auchte, konnte nicht recht durchatmen. Das amedale", ameri-kanisch anmutent Theman mill wire aun einer antderen Weit (der alten) herna-achwohen, drängte alch jedoch wie aus dem Hintsergrund derseihen Weit hervor. Das an sich gut disponierte Biech war ablemvese zu massio und leid den her-lich dissiplicitetten. Violinen auf den Hi-bezunkten seine Chance, wirklicht gebint erstunden seine Chance, wirklicht gebint bepunkton koine Chance, wirklich gehört

zu werden. Waller, selber Violinist, hat sie offenbar sorgsam einstudiert, aber nicht immer die Klangproportionen bedacht

Am meisten litt unter dem getrieb Tempo die urböhmische Behaglichkeit des Trios; die natürliche Überleitung nach dem etwas starr, aber jedenfalls

des Trice, die maturische Contestung nach dem etwas starr, aber jederfallt klar punktierten Scherzo gibt ja die beste Anweisung. So brachte Walles trutz vie-ler schöner Episoden auch bei den Bis-sern die Sinfonle um ihre eigentliche Wirkung Respekt regit sich doch Fasti-nation ging erst von Gersikwin aus. Mit dem Klarinettensels zu Beginn der "Rhapsody in Blas" war die Szens vie verwandet. Wer es noch nicht gewulb hate, parkte jetzt Dotrak wurzelte tief im Erdreich Europas, hier bei Gernivein meldete sich, immer noch gebettet in su-ropäisches Erbe, in frühlich-frecher Un-bekummertheit die Stimme der zu sich selbst szwachenden "Neuen Welt" ge-sicht strunge, sichtes Dalinschlendern, lok-nentharmonien stammen aus dem Iranzb-nischen Impressionismus, das Umkreinenharmonien stammen aus dem franzö-nischen Impressionismus, das Unikrei-sen einer obstinat wiederholten Zentral-nöte von Ravel, die Konnertnechnik von Chopts und (im hymnischen Finale) von Tachaikowsky. Den reinvollen Klaviee-part meinterte Bohumila Jeditickowa – ei-ne "Rhapaody in Vinlett" fürs Auge mit europäischer Bewußheit und klar akzen-niserender Hellinz, der eben nur das – nicht abrufbare – Spontane fehlte, um disekt au einden.

nicht abrufbare – Spontane fehlte, um direkt zu zinden. Das Zewaschen fröhlicher Gefühle beim Bummel des "Amerikaners im Paris" be-eritigte leiten Barrieren. Bei den raspekt-los-witzigen Bemerkungen der Bläser schmunzelle man auf der Buhne und im Saal ähnlich wie bei den "Bildere einer Jagenter Amsophäre willig durch die verkrimmig verführerische Flätterweit der damals bereits amerikanisch ange-hauchten Seinemetropole führen, freute und Tubs Her fühlte jederman sich und Tuba. Hier fühlte jederman sich wuhl vom Pult verbreitets sich schnum-reindes Behagen bis in die letzten Re-hen. Nicht der schlechteste Effekt einer überdies mit Hingsbe musizierten Kon-nert-Suitz. Wolfgang Pienie

Flensburg Daily News (Flensburger Tageblatt) August 27, 1988. In his many years as a leading German music critique, Dr. Plenio wrote around 1200 oneof-a-kind articles. Experts compared him to Joachim Kaiser, the 'pope of music' of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich.

### Chapter 2

#### America

#### From the New World to the Old and Back The Sønderjylland Symphony Orchestra in the Deutsches Haus *Flensburger Tageblatt,* August 27, 1988

The appealing program of Dvořák's justifiably famous "New World" Symphony and Gershwin's symphonic favorites attracted a striking number of young people to the concert hall in the Deutsches Haus. George Gershwin's popular melodies and electrifying rhythms in particular sparked storms of applause.

Dvořák's symphony, dating from a period that still signified the new world for Europeans, is among the best-known orchestral works in general. Did the amount of applause, which was no more than "ordinary," perhaps indicate the audience's level of familiarity with the piece? Persistent coughing dampened the listening pleasure considerably, and in spite of several superbly played sections, especially in the strings, one couldn't help noticing a certain amount of unevenness.

After the less than successful introduction, the first movement had the effect of consisting of a series of short passages. Anyone who attempted to experience the dynamic sequence found it difficult to breathe along properly. The "modal" American-sounding theme, which should float forth as if coming from a different world (the old one), edged its way forward as if from the background of the same world. The brass, basically well-balanced, was at times too massive and gave the splendidly disciplined violins no chance to be clearly heard in their climaxes. The conductor, Jean-Pierre Wallez, is himself a violinist and had clearly rehearsed them carefully, but did not always keep the sound proportions in mind.

The clarinet solo at the beginning of "Rhapsody in Blue" transformed the scene. While the depth of Dvořák's rootedness in European soil had to be clear by now even to those who had not been aware of it before, with Gershwin, though still imbedded in his European heritage, the voice of the awakening "New World" made itself known in its joyous, impudent carefreeness: muted trumpets and flutter-tongued trombones, an easy moseying along, loosely-connected passages. On the other hand, the hovering between major and minor as well as the use of seventh and ninth chords had their origin in French Impressionism: the repetitive, circling central note from Ravel, the concert technique from Chopin, and the anthem-like finale from Tchaikovsky. Bohumila Jedlicková, a "Rhapsody in Violet" for the eye, played the piano sections masterfully, with a European assuredness and clearly accented brilliance—which, however, was lacking in the spontaneity that would have allowed it to sparkle.

The awakening of joyful feelings during the stroll taken by the "American in Paris" did away with any remaining barriers. The flippantly humorous remarks of the wind instruments made both the performers and the audience smile. In a manner similar to that of "Pictures at an Exhibition," the listeners let themselves be guided through several voices of the seductive, tinseled world of the "City of Light," at that time already touched by an American feel; in this relaxed atmosphere, they happily enjoyed the solo parts, especially those for trumpet and tuba. Everyone was feeling good at this point, as a sense of cheerful well-being spread from the stage to the last rows of the theater. Not the worst effect of a concert suite that in any case was performed with great commitment.



1893, Dvořák with his family and friends in New York. From left: his wife Anna, son Antonín, Sadie Siebert (secretary) Josef Kovarík, mother of Sadie Siebert, daughter Otilie, Antonín Dvorák. His assistant, the Czech-American Josef Kovarik, suggested that the family might like to spend the summer vacation in his home town of Spillville, Iowa.

# **Toiling with the Defeated**

American Diaries from the Ruins of WWII Deane & Ian Barbour in Hamburg and Münster, 1948





lan and Deane Barbour, Northfield, MN, participated in summer work camps in Münster and Hamburg in 1948. The newlyweds worked with American, Dutch, and German students to clear rubble from bombed buildings. These Christian groups also sought understanding and reconciliation between former enemies, and experienced moments of great honesty and emotional depth. See also

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#### Reflections

In 1948, my family in Kiel, Germany, knew starvation and the misery of being refugees and homeless. Shortly before the currency reform, we were turned out of our house and given a room (about 35 x 35 feet) in a barracks for our family of five (father, mother, three children) because my father had been a low-level Nazi, a block leader. In high school, our main meal was from the substantial school food program funded by assistance from the Allied countries. Kiel had been mostly destroyed and unexploded bombs were often found and detonated. We had a class trip to Heidelberg in an ex-Wehrmacht radio truck fitted out with blankets on wooden benches. We spent nights in youth hostels, and our midday meals were in the university cafeteria.

A class at our age level at the US base there invited us to a reception, evening meal, and pastries. We were ashamed to be with these openminded students: they had everything to offer, while we had nothing. We felt inferior on account of our bad English; we felt superior on account of our humanistic education. But we were together in a friendly atmosphere. We didn't yet have any sense of guilt because we knew little of Nazi crimes or concentration camps.

In translating the diaries of the Barbours from 1948, I felt astonished that young Americans were willing to help clean up the rubble from the time of the carpet bombing of German cities, and that they felt solidarity with the sufferings of German and Dutch young people. They recognized German shortsightedness, yet were ready for reconciliation and admired German cultural achievements. I kept reading and translating these diaries by Americans of my own age with growing interest in their fine minds and willingness to put up with privations.

German young people of today should get to know these diaries because they could learn from them how victorious nations can put forth the effort to meet one-time enemies with as few prejudices as possible, and try to understand their problems. The victors must open up to those who see things differently so that they will not be left out.

