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Ety Hillesum: Love Calls for Spiritual Discernment¹

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ABSTRACT

Ety Hillesum, a young Jewish woman living in Amsterdam, died on November 30th 1943 in Auschwitz when she was twenty-nine years old, leaving behind a diary (eleven exercise books) and seventy-eight letters which have drawn responses across the world in the form of books, reviews, articles, documentaries, plays and visual art. By adding this essay to the body of literature on Hillesum's writings, I hope to change the process of recuperation so that her texts may be read differently. What I hope to contribute is a pluralist and universal's perspective on the comprehension of love in Hillesum's writings. This subject has not as yet been given enough thought and attention. And yet, when one tries to understand Hillesum's spiritual path it is mandatory to interpret what she understood by the so common word of "love." Hillesum's writings do indeed articulate a remarkable experience of God in times when many just abandoned a faith that seemed so useless.

Keywords: Auschwitz, comprehension of love, experience of God, spiritual eros, agape.

At the very beginning of her diary in March 1941, Hillesum described herself as being among the best lovers, saying that love suited her to perfection but that it remained a mere trifle setting apart for what was truly essential. A couple of weeks before her deportation to the death Camp of Auschwitz in September 1943, she completely agreed that "God is love" adding that this was truer now than ever. If Hillesum fully agreed that God is love, was God a mere trifle to her? What happened

between those thirty months (March 1941–September 1943) in order to change so radically her perception of love? In the first part of this essay, I shall present Hillesum as a chaotic young woman who was mainly reaching out to others out of selfish love. Hillesum was mostly preoccupied by her ambition to become a famous writer and by her erotic and sexual impulses. We shall see how and why she decided to struggle against her selfish and possessive love (carnal eros). In the second part, I shall present how Hillesum's spiritual master, Julius Spier, introduced her to a spiritual love (spiritual eros). Reaching out for a deeper love, the young woman attained a profound awareness of the difference between these two kinds of love (carnal eros and spiritual eros). This shall bring us to the third part of this essay where Hillesum is being radically transformed. Realizing the difficulty to love those who are not so lovable people, she decided to love God within them. Thus she would help others with God's own love dwelling within her. She could now love God through the neighbour—whoever he or she may be—with a love that surpasses all understanding, a love that goes beyond all forms of eros and that Christians call agape (although Hillesum never used the word itself). This brought her to this profound decision of wanting to help God within her self and within the others. She believed that there was no two ways about it: God could not help her in such tragic times, so she would have to go out there to help God. I shall conclude by raising a few questions. Could Hillesum's writings witness of the Christian agape although she never manifested any desire to become a Christian? And if so, how did she reconcile her ever erotic love with such a divine love? In his famous book, *Eros and Agape*, Anders Nygren argued that there is a sort of spiritual love that is deeply rooted in eros and has nothing to do with the Christian agape love. According to him these two loves—spiritual eros and agape—are different and totally incompatible. Although Nygren's work is a monumental achievement that should be reread in my opinion, his discernment between these two loves remains solely theoretical. How could we concretely discern between a spiritual eros love and an agape love? Is agape limited to Christians and the so-called “anonymous” Christians?

Ery Hillesum was born on January 15, 1914 in the town of Mid-

delburg in Zeeland, the Netherlands. Daughter of Rebecca Bernstein and Louis Hillesum, she had two brothers, Jaap and Mischka. Although they remained part of the Jewish community, the Hillesums did not practice their religion. Since 1937, Ery Hillesum had been living in Amsterdam with a retired accountant and widower, Han Wegerif, who quickly became her lover. In May 1940, Holland was invaded by the German troops. The Nazis started to strip the Jewish population of its rights and freedom. In 1941, Hillesum met the Jewish chiropodist (a person who studies the personality of people by examining their hands), Julius Spier, with whom she started a therapy. A former colleague of Carl Gustav Jung, Spier had a major influence on Hillesum's psychological and spiritual development.² It was probably under Spier's advice that Hillesum started a diary in March 1941. The last entry in it was made on October 13, 1942. But Hillesum died more than a year later, on November 30, 1943 in Auschwitz, which means that she probably took her last diaries with her in Auschwitz. All we have left from that period of her life in Westerbork Camp are some letters. In one of these letters, Hillesum copied a passage from her diary for her friend Henny Tideman. Thus this is the only trace we have of these lost diaries. As I shall now demonstrate, it is quite amazing to see how much Hillesum's perception of love radically changed within these thirty months of writing: March 1941–September 1943.³

Reaching out to others out of selfish love (carnal eros)

Ery Hillesum began writing in her first exercise book on March 8 1941 by copying a desperate letter she had addressed to Julius Spier whom she had met a month earlier on February 3 1941 and by whom she was infatuated. Hillesum probably knew by then that the man was engaged and that he wished to remain faithful to his fiancé, Hertha Lewis, who had immigrated to London because of the war. This would explain the desperate tone of Hillesum's letter. Although Hillesum was living with Han Wegerif, she was also sexually attracted by Spier and didn't know how to restrain her sexual impulses. The young woman was exceptionally liberated for the forties and probably not accustomed to being rejected by any man. Spier negotiated therapy for Hillesum in return for

secretarial work. He helped her to see things in their right perspectives and proportions. He introduced her to a new kind of relationship: a spiritual⁴ friendship. Hillesum was quite captivated by Spier considering him to be her first worthy partner. In the past when Hillesum would find a man charming, she usually had sexual contacts right away with him and would generally feel disappointed afterwards. Hillesum was impressed by Spier's self control. She wrote:

He is the first who fights against his impure feelings and by being the person he is, he has taught me how to fight also. There is tension now, wholeness, and many possibilities in the air and a respectable struggle that ennobles one. Deep down in my heart, I am proud to face such a relationship (24.03.41).⁵ (Hillesum 2008, 50)

However, Hillesum had difficulty in reconciling this concept of spiritual love with her libido and femininity. She attributed her lapses to a possessive propensity and to some sorts of typical feminine behaviour. She thought that she would always be searching for this *one* man, attributing this wish to a woman's handicap, seeing it as the result of an ancient tradition from which women must liberate themselves. Whenever Hillesum would try to possess the object or the subject of her love, she would inevitably feel isolated and desperate. Thus, she tried to demystify such an overestimation of the erotic element in the relationship between women and men. But her erotic desires assailed her from all sides. Seeing a beautiful woman on the street would often make her jealous for she also wished to be a beautiful object of desire for men. Hillesum considered such a reaction as being typical of women wanting to be desired as if it was the ultimate confirmation of their worthiness. Hillesum believed that women continued to be challenged in finding their real value and place in the world. She often felt divided and torn between her body and her soul. She wrote: "It is difficult to be simultaneously on good terms with God and with your lower part of the body" (04.08.41) (Hillesum 2008, 74). Hillesum's spirituality triggered a source of conflict between her sexual and spiritual needs. She was tormented by this affective dependence preventing her from loving as she wished she could. She was angry at herself for succumbing so easily to her erotic impulses. Taking over the whole feminine condi-

tion, she wrote:

