

Dutertismo and the Perversion of Ethics

A Response from the Perspective of Catholic Holocaust Theology

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Curato and Franco's research offers the reader a unique, evidence-based, inside perspective into the (im)moral dynamics around the violent and murderous politics of president Duterte in his fight against drug pushers and addicts in the Philippines since 2016. The analysis is at the same time shocking, surprising, and hopeful. The presentation of the oppressive political situation gives a complex picture of the situation. Such an approach 'from within' gives the best guarantees to understand and to work on prevention and resistance against evil. But it also makes the challenge much bigger. Nine in ten Filipinos support the president's policy, even with full knowledge of the corruption of the regime, and its random dehumanization and killing of suspected drug pushers and addicts. For an outsider, it is surprising and shocking to see such levels of support for the regime considering the well-known use of extreme violence, in combination with constant political scandals and a complete mismanagement of the pandemic. All this with in the background the terrible economic situation of the Philippines. Most dreadful is that even people who lost a close family member because of this so-called war on drugs, even when they were completely innocent or just random victims of police violence, continue to defend the president and his politics. Curato and Franco explain this situation with the distinction that victims and their families make between the so-called 'good cause' of the war on drugs on the one hand, and the extremities of (extra-judicial) killing that comes with it on the other hand. The cause is good, whilst the implementation is bad. So, people excuse state violence because it is necessary in the social crusade against illegal drugs. Only (some of) the policemen abuse their power in this context. 'Only' the lack of due processes when something goes wrong forms a problem. Both Curato and Franco remain in perplexity about their empirical findings and ask the following important question: "How to make sense of everyday citizen's political justification for supporting the president and their ethical assessment of the drug war?"¹

I am not an expert in analyzing the political situation in the Philippines. I am a Holocaust scholar, and in this response I offer some reflections based on my ethical analysis of the Holocaust and on my comparable search to answer how the Holocaust (1933-1945) became possible and received, in the same way, widespread support by the German population for more than a decade.² I hope this can help to better understand the perplexity Curato and Franco are

faced with in their analysis of victims of the Duterte regime in the Philippines, and, broader, to understand how immoral leaders can receive political and moral support from ordinary people.

Curato and Franco's analysis spontaneously reminded me of a speech delivered by *Reichsführer-SS* Himmler on October 4 1943, in Poznan, the oldest city of Poland, to a group of SS-officers.³ In this not very well-known speech, Himmler, after Hitler the second man in the Third Reich, complained that each of the eight million Germans seems to have their own honorable Jew. I quote from this puzzling speech:

"And then along they all come, all the 80 million upright Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. [*mockingly*] They say: all the others are swine, but here is a first-class Jew. [*a few people laugh*] And . . . [*audience cough*] [*carefully*] . . . none of them has seen it, has endured it. Most of you will know what it means when 100 bodies lie together, when 500 are there or when there are 1000. And . . . to have seen this through and—with the exception of human weakness—to have remained decent, has made us hard and is a page of glory never mentioned and never to be mentioned."

Many people will not understand or believe this statement because we like to see the Nazis, because of their extreme crimes, as absolutely evil. Also, the violence engendered by Duterte creates in us, understandably, anger, indignation, and moral rejection. We cannot and do not want to understand that people support such regimes on moral grounds and see good or acceptable intentions in it. Hannah Arendt wrote on the Third Reich: "Evil (...) had lost the quality by which most people recognize it - the quality of temptation. Many Germans and many Nazis, probably an overwhelming majority of them, must have been tempted not to murder, not to rob, not to let their neighbors go off to their doom... and not to become accomplices in all these crimes by benefiting from them. But, God knows, they had learned how to resist temptation".⁴

In this response, I want to present the work of the American ethicist and rabbi, Peter J. Haas, as a possible framework to answer the perplexity with which Curato and Franco are confronted from an ethical perspective in dealing with Duterte. According to Haas, the discussion on collective moral evil has been dominated by the wrong question. The question is not why people do evil, but why they do not recognize evil as evil, and why they do not distance themselves from it – as perpetrators or bystanders. In his pioneering ethical study, *Morality after Auschwitz*, he answers this question in the context of the Nazi genocide by referring to

the prevalent patterns of ethical argumentation and acting among the Nazis that predetermined their perception of the Jew in a very specific way.⁵ In light of this ethical framework, the effort to persecute and exterminate the Jewish people appeared for the Nazis as an ethical part of a greater good. Haas' analysis provides a new paradigm in Holocaust studies that enables us to understand some difficult aspects of the Nazi genocide. My question will be if this approach can also be helpful to understand what happens with perpetrators and bystanders in the criminal context of the Philippines.