Would we Germans deal with others with so much solidarity? There are examples. Have we Germans felt the necessary thankfulness? It is a shame that at that time many Germans failed to recognize this help due to their self-righteousness and ignorance. At that time the German sense of cultural superiority was out of place.

By translating the Barbour Diaries into German, I have realized the American readiness to help that came from Christian convictions and emotional openness to the needs and sufferings of people their own age, both guilty and innocent. As they came to know the Americans, Germans had to feel more and more shame for the crimes against other people perpetrated in their name by the Nazis.



Marriage Photo from Florida, 1947

Deane Barbour (b. September 8, 1925 in Washington, DC; d. December 23, 2011, in Northfield, Minnesota); her husband Ian Graeme Barbour (b. October 5, 1923 in Peking; d. December 24, 2013 in Minneapolis) was an American physicist and theologian. He was the founder of the interdisciplinary field of science and religion.



Münster; some of the students in the group carry a section of rail for the coal cars used to remove the rubble so that the University could be rebuilt. Cf. Chapter 6, Summary, 3. Reflections on Ian Barbour's "Balance between Faith and Science" (*New York Times Obituary*, January 12, 2014).



On Christmas Eve 2017, we received, right out of the blue, a dinner invitation from Dr. Wolfgang Plenio. While Germany and America both have roots in eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the "new" country of the United States has focused in its educational system more on the history of its own democratic development. By contrast, Wolfgang Plenio had the misfortune of growing up in a Germany in which the country's long classical humanistic tradition was threatened by the ideology of Nazism. In spite of this, Wolfgang never lost his faith in mankind.

#### Chapter 3

## On the Impossibility and the Prospect of Being a Christian Today

"The god is near and difficult to grasp; but where there is danger, there grows, too, that which saves" – Friedrich Hölderlin, "Patmos"

During my last year in secondary school I was an atheist and a skeptic; I was willing to study anything but theology. Eighteen years of delay later, I passed the state examination in theology and enrolled in a course of study in the discipline of religion. In between times there were years of searching for the origins of our culture, pilgrimages to Athens and Rome, Paris and Vienna; I looked for and found the heart and soul of our culture in the resounding cosmos of music, in the symbolic proportions of Greek temples and Gothic cathedrals, in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and Rembrandt's chiaroscuro; I let the magical words of poetry flow through me and made my way along the royal path of philosophy. And I saw myself in heart and mind as a European, shaped by Socrates and Jesus, Plato and Paul, as the heir of Shakespeare and Goethe, Bach and Bruckner.

How can one still dare today to want to be a Christian? After two thousand years of fearfully lost ways and desperate confusions, tragic misunderstandings and fanatical, erroneous commitments, hopeless illusions and prideful perversions, after inquisitions and Jewish pogroms, conversion of peoples by fire and sword, suppression by cross and concentration camp? What is there that has not been done and suffered, struggled and fought for in the name of Christ? How many terrible wars have there been in the name of peace, in the name of freedom, in the name of "Christian freedom" and truth, including the truth of a belief? What an appalling demonstration of enslavement and lies!

Faced with this register of sins in Christian history, one would have to despair if there were not shining opposing examples of the Imitatio Christi: selfless martyrdom and sacrifice, the offering of one's own life in the service of outcasts and the desperate, hope in the face of despair, courage in the face of bloody barbarism, active faith in the face of death, chorales against cannons!

St. Benedict of Nursia and Francis of Assisi, Jan Hus in Konstanz and Luther in Worms, the Bethel Institution and Lambaréné, the Red Cross and Amnesty International—none of these would exist without Jesus Christ, without the strength of his death-overcoming belief in the mercifulness of God the Father, which obligates us, the bearers of his name, to be merciful to all of our fellow humans.

Consequently, what can Christianity no longer be today? It cannot be narrow-minded dogmatism and sectarianism, obstinate, self-righteous, pharisaic orthodoxy, insistance on the letter of "Holy Scripture" and the so-called confessional writings, which no doubt had meaning in their own time with its particular challenges, but do not necessarily today with our quite different challenges. All of theology is an interpretation of tradition as determined by its time; we must learn to differentiate between what is limited by its time and what is determined for its time and to make the eternal word accessible for our own time.

Consequently, what does it mean to be a Christian today? Active support of all people without distinguishing according to classes, races, and religions; Jesus with the lepers and the Good Samaritan can serve as models. Readiness for open dialogue with everyone, of every party, of every doctrine of salvation. Openness for everything in the entire world that concerns people, solidarity with all who are oppressed and suffer inhumanely. From another perspective: renunciation of material excess: "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16, 26) To renounce having privileges of any kind over others. To distance oneself from all worldly things, "for the essence of this world passes away" (1 Corinthians 7, 31). To give over one's soul to no one, to no cause, to no ideology, because "a Christian is a master of all things and subject to no one" (Luther). Then we will let go of our concerns about maintaining and increasing material goods. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it" (Matthew 16, 25). Then we will lose our fear about the world and of the world, and Christians will understand again when Jesus says: "In this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16, 33). We must return through theology, as it were, to the origins through the framework of Christianity to its core, to Jesus of Nazareth.

As long as we are subject to the powers, conditionings, desires, and false goals of our human world, fear holds us in its grasp and we are enclosed in our own prison; we become truly free, completely ourselves, only when we overcome the world within us, when we have freed ourselves from the grasp of our illusory desire and our self-centered addictions (Buddha and Christ are in agreement on this), when we take a step back and gain distance from all things and conditions of our existence. We are meant to become complete, whole human beings, fully ourselves, free of all alienating conditionality. The Christian gives of himself so that the "other" can recognize himself in his counterpart — who is the "other" like himself. He will not and should not impose himself on another person or oppress him; he wants to help that other person to become truly himself in accordance with his purpose.

This is Christian humanism. To be a Christian today means: to become a Christian again, to return to Jesus Christ, his word, his deed, his intention, his accomplishment, his suffering on the way to the cross, and his resurrection in the spirit and heart of his followers. His word promised blessedness to the poor and the suffering, to the peacemakers (not just those who keep the peace), and to those persecuted for their convictions. We feel united with them, our service is on their behalf. His deed was the release from the compulsion of the law and inner torment, and toward the certainty of being surrounded and borne by the love of God the Father. His deed was redemption from alienation and enmity, and toward selfhood and brotherhood, from isolation and disunity, and toward a new covenant that unites all peoples as one humanity and invokes the peace of the kingdom of God. A complete turn-around is necessary. Metanoeite! Transform your inner convictions! Repent, and believe in the gospel! (Mark 1, 15)

What is needed is a reversal of the polarity of egotism, which simply does not achieve what it hopes for but degrades us to being slaves of this world, and to the active love of others which changes our selfcenteredness into being ourselves. To help others, not to use them as a means of achieving our own selfish purposes. The order of the day does not call for us to remain Christians and hold fast to Christianity in all its historical developments, but rather, conscientiously and with a hand on the pulse of our times, to review and sound out all of Christian doctrine, all the findings and avowals that have been handed down, in order to determine their durability and sustainability in the face of untenable positions and groundless illusions, and, if necessary, to courageously throw over board all teachings that prove to be empty, so that our ship of life, the Noah's ark of humanity, will not sink under the excess weight of a useless cargo, but rather head directly for the coasts of the future. Too much baggage will oppress the traveler and tire him out before he has reached Sinai; anyone who hopes to make it to the peak and be permitted to view the promised land of the future may bring along only what is most necessary: a small manual (Biblion) will suffice.

Who knows how the "Holy Scripture" of the Old and New Testaments came into being—whether sayings of the prophets or psalms, gospels or letters to distant churches, the proclamation of final judgment or of a New World, consolation in the agony of death, the promise of bliss to those cast out. Who knows the manner in which every word was directed to groups of people in specific situations, which means that not every word preserved in the Bible must relate to us literally, but which nonetheless can reach us anew as individuals or in a community and can affect us, just as, ever since the entrance of Jesus into the world, his Word has again and again awakened individuals and entire peoples to new life, calling to them in their desperate forsakenness to a hopeful "new being." Anyone who brings this to mind knows that Christ has always risen and will in future always be a living presence wherever two persons or groups or enemies open up to each other, tear down the walls of distrust and enter into dialogue full of confidence, recognize each other thereby as brothers who are dependent on each other, who for that reason acknowledge and accept each other just as they are, without prior concessions, conditions, or indignities, in true humbleness and with the courage to confess to their own errors and culpable actions. This is what John means with his new commandment of reciprocal love, this is what Paul means when he says "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Romans 3, 28), to which hope and love and the courage to trust one another also belong.