Yes, we women, we stupid, idiot, illogical women, we search for the Paradise and the Absolute. And yet I know with my brains, with my outstanding working brains, that nothing is absolute, that everything is relative in endless shades and in eternal movement and therefore so fascinating and appealing, but in the same way so very much painful. We women want to immortalize ourselves in a man (25.09.41).
(Hillesum 2008, 111)

Hillesum was well aware that the spiritual contact brought her much greater satisfaction than the physical one, but all she longed for at times was to fling herself into a man's arms and just be a piece of cherished flesh. She dwelled too much on her sensuality although she knew with her brains that this rising wave of hers would only last a few days at a time.

One evening, Hillesum was lying stark naked on the Persian rug in front of the wood stove in the dark living room feeling the urge for sexual contacts and it just happened that H. (perhaps Hans' son who was also called Han) was reading there and as she wrote she simply used him to satisfy her physical needs. Later on Hillesum wrote in her diary: "And who the man happens to be doesn't matter much" (02.01.42) (Hillesum 2008, 213). The man here was nothing more than an instrument to her and she knew that it shouldn't be so. Spier had taught her that the only thing that really mattered was the spiritual, meaning both the brains *and* the soul. Although Spier enjoyed having sexual contacts here and there with Hillesum—he also tried to abstain from it. He would rather orientate all his energies to his work. Hillesum wrote: "He feeds me indeed with a wider love, one that embraces more than just *one* human being, with a love that differs from the possession of *one* human being" (07.01.42) (Hillesum 2008, 230). Spier told her that many people hold on to the ideal of just *one* man and of just *one* woman living for each other alone, completely wrapped up in each other and in their love for each other. Spier considered this to be an obstruction arguing that it does not allow any "influx" from without. Hillesum added: "When love for all human beings is not involved in some way or another, it leads straight to impoverishment

and limitation" (27.03.42). (Hillesum 2008, 315) Spier taught her the importance of working first on a relationship with her own self, adopting an attitude of self respect: "Love thy neighbour as thy self".⁶ Love for neighbour should first start by love for our own self calling therefore for respect and dignity toward our own person and it must be differentiated from an egocentric and narcissistic love. In other words love for the self and love for neighbours call for discernment. Hillesum had to fight against her narcissistic propensity for seducing and wanting to be desired by men. She also had this habit of watching herself too much in the mirror. Addressing herself she wrote: "I would like to ask you not to look at yourself so much in the mirror, you idiot. It must be terrible to be very beautiful, for than you can't get to your interiority being so dazzled and blinded by the exterior appearance" (08.06.41) (Hillesum 2008, 60). Hillesum was now determined to lead a spiritual life and to get rid of all these fantasies that were always blocking the way for a deeper and meaningful life. But how would she put up with such a fight? She wrote: "He says that love for all human beings is more beautiful than love for one man. For love for one man is merely love for your own self" (04.08.41) (Hillesum 2008, 72).

With all the admiration Hillesum held toward Spier, she nevertheless felt crushed under his charisma: she never had to deal before with anyone who had so much love, so much strength and such an unshaken confidence. Spier told her that if he was to devote all his love and strength on just *one* human being, he would surely destroy that person. Hillesum's sadness arose from the fact that the man was spreading a huge amount of love on such endless number of people around him instead of giving her his undivided love and attention. She was well aware that her reaction was selfish. She copied a quotation by saint Francis of Assisi in her diary: "O Master, let me not yearn so much/ To be consoled ... but long to console / To be understood ... but long to understand / To be loved ... but long to love / St. Francis of Assisi" (20.09.41) (Hillesum 2008, 108). At times when Hillesum felt impotent, she almost hated Spier and couldn't stand his love and strength. Instead of accepting her temporary fatigue, she would just corrode her entire perspective of life. Whenever these moments

occurred, she would throw away all that seemed so good to her previously although she knew with her *brains* that this behaviour made no sense at all. But what is the use to know it only with your brains? These things must make their way to the heart. During these difficult times, Hillesum wouldn't be able to love anyone around simply because she had no energy left for them. And this was precisely when she expected others to give her twice as much love. The less she was able to give to others, the more she demanded from them. Addressing herself, she wrote: "On days like these, I must stay away from everyone with my thoughts and feelings. Hide away like a sick little bird knowing that everything will be alright again and not to waste my energy by rebelling against my lack of energy" (28.10.41) (Hillesum 2008, 147). There were days when Hillesum felt desperately sad about Spier and desperately jealous of his *far away* fiancé. Feeling at the end of her tether, Hillesum reached for the Bible and opened it up at 1 Corinthians 13 for the unprethought time. And when she read those words, she felt as if they worked on her like a divining rod that touched the bottom of her heart, causing hidden sources to spring up suddenly within her. She suddenly knelt down and all her released love coursed through her again, purged of all selfish desires, jealousy and hostility. She was experiencing an inexpressible deep peace within her.

Hillesum wondered why she still felt the urge to own Spier's body when she already had his spirit. Why when two people of the opposite sex have a close relationship do they inevitably feel that they must have sex together, she wondered? Hillesum was struggling against her desire to possess Spier; a struggle that went on and on in her first diaries. She was still absolutizing people and things too much, seeing them as the finality and not simply as a means: she just wanted to possess them. Spier kept trying to teach her how to let go of this possessive need of hers. Hillesum's first reaction when she would meet a man was inevitably to imagine the sexual possibilities ahead. Whenever Spier would reject her sexual advances, Hillesum would return home feeling sad and angry with the fury of a scorned woman. On the other hand when her implicit sexual propositions were welcomed by Spier, she would go home feeling guilty because the dear man had made up his mind to

lead a chaste life and she had just ruined it for him! Hillesum wrote: "I do understand something of the monks who kneel on the cold stone floor in their rough habits... I will certainly have nothing to say to God tonight, although I do feel this longing for the cold stones and to reflect seriously on things" (11.01.42) (Hillesum 2008, 234-235).

