

THE SHADOW OF TOWER OF BABEL ON SYNODAL AUTHORITY

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Abstract

Synodality is a mode of being the church, interpreted in eight hermeneutical circles. The authority could be compared to writing a novel from dialogic orientation of a word among other words creating new and significant artistic potential in discourse. Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject is, accordingly, the locus in which centrifugal as well as centripetal forces confront each other. The processes of centralisation and decentralisation, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance. Every utterance is an active participant in such speech diversity. The freedom of people of God involve “much debate” but also much attention, which is prayer. The leader has to become an exiled author with the power of persuasion in the mystical body becoming a confessing church with the word of God becoming event of communion. The power of a Synod is the power of the holy language, which is dialogue.

Keywords: Author; Communion; Dialogue; Monologism; Heteroglossia; Synodality; Trinity

Introduction

Let me begin this article with a personal note. I have been a Catholic priest from 1974, being active in Catholic media work for more than 30 years and served the church as the spokesperson of the Syro-Malabar synod of bishops for 15 years. Looking back to these

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years in the church after the II Vatican, there we find the wonder of Papacy in the modern world. Papacy has become the moral voice in the world. No Pope will dare say in the modern era as Gregory VII said in his *Dictatus Papae*: “Of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet.” A Copernican revolution has taken place. But I wonder this metanoia has not happened in the role of the bishop nor in priests, even though lot of changes have come. Clericalism rules the church with careerism driven not by Spirit of Christ but ambition.

Gone are the days of great geniuses and their inventions change the world. Today we look forward to collective leadership. We have to re-learn the myth of the Tower of Babylon. We have set off a much more pervasive process of discernment, purification and reform of the whole Church as the necessary basis for a pastoral and missionary conversion to return to the source and recover the original freshness of the Gospel. The time has come to change the methodology of the synod because our present practice seems too political and static. “I am conscious of the need to promote a sound “decentralization.”¹ I have tried to think of the Synodality in eight concentric circles. It is not well-argued system of which I am apprehensive. It is not the product of a calculative rationality and refuses to see not the world itself but only the measures in which the world is veiled. Synodality is a style which demands the exile of the author who pushes by the power of persuasion in the mystical body of the church which is a confessing of its plagues and listening the Word to live an evangelical life.

1. Synodality is a Style

“Synodality is a style, it is a walk together, and it is what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium,” Pope Francis said. “So the Bishop is called to lead his flock by ‘walking in front of them, showing them the way, showing them the path; walking in their midst, to strengthen them in unity; walking behind them, to make sure no one gets left behind but especially, never to lose the scent of the People of God in order to find new roads.’”² It is indeed a new road, it is road of hearing, for their “ears open to listen to ‘what the Spirit says to the churches’ (Rev 2:7), and to the ‘voice of the sheep,’ also through those diocesan institutions whose task it is to advise the Bishop, promoting a loyal and constructive dialogue.” The sheep are not irrational mutes, they are led from the back so they hear the shepherd, but the shepherd hears them. They

¹Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 16.

²Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio* (15th September 2018), no. 5.

have to live in the house of being, which language is. “Attentive to the *sensus fidei* of the People of God—‘which they need to distinguish carefully from the changing currents of public opinion’—the members of the Assembly offer their opinion to the Roman Pontiff so that it can help him in his ministry as universal Pastor of the Church.” From this perspective, “the fact that the Synod ordinarily has only a consultative role does not diminish its importance. In the Church the purpose of any collegial body, whether consultative or deliberative, is always the search for truth or the good of the Church.”³ “This does not mean that the Synod exists separately from the rest of the faithful,”⁴ “demonstrating, from one Assembly to another, that it is an eloquent expression of synodality as a ‘constitutive element of the Church.’”⁵ The “consultation of the faithful must be followed by discernment on the part of the Bishops chosen for the task, united in the search for a consensus that springs not from worldly logic, but from common obedience to the Spirit of Christ.”⁶

This is a horizon of Synodality of church bodies as Pope Francis envisioned it. It is definitely not a fact or a reality but a possibility and hope for which the Synods or bishops’ councils have miles to go. Every church body could be seen as a synod. Synods do sometimes reduce themselves to partisan politics of different power equations or involve in crisis resolving tactics where they thrash out the issues with political power but fail to see every crisis as a possibility and a grace coming from the future. It is capable of creating tragic situations, but also can intervene in history making it salvific. “The Church disguises her borrowed splendour in a shabby garment: the contradiction is, therefore, part and parcel of her nature and only the penetrating regard will know to discover the beauty of her face.”⁷ De Lubac worried that “an impersonal, anonymous leadership developing into a bureaucracy” would encourage individual bishops to “take refuge behind some national commission or other.” Reflecting on France’s episcopal conference in a letter written in the 1970s to Bishop Carlo Colombo, de Lubac lamented that, under the guise of collegiality, he had witnessed “a conscious distancing from Rome, especially on doctrinal issues” and “a hyper-bureaucratization of

³Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio*, no 7.

⁴Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio*, no. 6.

⁵Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio*, no. 6.

⁶Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio*, no. 7.