This is the beginning of the Christian's new being—that he meets others, including his enemies, halfway, like the father who welcomes his long-lost son when he returns home, like God himself when he comes to us in Jesus, speaking with everyone and helping them to live. We should not remain Christians, with our eye rigidly directed at things past, but become Christians again, looking ahead to the future for all of us, prepared to give up our security and assurances if necessary, because such securities have become assurances against leading a truly human life (consider our consumer world with its gigantic industry attuned to our superfluous needs). We must leave the prison of our computer world (our "Egypt") and journey through the wilderness again, to that still unknown promised land, guided by the hope of coming closer to the kingdom of God, even though we ourselves may never set foot in it or even catch sight of it.

But Exodos is not the only guiding principle of a truly Christian life, there is also Kathodos, unfortunately forgotten in the course of our highly un-Christian history—that is, a descent into the rubble-filled depths of our spiritual and actual being, the inner world where God waits for us. Turning inward to a dialogue in our soul with God (formerly known as "prayer"), a quiet submersion into the depths of being (which is God), something found in the mysticism of all religions. This is necessary, because it can get to the root of our innermost need. Turning around, turning inward, turning homeward, out of the deadening, blinding, alienating world of the motors and machines that kill the soul, into the

silent world within us that opens our heart and mind, reconciling and uniting us with our lost self.

All around us we are aware of millions of lost, desperate, doubting souls in search of meaning, full of longing for genuine life, for the "paradise" of being oneself; horrified, we see how many of them sink into despair, drowning in addictions, incapable of seeing and grasping the helping hands that reach out to them. Religious unrest and a thirst for truth and clarity drive countless people hither and yon, to take trips to Rome or pilgrimages to Poona; rarely do any find their paradise, most of them chase after illusory images.

In his long poem "Der Archipelagus", Friedrich Hölderlin anticipates our perdition prophetically:

"But woe! Our people wander in night, they live, as in Orcus, without the divine. To their own activities they are bound, and in the workshop's din they hear only themselves; many work like wild men without rest, with powerful arm, but time and again,?like the Furies, their efforts remain futile." But then near the end of the poem, he continues: "Until, awakened from his fearful dream, man's soul arises in youthful joy, and the blessed breath of love heralds a new time..."

It is not Christianity that is played out and at an end, as its enemies would like to believe, it is us—not because we are Christians, but because in all that we hope to do, we do the exact opposite of what Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed and set in motion according to multiple testimonies in the New Testament—the things for which he lived and suffered, for which he allowed himself to be tortured and crucified in order to change our inner convictions, to turn us away from deadening alienation and toward life-creating humanity, to help us to be there for every person who needs us as fellow humans. We do not need more objectivity, what we need is more humanity. Man himself has become objectified along with the objectified world, yet man is not an object that people can do with as they like, but a creature in the likeness of God.

Not until all the baptized Christians become born anew in the spirit of Christ, not until the likeness of God glows resplendent in the millions of faded faces, will we Christians be able to avail ourselves of our call to become a light to the world.

The calculation made by world-conquering homo rationalis does not add up, it cannot add up, because he has failed to see the common denominator and the large minus sign before his gigantic summation, which makes him eternally in debt to the divine in its very being, in other words, in debt to his creator, whom he no longer figured on, but who will present him with his reckoning at the Final Judgment. May we hope that HE will pardon his tyrannical, megalomaniacal debtor, who was supposed to be his responsible representative on earth? We can only hope so, against all outward appearances, and we must activate our mind and hands to counteract a catastrophe, to change course before it is too late. Periculum in morar. The danger grows with continued delay.

The danger has grown immeasurably and the possibility of being saved appears small if we continue to drag along as we have; the only possible solution is to radically reject our desire to possess and thereby find our essential being—the very change that Jesus of Nazareth categorically demanded.

It is not necessary to make a pilgrimage to Katmandu and become apprenticed to a guru (who is often a wolf in sheep's clothing). We need only to descend into the depths of our own original being to the origins of Christianity, and discover once again its riches under the rubble of time, in order to rouse to new life the so-called "Christian" world that has become numb in its spiritual coldness. We do not need to seek mystical contemplation in India or in Islam; we can find it at a similar depth, and more closely attuned with ourselves, in our Christian culture: with Jesus at prayer, with monks and anchorites, with Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme, in Bach cantatas and masses by Bruckner. It is good to set out to learn from the wise men of India and from American Indians wise in the ways of nature, from Buddhist masters in the art of meditation, from the thinkers and visionaries, prophets and philosophers of Karl Jaspers' "Axial Age," who laid their foundations from the plains of China to the coasts of the Aegean, if only we can summon the necessary courage to excavate the buried sources of our life, so that they begin to bubble up again and supply the "water of life" that we long to drink.

Marx's famously infamous 11th Thesis on Feuerbach states that "previously, philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; but the point is to transform it." This is, in the wake of the threats of our time, in serious need of revision. We must learn again not to view the world as an object of exploitation for our greed, but to see it as God's creation. Our addiction to change has without doubt caused enough harm; Marx was not referring to nature, of course, but to the world inhabited by people, the human societal order with its often oppressive, obsolete regulations created through historical developments; these were certainly good and useful at first, but became life-threatening in a changed and changing world, and may still be. Marx had in mind, so we believe, basically the same thing as Jesus with his call for a change of heart. It may sound heretical, but through his efforts for the suppressed, reconciling man and nature, Marx stood with Jesus of Nazareth, whether he himself knew it or not, whether Christians deny it or not. Expressed more pointedly, the young Marx, like the young Luther and Thomas Müntzer, was much more of a "Christian" than all the "Christians" against whose inhumane conduct he justifiably protested.

Many Christians were awakened from their church-induced sleep through Marx and came to themselves again, but unfortunately far too few. And many Christians are unfortunately Christians in name only, and are in reality heathens or even nihilists or blatant materialists or some other sort of "-ists." The harm that has made us fearful on all fronts today began when we tore asunder the bond between God and nature in our sacrilegious presumption. The debasing of God brings about the debasing of man, the desacralization of the world leads to the objectification, reevaluation, and devaluation of the world. Now that God, separate from the world and superior to it, has been deposed and his creature, established by him as the responsible governor of his world, has made himself autocratic lord of this world, the world and with it man himself has suddenly become an object of exploitation.

What a monstrous paradox: the "lord of the world" has made himself the slave of his uncreated, transformed world! Referring to the power that the world has over our souls, John once proclaimed to his brothers in the faith: "Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world" (1 John 5, 4). Horrified, we must realize today that our faithlessness, our selfidolization was a Pyrrhic victory, through which the world has almost completely conquered us once again.

As it was two thousand years ago, it is decidedly necessary for us today to succeed, as the first Christians did themselves, in freeing ourselves from the deadly grasp of world powers, from the automated contrivances that we ourselves have created. As it was two thousand years ago, no one will succeed in doing this alone; if we do not want to perish from the "blessings" (which are actually a curse) of the "progress" we have set in motion, it can only happen through universal solidarity of all people with all others, through taking seriously Lessing's ring parable\*, through reciprocal respect of our essence, though reciprocal support, through giving and taking wherever it is necessary. For us today, it is truly "the eleventh hour," demanding our decisiveness against compulsion by things and systems, and for being ourselves—that is, for a life worthy of humanity, as unassuming as it may be. We must learn to be satisfied with little, and not to become self-satisfied; we must learn to assume that what is appropriate for the human race ... is to be unassuming.

\*Nathan the Wise is a play published by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1779. The centerpiece of the work is the ring parable, narrated by Nathan when asked by Saladin which is the true religion.



Wolfgang Plenio with his former high school students Dr. Harald Held, oncologist, and Dr. Christian Hansen, hand surgeon.

#### Chapter 4

## Views on the Three Monotheistic Religions

These religions come from a time when the world was seen and interpreted in a mythic fashion. Today, these desert religions of antiquity no longer satisfy the aspirations and needs of an emancipated, autonomous humanity.

The first in time was Judaism, which developed from a selfidentification with Jehovah, the god of the Sinai, who had freed the people of Israel from their captivity in Egypt and led them to the promised land of Canaan. It was for reasons of survival that the Pentateuch contains so many commandments (laws).

Christianity came into being a millennium later during the foreign domination of Babylon and (later) Rome, when the the people of Israel came to believe that the rabbi Jesus from Galilee was the "son of God" and the promised messiah (redeemer) who had come of his own free will to free his people from their belief in false gods. Using documents from the original religious community in Jerusalem, Paul created the myth of the sacrificial death of the son of God, who had been sent to absolve his brethren's sins and even those of all of sinful humanity. God was no longer the strict, punishing judge of the Last Judgment, but the merciful, loving father of mankind. Pentecost was the birthday, through the acts of the Holy Spirit, of the Christian community.