Hillesum had a hard time disciplining herself and leading a scheduled life wasting it instead on many trifles. Addressing herself she wrote:

If you want to reach people later how to live, than you must first get a hold of yourself. You must first reach a spiritual "hygiene." I believe that Jung calls it to be psychologically "housed." You are still at the beginning of it, but at least there is a start and that is already a lot (08.06.41). (Hillesum 2008, 61)

Spier didn't think that Hillesum was really as chaotic as she pretended to be: she simply refused to think that being chaotic was better than being disciplined. Spier believed in the necessity of an ascetic life for whoever keeps giving so much of his own strength to others. Hillesum felt the desperate need to discipline herself from without as long as her inner discipline was not trained. There were moments when she understood why some creative artists could take to drink, become dissipated, frivolous, and lose their way. The artist needs a very strong character and a strict discipline if he is not to go to pieces and lose direction. All of Hillesum's love, emotions and tenderness were becoming too heavy for her at times and she felt like a soul-ocean. During those moments she wished she could pour out this soul-ocean into just one short poem, letting herself fall into an abyss or losing herself into drinking. Each creative act calls for great strength of character and a strong moral to go by with; Hillesum sensed this need. Even during her most fruitful and most creative inner moments, there were raging demons and self-destructive forces going on inside her. She wrote: "I then feel the sudden urge to kneel somewhere in a quiet corner and to hold the reins and guard myself from dissipating my strength and splashing it out unrestrictedly" (22.03.42) (Hillesum 2008, 308). Spier told her how she should not be so dependent on her body; how she should learn to get over these moods more quickly each time they arose. But wasn't it precisely what she kept trying to do?

Hillesum copied down this teaching from Spier a couple of times in her diary:

One should not look to reach its great desire through a hundred of small satisfactions; one should preserve it whole and undivided, to put it on a higher level so to speak and to draw the strengths and the drive to love many. This is difficult at times. Longing indeed remains always greater than any satisfaction. And this is how it must be (08.03.42).

(Hillesum 2008, 286, 287, 365)

Contrary *and* complementary to this teaching, Hillesum added that one should in fact divide one's single great tenderness into a thousand small handful of tenderness and spread it out to a dog in the street, to an old flower seller, and use it to find the right words for someone in need. The previous Friday evening, when Hillesum cycled back from Spier's home through the spring night, she poured out the great love and the overwhelming tenderness she was feeling for him into the night. She threw some of it into the stars and sparkled some behind in the bushes beside the canal. Hillesum wished to carry all of her great feelings without being crushed by it, but drawing strength from it, not just for one man but for so many of God's creatures which also have a right to her attention and love. Referring to Spier, she wrote: "... he is a permanent edifice, an ever-ready refuge for the great feelings. He seems to me like a mighty shelter where the most important human matters are given constant and eternal lodging. And there are many rooms in this edifice" (26.04.42) (Hillesum 2008, 367). Hillesum also enjoyed the company of Saint Augustine and wished to remember these words of his:

May my soul praise you in all things, God, the Creator of the universe, but my soul must not get tied up to things in a sinful love, by its carnal senses. For everything passes, as always, to the non-being, and this tears up our soul into sick desires because the soul wants to be and wants to rest in the things it loves. But in these things nothing can find rest because they are ephemeral. They divide and who could follow them with its carnal senses and who could seize them even when they stand before him? For the carnal senses are improper (30.05.42).

(Hillesum 2008, 404)

Hillesum was well aware now of the distinction between a fusional and a communal kind of love. The first is possessive, jealous and petty as the second is altruistic, generous and fruitful. By eliminating the necessary distance between two people one can only suffocate the other. There has to be an essential distance in order to allow the other to breathe and to preserve its mystery and uniqueness. What this meant for Hillesum was to let go of her need to possess the other, to resist this powerful urge to merge within the other and to be able to live her life on her own. This called for great autonomy and responsibility. But whenever Hillesum felt tired and weak, all these beautiful resolutions would disappear leaving her with this gnawing desire to merge with Spier for good. But she knew deep inside that her path would not lead to *one* man for life. She wrote: "My heart is really wide, but never for just *one* human being. For all the human beings. I believe that this heart is also very rich. I always wondered in the past how I would give it just to *one* human being" (21.10.41) (Hillesum 2008, 142). As Hillesum learned from Spier, when we love with the wrong love, a self-centred and possessive love, we inevitably suffer from it. Beyond and through the body, lies a rich and a wide realm of communion, but we must be able to do what is needed in order to leave the other free. It occurred to Hillesum that whenever she would go through moods of spring fever she would inevitably feel inclined to look on her erotic and sexual desires as the very centre of her being. But she was now realizing that no matter how dominant it appeared to be, it was only a part, no more than a very small part of her being. It was clear to her mind that writing or conversing about existential matters with other people would always bring her a greater satisfaction than a sexual release. And because this was so clear in her mind now, her inner harmony was almost restored despite these tormenting and passing desires. She wrote: "And I must not look at him [Spier] as a means to grow and mature with some distance from him. I must not want to possess him... There is really a lot of love in me" (08.08.41) (Hillesum 2008, 85-86). A couple of weeks later, this love within herself took on the name of *God* as she wrote: "There is a real deep well within me. And God dwells in it. I am able to be there at times. But there are often some stones and grit on top of it and thus

God is buried. He must then be dug out again" (26.08.41) (Hillesum 2008, 97). Thus the word *God* was being identified by Hillesum to a noble and charitable love. Spier had introduced her to this new love taking root within her: a spiritual love.

Reaching within oneself to attain a deeper love (spiritual eros)

Shortly after Hillesum had met Julius Spier, she felt how significant he was to become for her spiritual development if only she could seriously and honestly face her own self, face the man he was, and the many problems that were to be expected here and there in their relationship. Spier was initiating Hillesum to a whole new kind of love. She wrote:

To carry the other within ourselves, always and everywhere, privately within ourselves, and to live there with him. And not only with one, but with many. To take in the other into our spacious inner space and to let him go on flourishing there, to assign him a place where he can outgrow and blossom (13.03.42). (Hillesum 2008, 292)

Hillesum wished to live genuinely with Spier, to live with him even if she was to be separated from him, and to allow him to go on living within her. This was indeed a fundamental and new attitude for her to adopt. This way she would always be with Spier, sheltered from all the external vicissitudes of life. She felt that her longing was slowly but surely maturing towards fulfillment. Regarding this new awareness, she wrote:

Then the fulfillment is that the body and the soul are as one, that the body is only the expression of the soul and that one should not wish to enjoy it for his own sake. Sometimes the distance between the body and the soul can appear to us as being very small and perhaps one is thus growing even more to the unity? (27.03.42).