For Haas, the Holocaust illustrates the exceptional human capacity to redefine good and evil, reconstructing reality in the light of these new ethical categories. The Germans did not suddenly become savages, nor did they return to humanity in 1945. Through the entire period of the war, they remained the same people, doing their jobs professionally and with dedication, devoted to their families, functioning in society in a normal way. To understand Haas' position, it is important to know that, for him, an ethical system does not acquire its validity from a universal, rational principle, but only from coherent patterns of thinking and speaking in its entirety.⁶ As such, ethical judgements are not objectively or scientifically provable, but are the result of the interaction of personalities, human relationships, cultural ways of thinking, juridical and social habits, generally accepted linguistic conventions, and experiences of the past. The deep structure of an ethic is based on a coherent and logical structure of binary oppositions. On a conscious level, every part of the opposition helps to define the other part. Good and evil mutually call each other into being. An ethic makes it possible to divide the cosmos into forces of good and evil in an unambiguous way. An ethic is right when it is the expression of dominant values and interests, both individual and collective.

When an ethic can produce such a coherent and intuitively right discourse about good and evil, and the results of such an ethic meet the wishes and needs of the community, then, for Haas, it is possible for people to be ethically motivated to do any action, even the most immoral. He applies this to what he calls the 'Nazi ethic'. Nazism created a specific public discourse about good and evil within which the genocide became an ethically acceptable, and even laudable, policy. Nazi propaganda portrayed the extermination of the Jews as a good by connecting it to the ethical principle of the right of self-defense. The Jew was presented as a mortal threat to Germany's cultural and biological patrimony. In light of the age-long history of European anti-Judaism and antisemitism, this was not a difficult task. Could we argue in the same way to understand the situation in the Philippines under the Duterte regime today? Perhaps it sounds

paradoxical but considering this analysis of Haas, the dynamics, the support, and even the 'success' of Duterte and his politics can be attributed to the role and the power of ethics, regardless of how immoral his regime also may seem to us. For those involved, the actions of Duterte do not only have a political, but also an ethical legitimation. Normal people are not monsters. They can only be convinced to support, or at least to tolerate political actions when they also make sense of it from an ethical point of view. Populist leaders are 'experts' in creating such convincing moral frameworks, even if they imply murder and genocide. In line with the Haas' theory, one could say that a certain ethical framework legitimizes the violent anti-narcotics campaign of the regime. The Philippines has not only entered in a new social but also ethical contract with the state, where citizens consent to the use of even extreme violence in exchange for peace and order. The dehumanization and extermination of suspected drug pushers and addicts are presented and seen as a 'less evil'. This makes a 'higher good' possible. Moreover, as Curato and Franco explain, the war on drugs is only 'one' element in the politics of Duterte, as he created a framework in which people believe that their everyday frustrations are being addressed. They speak about Dutertismo almost as a Messianic movement that is based on a sensual experience of promised salvation. An aspect of such ethics is that it demands cooperation, loyalty, and obedience. Curato and Franco show how 9 in 10 Filipinos approve of this framework from which their president operates. The ethical framework can explain why people are prepared to rationalize corruption, scandals, and pandemic mismanagement that come with it. It is shocking to read that a mother of a victim of such dictatorial regime even says after the death of her son: "Duterte's policies are good" and "His policies are, we cannot find fault in it"⁷. Mothers of victims seem to support the fight against illegal drugs. And even the death of their children cannot change that as such. Haas would say that people will accept, and even embrace, the idea that ethics demands sacrifices or at least putting one's personal (moral) feelings and interests aside for the greater good. Every ethics asks and accepts suffering.

Nevertheless, the picture seems to be more complex and puzzling. Because at the same time, 76% of the Filipinos interviewed find that there are many human rights violations in the war on drugs. We also see this judgment in the portraits of victims in the interviews: their support for the state's anti-drug policy is complex and nuanced. Curato and Franco reveal the multiple layers of meaning that are at work in the way the Philippines make sense of this extreme chapter in its history. Filipinos support the war against drugs but they are critical of the extra-judicial killing of (alleged) perpetrators. We learn in the analysis of the interviews that Curato and