⁷Henri De Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, translated by James R. Dunne. Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1969, 25.

church life” which exercised “une pression tyrannique” (a tyrannical pressure).⁸

This study is construed in eight concentric circles of interpretation where the key notions are listening and speaking in a community of multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. I am not argumentative, I have nothing to argue but to wish and point to a possibility of a community, communion and communication within the Trinitarian faith. As Balthasar’s pneumatological standard for theatre direction no human director can exactly meet. For “a dramatic dimension that comes from God’s heaven and is implanted in the world, comprehending and judging everything in the world and leading it towards its redemptive meaning, is so unique and exuberant that it can only be reflected in a fragmentary and broken way on the stage.”⁹ It is possible for an impure spirit to usurp a major role and spoil everything. This shows us how important it is for the director to be a modest-reflection of the operation of the Holy Spirit. There is a faith that holy language can wash the face of his bride dirtied by the corruption of the hierarchical clergy. I give certain interpretative circles of an ethics and spirituality of exodus to the other. The ethical and the spiritual in the community and the world cannot be carried to language for they are unfathomable and inexpressible—the absent.¹⁰ The basic assumption in this study is a spiritual turn which is associated with a conversion to one’s own interiority, which is the exodus to the other. This is a pilgrimage from oneself to the other in dialogical language reaching in communion. God cannot arrive until we convene to converse and listen. Synodality is an act of prayer, which is attention to the other in responsibility. Listening to the other and talking as responsible response is nothing but prayer. The leaders in the Synod have to be both incarnated and exiled in exercising their authorship of leadership.

2. The Exiled Author

The leader of the dialogic conversation is like the exiled author of a modern novel. A novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech

⁸Samuel Gregg, “Pope Francis, Henri de Lubac, and the Decentralizing of Church Authority,” *The Catholic World Report*, September 6, 2016.

⁹Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Volume I: Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988, 320.

¹⁰“There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.” L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, transl. by David F. Pears and Brian McGuinness, Introduction by Bertrand Russell, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, rev. ed. 1963, 6.522.

types and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized.¹¹ The author is not in the novel, he is out but he guides every character. He is legally the author but is he morally responsible for the characters and their views? The difference between legal authority and intellectual authorship lies at the border between what is one's own what is someone else's, the self and alterity. The author is character, ideologist of the architectonics, masked voice, polyphonic ear, interlocutor in cronotopized dialogue. We assume an ontological consideration of the character in the verbal creation which is almost divine. It is a consciousness creating another consciousness to which it should give, however, all the inconclusiveness of the real man, but all the wholeness of the aesthetic object. This entails a struggle of the artist "with himself"¹² in order to achieve "the position of being situated outside."¹³ "I'm not looking from the inside of my eyes to the world, but rather I see myself with the eyes of the world, with the eyes of others; I am possessed by the other... With my eyes, the eyes of the other are looking."¹⁴ The author must—extrapolate himself and see the intimate world of the character from the outside, having that surplus of vision that allows him to understand and evaluate from another position, inaccessible to the character. For this reason, perhaps, the notion of person underlying character (and which comes from drama), is also proposed as—hero, not in the mythical sense, but as a semantic condenser of alterity. Art and life are not the same, but they cannot be separated in the aesthetic consideration.

If every man is a potential creator of text, the notion of author is extended to all subjects as architects of social discourse. It is authorship then what gives the utterance its character of decisive historical event. To give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author. It is the language, which speaks, not the author that neutral, composite, "oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."¹⁵ Where the I tends to adopt a social place, a role, a speaking position, to speak, to construct one's own speech, to plunge as a consciousness in act, but always in tension with the word of others, with the other voice, with another consciousness. The same

¹¹Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas, 1981, 262.

¹²Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, London: Routledge, 1990, 6.

¹³Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 15.

¹⁴M. Bajtin, *Yo también soy, Fragmentos sobre el otro*, Méjico: Taurus, 2000, 156.

¹⁵R. Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in R. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, edited and translated by Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, 143.

speaker adopts different authorial masks. "The writer is a person who is able to work in a language while standing outside language, who has the gift of indirect speaking."¹⁶ The construction of the dialogical subject is a way of knowledge: learning and understanding the language of the other, not to merge in it, but to be able to create one's own voice from it. "The boundaries of two consciousnesses, on the boundaries of the body, that an encounter is actually realized and the artistic gift of the form is bestowed."¹⁷ "The author-as-creator will help us to gain insight into the author-as-person and only after that will the author-person's comments about his creative activity acquire illuminating and complementary significance."¹⁸ The author does not exercise any power of coercion but of persuasion.

3. The Power of Persuasion

Aristotle considers authority is of two types, one coercive power, and second persuasive power. The first is primarily political and the second is moral and divine. According to W.D. Ross, Aristotle's exposition on the Unmoved Mover, "that which initiates motion, but which is itself unmoved," "that kind of being which combines substantial, self-dependent existence with freedom from all change," "is the coping-stone of the *Metaphysics*."¹⁹ The Unmoved Mover is a divine being, the subject of Aristotle's theology. This "god," however, is one which is so radically different from conceptions of the divine held by his contemporaries that it was difficult for many of them to accept. Nevertheless, his argument is thorough. The Unmoved Mover moves as an object of love; the word is *Eros*. This relationship, however, is one of less perfect beings acting in such a way as to emulate more perfect beings. In this case, the Unmoved Mover, while being pure actuality, is not acting for other beings in quite the manner which Kant is suggesting a person acts, since it exists as self-thinking thought; however, "it initiates motion for an infinite time."²⁰

Husserl concludes his *Cartesian Meditations* quoting Augustine. "The Delphic motto, 'Know thyself!' has gained a new signification. Positive science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by epoch, in order to regain it by a universal self-examination. "*Noli foras*

¹⁶Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 142.