(Hillesum 2008, 316-317)

Hillesum told Spier about this sentence she had woken up with few mornings before: "There is a slow shifting of emphasis between the place of the body toward the soul" (01.04.42) (Hillesum 2008, 329). She considered this as a leitmotiv for her friendship with Spier. She wanted to be with him when her body would be the expression of her soul and no longer for the sake of her physical enjoyment only. She felt

in full control of the remnants of those purely sexual desires of hers. She thought that all these intense experiences of sexual love she had had over the years were over, thinking that she would no longer have those needs to satisfy her body at any cost. She asserted that she only wanted Spier if body and soul were in harmony. And if it didn't happen, she said, she would then have to meekly accept it. Hillesum was proud to become Spier's disciple: "And that's what it is really about: I am becoming a 'pupil' in his mind, a real 'disciple'. I am progressively learning how to control my strength and to share it out to others" (24.01.42) (Hillesum 2008, 250). Hillesum was drawing on an ever bigger inner certainty and self confidence. Spier had opened up her inner sources and they would never go dry anymore. This way she would always be bound to him because they both increasingly drew on their inner sources. Her love for Spier was boundless and she felt that her heart was wide enough to even shelter his fiancé in London and many others also. Time and again Hillesum captured the wideness of her heart with a whole new intuition.

There were times when Hillesum loved Spier with such a high love that it hurt terribly. This love transcended eroticism and sensuality, and hence suddenly seemed quite unattainable. She was well aware of the impossibility to express it in an embrace or even in complete surrender. Thus this meant having to stay quietly put, keeping all this love to herself, which suddenly became a burden almost too heavy to carry for such a sensuous young woman. She managed though to orientate anew this too great a love on the others, bowing her head and praying. She started to pray for all those who were suffering in freezing concentration Camps, praying God to grant them strength, wishing they might remember the good times of their lives and draw whatever strength they needed lest they became embittered with life. Hillesum felt thankful that her love was really growing this way:

I am really thankful for this life, I feel my growth, I am aware each day anew of my faults and my pettiness, but I am also aware of my possibilities. And I have so much love, I love a few good friends, but this love doesn't build up a fence in front of the other fellow men, my love extends so far away, it is spacious and encompasses so many, even

human beings that I am not personally very fond of, but they must be there too (22.02.42). (Hillesum 2008, 263–264)

A few weeks later Hillesum wrote:

That I can have so great a love! My inner state is blossoming forth in all directions and the love is always becoming stronger and greater and I am also and still learning better how to carry it and not get crushed under it. And through that carrying, one feels himself becoming always stronger. That I can have so much love! He [Spier] is so great (29.04.42). (Hillesum 2008, 369)

Hillesum wished she could find *one* new word for Spier everyday, wishing she could give better expression to him. She felt that he was the first man she had really kissed. She had sipped his breath out of the beaker of his mouth: "Perhaps is it the only real way of kissing a man. Not only out of sensuality, but out of a desire to breathe for a moment through the same and *one* mouth. So that *one* breath passes through both of them" (16.04.42) (Hillesum 2008, 348). At times, Hillesum would be sitting in Spier's small room and watching him from a distance; she would suddenly wish that she could walk around him and examine him from all sides feeling with her hands the material this man was made out of. He was becoming like an exhibit in a museum to her, a dense, mysterious and unfathomable phenomenon. It was as if she had never seen him before, as if she had to learn to know him all over again:

This, I believe, is the greatest miracle in our relationship, at least for me: that he is always entirely new, that he must be scrutinized and fathomed all over again, that I still have to go on absorbing him, that he is a material that I will not have finished studying in years – which may explain why I have account so little studying for the rest (29.04.42). (Hillesum 2008, 369–370)

Hearing Spier praising the benefits of meditation, Hillesum asked him how one meditates and if she could learn it too. She had to learn how to become *lost within herself*, he said, because it was not a matter of thinking but of listening to what was going on inside her. By doing so every morning it would illumine her whole day, sweeping away all

the petty and useless worries which prevented her from concentrating. It would clean her inwardly just as one sweeps his or her home clean of dust. Thus Hillesum learned how to meditate each morning before work, to *turn inward* for half an hour listening to what was going on within her, to *go down within herself*. One could also call it *meditate*, but that word still aggravated Hillesum too much. But why not, she thought afterwards, why couldn't we take half an hour for ourselves? Is it enough to move our muscles only? Body *and* soul are one, repeated Spier many times. Hillesum decided to consecrate each morning half an hour for gymnastic and half an hour for meditation: this would certainly bring her enough peace and concentration for the rest of the day. Addressing herself she wrote:

Your meditation must have this objective: to transform you within into an immense and spacious sky without all these nasty bushes that obstruct your horizon. Thus this way something of God comes within you in the same way that something of God is present in the Ninth symphony of Beethoven. May a little *Love* enter within you, not that half an hour lusty love in which you sprawl on with pleasure, proud of your exalted feelings, but the kind of love with which you can accomplish something in the most and simple daily chores (08.06.41).
(Hillesum 2008, 60)

Hillesum considered reading the Bible each morning, but she didn't feel mature enough for that yet. She didn't have enough inner peace and was still trying to fathom intellectually the book instead of letting the message permeate her most inner self. Few months later though, she would be picking some sentences from the Bible enriching it with what was to her a new, meaningful and experiential significance: "*God created the human being in his own image. Love Your neighbour as Thyself*" (28.11.41)⁷ (Hillesum 2008, 165). She copied seven times in her writings the following quotation by the apostle Paul: "*And what shall profit me everything if I have no Love.*"⁸ Hillesum realized that these were fine theories to make her feel good for the moment, but that they were very difficult to put into practice. Even the smallest act of love can seem impossible at times. Hillesum started to kneel down on the brown coconut matting in the bathroom with her head hidden in

her striped brightly colored dressing gown. She wondered why kneeling didn't come easily to her and why she felt embarrassed by it. She suspected that the critical, rational and atheistic part of her self had something to do with it. And yet every so often she would feel the sudden urge to kneel down with her face hidden in her hands. Listening to those hidden sources brought her some inner peace. She found the courage to go beyond her shyness qualifying herself as a *kneeler in training*. She considered this gesture to be more intimate than sex. Only the poet could write about so deep a thing, she wrote (14.12.41) (Hillesum 2008, 190). Hillesum felt that she was achieving a state of complete equilibrium:

I do not need to crawl into a corner against the wardrobe anymore in order to *harken within me*; I listen to what is going inside me all day long, even when I am surrounded by people, I do not need to withdraw anymore to draw strength from the most hidden and deep sources within myself (19.01.42). (Hillesum 2008, 244)

Early one morning, Hillesum woke up and vaguely recalled that in the middle of the night she had been saying softly to herself in German: "My voice is maturing" (10.03.42) (Hillesum 2008, 288). Hillesum knew that she could never be conscious enough for the responsibility she had for her questioning fellow men in search of help, that she had to harken to herself ever more attentively and conscientiously, that she had to grow ever more self-disciplined, and that she could not waste a single minute of anyone's life, because so much, so overwhelmingly very much, remained to be done for the others. On November 25 1941, Hillesum wrote down in her diary a first prayer to God:

God, take me in Your⁹ hand, I will follow You with honesty without much resistance... I will try to radiate some of the love, of the real love for humankind that is within me, wherever I go. [Addressing herself, Hillesum added] But you should not glory in the *love for humankind*. You don't know if you possess it. I do not wish to be anything special, I will only try to become the person trying to blossom within me. I sometimes think that I long for the seclusion of a cloister. But I must indeed go about among the human beings and in this world (25.11.41). (Hillesum 2008, 162)

Reaching out to others with the love of God (agape)

Ety Hillesum felt a call to explain her inner processes to all mankind; not to some individual in private, but to all mankind in the form of some masterpiece. She had the impression that all she went through was not meant for her alone, that she didn't have the right to keep it all to herself and that she had to give it back to others. She wrote: "As if in this tiny part of the human history, it was my turn to be one of the many receivers who has to broadcast to the others. But what? I still don't know it" (04.06.42) (Hillesum 2008, 412). Hillesum was aware of living a privileged life, but this called for great responsibility. This meant gathering all the strength she could, living her life with God and in God and having God dwell within her. She wrote:

I find the word God so primitive at times, it is only a metaphor after all, an approach to the great and continuous inner adventure; I don't even think that I need the word "God"; it appears to me sometimes as a primitive sound from the origins. A complementary makeshift (22.06.42). (Hillesum 2008, 463)

Although Hillesum pretended here not to be in need of the word *God*, she used it more than four hundred times in her writings.¹⁰

Hillesum decided to defend God, estimating that God was not accountable for all the evil in the world, but that his creatures were accountable to *him*.¹¹ Hillesum was somewhat conscious of what was lying in wait for the Jews. She had heard from the latest news that all Jews would be deported to Holland through the Drenthe Province. The report announced that 700,000 Jews had already died the last year alone. This awareness of their impending destruction and annihilation brought a whole new insight into Hillesum's life. Her writings changed radically around the end of June and the beginning of July 1942. The young woman who was acting more like a teenager than an adult at the beginning of her diary was suddenly transformed into a grown-up, into a mature woman who would keep bringing on even deeper reflections and wisdom. This time was really the turning point of her life; one could see it as Hillesum's profound and mysterious *conversion*. Both the tenth and eleventh diary have a whole different tone to them. Thus her *worldly task* really began here. At the end of her ninth diary, she wrote:

It is true, I am still sitting at the same desk but I must draw a line under all of my previous things and go on with a whole new tone. One must give a new certainty and a new shelter to his life, one must even find a new place for it: what is at stake is our destruction and our annihilation, one can't have illusions about it anymore. We want our total annihilation, this one must also accept in his life and keep going on with it (03.07.42). (Hillesum 2008, 486)

Hillesum carried everything within her: God, heaven, hell, the earth, life, death and centuries, many centuries. The exterior didn't matter much anymore because she was now carrying everything within her. She wished to welcome everything that would come her way, the good with the bad, which didn't mean that she couldn't devote her life curing the bad. But she had to keep in mind always the motifs of her struggle and begin anew within her own self everyday: "I feel that some great changes are taking place within me and I believe that this is more than some moods" (04.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 490). Hillesum felt totally connected to the whole world of history, past, present and future. She carried it within her and felt in communion with everything and everyone. She felt as if the whole process of giving birth was taking place inside her. Outwardly everything remained the same, but not inwardly. She wrote:

"One thing is certain: one must help to increase the supply of love on this earth. Every little bit of hate that one adds to the increasing hatred makes this world more inhospitable and uninhabitable. I have much of that love, really much and so much that it must really count and not be deficient anymore" (05.07.42). (Hillesum 2008, 497)

Hillesum loved Spier with all the unselfishness she was capable of. She didn't want to burden him with even the smallest demand. Her whole being was busy in the transformation of becoming *one* great prayer for him. And she added: "And why for him alone? Why not for all the others?" (06.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 502). Hillesum knew that she had to forget her own worries for the sake of others. All the strength, love and faith in God that she possessed, and which had grown so wonderfully well in her lately, had to be there for all those who would cross her path and who would need it. Hillesum was learning to forgo all

personal and selfish desires and to surrender completely to God's will. She wrote: "Not my will, but Thy will be done" (03.10.42) (Hillesum 2008, 575).

Hillesum believed that this whole tragedy had become a *Common Destiny* (*Massenschicksal*) that the Jews had to face together. She kept finding herself back in prayer. She wrote: "And I will always be able to do it ever again, even in the smallest space: pray. And this *Common Destiny* that I am able to carry, I strap it tightly and firmly on my back like a little bundle and I grow together with it and go on through the streets with it even now" (10.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 511). She decided to go out there to help God. She wrote: "And if God doesn't help me anymore to go on, then I will surely help God" (11.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 512). Hillesum didn't fool herself about the real state of affairs and she didn't pretend that she was out to help others. She would merely try to help God as best she could, and if she succeeded to do so, then she could be of use to others as well. Where did such an intuition of helping God come from? In March 1941, Spier had taught her that God helps those who help themselves and that whosoever helps himself, trusts himself, his inner self, and therefore trusts also God (Hillesum 2008, 34). In a letter to Spier addressed on July 1942, Hillesum wrote:

You must take care of your health. If you want to help God, then this is your sacred and first duty. A man like you, one of the few to provide a proper shelter to a part of life, of suffering and of God... has the sacred duty to preserve his body, his earthly dwelling, healthy as much as possible in order to offer hospitality to God as long as possible... (Undated letter, probably in July 1942). (Hillesum 2008, 600)

Hillesum didn't want to be exempted from what so many others had to go through; this would have made her feel unhappy. People kept telling her that she had the duty to go into hiding but she herself considered that if God should feel that she still had a great deal to do in life, then she would do it after she had suffered what all the others had suffered. She added: "And also, if I was not to survive, then the way that I die will be decisive to know who I am" (11.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 515). The following day, Hillesum wrote a Sunday morning prayer in her diary:

I will help you God so that you won't be put out within me, but I can't

guarantee anything in advance. Nevertheless, *one* thing always seems clearer to me: that you cannot help us, but that we must help you and therefore help our own selves. This is the only thing we can save in these times and also the other thing that matters: a parcel of you in us, God. Perhaps we could contribute as well to dig you out of all the other tormented hearts (12.07.42). (Hillesum 2008, 516–517)

Hillesum had begun to walk with God; all she needed now was to keep on walking with him and all of life would simply become one long stroll. She hated nobody and she was not embittered. She wrote: "And once this common love for mankind has started to unfold within you, then it grows out infinitely" (14.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 520). Hillesum felt thankful to God for being his *chosen* one: "I am really one of your chosen one, my God; for you let me parake entirely in this life and because you have given me so much strength to be able to carry everything..." (19.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 525).