In the view of Islam, the doctrine of the Trinity is polytheism, a betrayal of the religion of Abraham and the belief in one God. As the second-to-last messenger of Allah, Jesus renewed the original religion, which however was distorted and falsified by those in possession of the holy books, the "Christians." Not until later was Mohammed, as the final authentic emissary of God, assigned the task of reinstating and making complete the true religion of Abraham: "Stand up and give warning!" (of Allah's final judgment)

The word Islam means submission to the often apparently arbitrary and absolute will of God, which was imparted to Mohammed by the archangel Gabriel through the Koran (= lesson). The teaching of Islam is carried out through interpretation of the Koran by legal scholars (not theologians). Only strict obedience to the commandments of Allah saves believers from damnation at the last judgment. All the surahs (chapters) of the Koran are revealed "in the name of Allah the merciful."

The history of Christianity and Islam is written in blood and is full of the suppression of "unbelievers," but offers examples of self-sacrificing human actions as well as brotherly living together. Tolerance existed in Islam, beginning in Andalusia and lasting until its defeat there in 1492, but it was not present in Christianity until the period of the Enlightenment. In the Islamic view, Jews and Christians, though "people of the Book," have deserted the faith and become "infidels." In the struggle against them, the Koran forbids violent conversion ("There shall be no compulsion of belief"), but does recommend violence in the Holy War for the true faith. Overall, intolerance and a radical absolutism of belief dominate Islam.

The major division in Islam is between the Sunnis ("true believers") and the Shia, who are disciples of Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law; he was the first Imam (interpreter of the Koran) and was later murdered. In Islam there is not only legal interpretation, but also the practice of a personal pious mysticism by the Sufis. The caliphs are followers of Allah in the Holy War against the infidels.

Modern-day Islam is experiencing a profound cultural crisis in the face of the technically progressive and secularized West. Fundamentalists seek agreement between the Koran and modern thinking, and accuse western modernism of deserting the true faith, which they believe has the well-being of all people as its goal. There is no separation of state and religion in their theocracy. Allah's will is absolute, and unbelievers are punished in courts of law, while those who sacrifice their lives in the struggle against recalcitrant unbelievers will be rewarded with paradisiacal bliss.

The truth of religion is the experience of the reality of God, of the dignity of man, of the equality of all before God, regardless of the barriers that have developed historically. In the context of enlightenment, Islam, which became frozen in time during the Middle Ages, is in need of remediation. What is decisive today, beyond all differences in belief systems, is to overcome the deadly egomania and striving for power prevalent in both the East and the West. Let us not consider those who are unlike us to be unbelievers, apostates, and "enemies," but fellow human beings in need of our help.



Professor Michael Goering, Executive Director of the ZEIT Foundation in Hamburg, exchanges publications with Wolfgang Plenio and discusses new developments in classical music with him. Wolfgang had always dreamt of becoming a concert pianist, and might have, if only—according to him—he had had "five percent more talent."

### Chapter 5

# The Significance of Music in European Culture from Antiquity through the Age of the Baroque

"If to song you lend an ear, you gain a prize from far above, for the sounds you find so dear began in heaven with great love; It's there that all the angel choirs sing sweetly as they play their lyres." - free rendering of a poem by Martin Luther

Martin Luther praised music as one of the most beautiful gifts of God: "Noble *musica* is, second only to the word of God, the greatest treasure on earth. It governs all our thoughts, our mind, our heart, and our spirit." Luther, as the composer of many chorales, was the creator of Protestant church music. Without his influence, Bach's music would not have been the same.

Luther's esteem for music has a long tradition. Our European culture begins with the ancient Greeks. The sparse archeological finds can teach us little about how their music, praised by poets and philosophers, really sounded beyond that it was for one voice and was accompanied by the lyre or cithara and the aulos, a kind of double flute. Be that as it may, music was considered the highest of all the arts. For Pythagoras it was the sonorous expression of natural number relationships: the monochord string imparts in its intervals the audible representation of the harmony of the spheres; the macrocosm is reflected in the microcosm. For Plato, education through music is so excellent because rhythm and harmony penetrate the soul most powerfully and lend it the right state of mind. Aristotle, too, emphasizes the ethical, practical, and inspiring effect of music.

In the Christian Middle Ages, a fundamental mathematical understanding dominated music approximately until the death of Bach in 1750. Its essence was from the very beginning praise of God, the innermost expression of Christian gratitude for grace and redemption through Jesus Christ. There would be no European music if the musical consciousness of the West had not been awakened to active creativity by the ethical appeal of Christ to freedom of the heart and personal decisiveness. Thus it was that Christianity raised music to its hitherto highest level. Beginning musical stages are found in all tribal cultures, in which spontaneous music for dancing and singing issue from direct personal experiences. At a higher level of consciousness we find ritual music established by doctrine in the advanced civilizations of ancient China, India, and Greece. The performance of music thereby gained meaning and function in the framework of a religious interpretation of the world and of life.

In the Middle Ages, polyphony developed out of early Church psalmody and hymnody and from responsories, the antiphons between cantor and choir. Vertical components, comparable to the art of the Gothic cathedral with its use of buttresses, were added to the linearity of Gregorian chant, first as parallel lines in fourths, fifths, and thirds with specific cadences on the word "amen." These led in the Renaissance to the formation of the tonal system, which arranges tones according to the natural logic of hearing, thus expanding the horizon of keys into a universal space of sounds.

The music of the 15th and 16th century Renaissance saw itself as a *nova ars* led by the so-called "Old Netherlanders." The particular qualities of this new style of music were pleasantness and diversity. It was considered an art form that was intended only for the educated classes, and was shaped by the individual accents of every nation. It maintained a balance between vocal parts and harmony, between the precise correspondence of word and sound.

Along with the religious genres of mass and motet, there were also the secular song and the madrigal. Given the close connection between word and sound in each of these categories, there is no difference stylistically.

In the age of the Baroque (ca. 1600-1750), the whole of life was accompanied by music in the cycle of the ecclesiastical year. A musician in the service of a prince bishop, a nobleman, or the city council, had to supply appropriate music for all ceremonial and representative occasions, so that music consisted exclusively of commissioned pieces. Freelance musicians did not exist until Mozart's day, and even he still had to seek employment suited to his talents. The first truly independent composer, from whom noblemen ordered specific works and received dedications, was Beethoven.

While the instrumental music of the Renaissance functioned only as accompaniment in the service of vocal music, new independent instrumental forms, manners of playing, and expressive techniques developed in the age of the Baroque. On the basis of the "doctrine of affections" developed from ancient rhetoric, it became a sort of *resonant* rhetoric; its task was the imitation of every movement of mind and soul. The opera came into being in Florence around 1600. Its originators sought to revive the Greek theater with its musical accompaniments, though they had no real sense of what that involved. As opera developed, it became a Baroque showpiece in honor of noble patrons. The staging presented a total work of art with magnificent settings, recitatives, and *da capo* arias for the self-promotion of prima donnas and castrati. Heroic figures from Greek mythology such as Orpheus and Eurydice, Hercules and Ariadne, reflected societal and individual relationships within the nobility, and later on, tensions between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. The opera served as representation and entertainment for the upper classes, and did not encompass broader circles of society until the end of the eighteenth century.

The musical aesthetic of the time viewed music as language, with the task of expressing the emotional content of a text through appropriate means of expression. Most important were the directional motions: ascendit in coelo (he rose into heaven) with a rising figure, descendit de coelo (he descended from heaven) with a downward figure. In all of Bach's text-oriented works one frequently encounters musical turns of phrase that portray certain descriptive words. Music consciously became an applied language of tones replete with symbols, a sign language of multilayered meaning. If the subject was the cross, for example, it was denoted by a # or through a motif in the shape of a *cross*, such as the theme of the C-sharp minor fugue with two counter-themes in the first volume of the "Well-Tempered Clavier." The so-called Orgelmesse (organ mass) is introduced by a prelude representing the majesty of God, while the concluding fugue portrays the Trinity: God the Father in calm, diatonic strides, God's son as his Word in flowing eighth notes, and the Holy Spirit in a dance-like 12/8 time; their unity is represented through combinations of these themes with each other

The philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716) defined music as an esoteric form of mathematics. The letters b-a-c-h, for example, add up to the number 14; in the St. Matthew Passion, "Lord, is it I?" is heard eleven times, without Judas, of course; a figure with twelve notes points to the twelve apostles.