¹⁷M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays* (13. ed.), ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013, 110.

¹⁸Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 96- 97.

¹⁹W.D. Ross, *Aristotle: A Complete Exposition of His Works and Thought*, New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959, 175.

²⁰Meta. 1073a8.

ire,” says Augustine, “*in te redit in interiore homine habitat veritas.*” Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man (*De vera religione*, 39, n. 72).²¹ Those who live in the Cartesian Cogito do not get out of oneself and live in the illusion of a solipsism. The alter ego demonstrated precisely within the experiencing intentionality of my ego. Within the bounds of positivity we say and find it obvious that, in my own experience, I experience not only myself but others in the particular form: experiencing someone else “in” myself I experience and know the Other; in me he becomes constituted mirrored, not constituted as the original. The being of the ‘I’ is not simply ‘to be,’ but in its ‘being’ is already ‘otherwise than being.’ The ‘dedication in spite of myself to the Other than myself’ fulfils itself precisely as a scruple, as a questioning, as an uneasiness of the attempt at being with itself. One can truly love truth because instead of talents favoured by education, he has this “genius” that “is nothing but the supernatural virtue of humility in the realm of thought. Life of simple and ordinary mysticism and poetics, with its strangeness, ‘excess of fire,’ can deconstruct meaning and make music. By ‘saying nothing,’ the poem ‘permits saying.’ Speaking of a language is a part of an activity or of a form of life.”²² “Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the form of the thought beneath it, because the outward form of the clothing is not designed to reveal the form of the body, but for entirely different purposes.” “The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated.”²³ “The confusion which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.” Not only Philosophical problems but social anarchy can take place when “language goes on holiday.”²⁴ When such a thing happens every form of resistance will emerge and show themselves in different form of critic of cry and anger. When religious leadership resort to coercive power explicit or subtle the authority will reduce itself to political managers of manipulation—a return of the Leviathan. What erodes is respect freely given by the people and the very authority on which the whole system is built.

Language is wedded to the modes of life. Our language is a growing phenomenon; it does not have a single uniform structure. It

²¹E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960, 157.

²²L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972, Sec. 123.

²³Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 4.002.

²⁴Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* Sec. 38.

consists of old and new forms that are added to it from time to time. It changes from time to time. In course of time new language games come into existence and some old language games become obsolete. This discloses another salient feature of language, namely that language is open-ended. "Language is an instrument."²⁵ As language changes the instruments of the community also changes.

The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists—and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental.²⁶

When we speak of value we are in a different world. The world of value continuously influences and makes changes.

By choosing to be a player rather than an emperor of creation, God chooses powerlessness. This choice expresses itself as self-emptying, kenosis, letting go. God thus empowers our human powerlessness by giving away his power, by possibilizing us and our good actions—so that we may supplement and co-creation. To be made in God's image is therefore, paradoxically, to be powerless; but with the possibility of receiving power from God to overcome our powerlessness, by responding to the call of creation with the words, 'I am able.' To God's 'I may be' each one of us is invited to replay 'I can.' Just as to each 'I can.' God replies 'I may be.' In this eschatological play of power and powerlessness, the human self becomes the capable self."²⁷

Kearney concludes:

In sum, the close rapport between the Eucharistic request for repetition and the Passover ritual, suggest that for both Judaism and Christianity the Kingdom advent is construed as a retrieval-forward of the past as future. The remembrance formula might be interpreted accordingly as something like this: "Keep gathering together in remembrance of me so that I will remember you by keeping my promise to bring about the consummation of love, justice and joy in the parousia. Help me to be God!" Or as the Coptic version of the formula goes: "May the Lord come... If any man is holy, let him come. Maranatha. Amen"²⁸

²⁵Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 151.

²⁶Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Sec. 6.41.

²⁷Richard Kearney, *The God who may be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001, 108.

²⁸R. Kearney. "Re-imagining God," in *Transcendence and beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry*, ed. John D. Caputo & Michael J. Scanlon, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, 62.

4. The Mystical Body

Christ event can be said to have happened in the European world and it made its politics as well. The Mediaeval Political Theology tells of the two bodies of the king. The curious legal fiction of the “King’s Two Bodies” gradually developed. Crown became as a corporation. The theory of myth of the State having Two Bodies is a marvellous display of the metaphysical. His Majesty in the eye of the law is always present in all his courts, though he cannot personally distribute justice. The state of superhuman “absolute perfection” of this royal *persona ficta* is, so to speak, the result of a fiction. That kind of man-made irreality provided an important heuristic fiction which served the lawyers at a certain time to harmonize modern with ancient law or to bring into agreement the personal with the more impersonal concepts of government. The King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic were related to theological thought, or, to be more specific, to the mediaeval concept of the king’s character angelicus. The body politic of kingship appears as a likeness of the “holy sprites and angels,” because it represents, like the angels, the Immutable within Time. Here with “mysticism” begins. Body of the King never dies by his natural Death. There is separation of the two Bodies. The politic capacity is invisible and immortal, and Christian society in general, was a “corpus mysticum the head of which is Christ,” has been transferred by the jurists from the theological sphere to that of the state the head of which is the king. A passage from Gratian’s *Decretum*: “Bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the Bishop.”²⁹

The succession to the throne was established by ancient custom and was introduced by the consent of the three estates and of the whole civic or mystical body. The royal or secular dignities of the realm were not privately owned but public, because they belonged to the whole civic or mystical body. That is to say, the body politic, mystic, was defined not by the king or head alone, but by the king together with council and parliament. This concept of a “composite” body, and therewith of “composite” authority, was not quite new by that time.