Seeing how merciless and totally without pity the German soldiers were, Hillesum called for even more mercy within herself. Spier told her that these were times to apply this saying: *Love your enemies* (25.07.42)¹² (Hillesum 2008, 532). And if they dare to say it, then people would have to believe that such a thing is indeed possible. Hillesum prayed:

Somewhere in me, I feel *so* light, so wonderfully free from resentment, I have so much strength and so much love within me. I would like to survive in order to help preparing the new age and to bring forth intact all that is indestructible within me; this new age must surely come for indeed I can feel it growing already within me, each day I really feel it (20.07.42). (Hillesum 2008, 526)

Hillesum felt as if she was the guardian of a precious part of this life with all its responsibilities and whatever it entailed. She felt responsible for this beautiful and great feeling she carried toward life. She considered that this was the only decent gesture left for human beings in these difficult times: to kneel before God. Wishing to survive, she wrote: "There must be someone to stay alive to be able to witness later that God was alive even during these times. And why couldn't I be that witness?" (27.07.42) (Hillesum 2008, 536).

Hillesum received her Jewish identity number on July 28th 1942 and

got ready to leave for the Westerbork Camp. Being a member of the Jewish Council¹³ in Westerbork, she was given permission to return to Amsterdam mid-September for health reasons. She got back just in time as Spier was dying from lung cancer. Addressing herself to God in her diary, she wrote:

I am grateful to you, my God, to have chosen especially my heart in these times to experience all that it has experienced... To talk with you, my God, is it good? With all these people coming and going, I feel the need to talk only to you. I love human beings so much, because in each one of them I love a part of you, my God. I look for you everywhere within them and I often find a part of you. I try to dig you out of their heart, my God... (15.09.42). (Hillesum 2008, 543–544)

Despite Spier's death, Hillesum felt a perfect and complete happiness within. As Spier had taught her, she now knew how to *hearken inside herself* (*hinetinborchen*). Her life had become one continuous *hearken inside herself*; inside others and inside God. She wrote: "And when I say that I *hearken within*, it is really God in me that *hearkens within*. The most essential and deeper part of myself hearkens to the most essential and deeper part of the other. God to God" (17.09.42) (Hillesum 2008, 549). Hillesum felt that she was one of many heirs to a great spiritual heritage; she would now be its faithful guardian and share it as best she could (18.09.42). In spite of everything she went through at the Westerbork Camp, she always had the same feeling at the end of each day: a great love for mankind. She didn't feel embittered, but had this immense love for all human beings. She quoted Saint Francis of Assisi once more in her diary: "Lord, make me less eager to be understood, but make me understand" (09.10.42) (Hillesum 2008, 579). She picked up again her reading of Saint Augustine whom she found so strong, glowing, so passionate and so rightly devoted in his love letters to God. And she added: "These are truly the only love letters one should write: those to God" (09.10.42) (Hillesum 2008, 579). Hillesum wanted to be sent to every one of the Camps all over Europe; she wanted to be at every front, she didn't ever want to be *protected*. She wished to be out there to fraternize with all their so-called enemies. She wanted to understand what was really happening reaching out to as many people she could;

she felt that she could reach many. Quoting Saint Paul once more, she wrote: "And what good is it all if I have not love?" (02.10.42) (Hillesum 2008, 573). But doesn't love always call for discernment?

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The first part of this essay showed that Hillesum wished to be helped by Spier in many different areas of her life. He taught her the importance of self-discipline and showed her the need to struggle against her sexual drives in order to preserve her energies for what was truly essential to her at that time of her life, i.e. her studying and writings. In the second part, Spier helped the young woman to discover the infinite possibilities of a spiritual life. Thus a shifting of emphasis happened between her body and her soul. Hillesum could now see how the spiritual love was infinitely greater than the sole carnal love. Unlike Saint Augustine—whom both Spier and Hillesum enjoyed reading—they did not perceive the love of *cupiditas* as being sinful, but merely insignificant if it was not elevated by the spiritual love. In the third part of this essay, I showed how Hillesum experienced a *conversional* moment of her life when she became aware that the Jews were facing their total annihilation. Her main preoccupation was now to help God within herself and to help God within the others. In the like of Saint Augustine, Hillesum discovered that: "love of neighbour was not instrumental, but essential: in loving our neighbour with true *caritas* we are actually loving God."¹⁴ On the assumption that God was buried within the others and that she could help to dig him out in the hearts of others, Hillesum loved and helped the others around extending it to her so-called enemies. In Westerbork, she received a letter from J. Leguyr¹⁵ with a quotation from Dr. Koffm⁶: "And yet God is love." And Hillesum added: "I completely agree, and it is truer now than ever" (29.06.43) (Hillesum 2008, 651). This brings me to conclude with my initial questions.

Do Hillesum's writings witness of the Christian agape?

By summer 1942, Hillesum stubbornly believed that this earth could become more habitable again only through the love (agape) about which the Jew Paul talked about in times past to the citizens of Cor-

in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter. Hillesum believed in this kind of love. As she was having a discussion with her friend Klaas Smelik,¹⁷ Hillesum told him that each of us must turn inward and destroy in himself all that he thinks he ought to destroy in others, because every atom of hate we add to this world makes it still more inhospitable. And Klaas replied to her: "Yes, but that—that would be after all a return to Christianity," and amused Hillesum replied: "Yes, why not really—Christianity?" (23.09.42) (Hillesum 2008, 561). Although Hillesum believed in the Christian love (agape), she has never manifested any intention to convert to Christianity. How many also believe in the Christian love without believing in Jesus Christ being the Son of God?

Are agape and eros totally incompatible?

In his book, *Agape and Eros*, Nygren argues that the Christian agape has been perverted by the Greek eros (both profane eros and heavenly eros) beginning with Origen who perceived some equivalence between the two. According to Nygren, eros and agape could never meet. They are totally incompatible and totally different in origin and in nature. It is, he writes:

a pair of ideas which in their origins and early development had nothing at all to do with one another, and are by nature completely antithetic, and yet in the course of subsequent history have become so thoroughly interwoven that it is now difficult for us to think the one without thinking the other. (Nygren 1937, 23)

Nygren corroborated this hypothesis by underlying the fact that the word eros was rarely used in the New Testament. But as Bernard McGinn sustains: "... the opposition that seems to be implied by the New Testament's preference for agape over eros may apply only to what the philosophers came to call profane eros, and not the heavenly eros" (McGinn 1991, 72). Aren't God and his creatures totally different in origin and in nature? Does this mean that they have nothing to do with one another? I agree that the otherness should never be removed but to assert that they could never meet is not my opinion. Nevertheless this belief of a possible encounter between eros and agape is not an *idea* but a mystery. Nygren opposed the *idea* of eros to the *idea* of agape, but

these are not merely *ideas*, they are indefinable and inscrutable mysteries that must be experienced up and foremost.