Bach's purely instrumental music is also full of a surprising amount of symbolism that can only be seen through careful study of a musical text. The role played by "sacred" numbers in the symbolic cosmos of his works is time and again a source of wonder. Merely the simple analysis of a Brandenburg Concerto points to forms of construction that can be found in the structure of Baroque palaces.

But Bach's greatest accomplishments were made possible by his traversing the complete circle of fifths, once the notion of "equal temperament" had been invented in 1691. This system of tuning divides

the octave into twelve equal half-tone intervals, dispenses with the absolute purity of the natural intervals, and thereby makes modulation in and through the most distant keys possible.

Lasting testimony to this revolutionary invention with its systematic exploration of the tonal order is the "Well-Tempered Clavier." The double cycle through all twenty-four keys in major and minor has proven even today to be a veritable fountain of youth from which almost all composers have drawn new ideas. In each instance, the musical variety is due to the tension created between the more or less freely formed prelude and the fugue coupled with it. In his inexhaustible power of invention Bach goes through not only all the possibilities of contrapuntal combination and variation, but also the multiplicity of tonal modulations, while at the same time pulling all the registers of the corresponding feelings and significations.

Each of Bach's fugues unveils to the student innovative relationships not only through mathematics and architecture, but through symbolic Biblical images as well. In his creations, the art of the fugue attains the high point of effectivity. It is a pendant in sound to the universal notion of *ordo* as presented by Leibniz in his doctrine of "pre-established harmony." Since Bach's day, the ability to write a fugue has been considered a point of honor and seal of approval for every serious composer. In a fugue, the theme does not only "flee" (Lat.: *fugare*, to put to flight) through the different voices, it also transforms itself from major to minor and assumes reversed, diminished, or augmented forms. The melodic theme goes through rhythmic and harmonic variations, and is confronted with changing counterpoints or a counter-theme. In brief, a fugue is "established form that lives and changes," to quote the poet Goethe.

Bach not only brought the fugue to its summit, but, with the exception of opera, he composed in all other genres that had developed in the Baroque. Along with the religious categories, such as motet, cantata, passion, and mass, there were his secular concertos, variations, and suites. Europe is present in all of these: he wrote choral preludes in the German style; concertos in the Italian style; French, English, and German suites, using the order of movements required of stylized dances: allemande (German striding dance), courante (French running dance), sarabande (Spanish striding dance), gigue (English leaping dance), plus any additional movements desired, such as gavotte, minuet, and bourrée. If one looks for music that represents all of Europe in one unified style one will find it in Bach's works. It should not be forgotten, however, that his art was in the broadest sense worship: *omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—all for the greater glory of God. In Bach's credo, the basso continuo that was dominant in his time "is the most perfect foundation of music . . . in honor of God and for the pleasure of the spirit, and like all music should have no other end and purpose than to honor God and to provide refreshment for the spirit. Where this is not paid attention to, there is no genuine music, but only a devilish whining and droning."

Since his rediscovery in 1829 through the epoch-making performance of the "St. Matthew Passion" under the direction of the young Felix Mendelssohn, Bach has penetrated not only European consciousness more and more deeply, but that of the entire world of music. Subsequent composers owe him an enormous debt of gratitude.



www.Moin-Moin.us (Cf. W. Plenio in "Archive")

## Ian Barbour, Who Found a Balance Between Faith and Science, Dies at 90

By WILLIAM YARDLEYJAN. 12, 2014 - New York Times



Ian Barbour, right, who had physics and divinity degrees, with Sir John Templeton after winning the Templeton Prize in 1999. Ian Barbour first studied science, then religion, but instead of concluding that the two are in eternal conflict, he helped create an academic realm where they share common ground.

Dr. Barbour, who was 90 when he died on Dec. 24 in Minneapolis, earned a doctorate in physics at the University of Chicago and then a divinity degree from Yale, and he never abandoned his passion for scientific exploration or his place in the pew. He embraced the complexities of evolution and the Big Bang theory, of genetics and neuroscience. He also embraced Christianity. He was a devoted parishioner at First United Church of Christ in Northfield, Minn.

In 1999, when he won the Templeton Prize, a prestigious award given annually to "a living person who has made exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension," he said it was missing the point to focus on the supremacy of one over the other, to read either religious texts or scientific findings as comprehensive in their capacity to explain existence.

"If we take the Bible seriously but not literally," he said in his acceptance address, "we can accept the central biblical message without accepting the prescientific cosmology in which it was expressed, such as the three-layer universe with heaven above and hell below, or the seven days of the creation story."

Wolfgang Plenio was moved by the diaries of lan and Deane Barbour, from Northfield, Minnesota. (see Chapter 2, "Reflections", pages 24-25): The couple travelled to the defeated Germany in the summer of 1948 to help remove debris in Hamburg and Münster (in Europe, there were 150 work camps organized by US Christian student associations). Deane and lan Barbour were married in 1947. Deane studied theology, and lan physics. Later as a professor he became especially well-known through his publications on the dialogue of religion and science. In 1999, lan received the \$1.2 million Templeton Prize. Previous laureates were Mother Teresa, Alexander Solzhenizyn, and Desmond Tutu.

#### Chapter 6

## Summary

#### 1. Humanism as an educational ideal

Europe is culturally based on humanism, Cicero's notion of humanitas. Petrarch ("I am a Ciceronian") can be considered the father of early Renaissance humanism, which continued into the period of the Reformation. The cosmopolitan central figure of the time was Erasmus of Rotterdam, who argued with Martin Luther around 1525 on the subject of the freedom or bondage of the will.

This so-called classical humanism of the sixteenth century became the cradle of the humanistic schools in Germany, which correspond roughly to American liberal arts colleges. Modern humanism grew out of the eighteenth-century body of thought of the Humboldt brothers, Lessing, Schlegel, and Goethe, among others.

Following numerous variations (Karl Marx, socialism), this modern humanism as established by Humboldt experienced a revival as a thirdstage humanism under the leadership of Werner Jaeger, whose standard work "Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture" is based on Plato's concept of education.

The attempt at establishing a German parliament in 1848 (in Frankfurt's Paulskirche) played an essential role in the emergence of a new Europe. Fundamental to this concept were Immanuel Kant's idea of man as a citizen of the world (1784) and his notion of an everlasting peace among nations.

#### 2. The expansion of life's fundamental questions

The truth inherent in religions is the experience of the reality of "God," of the "dignity of man," the equality of all people before God, irrespective of all historically developed barriers. ?What is necessary today, beyond the differences in religious beliefs, is to overcome the cutthroat egomania and striving for power of every individual, and finally to recognize the needs of our fellow man, rather than viewing him

as a non-believer, a renegade, an enemy. Do we in the West really live in a democracy, or is it in actuality a plutocracy—a chaos of information without orientation, a labyrinthine soap bubble, sparkling in many colors, of our ignorant imaginings and life-threatening illusions?

As long as man strives, he goes astray, as God points out to Mephistopheles in Goethe's "Faust". The well-known philosopher of perception, George Berkeley, expressed a modern idea in his thesis esse est percipi (existence means being perceived) and was a prophet of today's fashionable mentality: anyone who is not in Facebook doesn't exist.

Man is nothing but a shadow—the dream of a shadow, according to Pindar; or in "Macbeth": a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

## 3. Reflections on Ian Barbour's "Balance between Faith and Science"

(New York Times Obituary, January 12, 2014)

The "scientific" rational explanation of the universe that we have appropriated has missed the mark, just as much as any "merely" religious faith in a traditional or illusory "God." Every "God" imagined by man is nothing but a man-made miniature god.

Nonetheless, for Voltaire, who thought the situation through, the following maxim is valid: If God didn't exist, he would have to be invented (for the sake of man).

The peace of God must be on a higher level than any—powerless human reasoning, which is incapable of "hearing" the voice of God in the innermost depths of the world. To do this, the modern "multicultural" person must learn how to hear again, as Heraclitus did when listening to the harmony of opposites. There can be no point without a counterpoint!

Our cultural history is, according to one's viewpoint, the history of religion or philosophy. One without the other would be one-sided, that is, diminished.

PS, from our Christmas card of 2014: Hamlet's remark that the world is out of joint presupposes the existence of interlocking joints which in today's general madness are no longer recognizable. Our supposedly civilized humanity has become mentally ill and is scarcely curable, either physically or psychically, if we continue to adhere to the symptoms that dominate the world. We think that we see the "tip of the iceberg," without really knowing what that really is. "Everything has always turned out well" (so it will this time too). All one can do is hope or, as some think, pray.

In spite of this, we greet every little daisy alongside our path through life with joy. Go forth and do likewise! In the spirit of reason and confidence, based on our belief in the good, we send this from the old world to the new.

## Appendix 1

## 2010, Yogi Reppmann's Speech for Dr. Plenio's 80th Birthday in English and Latin:

My honored friend Wolfgang,

On this day it seems to me perfectly in order to express my gratitude to you and to emphasize my admiration by offering you a short speech in Latin\*. Do you find this awkward? Not at all, I hope, as long as my words are in reasonably good Latin! I send them to you from the bottom of my heart. While it is true that the happy days in which I was your student are past, what has remained constant is most especially the indelible spirit that you have planted in my very being. There is no doubt that you imparted in me everything I know about the usage of the Latin language. In your person we found an outstanding pedagogue who consistently remained unsurpassed in all matters having to do with culture, teaching, and humanity. It was customary for you to always hand back the papers to be corrected on the next day; your fortunate students had the good luck of working with a scholar of philosophy of the highest degree. We treasured whatever it was that we learned through the brilliance of Dr. Plenio, and it was good not only for school, but for a lifetime. In these days we in America have come to understand the value of Latin thought and the authority of ancient philosophers. In the city of Nordfeld—"Northfield" in the English language—we organize courses of study of great breadth and depth under the name of "liberal arts." In these, your mental acuity lives on as a commitment to those eternal values. The education you gave students frequently offered them a window of opportunity into the successful pursuit of their lives. This was the expression of the spirit of a great and beloved teacher whose name, "Plenio," is simply filled with fulfillment!

Once again I offer you my thanks and wish you all the best for what the future holds.

May this future be the best part of your life!

Published by *Flensburger Tageblatt*, with Antje Walther's article, "Wolfgang Plenio turns eighty—Praise in Latin for a 'shining light'" Flensburg Daily News, January 11, 2010 Honoratissime amice Wolfgang!

Hodierno die alienum non esse videtur gratias tibi agere et venerationi meae orationem brevem dare paucis verbis Latinis. Putasne talia perdifficilia esse? Minime, dummodo haec verba sint satis Latina. Corde meo ad te veniunt. Certe: Tempores felices praeterita sunt in quibus eram discipulus tuus; quid mansit constanter est spiritus imprimis perpetuus quem posuisti in animum meum. Haud dubie omnia qua scio in usu loquendi linguae Latinae a tibi mihi data sunt. Paedagogum egregium cognovimus in persona tua perpetuum invictum in omnes quaestiones cultus, doctrinae et humanitatis. Usus erat te opera corrigenda semper proxime die reddidisse; fortunati discipuli reppererunt paedagogum philosophiae valde eruditum. Quacumque didicimus dileximus, et omnia cognita in luce et spiritu Doctoris Plenionis non scholae sed vitae erant. His temporibus in collegia americana numerosa intelleximus etiam gravitatem cognitationis Latinae et auctoritatem philosophorum antiquorum. In oppido Ager Septentrionum - in lingua Britannica "Northfield" - collegia educationis latitudinis et altitudinis magnae apparamus sub nomine "Artes liberales". Hic vivet acies animi tui in confessionem ad virtutes aeternas. Saepe haec educatio aperuit discipulis fenestram ad cursum bonum vitae suae: eventus spiritu magistri magni et valde amati cuius nomen est plenus plenitudinis Plenio. Iterum gratias tibi persolvo atque omnia bona in res posteras opto.

Sit melior pars vitae futura!

#### Laudatio auf Latein für eine "Lichtgestalt"

11. Januar 2010 | 20:17 Uhr | Von Antje Walther - Flensburger Togeblatt



Leter yogi, Inte Gitta! ich hate mit deres no types Fingefill Deiner Sateinischer und distaken Text möglivist Deinen, Werch journafs Romignet, ohni daber perfakto klaminko Lakin angestell in haben the ffeutich kannel Di alles maly leave ! Bernist hat ich wich, divitich zu schreiten. Benan fortunant in hunc annum mente sana et compose sano workscher Erch deiden Ruth will willfam

Lichtgestalt: Wolfgang Plenio.

Honoratissime amice Wolfgang!

Hodierno die alienum non esse videtur gratias tibi agere et venerationi meae orationem addiert brevem date paucis verbis Latinis. Putasne talia perdifficilia esse ? Minime, dummodo haec Temporn fabricia 268227 verba sint satis Latina. Corde meo ad te veniunt. Certe: Tempores felices praeterita sunt ja perannus essem. quoil quibus eram discipulus tuus; quid mansit constanter est spiritus imprimis perpetuus quem posuisti in animum megua. Haud dubie omnia qua scio in usu loquendi linguae Latinae a tibrie mihi data sunt. Paedagogum egregium cognovimus in persona tua perpetuam invictum in e. 64.63 e. 1944.9 part Mcs 41.6. omnes quaestiones cultur, doctrinae prhumanitatis. Usus erat je opera corrigenda semper Mes proxime die reddidisse; fortunati discipuli reppererunt paedagogum philosophiae valde tid in mon eruditum. Quacumque didicimus dileximus, et omnin cognita in luce et spiritu Doctoris secrete instructure in the secret in the s cultural intelleximus etiam gravitatem eognitationis Latinae et auctoritatem philosophorum

Once a pupil, always a pupil! In 2010 Wolfgang Plenio phoned us in Northfield, MN from Germany, and suggested the above corrections and improvements to Yogi Reppmann's speech.

antiquorum. In oppido Ager Septentrionum - b(lingua Britannica "Northfield" - collegia Institucionus educationis latitudinis et altitudinis magnae appararous sub nomine "Artes liberales". Hic Hi tum altomarum. vivit viver acies animi tui in confessionend ad virtutas acternas. Saepe haec educatio aperuit discipulis fenestram ad cursum bonum vitae suae: viam ad viter i bia tam eventus spiritu magni et valde a multis amati, cuius nomen est plenige plenitudinis Plenio. Iterum gratias tibi persolvo atque omnia bona in tes posteras opto.

futura Situaction pars vitae futura ! mellor!

#### Die deutsche Übersetzung:

Sehr geehrter Freund Wolfgang !

Am heutigen Tage scheint es nichts Fremdes zu sein, Dir Dank abzustatten und meiner Verehrung eine kleine Rede zu schenken mit wenigen lateinischen Worten. Hältst Du dies für schwierig? Keineswegs, wenn nur die Wörter einigermaßen ordentliches Latein sind. Von meinem Herzen kommen sie zu Dir. Gewiss: Die glücklichen Zeiten sind vergangen, im ab denen ich Dein Schüler war; was in Bestähltiger Weise geblieben ist, ist der besonderedauerhafte Geist, den Du in mein Gemüt gelegt hast. Zweifellos sind alle Dinge, die ich im Gebrauch der lateinischen Sprache kenne, mir von Dir gegeben worden. Einen herausragenden Pädagogen haben wir in Deiner Person gefunden, der beständig unübertroffen blieb in allen Fragen der Kultur, der Lehre und der Humanität. Es war üblich, dass Du die zu korrigierenden Arbeiten stets am folgenden Tag zurückgabst; die beglückten Schüler trafen auf einen sehr hervorragenden Pädagogen der Philosophie. Was auch immer wir lernten, schätzten wir, und alles im Licht und Geist des Doktor Plenio Erkannte war nicht für die Schule, sondern für die Leben. In atesch Zeiten haben wir in zahlreichen amerikanischen Kollegien auch die Bedeutung lateinischen Denkens und die Autorität antiker Philosophen begriffen. In der Stadt Nordfeld - in der britannischen Sprache "Northfield" -

Eranstalten wir Bildungskollegien von großer Breite und Tiefe unter dem Namen "Freiheitliche Künste". Hier lebt die Schärfe Deines Geistes im Bekenntnis zu den ewigen Werten. Häufig öffnete diese Bildung den Schülern ein Fenster für einen guten Lauf ihres Lebens; eine Auswirk des Gelande eines großen und vielgeliebten Lehrers, dessen Name lautet gefüllt mit Erfüllung Plenio.

Wiederum erstatte ich Dir Dank und wünsche alles Gute für die nächsten Angelegenheiten: Lei rär & frillung Denne, Pflichten

Möge die Zukunft der bessere Teil des Lebens sein!

## Appendix 2

## Ernst Lehmann

by Wolfgang Plenio

He was my model, fatherly friend, and also teacher at the Altes Gymnasium, Flensburg: "When Ernst stepped into the teachers' room, it was as if the sun had just risen."

Ernst Raimund Lehmann (pen name: Lehmann-Leander) was born in Schwerin in 1901 and died in Flensburg in 1981. He taught ancient languages, German, and geography in the Altes Gymnasium in Flensburg from 1949 to 1966. He embodied humanistic education and teaching in all that he said and wrote, not least through unforgettable performances of ancient comedies as director of his school theater group. Because he himself was enthusiastic, he inspired enthusiasm in his classes, in which he brought the spirit and experiences of antiquity to life.

His studies at the universities of Heidelberg and Berlin were in classical philology, philosophy, and German language and literature, and were shaped largely by Werner Jaeger, whose three-volume "Paideia" became the standard work of what was known in Germany as "The Third Humanism." His own publications with Vollmer Publishers included the volumes "Socrates and the Pre-Socratics", "Plato: Logos, Eros, Mythos," and "Aristotle: Analyst of Reality," all in the series "Thinkers of Antiquity." Each of these volumes is provided with an informative introduction, including well-considered excerpts that show the author to be a true scholar of antiquity. Lehmann also published new translations and completions in "Masterworks of Ancient Comedy," written with a great sense of the theater, as well as Plautus' play "Aulularia"-about a miser and his golden pot-in the volume "Greco-Roman Comedies." By way of explaining his preference for comedy, especially in school performances, he said, "the comic significantly eases the gap between the actor and his own self."

Under the name Ernst Lehmann-Leander he wrote essays, gave numerous lectures, and wrote books with selected writings from ancient literature, including, among others, "Man and Universe." His translation of the pastoral novel "Daphnis and Chloe" by Antonis Longos makes for good reading even today, as does "Aphrodite's Girdle," a charming bouquet of Greco-Roman love poetry. In addition to his skills as translator, he was a master of the art of the spoonerism and author of lively neo-Latin poems, some of which are included in Artemis Publishers' "Viva Camena."



From left to right: 1970, Ernst Lehmann-Leander with his wife; Walter Krebs and his wife, Dr. Joachim Paul celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the 'Alpine Club, Flensburg branch'.

### Appendix 3

## On Luther's Ethic of Obedience

#### by Wolfgang Plenio

Luther neither idolized nor rejected the state. He was concerned with the question of how Christians should act. The entire life of the Christian is entwined in the struggle between God's realm and the devil's.

The most significant Bible quotation in this context is Romans 13, 1: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God."

The Christian lives not for himself, but for his neighbor. And thus he does not do what he himself needs, but what is useful and beneficial to his neighbor. But because the sword (i.e., the secular power) is useful and beneficial for maintaining peace, punishing sin, and defending against evil, the Christian subjects himself voluntarily to the authorities.

Christians may also be secular authorities. You are obliged to support such authorities however you are able. In doing this you satisfy both the realm of God and the realm of the world. You suffer evil and injustice (as a Christian) and you punish evil and injustice (in your position of authority). You resist evil and at the same time you endure it. Where you and what is yours are concerned, you act in accordance with the Gospel and endure injustice; where your neighbor and what is his are concerned, you act in accordance with love and ward off evil from him. Those who are bearers of the official power are also servants of God who punish evil and protect the good. No Christian may wield or call upon the sword of secular authority on his own behalf. A Christian as a bearer of authority will not allow himself to be guided by worldly honor, nor will he plunge his country into the calamity of war because of injured honor, but will rather suffer this injustice and only give advice.

The laws of the world concern only our body and our possessions, but God does not want anyone but himself to rule over our soul. Wherever secular authority presumes to make a law affecting our soul, it encroaches upon God's rule, leading souls astray and corrupting them. Thus there may be no restriction of our thoughts, no religious tyranny. Any coercion of our beliefs is against God's commandment. One should not believe the Church or the Councils, but only God in accordance with the Gospel. As Augustine said: One cannot and may not force anyone to believe! The struggle against heresy is not a matter for secular authority, but must be consigned to the Word of God. The world cannot be governed by the Gospel. For the world, God gave his external order, the law. "Secular authority is God's bailiff." A society without secular authority is drunken madness. But neither is the absolute autonomy of the state acceptable to the Christian. Secular authority is bound by love to care for its subjects. But in matters of faith it may dictate nothing.

Subjects have no right to insurrection, not even when the authorities are in the wrong. Subjects are obliged to do service for the authorities, including military service. There is a limit, however, if the authorities engage in a war that is clearly unjust. In such a case, the Christian should refuse and take all resulting suffering upon himself.

#### Appendix 4

## paradiso – Light at the End of Civilization's Tunnel?

#### by Wolfgang Plenio

As we page through the magazine *paradiso*, we read in disbelief that it has genuine life to offer—can this be a haven of peace in the torrent of digital mass media publications? Is an escape from the dead end of total manipulation beckoning to us? Can homo digitalis—burnt out, limited by the media, trapped in a spurious communications network of our own making—regain our lost paradise through self-determination and contemplation of the world?

This would of course be a genuine new beginning, a rethinking and at the same time a look to the future, a rediscovery of our buried knowledge of life, a renaissance of an enlightenment that has been disappearing in murky waters. *paradiso* appears as a vision, a promise that we cannot keep but also cannot give up on, without giving up on ourselves; a challenge that makes genuine life possible and that rewards it. Not as a permanent flight from an oppressive reality to the illusionary happiness of a deceptive virtuality that will ultimately leave us empty-handed; it will rather be a universal world that both includes us and opens us up—a newly awakening vita nova such as the great ages of history were granted, kindling the flame again and again of a self-liberating humanity.

This could light the way to a truly humane future for us, to a genuine life of our own that we determine ourselves. It is possible that what we determine may turn out to be wrong in an "objective" sense—the inner horizon of our knowledge is always limited whenever we view the world from our one-sided human perspective. Every point of view is an interpretation and is based on a selective decision that is always fallible. "Man errs as long as he strives." No thoughtful person is able to change this well-known insight of Goethe.

Part of the conditio humana, with or without *paradiso*, is the fundamental recognition of space-time limitations and fallibility, but also the possibility and self-confidence that when we choose ourselves, with the possibility that we may be in error, "we make our decisions, and only they matter" (Thies Matzen from Flensburg, who has traveled the world). Knowledge of self and of limitations is part and parcel of humankind and constitutes the much-quoted "dignity of man". As far as we can see, *paradiso* opens up the possibility of seriously embracing this questioning and questionable challenge to humanity.

All human efforts are based (hopefully!) on good will, but we do not determine their success.



paradiso's publisher was Stephan Richter; Glücksburg, Germany.

## Epilogue

## A Lighthouse for Our Cultural Life

By Stephan Richter

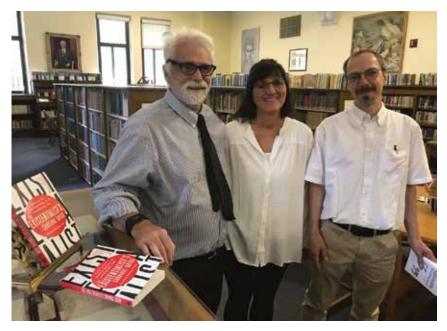
The printed newspaper, as once formulated by the communications expert Miriam Meckel, is "a medium of epic proportions." Her Tübingen colleague Professor Bernhard Pörksen added: "The newspaper is a locus for stories taken from real situations, an instrument of orientation that is indispensable in times of unrelenting, constant communication."

Hundreds of reviews written by Wolfgang Plenio in the sixties, seventies, and eighties for the "Flensburg Daily" fulfilled this ideal, enriching both the newspaper and our cultural life. His reviews were more than just reports describing what had been seen and heard. Plenio's extensive knowledge flowed, expanding the horizons of his readers. He asked questions, gave praise and criticized, without compromising artists; always the teacher, he encouraged talented individuals and often rose to great artistry in his formulations. At times this went so far that young journalists in the editing office wondered exactly what he meant with one or the other of his expressions. A typical Plenio review of a soprano, for example, maintained that "as a soloist, Susann Hagel's remarkable sureness of tone made the audience listen attentively."

This was at the end of 1988. At that time, the newspaper—unlike the "social media" platforms of today—truly still functioned as a kind of social network. This was where, in the local and regional realms in particular, civic debates were carried out and a forum for participatory cultural discussions was available. Wolfgang Plenio helped the music scene in the northern part of the state to reflect on matters knowledgeably and to hold well-founded debates. Many of his contributions published decades ago are still as relevant today as they were then. In reading them, one is reminded of a theorem stated by the above-mentioned Bernhard Pörksen: "Newspapers are media that offer second thoughts." How true, as long as they could rely on authors such as Wolfgang Plenio.

Much of what came after Wolfgang Plenio's printed music reviews has less permanence. Classical scholars are well aware of such developments, since languages like Latin and Greek are likewise no longer in demand.

But our birthday celebrant will only smile at this. As a music critic, Wolfgang Plenio has displayed a character trait similar in excellence to the one that he once attributed (see above) to the soprano Susann Hagel: a "remarkable sureness of tone." A critic with staying power—a stroke of luck for the regional cultural scene.



From left: Dr. Gordon Marino and Eileen Shimota in the world-famous Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN here welcoming Dr. Henning Peucker, Philosophy Professor, Paderborn University, Germany. In addition to his books on Kierkegaard, Gordon has written many articles on professional boxing, e.g., for the *Wall Street Journal*.

## Editors

#### Dr. Gordon Marino in Dr. Jens Peter (Jay) Becker's Post 'exis':

Gordon is a Kierkegaard expert, and you wouldn't be able to tell by looking at him that he is also good at something else that is quite different. At one time he was a boxer and he is still a boxing trainer today. Philosophers aren't necessarily associated with that sport.

Gordon Marino is also a philosophy professor and director of the Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and the fact is that this small college possesses what is possibly the best Kierkegaard library in the world. One doesn't even need to study philosophy to read Kierkegaard, because he's among the philosophers like Schopenhauer (whose works he hadn't really examined until shortly before his death) whom one can read without outside help. Every reader will understand him differently, but he is a pleasure to read. Because he is actually a poet. And since I'm on the topic of philosophers that one can read without having studied philosophy, let me mention Gordon Marino's latest book:

The Existentialist's Survival Guide, with its excellent subtitle How to Live Authentically in an Inauthentic Age. Sapere aude! ("Dare to know.")

The book isn't a self-help manual, no more than Claude Lelouch's film Hommes, femmes: Mode d'emploi is an instruction booklet for living with a woman. Marino's Existentialist's Survival Guide is an introduction to the history of existentialism, which for English critics is frequently nothing more than a fashion, a spiritual expression of the pain of existence.

Andrew Hussey made this formulation in 'The Guardian' with a nice touch of irony: French philosophy, for all its flag-waving sexiness, is also mostly pretentious and daft. No philosophy has exemplified this more than existentialism, the movement that dominated cultural life in Paris after the second world war.

English translation of the German post 'exis', by Dr. Jens Peter (Jay) Becker, Kiel, Germany:

www.peace-pipe-proposal.com/post/ kierkegaard-pugilism-peace-pipes-1931-2-2019

German original post 'exis' (October 6, 2019): loomings-jay.blogspot.com

## Yogi Reppmann in Antje Walther's article, Wolfgang Plenio turns eighty—Praise in Latin for a "shining light" *Flensburg Daily News, January 11, 2010*

... quid mansit constanter est spiritus imprimis perpetuus quem posuisti in animum meum." These Latin words\* of praise express Joachim (Yogi) Reppmann's enthusiasm for the spirit that his former Latin teacher instilled in him. Reppmann's words were made to order as part of his encomium to Dr. Wolfgang Plenio, who turns eighty today.

No one would ever suspect Yogi Reppmann, a native of Flensburg and columnist for our campus website, of needing to embellish his school grades. An American by choice, Reppmann was born in 1957. On being granted his doctorate he composed an encomium in Latin filled with admiration and respect for Wolfgang Plenio, who had been his Latin tutor and philosophy taskmaster at the Altes Gymnasium, where Plenio was Director of Studies and an educator of future teachers of philosophy. Reppmann extols Plenio as a shining light who always recognized where each individual student could be having problems, including of a personal nature. The americanized Flensburger might well have been speaking in the spirit of his former teacher when he observed that Latin was "an ideal entry point for a comprehensive humanistic education." He pointed out that Americans were also becoming aware of this and were actively furthering a renaissance of this supposedly "dead language." Reppmann emphasized that both Plenio and Latin taught him to love reading and thinking, then concluded his comments by wishing the honored guest "Sit melior pars vitae futura!" (May the future be the best part of your life!).

\*... what has remained constant is most especially the indelible spirit that you have planted in my very being.

(for Reppmann's Latin speech, see Appendix 1) www.moin-moin.us



From left: Yogi Reppmann, Flensburg & Northfield, MN; Ive & Tony Conn, Keokuk, Iowa.

#### A Peace-Pipe for East Jerusalem — Background:

In 1931, Jewett Fulton, RC Keokuk, IA, attended the Rotary International Convention in Vienna, Austria. There, he and other delegates grew concerned about rising nationalism and the danger of its leading to war. Returning home, he sent letters to all 496 Rotary clubs outside the US in sixty-five countries, inviting them to symbolically smoke a peace pipe in the tradition of his city's namesake, Chief Keokuk. Letters received back from those clubs have been remarkably preserved and are published in a 332- page book, The Peace-Pipe-Letters, 1931/2&2019. Members of those clubs were invited to a Peace Pipe reception at Flensburg, part of the Hamburg RI Convention, 2019.

Eighty-eight years later, Fulton's bridge-building spirit is being revived. Dr. Dan Shanit, RC Jerusalem, has asked Tony Conn and Yogi Reppmann to build a bridge to the Arab/Palestinian Rotary Club in East Jerusalem. Conn and Reppmann have accepted the invitation and will hand deliver an original peace pipe to the East Jerusalem Rotarian Club.

SHALOM & SALAM: Since Tony is working on water projects, we are dreaming of a road trip on Highway 90, from Jerusalem to Lebanon.

www.PEACE-PIPE-PROPOSAL.com

## The team behind the book



The text of the present booklet was translated by Norman Watt, Ph.D.. He was born in 1938 in New Jersey, taught German language and literature from 1966 to 2000 at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. Main literary interests: German poetry and German and Austrian literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; has translated novellas by Arthur Schnitzler and has written a novel, as yet unpublished.

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John Nguyen is from Crystal, Minnesota. He specializes in music production and music education, but also is passionate about graphic design, coding, and technology. He helped serve as an editor for the book layout, as well as general support for the entire project.

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Jens Peter Becker, who writes his blog SILVAE under the name Jay, was born in 1943. Primary school and Gymnasium in his home town of Vegesack (near Bremen). He studied art history, English language and literature, and philosophy in Hamburg and Kiel. Doctorate in 1973 and thereafter a college professor in the English Department of the University in Kiel. His publication list is long, but he was never able to write the things that he does now in his blog:

loomings-jay.blogspot.com Cf. "Silvae - Best of Becker's Blog, 2010-2019" (Printing on Demand: www.LuLu.com)



Stephan Richter was one of the longest-serving editors-inchief of a newspaper chain in Germany. He reorganized daily newspapers in formerly communistic East Germany and published countless books.

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Jan-Reza Sadri was born in Essen in 1981 and studied communication design at the Berlin Technical School of Art. His subsequent work there included graphic design for the Free University and Humboldt University. For the past seven years he has supported social projects as well through his work. Having grown up in Flensburg and with strong ties to the North, his paths and those of "Yogi" Reppmann have frequently crossed.

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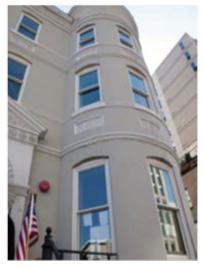
Dr. Klaus Lemke-Paetznick graduated in 1977 from the Altes Gymnasium in Flensburg, an institution founded in 1566 by the Danish king Frederik II. He studied theology at the University of Kiel with major emphasis on Latin, ancient Greek, and Hebrew. A church historian and navy chaplain for many years, he is now a pastor in Wilhelmshaven. His doctoral dissertation, "The Church in Revolutionary Times: The State Church in Schleswig and Holstein, 1789-1851" was published by de Gruyter (Berlin and Boston) in 2012.

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"So far as I am concerned, if you are angry with me, you are angry with one who has, I think, at least as much ability as anyone to see what ought to be done, and to explain what he sees, one who loves his city and one who is above being influenced by money."

Pericles: Last Speech, Thucydides Book II, 59-64.

"And so we come to the conclusion that only a brilliant statesman such as the irreplaceable Pericles was capable of guiding the destiny of Athens."

P. 97, unpublished Dissertation, Wolfgang Plenio, "Die letzte Rede des Perikles", Kiel, 1954.



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