Declaration of the Lords and Commons of May 27, 1642, the King body politic was retained in and by British Parliament whereas the king body natural was, so to say, frozen out. It is acknowledged that the King is the Fountain of Justice and Protection, but the Acts of

²⁹Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: The Mediaeval Political Theology Tells of the Two Bodies of the King*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1957.

Justice and Protection are not exercised in his own Person, nor depend upon his pleasure, but by his Courts and his Ministers who must do their duty therein, though the King in his own Person should forbid them.

When the words of St Paul “There is no power but of God” (Rom 13:1) remain in force. But that power is typified in one God who is not a univocal monologic reality. As Christians are not believers in one God—the One of Plato or Plotinus, but one in three persons, it is communion of the three in perfect communication. Authority was conceived not as rule of the One. It was rule of mystical body which was creating “heteroglossia.” It is quite true that nations or societies do not go to heaven. Human beings go to heaven one by one, to live in the Family Circle of the Blessed Trinity. But the individual member of society lives under the never-ceasing influence of his environment, in which, if we may not say that he is submerged, he is at least, deeply plunged. Social organization is required to aid the disciplining of self against the unorganized tendencies of formalism and naturalism that are in all of us. M. Bakhtin’s use of interrelationships to describe the networking of the concrete word is homologous to the interpenetration or perichoresis of logos with other segments of the Trinity. The Trinity invites us to celebrate our diversities and enter into dialogue with other religions and cultures, ideologies and movements to promote harmony and unity. Many of the clergy including bishops recite the creed of Trinity but for all practical purposes seem to believe in mere monotheism. Trinity has only to do with source, fount, origin of the divinity of the Son and the Spirit which does not automatically include a hierarchy of authority. It does not create a hierarchy of power to dominate and subjugate others. “Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists.’ We must admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could were remain virtually unchanged.”³⁰ It is only when the doctrine of the Trinity [in its perichoretic unity] vanquishes the monotheistic notion of the great universal monarch in heaven, and his divine patriarchs in the world, that earthly rulers, dictators and tyrants cease to find any justifying religious archetypes any more.”³¹ Like the divine word, denotes communality of those interacting with it; in its capacity as an embodied phenomenon, it also represents the individual utterance: “In light of this metaphor, the participants in Bakhtinian dialogue begin to emerge as communicants in a

³⁰K. Rahner, *The Trinity*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, 10-11.

³¹J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, London: SCM, 1981, 197.

Eucharistic sense as well as in a strictly linguistic one.”³² The embodiment of Christ gave a special meaning to the body. Jesus may be said to represent the perfect reconciliation of language with the body; he is the Word of life whom the first epistle of John describes as “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched” (I Jn 1:1). Christ is declared the king during his entry into Jerusalem, and then soon mocked and beaten up by Jews and Roman soldiers. “King is the fool. All the people elect him, then all the people mock him and beat him, when the time of his reign has passed.”³³ “The church as a communion of unmerged souls.”³⁴ Both the Russian Church and the society were always characterised by a high degree of communality, and Bakhtin was a true propagator of this love and ecclesiastical unity between people. In order for the “I” to exist in the first place, the existence of the “you” is necessary. Two are an inseparable part of unity in Christ, and Bakhtin calls their communication dialogue. His dialogism, therefore, can be looked upon as a distinct view on the fundamental significance of Christ’s church on Earth through the ecclesiastical and social communion.

“Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.”³⁵ Language is an expression of human consciousness, is not static nor can it ever be neutral. It is inherently dialogic since all utterances are “contradiction-ridden, and tension-filled.” Multi-voiced and indeterminate, the textual utterance creates “dialogic spaces” in which the reader engages in an act of self-realization and self-determination in opposition to perceived “others.” Dialogue simultaneously and perpetually operates on a vertical plane, as an internal dialogue oriented within the self, and on a horizontal plane, as an external dialogue between subject and addressee. “Dialogue... is not threshold of action, it is action itself... in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly but he becomes for the first time that

³²M. Bakhtin, “From Notes Made in 1970-71,” *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee, Austin: University of Texas, 1986, 147.

³³M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 197-198.

³⁴M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006, 26.

³⁵Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson, Introduction by Wayne C. Booth, *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 8, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 110.

which he is—and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically, when dialogue ends, everything ends.”³⁶ That call is for confession.