How could we discern between a spiritual love (spiritual eros) and a divine love (agape)?

But first what is agape? Agape is God and God is love (1 John 4). Although Nygren opposed the idea of eros to the idea of agape, I find no objective and concrete criterion of discernment in his book between the spiritual love (spiritual eros) and the divine love (agape). So how can we discern true love of God (agape) then? As Bernard of Clairvaux wrote: "if it is true love of God, it has its own merit, its own reward. Love has no cause or fruit beyond itself: its fruit is its use. I love because I love. I love that I may love." (McGinn 1994, 199). It is my opinion that Hillesum's love at the end of her life appeared as a love for love, as a love without any cause or any expectation. On her way to Auschwitz on September 7 1943, Hillesum quickly scribbled a note on a postcard that she threw out of the train: "Christine, I open the Bible at random and find this: *The Lord is my high tower*" (07.09.43) (Hillesum 2008, 702). Hillesum's God cannot be identified to any religion without betraying her intentions. According to Werner Sterzenbach who met Hillesum at the Westerbork Camp, she identified herself as being *religious*, but not in the Christian or Jewish sense of the word. She had her own idea of a religion (Gaarlandt 1989, 202–203). In an interview, Hillesum's friend, Hanneke Starreveld-Stolte, reported that Hillesum's spirituality involved a faith in God, perhaps in some Christian beliefs, but nothing showed that she was a Christian.¹⁸ What mattered for Hillesum was to overcome all belongings. As Michel de Certeau wrote: "This is precisely what makes the difference between the *place* and the *path*" (De Certeau 1975, 9). Although many may recognize themselves in Hillesum, we should not ignore the fact that she was a mixture of things: Spier's teachings, Jung, Rilke, Rittelmeyer,¹⁹ Ouseley,²⁰ Hebraic Bible, New Testament, Augustine, Meister Eckhart and so forth.

Hopefully this essay has shown the process of love in Hillesum's writings from the carnal eros to the spiritual eros leading to the ever unexpected and captivating divine love: the so-called agape. This

doesn't mean that once agape was experienced by Hillesum she was free of eros in all shapes and forms; this would be a disembodiment of Etry Hillesum. In this essay I have tried to demonstrate that God's love (agape) is infinite and offered to all. It is not limited to Christians or to the so-called "anonymous" Christians. The latter expression can indeed be interpreted as being disrespectful toward the non-Christians. I do believe that Christ is a mystery surpassing all religious dogma. Agape comes and goes in a mysterious way because God is agape. We are not united in God with our words but with our love and respect for one another. Etry Hillesum is a shining example of such a divine "agape" love, although it is mandatory to respect Hillesum's Jewishness and not to convert her to Christianity. I also believe that Hillesum's writings are particularly significant today because they reflect our context of globalization. These writings contribute to an open-minded approach towards the "O/other" including the "O/other" within our own selves. Hillesum is a shining example of reconciliation and as she hoped for, she is the heir of a great spiritual heritage for which we are now called to share it as best we can.

Notes

1. This essay was part of a postdoctoral research subsidized by the Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC), 2007–2009.
2. In her diaries Hillesum usually referred to Spier as "S."
3. The first complete version of Hillesum's diaries and letters was published in 1986 and a fifth version in 2008. Seventy-eight letters written by Hillesum have been found to this day; they are all included in the last edition. An English version of Hillesum's writings was published in 2002: *The Letters and Diaries of Etry Hillesum, 1941–1943*, edited by Klaas A.D. Smelik, translated by Arnold J. Pomerans, (Ottawa/Grand Rapids: Novalis/Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002). A French version of the complete writings and seventy eight letters has been published in 2009: *Les écrits d'Etry Hillesum. Journaux et lettres 1941–1943*, traduit par Philippe Noble, (Paris: Seuil, 2008). Although an English translation of Hillesum's writings is available, I translate myself all Hillesum's quotations from the 2008 latest Dutch version.
4. The word "spiritual" (*geestelijk*) in Dutch can refer to both the intellect and/or the soul of the person.

5. References to the diary are indicated by date of entry in my text
6. See Lev. 19, 18.
7. See Lev. 19,18 and 1 John 4,7.
8. See 1 Cor. 13. Hillesum 2008, 166 (28.11.41), 166 (29.11.41), 258 (20.02.42), 266 (27.02.42), 534 (27.09.42), 573 (02.10.42), 629 (letter dated at the end of December 1942).
9. This is one of the very few times when Hillesum used the formal "uw" when addressing herself to God instead of "je" or "you" which is more familiar.
10. The word "God" comes back 29 times in the first diary (March 8 1941 – July 4 1941) 25 times in the second diary (August 4 1941 – October 21 1941), 23 times in the third diary (October 21 1941–December 6 1941), 36 times in the fourth diary (December 8 1941–January 25 1942), 15 times in the fifth diary (February 16 1942–March 27 1942), 13 times in the sixth (March 27 1942–April 30 1942), the seventh diary has been lost, 13 times in the eighth diary (May 18 1942–June 5 1942), 34 times in the ninth diary (June 5 1942–July 3 1942), 81 times in the tenth diary (July 3 1942–July 29 1942), 92 times in the eleventh diary (September 15 1942–October 13 1942), and 55 times in the letters.
11. Hillesum always referred to God using the masculine gender.
12. See Matt. 5, 44.
13. The German's authorities had requested for most cities in the Netherlands the creation of Jewish councils presided over by notables from the local communities. These were supposedly representing the Jewish community, but in fact they were being used and forced, under duress, to take over the Germans' orders. In July 1942, Hillesum's brother Jaap convinced her to accept a position at the Jewish Council in Amsterdam, hoping to protect his sister. Hillesum worked there two weeks before transferring to the Westerbork transit Camp to pursue her work for the Jewish Council.
14. Bernard McGinn, "Love: Active, Contemplative, Essential," to be published by Brill in 2009. I thank Professor McGinn for sending me this essay delivered at an event in honour of his friend Karl Morrison held in May 2008.
15. J. Leguyt (1897–1969) was working for Han Wegerif as an assistant accountant until he became his partner in 1943.
16. Frederik Willern Adrianus Korff, *En toch is God liefde* [And yet God is love] (5^e druk, Den Haag: J.N. Vooihove, 1945). Korff (1887–1942) was a Dutch Protestant theologian and professor at the University of Leiden.
17. The writer Klaas Smelik (1897–1986) has been Hillesum's lover for a few