Franco make a distinction between the state policy against drugs, and the abuses of the police and the lack of due process. They support the former but reject the latter. Even if the war is supported, the police are criticized for their implementation of the orders of Duterte, especially for the thoughtlessness with which they are executing orders. One mother of a victim summarizes this position well: "Duterte and his executors may have good reasons, but they have the wrong way of doing it"⁸. Haas would say: "Within the ethical framework, there is room for dissonance and multiple interpretations".⁹ It is exactly *because* there is an ethic at work that citizens object to the disproportional or random violence, blind execution of orders, police abuse of power, or a lack of clear juridical procedures. There are many examples of this in the study of the Holocaust. I give three examples. Firstly, the Nazi leadership boycott of Jewish-owned business and the offices of Jewish professionals in 1933 was stopped because many individual Germans continued, as a form of protest, to shop in Jewish-owned stores.¹⁰ Secondly, the Nazi leaders wanted 'decent' perpetrators. That is one of the reasons why the executions 'on the spot' of Jews and other victims (which was often accompanied by sadism or alcohol abuse) was replaced by a systematic murder machine, namely the gas chambers. Thirdly, it is a well-known fact that in 1941, the Nazis had to temporarily stop their euthanasia program (called *Aktion T4*) because of the protest of the churches and of family members.¹¹ This illustrates how even people who are operating within a certain 'ethical' framework can show critical and even 'deviating' behavior. Even in a genocidal context, ethical concepts such as proportionality, a correct procedure, and decency, can continue to play a role. It is shocking to see that ethics can become an element of genocidal practice, and its concepts contaminated by violence and immorality.

Fortunately, we also see radical resistance against the politics of Duterte. The four modes of resistance identified by Curato and Franco are very impressive. While many would be inclined to see this as an expression of 'real' ethics against the immortality of Duterte, Haas argues that resistance comes from other, also relative, ethical frameworks that are based in other systems, logics, faith traditions, etc. Haas will not share the optimism and hope that resistance reveals true morality against Duterte's ethics but argues that these forms of protest and resistance are inspired by other ethical frameworks based on other systems and traditions. For him, there is no universal morality, there is only the clash between different interpretations of what is to be called 'good'; and at this moment, Duterte has just more power to impose his ethical system on the social reality of the Philippines than those who resist it based on an alternative ethical system. Haas will refer to National-Socialism that did not come to an end because of better

ethical arguments but by a complete war that was won by the Allied Forces. That is, for Haas, also the explanation for why, after the war, the Nuremberg trials were described by the Nazis as a misuse of power of those who won the war on those who lost the war.¹²

I introduced the analysis of Haas on the Holocaust as a theory to try understanding some complex aspects in the findings of Curato and Franco. In short: the perpetrators know what they are doing; they find these facts morally acceptable, and they act consciously and creatively in accord with this new moral sense. They did not act out of purely immoral desires, or out of moral insensitivity, but precisely because they were ethically sensitive. Ordinary Filipinos accept the basic rationale of this new morality. They are not suddenly deprived of their capacity to distinguish good from evil. Dutertismo is sustained by a very hard, popular, and (for many) convincing ethical code. The analysis of this code makes clear that the 'ethic' is a new construction, but it is constructed with the building blocks of traditional morality: loyalty, good and evil, drugs as intrinsic evil, drugs as evil and drug dealers as perpetrators, obedience, the common good, etc. Because good and evil received a new meaning, many Filipinos no longer recognize the evil of Dutertismo as evil. The violent war against drugs has become an acceptable component of a package of values that, in its totality, is appealing, including also other values. This also makes it much more difficult for other countries to react against this populist political regime.

Only because of the role of ethics, it can be explained how so many 'normal' citizens support or at least tolerate such a criminal regime. As a Catholic Holocaust scholar, I reject the theory of Haas as such.¹³ In Holocaust literature, one can find a long and well-documented history of dialogue and discussion between Haas and myself on the issue of 'Nazi ethics'. My main critique on Haas is that his approach ends in ethical relativism. If the behavior of Hitler or Duterte can be called an ethic, then there is no moral foundation anymore to reject their acts as evil, even more, ethics then becomes the property of those who have the power, which is exactly what dictators want. Calling Hitlerism or Dutertismo ethical would grant them another victory over their victims.

The Jewish philosopher, Emil Fackenheim, argued that the Nazis did not have an ethic, but a *Weltanschauung*.¹⁴ A *Weltanschauung* has some formal attributes: cosmic dimensions, internal coherence (*Geschlossenheit*), and unconditional devotion. A *Weltanschauung* provides an all-embracing system of explanation, according to which all natural and historical facts can be

interpreted. It is characterized by a self-grounding, closed, and internal coherence. External criteria to evaluate its truth do not exist. A *Weltanschauung* demands total dedication and obedience from its followers. It not only creates a system of values from which one can live, but also values for which one is prepared to die.