5. A Confessing Church

So the Christian countries derived their politics from their mystical body concept of Christ, the second person of the Trinity did elaborate not in monarchy, the rule of the one, the rule of the king. A trinitarian theology is necessary for a full understanding of such burning issues as the nature of the human person and the synodality of the church. The concept of human being is derived its political thought from the basic humanism of Christianity, from the basic values of the French revolution of triple values of equality, Freedom and fraternity. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). It is in Christ we are one. “All who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). All human races and communities were united into a community of many who participate in the mystical body of Christ. The form of politics that evolved was not impositions of one language but of dialogue implying multiplicity of voices united in the one mystical body of communion. “The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate...” (Acts 15:6-7). This is how the first Council in Jerusalem met. Those who met are *apostoloi* and *presbyteroi*. One term is missing which is *episcopoi*. For in the book of Acts the two terms employed for local leaders of the church are interchangeable *presbyteroi* and *episcopoi*, which had the same meaning. Did the apostles elect or appoint their successors except in the case of Judas? These leaders of the church are “never to lose the scent of the People of God in order to find new roads.” The Synod decisions are sent to the people of God: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials” (Acts 15:28). Nothing of imposition. Only what is good to the Holy Spirit, which is available to all irrespective of the apostolic and episcopal order. The Synod meeting geared to know good to the Holy Spirit, it is linguistic meeting. It is the Spirit that must talk within the Synod. It will speak the spirit only if they will be attentive to the spirit.

What could be more stupid than to tighten up our muscles and set our jaws about virtue, or poetry, or the solution of a problem? Attention is something quite different. Pride is a tightening up of this kind. There is a

³⁶Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 252.

lack of grace (we can give the word its double meaning here) in the proud man. It is the result of a mistake. Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer...³⁷

Truth is sought not because it is truth but because it is good. Attention is bound up with desire, but desire of what? "In such a work all that I call 'I' has to be passive. Attention alone—that attention which is so full that the 'I' disappears—is required of me." A divine inspiration operates irresistibly, if we do not turn away our attention. Purity is the power to contemplate defilement which is indeed necessary to divest the ego. "Sin is nothing else but the failure to recognize human wretchedness. It is unconscious wretchedness and for that very reason guilty wretchedness."³⁸

The temptation to be always right is indeed a preoccupation in the Synods of bishops. The Pope is well aware of the question of infallibility. But not all synod members are aware as we live with the synods of the Oriental Catholic churches. Is synod making their truth? The answer is yes and no. When it concerns their private lives it is true. Every bishop is making manifest the truth each one lives. We are humans who write our own autobiographies as Augustine, but all are into confession. Every human being is manifesting himself or herself in the world; life is the revelation of the person. In that revelation one makes one's own truth as Augustine has rightly pointed out, *facere veritatem*. But that truth can be seen differently by the society. But in a dialogical synod they do not make truth, they invent truth. There they all have to submit to the objectivity of truth. Here we have to refer to Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*. The party makes the truth and imposes it in an individual who has committed the crime of thought. The party makes 2+2=5 which Winston had to agree on torture. This is satire which alone is played in the given aggressive audacity of 'the truth department of the infallible system.' St Augustine speaks of the "ears of his heart" (*ecce aures cordis mei*). This heart without repose (*cor irrequietum*) is the foundation of Augustine's theology and spirituality. To understand disquiet in the thought of Augustine, this Heart is not separated from the thought which genuinely constitutes the human as such. Human's ultra-clear rationality turns upon itself like a dog upon its master (*et latrare adversum*), literally that is, I "barked" against Thee. We humans are not simply one class of beings among others, but, as the very openings of presence, we are wholly unique and worthy of

³⁷Simone Weil, *An Anthology*, London: Penguin Books 2005, 231-232.

³⁸Weil, *An Anthology*, 236.

questioning: “*Quaestio mihi factus sum. Quid amo?* I have become a problem. What is love? What do I love?”³⁹ Life is nothing but a constant temptation. The connection, then, between temptation and *molestia* is possibility: Possibility is the true ‘burden.’ This possibility is the strife in which I live, my facticity: “Life = temptation (*Vita = tentatio*). For Augustine, God is the “*medice meus intime*” (physician of my intimate self) who stirs up the heart to seek to know God, do good works, and strive for the eternal happy life.⁴⁰ He keeps his wound open to be healed as in ‘the country doctor’s story in Kafka. Derrida says that truth in deconstruction has to do with doing or making truth (*facere veritatem*), making truth happen, effecting it, forming and forging truth.⁴¹ “Augustine’s back is turned to us throughout the *Confessions*. His attention is elsewhere. He is speaking with his God. The pronoun *tu* - ‘Thou’, ‘You’-occurs in 381 of the 453 paragraphs of the *Confessions*.”⁴² Yet Augustine writes: “And now I confess to you, O Lord, in writing (*Et nunc confiteor tibi, domine, in litteris*).”⁴³ “This I desire to do, in my heart before you in confession, and before many witnesses with my pen.”⁴⁴

6. The Plague of Clericalism

Cardinal Henry de Lubac stated: “Man is made in such a way that he cannot give meaning to something without choosing his perspective.”⁴⁵ The perspective is basically a stand of ocular view. St Paul spoke of a Christians walking not with light but by faith (2 Cor 5:7). Faith can be deconstructed to an ocular perspective. Jose Saramago tells the story of a city gone blind with a plague of white blindness. This blindness is very close to the blindness which the angels in Sodom caused to the immoral people who surrounded the home of Lot (Gen 19:11). It was not blindness of physical nature but of look, which is commodifying, belittling and subjugating. It is a look of the solar perspective. Clericalism is emanating from the vitiated perspective that is borrowed from the Roman Empire. It is a

³⁹Augustine, *Confessiones*, X, 6(8) and 33(50).

⁴⁰Augustine, *Confessiones*, X.iii.4.

⁴¹Jacques Derrida/John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, New York: Fordham, 1997, 166.

⁴²Peter Brown, Introduction to an English translation of the *Confessions*, trans. F.J. Sheed, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1970, xiii.

⁴³John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, 295.

⁴⁴Augustine, *Confessiones*, “*volo earn facere in corde meo coram te in confessione, in stulto autem meo coram multis testibus,*” II, 74.

⁴⁵Henri de Lubac, “Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred,” in *Theology in History*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1996, 231.

perspective that dominated the entire Western thought and practice. Clergy see themselves as administrators of rituals and rulers of the church. They become power brokers and the image of the church is power and glory. The laity are simple and ordinary sheepish men and women who pray, pay and obey. It was the solar perspective that Caesar maintained with the belief in the Sun God, it was the solar look of domination of the Pontifex Maximus, a title adopted by the Pope from the Caesar. A perspective of the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoevsky. Even the parish priest in the village can adopt such a vision. The Dangers of Constantine's Solar Optics was abandoned by the modern Church and the title Pontifex Maximus is dropped. Pope Francis as he became Pope made a scandalous statement, "court is the leprosy of Papacy"⁴⁶ – what he meant is the deconstruction of Christ into the Sun God of colonisation. A priest-centred church is dying. The shepherd lost the smell of the sheep and they ruled the sheep with the almighty cunning rationality of Hegel. The logic of this "anti-discipline" is not that of deliberate rebellion, but a singular type of contingent "invention," which is often ignored by many. Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* paved the way for the culture in plural where everyday practices elaborate a symbolic theatricality and an almost accidental creativity in overthrowing the mechanisms of surveillance, thus becoming, at the same time, "poetic" surprises and dissimulations.⁴⁷

The hierarchy has to be possessed of the lost crucified Christ. One suffers the pangs of absence because one suffers the pangs of the One. The One is no longer to be found. "They have taken him away" (Jn 20:15), say so many chants of the mystics who inaugurate, with the story of his loss, the history of his returns elsewhere and otherwise, in ways that are the effect rather than the refutation of his absence. While no longer "living," this "dead" one still does not leave the city – which was formed without him – in peace. He haunts our environs. A theology of phantoms would doubtless be capable of analysing how he reappears on another stage than the one from which he vanished. Such a theology would be the theory of this new status. Hamlet's father's ghost once became the law of the castle in which he was no longer present. Similarly, the absent one who is no longer on earth nor is the body in heaven but inhabits a strange region. His "death" has placed him in that limbo. Speaking in approximate terms, this is the region the mystic authors designate for

⁴⁶In a report published in *La Repubblica* on October 1, 2013.

⁴⁷Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, 29–36.

us today. The laborious waiting in front of these night watchmen allow one at last to behold a radiance that streams inextinguishably from the gateway of the Law. The guard leans over to shout to the dying man the true nature of his wait: "This gate was made only for you. Now I am leaving, and I am closing the door." Until that final hour, the task of wailing and writing remains as Franz Kafka tells. Its labour in the meantime lasts for as many years as there are between the first request the man from the country addressed to the keeper of his desire and the moment when the angel withdraws, leaving the word that puts an end to patience. Why, indeed, does one write and preach, near the threshold, sitting on the stool mentioned in Kafka's story. The only inevitable prayer is Maranatha—Lord Come. The question of embodying the Word. Prayer is attention, taken to its highest degree, it presupposes faith and love. If we turn our minds towards the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself. Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in man and the only extreme attention is religious. The amount of creative genius in any period is strictly in proportion to the amount of extreme attention and thus of authentic religion at that period. He who cannot be attentive, cannot listen. The language of extreme attention cannot be Philosophical language of existence. But a language of faith which discovers the call to responsibility from the Other, the language of the prophets and poets. Philosophy will drag you to the market. Break the divide between sacred and profane language—for all language is sacred as all language is about the other, on the basis of promise, faith and hope.

7. Word was with God

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). I think the Bible believes in the ears: "hear O Israel" (Deut 6:4). The silence of the universe speaks. Do I attend to my own interiority of origin? It is attention of listening to the great absence within me. It is source of poetry and prophecy. It is attention—payer. "All I needed to do was to 'leave everything and follow,' without making plans, without wishes or insights. All I needed to do was to stand there and wait and see what I would be needed for."⁴⁸ Life exemplified in a "handing over." The very existence was offered to God in service. This is the freedom of the

⁴⁸Balthasar, quoted in Peter Henrici, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Sketch of His Life," in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. D.L. Schindler, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991, 11.

saints whose experience constantly informed in their theological reflections of language. This is the permanent and fundamental openness of the whole soul to God. The attitude is characterised by a “total self-dispossession” in thinking and speaking which derives from being freed from egocentricity.⁴⁹ This vocation to establish a “bridge” between people and God. This bridge is built primarily through love. Indeed, our primary call is to love. We are here to love God and to love our neighbour. “Love alone” is enough, for it is in love that our blessedness consists, a life lived in love is sufficient unto itself. This love involves intrapersonal dynamics that effect such a change in the structure of one’s ethics. Human being must become a “mirror” for God by achieving the “transcendence and radiance” that reveal God’s glory in created humanity. The unique vocation and mission will provide the form whereby persons express themselves in freedom and without fear. The one who attends to that call thereby discovers a capacity to cooperate with Christ in the drama of mission. Humans have the grace to settle any issue by talking.

