

EXCERPT FROM REPORT ON PROCESS AND PILGRIMAGE IN CORDOBA

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In June 2014 we held a *Process and Pilgrimage* event in Cordoba at Albayda Centre and the Tea House of Salma al Farouki. Introducing the event, my invite was for us to explore freedom to self, freedom to other, and freedom in relation to God. On the second evening it felt as if we had hit a brick wall of the connotations these words already had. Were these words not just institutional similitude?

On day two of the gathering, a rather too rich afternoon programme hurried us to a museum, to a talk on Ibn Arabi, whose insights had to be worked out from the fragments of translated parts of sentences, then into eating, and further into a Sufi prayer that seemed to take us away from all known ground, into a darkness approaching midnight and returning us to our accommodation of being totally unsure of the way we were supposed to be following.

In the middle of the night, I wrestled with this darkness and my folly of having let the way slip from my grasp into a busyness that was set to repeat the next day. Every detail of existence seemed fallen from existence; the bedroom too big, the arrangements flawed, the whole endeavour cast upon futility.

Only in the early hours does an answer resonate of the difference between the God that is named in tradition and the process of “naming” that is always unique and meaningful. Naming does not happen in closed secluded gatherings. Naming happens in the everyday-ness of common speech. The next liberation at four in the morning is the realisation that we can change the program, the timetable is not prescriptive. Instead of rushing the afternoon in another series of excursions, we can open inward to another session of our own group.

The next morning everyone agrees on having a second session together, rather than heading back to town. A participant talks about the infinite coming to earth being the real aim of the gathering. This statement is the invitation for my night-filled wrestling to find voice.

The infinite, only appears when it is given a form. What we are doing in meeting to talk about God, is not to reverence some static image of Heaven. What is required is that a form is found in which God becomes an everyday aspect of existence on earth.



As example in India in “naming emptiness”, emptiness then turns into the most everyday experience. The naming of emptiness, in meditation and the use of ‘0’ in the number system made of the concept of “emptiness”, something that was intuitively obvious to everyone. The naming brought the mystery into everyday use.

When we talk about a new revelation coming to earth, we mean this also in an everyday sense, in which the infinite is made routinely accessible through a speaking of its quality in everyday parlance.

The naming is not a fixing but is as when one is in love and the name of the other comes into one’s heart. All the different aspects of being are surprises that enrich the openness of naming. The naming is an address of the potential which has many contradictory forms, held in a single address. And once the naming has occurred, its meaning pervades all activity without comment, or intellectual effort, or need for systemisation.

Naming does not form out of something totally new, but arises in the dark wasteland of where the old names have fixed the world in stasis. Renewal comes through the very form that had fixed itself in a final description of the world. Naming renews the relation to the mystery. Our task is to name the world in all its mystery anew through the old elements that have outworn their usefulness.

And now, the silence speaks the need that the mystery be given a new name, in which everyday existence may form. Everything inverts until the very names we have for things translate to a calling through light into the mystery of the future. In this appeal to naming, light is born anew, without reference to any “thing” that existed before. There is no sense from an old perspective for what happens. And yet in the naming, if faith and patience are followed, the world attains a new orientation for its speaking. The speaking of the word is the very source of the light about which the world coheres in mystery. The silence when entered, is bound by its ancient principle, to deliver itself to the word of naming.

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Philip Franses is the originator of the **Process and Pilgrimage** inquiry forum which he began in 2009. After studying Mathematics at Oxford University, academia’s dull explanation of the world inspired Philip on a counter-journey into the depths of experience, travelling and a re-sensitisation to quality. He teaches Complexity Theory and Goethean science at Schumacher College. He is also the Editor in Chief of the Holistic Science Journal.



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