In this interpretation, genocide is not seen as working toward a greater good, but as a component of a coherent system that tried, in the first place, to establish itself. This *Weltanschauung* gave its followers a closed framework that enabled them to legitimate their actions. As a result, one cannot conclude from the fact that genocidal perpetrators legitimized their crimes that they acted out of ethical concerns. 'Ethics' too easily lets us believe in the self-presentation of perpetrators. Their so-called ethical language could also be the expression of the need they felt to legitimize themselves in the face of what they recognized as unambiguous evil, and this for themselves as well as for others. *Weltanschauungen* such as Hitlerism or Dutertismo can be seen as the supplier of an arsenal of skillful pretexts and ethical sophisms to do evil (and not good) with a more peaceful (but not good) mind. Here we encounter the phenomenon of self-justification becoming self-deception (see below).

What is then the difference between an ideology and an ethic? The French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, indicated that language is only possible in confrontation with otherness.¹⁵ Similarly, the precondition for the production of an ethical meaning is not a closed and absolute self-satisfied binary system, but the irremovable difference between the system and the possibility of deviations of meaning. In other words, no system can be closed and definitive, because there are always productions of meaning possible that escape the power and the rules of the system. An authentic ethical discourse differs precisely from a *Weltanschauung* due to its principal openness to a new meaning, to otherness, to the new, which calls the *Geschlossenheit* of the system into question. While it is true that human morality always takes form within a particular and contingent community, with its own history, language, social structure, and political interests, an ethic can never derive its validity from this community itself. On the contrary, the concrete ethic of a community receives its legitimacy precisely from a point that lies outside its homogeneous structure and can never be captured by it. An ethic becomes immoral when it eliminates or strangles this point of transcendent otherness. In ethics, exteriority or heteronomy can never be excluded, captured, or manipulated. Ethics does not receive its legitimacy by the closeness of its categories or of its community, but by a (transcendent) point that is 'strange' to the system and questions it time and again.

Interestingly, the production of meanings could not be completely controlled by the Nazi ethic, and it failed often, both in victims resisting the Nazi evil, and in perpetrators becoming morally sensitive. Even in the most rigid and dominant ideology, no one can control all meanings, and especially not meanings that question the system, show its inhumanity, its victims, and their suffering. There are always cracks in the system where light comes in¹⁶. Therefore, we see hope in the modes of resistance described by Curato and Franco. They show the power of real ethical sensitivities that cannot be captured nor controlled by ideological systems. They are not just alternative narratives or ethics, but they reveal the immorality of the ideology from a transcendent point that can never be destroyed. This can be in the battle for statistic truth, making the extensiveness of the crime objective and open to the public, research, and history. Ethics can realize itself in protest and activities of NGOs, and churches. In the Philippines, we see it also happening in the form of resistance through art. The artist is the one who cannot be controlled by the system and who can create and open meanings that question the system and reveal the possibility of another world. That is why dictators often have problems with artists or try to recuperate arts for their ideology.

This possibility of ethics is not just something for scientists, social activists, heroes, artists, etc.; but it refers to a universal human possibility. Every human being can open himself or herself for meanings that deviate from a ruling system, especially for the voices of those who are the victims of a system. There is no excuse to be insensitive or thoughtless in confrontation with dehumanization. We consider this possibility to experience the gap between inhuman systems and people in need to be a universal human possibility. The one who denies this puts himself or herself outside of the realm of humanity. But if this is the case, how can we explain so much moral insensitivity and blindness in the world, also by perpetrators, bystanders, and even some victims under Duterte? Why is 'ethics' so often more powerful than true morality? Also here, insights from Holocaust studies can perhaps offer some help.

In his well-known analysis of the Nazi doctors, Robert J. Lifton explained the psychological processes that allowed doctors during the Holocaust to commit acts of exceptional evil.¹⁷ The main process, termed 'doubling' by Lifton, can be described as the creation of two aspects of the self, often one professional, and one personal, which are normally connected, but became, by institutional pressure, disconnected, so that the second, criminal self does no longer share responsibility or inhibitions with the first, moral self. In the process of 'doubling', Lifton sees a division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self. What

happens in doubling is that one part of the individual rebels against the central moral commitment of the core self *vis-à-vis* the good. I am committed to the good, but another part of me impedes the good act, or does something else that I, as my most completely appropriated self, know is wrong. At that moment I 'separate' myself, and I, as a moral self, become 'absent' in the morally rebelling part. Precisely at that moment, evil can find its way through my existence. However, this second self never becomes nor can become an independent, ontological reality. The second self always remains dependent upon a primary, more fundamental self that is orientated towards the truth and the good.