Two mystic fables are there in the scripture, one the tower of Babel and the second the Pentecostal miracle. In the first, God descends to the tower of monolingual imposition creating “heteroglossia,” as defined language’s ability to contain many voices. The second miracle is not creation of an Esperanto of universal language of understanding. Peter speaks in his language, all understand in their own languages. Peter was exercising his authority as the head of the Apostles. What he did was neither uniformity of language nor unity of languages. His language was powerful enough or open enough to be understood by all other languages. Primarily, it is the nature of authority that decides the nature of communication and communion. Derrida wrote in “Des Tours de Babel”: “The ‘tower of Babel’ does not figure merely the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics.”⁵⁰ In a church related meeting such a monologism will undo the very Spirit of the Church. Such “discourse consists in speaking of God in order to silence him in not keeping silent in order to silence him.”... “There is here a double impotence to keep silent about God, which silences him all the more.” The birth of “Christianity is out of the spirit of

⁴⁹Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Our Task: a Report and a Plan*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994, 132, 150-156.

⁵⁰*A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, 244.

ressentiment to the Jewish religion” hence for having reconstituted its genealogy on the basis of a reactive state of the will to power; for “ressentiment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values.” As Marion wrote in *God without being* “We speak of the God who crosses Himself with a cross because He reveals Himself by His being placed on the cross, the God revealed by, in, and as Christ; in other words, the God of rigorously Christian theology.”⁵¹ Jesus is one always in dialogue with every one of the society with representatives of every level of society, from the most revered to the most reviled: the Magi attend his birth. He becomes a teacher of teachers at a young age, the twelve disciples include fishermen and tax collectors, and the Gospels contain accounts of encounters with prostitutes, beggars, outcasts, soldiers and government leaders, men of wealth and hermits. “The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism, which pretends to possess a ready-made truth, and it is also counterposed to the naive self-confidence of those people who think that they know something, that is, who think that they possess certain truths.”⁵²

In order to accomplish its purpose, the Socratic dialogue utilized two basic devices: *syncrisis* and *anacrisis*. The term *syncrisis* refers to the reversal, or juxtaposition, of differing perspectives on an issue, and *anacrisis* is “the provocation of the word by the word,” the forcing of one’s opponent to articulate one’s position, thus revealing through spoken language any deficiencies in the logic or reason of one’s argument.⁵³ Another integral aspect of this genre is what Bakhtin calls slum naturalism, wherein the “adventures of truth on earth take place on the high road, in brothels, in the dens of thieves, in taverns, marketplaces, prisons, in the erotic orgies of secret cults, and so forth.”⁵⁴ Along with its willingness to venture into the darkest regions, the satire maintains a concern with life’s “ultimate questions,” the pursuit of which is often portrayed in the form of “threshold dialogues” which occur along the boundaries of life and death, in the heavens and in hell. The carnivalesque has its roots in ancient culture, it only emerges in those moments in history when decentralization of a culture has undermined the authority of social establishments, national myths, and correct languages. Carnival images reached maturity during a crucial moment in Russian history.

⁵¹Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, 70.

⁵²Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 110.

⁵³Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 111.

⁵⁴Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 115.

The element of carnivalistic satire is evident in the most vocal complaints of the Pharisees, the disciples of John, and even Jesus' own disciples regarding his unorthodox behaviour, such as his refusal to have his disciples fast during the period of his ministry (Mt 9:14-17), his habit of fraternizing with unsavoury characters (Mt 9:10-11, 15:23-28, 19:13-15; Lk 7:36-50), and his refusal to accept legalism (Mk 7:5-15). Naturally, each of these acts of Jesus are viewed by authoritarian forces as profanation of the sacred. Perhaps the most obviously carnivalized element of the Gospels can be seen in the act of crowning and decrowning. Jesus echoes his interest in the manifestation of carnival in literature as a celebration of the body, the senses and the unofficial, uncanonized relations among human beings. The account in the canonical Gospels of the 'King of the Jews' entering the Jewish capital on a lowly donkey and the crown of thorns that is an anti-crown is preeminent evidence of satirical carnivalization. The point is well-taken when one considers that the biblical narrative closely parallels the mock ritual of the fool's crowning and de-crowning upon the carnival square; Jesus is stripped, beaten, spat upon, and dressed in a parody of royal regalia.

What the Party holds to be truth, is truth. It is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the party. That is the fact that you have got to re-learn, Winston. It needs an act of self-destruction, and effort of the will. You must humble yourself before you can become sane.⁵⁵

The sanity of the party can become the sanctity of the church! Bakhtin asserts the following:

It was the victory of laughter over fear that most impressed medieval man. It was not only a victory over mystic terror of God, but also a victory over that awe inspired by the forces of nature, and most of all over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself.⁵⁶

Satire is revolutionary itself in that its very form presents a threat to the vertical ordering of hierarchical structure in official society. To this end, carnival "brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid."⁵⁷ The form of the fun-house

⁵⁵George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, The Annotated Edition, London. Penguin Books, 2013, 285.

⁵⁶M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984, 90-1.

⁵⁷Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 123.

mirrors which reflect the gay and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character, with the joy of change and renewal.⁵⁸ This is the satire of God that one finds in the book of Jonah. We have to wait with the silent Job in wonder.