- months. She asked her friend Maria Tuinzing to give all of her diaries to Klaas if she was not to return alive from Westerbok Camp. Smelik tried to have these diaries published in the fifties but nobody was interested. In 1979, his son, Klaas A.D. Smelik had much more success with these publications.
18. See the film "Interview with Hanneke Stokke-Starreveld," (Deventer: *Ety Hillesum Centre*).
19. See Friedrich Rittelmeyer, *Brüfe über das Johannesevangelium, mit einer Übersetzung des Johannesevangeliums* (Stuttgart, Urachhaus, 1938). This book is a commentary of the Gospel of Saint John. Friedrich Rittelmeyer (1872–1938) was a Lutheran pastor born in Nuremberg. He left the Protestant Church early in the twenties and founded the *Christengemeinschaft* (Christian Communities) which still exist. Rittelmeyer had been influenced by the Australian Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) who was at the head of the German Theosophical Society from 1902 until 1912 and then left to found the Anthroposophical Society. A copy of Rittelmeyer's book is available at the *Ety Hillesum Archives* at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. Large sections of it are annotated in the margins by a "E" for Ety and by a "S" for Spier. Several reflections of Hillesum echo this document. Hillesum also copied some passages of it in her diary and in a book that she was sharing with the Spier-club members: *Levenskunst*. See A.J. C. van Seters, *Levenskunst, Gedachten van week tot week* (Amsterdam: Tweede Herzene uitgave, 1945). This book—which is being kept at the *Ety Hillesum archives* at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam—contains some daily thoughts. Hillesum copied quotations in it once in a while.
20. See W. Ouseley, *Het Evangelie van de Heilige Tiendaen*: uit het Arameesch in het Engelsch vertaald en uitgegeven door Een Leerling van den Meester; in het Nederlandsch vertaald door N.M.C. Tidsman. The passages of the *Gospel of the Holy Twelve* copied in Hillesum's diary are all written in German, but this German copy of the book has not been preserved. In Hillesum's archives though, at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, there is a Dutch copy of it written on silk sheet of papers which belonged to Dicky de Jonge, a friend of Hillesum and a member of the Spier-club. Many passages which sometimes reflect Hillesum's way of thinking are underlined in the margins. It is very likely that Hillesum also received a Dutch version of it by Spier because she mentions it in her diary on December 29 1941. A German copy of the book is available at the Tübingen Library in Germany. See G.J. Ouseley, *Das Evangelium des vollkommenen Lebens*, Ein ursprüngliches und vollständiges Evangelium, niedergeschrieben und herausgegeben von dem verstorbenen Rev. G.J. Ouseley. Übersetzt von W. Zimmermann. Mit einem Vorund Nachwort und mit Kommentaren versehen von R. Müller. Rudolf Zitzmann Verlag. Laur bei Nürnberg, Leipzig und Bern. Erstmals veröffentlicht um 1902 durch den Verlag. Copyright 1938 by Rudolf Zitzmann Verlag. Laur bei Nürnberg.

Erstes bis drittes Tausend Januar 1938. The original book was written in English and is available at the Washington Library in the U.S. There are some slight differences in the translations though. See G.J. Ouseley, *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve* (known also as *The Gospel of the Perfect Life*), New Edition, with Introduction and Notes by E. Francis Udny, M.A., Priest in the Liberal Catholic Church (London: Edson Limited, 1923). A new edition came out in 2004; see *The Gospel of the Holy Twelve* by G.J. Ouseley, E. Francis Udny, in collaboration with E. Francis Udny (Kessinger Publishing, 2004). Rev. G.J. Ouseley (1835–1906) was a priest, first in the Established Church of Ireland and then in the Catholic Apostolic Church. Ouseley pretended that he had written down this Gospel after he had received it in different fragments and at different times in dreams and in night visions. Four persons supposedly had appeared to him in order to reveal this Gospel: Emmanuel Swedenborg, Edward Maitland, Anna Kingford, and a priest of a former century giving his name as Placidus of the Franciscan Order who then became a Carmelite. According to the preface, E. Francis Udny, it is unthinkable that Ouseley could have written this Gospel on his own because he apparently did not have the intellectual and literary capacities to do so. Ouseley asserted that this Gospel was a document originally written in Aramaic that the Essene communities would have sent to Tibet to protect it until the world would be *capable of receiving it*. Udny went on saying that although this Gospel looked like the four canonical Gospels, the order of the events was not the same. For having read it myself, I will add that the events are slightly modified—for example, God is both Mother and Father—and there are some passages totally different and original. This document arouse the interest of everyone in the Spier-club and they spent time reading it all together and commenting it. As a Christmas' gift in 1941 Spier typed a copy of it for all the members.

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Book Reviews

Chandola, Sudha. *Entranced by the Goddess: Folklore in North Indian Religion*. Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 2007. xvi + 205 pp., 12 b&w photos, Pb. ISBN-13: 9781905646081. £12.95.

Reviewed by: Nicole Hembroff, University of Lethbridge.

The goal of this volume is to describe a few important features of the North Indian Goddess tradition. Her research is split into two focused components. "Part One" concerns folklore in its many guises, such as songs, myths, mantras, and textual sources. In "Part Two," she delves into the use of trance in relation to Hindu goddesses. In this section Chandola provides four case studies where trance has occurred, some instances of which include extreme austerities such as licking hot metal. She concludes with her outlook on the future of goddess worship in the North of India.

Initially Chandola provides some background to the bulk of her research through a brief summation of Hindu textual categories. She states while goddesses were present in the Vedas, their role was minimal compared with their male counterparts. She argues that the Epics developed goddesses in two ways: firstly by introducing a new pantheon of deities which have taken the forefront in contemporary worship and secondly by planting the first seeds of the "Great Goddess" concept. The Great Goddess does not fully come into her own until the Puranic period. Here, Chandola focuses on the Devi Mahatmya as a vital text that cements the ultimate nature of the Great Goddess while also providing devotees with guidelines that pertain to her worship. Finally, Chandola describes three modes of goddess worship: one, through pilgrimage to holy sites devoted to various form of the Goddess, the pithas, two, through the Tantras, both as texts and as specialized forms of ritual practice, and three, through bhakti, the most common form of worship, which occupies a central role in the folkloric tradition.

From this point forth Chandola largely leaves the background material behind and focuses on her field-work. She commences with a discussion on devotional songs, which she divides into two categories: