

Evelin Lindner's Worldview

Evelin Lindner
Medical Doctor, Psychologist
Dr. med., Dr. psychol.
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My 'religion' is love, humility, and a deep sense of awe in a universe that is so much larger than what we, as humans, can fathom.¹ Community, love without reason, beauty and resonance, these are words that describe my core life orientation and experience.² I resonate with voices such as this, 'We ought to take delight in the fact that even if we disagree about the ultimate nature of reality, we share this profound sense of mystery and awe of the cosmos in which we find ourselves'.³ I follow Socrates in 'what I do not know I do not think I know'.⁴ I do not waste time on the notion of 'belief', in this book, I have not once said 'I believe'. I do not even believe in my own experiences, I simply try to describe them as best as I can, preferring phrases such as 'as far as I can see'. I avoid not just conspiracy theories, I remain in distance from all theories, in loving, cautious, and humble distance from all dogma, even from scepticism. As I laid out before (in chapter 2), I have learned that there is no guarantee for 'truth',⁵ there is only the experience of 'I understand'.⁶ So, through living a life of *inter-being*,⁷ I allow myself to be drawn into 'truth events' and nurture what physicists call 'coherence domains', places where hearts and minds seem to align.⁸ I am aware that there is no text without context, I am aware of the fragile relationship between *forme* and *fond*, of how 'the imaginary world holds the real world captive'.⁹ This fragility is what science is to me, and in that sense I resonate with what Carl Sagan once wrote, namely, that 'science is not only compatible with spirituality; it is a profound source of spirituality'.¹⁰

Fourteenth century Persian Sufi poet Hāfez impressed me. His full name was Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez-e Shīrāzī, indicating that he was connected with one of the oldest cities of ancient Persia, namely, Shiraz, also known as the city of poets, literature, wine, and flowers. He composed these lines: 'I have learned so much from God that I can no longer call myself a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew. The truth has shed so much of itself in me that I can no longer call myself a man, a woman...' My personal version would go as follows: 'I have learned so much from the larger universe of meaning around us that I can no longer call myself a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew. The truth has shed so much of itself in me that I can no longer call myself a man, a woman...'

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¹ I resonate with the argument in the following article, 'What does it mean to be spiritual? A rational answer', by Zat Rana, *Medium*, 6th January 2019, <https://medium.com/personal-growth/what-does-it-mean-to-be-spiritual-a-rational-answer-857380fda855>.

² Following the work of Erich Fromm, sociologist Hartmut Rosa, 2016, has developed a *Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (a sociology of world relation) and a theory of resonance as a counter concept against the ubiquitous alienation of our time. He speaks of 'Resonanz mit dem Unverfügbaren' or 'resonance with the unavailable', meaning that resonance cannot be produced systematically and intentionally, it is ultimately unavailable.

³ 'What happens to religion when we find aliens? A Rabbi, an Imam, and a Christian theologian on what life in space could mean for the spiritual', by Shannon Stirone, *Medium*, 30th October 2018, <https://medium.com/s/space-time/what-happens-to-religion-when-we-find-extraterrestrial-life-742146170c27>.

⁴ Plato, 399 BCE/1966, p. 21. Socrates went to a politician who had the reputation of wisdom, but after speaking with him, Socrates found out that this man was not as wise as he had supposed himself to be. Socrates thought to himself that he was wiser than this man, because 'what I do not know I do not think I know'. As a youth, I read the German translation, 'Ich weiß, daß ich nicht weiß'. See 'Platon: Des Sokrates Verteidigung'. In: *Sämtliche Werke. Band 1*, Übersetzung: Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, 1805. Berlin [1940], S. 9. Originaltext:

Denn es mag wohl eben keiner von uns beiden etwas Tüchtiges oder Sonderliches wissen; allein dieser doch meint zu wissen, da er nicht weiß, ich aber, wie ich eben nicht weiß, so meine ich es auch nicht. Ich scheine also um dieses wenige doch weiser zu sein als er, daß ich, was ich nicht weiß, auch nicht glaube zu wissen.

⁵ Lynch, 2013.

⁶ Gadamer, 1960/1989. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) grew up in Breslau and studied classics and philosophy in the University of Breslau, where also my mother was born in 1930. I thank Hroar Klempe for reminding me of Gadamer's work in April 2016. It is a privilege to have Hroar Klempe as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

⁷ Charles Eisenstein, 2014, asks, 'why is it assumed without much debate that no one can have direct access to the subjective experience of another person (or non-person)? This is obvious only if we conceive and experience ourselves as fundamentally separate from each other. There are other stories of self, however. We could see ourselves, as many spiritual traditions do, not as separate beings but as

'interbeings', not just interdependent but interexistent'. It was a privilege to have Charles Eisenstein with us in our 2012 Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict at Columbia University in New York City.

⁸ Laszlo, 2014:

By expanding our systemic consciousness and drawing on our relational intelligence skills, we will be able to form what physicists term 'coherence domains' — patches of networked holons that are in phase with each other. This alignment or 'meeting of the minds' (not to mention of the hearts and spirit) is what creates the conditions for hyperconnectivity and gives rise to the systemic nurturance spaces so necessary as contextual complements to active engagement with of systemic leverage points we will identify.

I thank Dino Karabeg for introducing us to Alexander Laszlo and thank him also for accepting to become a member in our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

⁹ 'The imaginary world that holds the real world captive', by Howard Richards, draft of chapter six in the book with the tentative title *Economic theory and community developmentan exercise in applied philosophy*, www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/RichardsCWPCChapterSix1July2015.pdf.

¹⁰ Sagan and Druyan, 1996, p. 29.