8. Hearing the Silence of the Simple and Ordinary

How does the Lord come in the silence of world? When all creatures are silent, then the solemn silence speaks. The silence speaks only to those who are open in their interiority, the origin within, waiting with open ears. We cannot but hear the sound of birth in the world. It is the sound of Life, the silence in which the Word of life keeps talking to us of our own life. If we hear the word that resounds unmistakably speaks, keeps talking about the Word of God. When anything appears there is an epiphany. Appearing seduces, it is good. May I say he expresses himself, he reveals himself. Divine inspiration can refer to the activity of the Holy Spirit in giving the data of public revelation, or to the assistance of the Holy Spirit in helping the reader to accept the data of revelation in faith. Give body to the Spirit.

To reveal means to lift the veil which hides an object from view; but the veil can cover the object or the faculty of vision. Ordinary people are silently living. How can the silence be heard? As everyday practices, the ways of operating that involve a way of making, a way of thinking and a way of acting that escape or exceed dominant ideologies of powerful and rich, these are capable of evading the imposed discipline and constructing an alternative order. Everyday practices like speaking, walking, reading, writing, travelling, dwelling and cooking are significant as they construct their own specific logic and space. These practices make the consumers the unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts, silent discoverers of their own paths, produce wandering lines and trajectories by obeying their own logic in the jungle of functionalist rationality. The fatality of the established order is challenged by stories comprising the everyday practices which reverse the relationships of power. Such a reversal ensures the victory of the unfortunate in a fabulous and utopian space. It is this space, the weapons of the weak against the established order. The ordinary equip themselves with a weapon which I may call tactic. "Tactics" are the tricks or the arts of the weak—the "last resort" of the weak that helps them to inscribe displacements in the prevailing order for its reorganization.

⁵⁸Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 301.

The mystics of ordinary life do not reject the ruins that surround them. They remain there. They go there. Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and many others wished to enter a “corrupt” Order. Not that they sympathized with decadence, but these disorderly, quasi-disinherited places—places of abjection, of trial (like the “deserts” where monks once went to battle against evil spirits) and not places guaranteeing an identity or a salvation—represented the actual situation of contemporary Christianity. They were the theatres of the present struggles. Like the Crypt of the Nativity in Bethlehem, like Jerusalem destroyed by the centuries, they marked the very spot where a present foundation that would also be a restoration is to be awaited, where the metamorphoses and revivals of history could be “suffered.” Besides, imposed by the circumstances yet desired, sought after as the trial of truth, a certain solidarity with an age-old and collective suffering marked the locus of a “wound” inseparable from a societal misfortune. At this point, an understanding is born by being touched by affliction. The deciphering of history, is reserved for certain beings of pain and suffering. There is post-Christian world in the West as there is post-communist world in the East Europe. There may be parallels. Official power is legitimized by constructing its mission and identity based on the glorification of the victorious past or on its demonization. There is amnesia as preferring the present to the past, nostalgia as preferring the past to the present, and melancholia as an inability to distinguish between the past and the present. In the experimental laboratory of communism they remodelled the old human, the old Adam, Homo sovieticus as labour camp of Solovetsky Islands reads: “With an iron hand we will drive mankind to happiness.” In the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, “freedom is disputed. The road to freedom is rocky, agonizing and tragic...” “Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much?”⁵⁹

The raw material of talk, every day is filled with it. These bricks lie about everywhere. But bricks don’t make! But for me it is all different... It is precisely there, in the warm human voice, in the living reflection of the past, that the primordial joy is concealed and the insurmountable tragedy of life is laid bare. Its chaos and passion. Its uniqueness and inscrutability. Not yet subjected to any treatment. The originals. I build temples out of our feelings... Out of our desires, our disappointments. Dreams. Out of that which was, but might slip away.⁶⁰

⁵⁹F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett, New York: The Lowell Press, 1912, 259-291.

⁶⁰ “Our Own Memory: A Q&A with Svetlana Alexievich,” *Sampsonia Way Magazine*, March 13, 2017.

The little great people exist in a niche world – kitchen society, which goes unnoticed and is overlooked by those in power – and to seek in vain for a way to survive and to live their everyday lives in this manner. The act of lending a voice to those who have been rendered mute – the act of giving the suppressed an opportunity to speak openly – requires not only humility and generosity but also an entirely new literary mode. It requires an author who writes own story of voices from nowhere. Toni Morrison once said: “There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.”⁶¹

Conclusion

I conclude with Toni Morrison’s Nobel Lecture which narrated a story of an old and blind but wise woman who was questioned by a band of young boys. Her reputation for wisdom is without peer and without question. One of them asked, “Old woman, I hold in my hand a bird. Tell me whether it is living or dead.” A long silence. Finally, she speaks and her voice is soft but stern. “I don’t know,” she says. “I don’t know whether the bird you are holding is dead or alive, but what I do know is that it is in your hands. It is in your hands.” The old woman can be the church or the ordinary Christian believer. The blind woman shifts attention away from assertions of power to the instrument through which that power is exercised. Tony Morrison said, “So I choose to read the bird as language and the woman as a practised writer. She is worried about how the language she dreams in, given to her at birth, is handled, put into service, even withheld from her for certain nefarious purposes. Being a writer, she thinks of language partly as a system, partly as a living thing over which one has control, but mostly as agency – as an act with consequences. So the question the children put to her: “Is it living or dead?”

⁶¹Toni Morrison, “No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear,” *The Nation*, 2015, 7.