This happened in the personality of the Nazis, but also in the perpetrators and even in the victims in the Philippines today. We can see this as a reinterpretation of Aquinas' view on evil. In this view, evil is always parasitical. It is always dependent upon a previous, greater, and more fundamental reality that is good. The same happens in doubling. The second, immoral self parasitizes on the good characteristics of the first self and maintains its positive self-image. At the same time, the first self rejects the second self as what it is not. At the place where goodness is absent, evil can do its work. Even in confrontation with Auschwitz, the power of evil should not be explained based on a metaphysical evil source. Auschwitz was the work of human beings. It is in the vacuum that is created by individual and collective processes of doubling that evil can grow. Auschwitz is a unique expression of this *horror vacui*. In this sense, Duterte is also No One, pure emptiness, *horror vacui*. Evil can only expand when it feeds itself parasitically on human goodness, by creating a second self that is inhuman and that, at the same time, deceives the first self. The interpretation that doubling presupposes self-deception was developed by Stanley Hauerwas and David Burrell in their moral analysis of the autobiography of Hitler's architect, Albert Speer.¹⁸ Self-deception is a kind of cosmetic to hide the absence of the good in a certain action or domain of life. In self-deception, evil depends on the good, but at the same time, it also manipulates and perverts the good. Also in the Philippines, the perpetrators are convinced that they are acting for the good and that evil is only in service of a higher good: the fight against drugs and the longing for a clean society. Even mothers of victims try to legitimate the evil of which their own children have been victims. It is a terrible fact, but psychologically and ethically, it is understandable. Evil is so malicious that it uses the good to make progress in the world.

But self-deception also shows that evil is more than the absence (*privatio*) of the good. Here, evil is also a perversion of the good. In self-deception, the first self knows and actively rejects

what the second self is doing. The two selves are never separated completely. In the context of self-deception, both selves are only the expression of the one, undivided self. In this way, explaining evil by referring to the doubling of the professional and the private sphere is not the solution to understand evil, because doubling always presupposes self-deception. Ultimately, there is only one person, and for this person, one is responsible willy-nilly. In self-deception, even when one remains connected with the good, one knows that this connectedness to the good does no longer apply for certain aspects of life. The idea of doubling as self-deception brings us from evil as *privatio boni* (in doubling) to evil as *perversio boni* (in self-deception). In doing evil, the good is not only absent, but also manipulated, deceived, and perverted. Evil still happens when the good withdraws from certain domains of life, but this withdrawal happens in a self-deceptive way. Also, this understanding rejects the possibility of choosing evil for evil's sake, because this would contradict the general human desire for the good and would suppose an ontological understanding of evil. As in doubling, in self-deception evil is always parasitic on good, but now rather through perversion than through failure or absence.

This is exactly what we also see in the Philippines. Evil misuses the good. Dictators use the desire for the good to realize evil purposes. This happens in the perpetrators, and even in the victims and bystanders. As mentioned before, it is terrible to read how a mother tries to reconcile the unjust death of her son with loyalty to a system that is responsible for his death. The perversion of the good that happens in self-deception has both an active and a passive part. This enables a complex and nuanced concept of responsibility for evil acts. A person deceives himself (active), and a person is deceived by himself (passive). He is always for some degree responsible (perpetrator) and for some degree not responsible (victim). In doing evil, people need self-deception precisely because they are unable to choose evil for evil's sake. In this way, the police or the military in the Philippines are not only a victim of the Duterte system, but they also chose, at a certain point, to become an accomplice of this system. Evil happens when the perpetrator retreats from his moral center and delivers himself to the 'ethic' of the dictator. From this perspective, Duterte's 'ethic', or better, ideology, is the constellation of all good reasons Duterte invented to help perpetrators and bystanders to deceive themselves as consistently as possible. The absence of the good was camouflaged and compensated with the help of self-deception. In self-deception, the virtuousness of the original self is claimed and, notwithstanding the involvement in evil, presented as the total moral identity of the individual. Of course, this camouflage never works perfectly, and often fragmentation and self-deception failed in the perpetrators. This also allows for a more moderate understanding of the family of

the victims: in their effort to 'reconcile' critique and loyalty to the regime, they are much more victim than perpetrator, much more passive than active in the self-deceptive reasoning.

What does this mean for our understanding of the relation between God and evil? Our understanding of evil ends up in an asymmetry between good and evil. Evil is the shadow side of the good, a permanent, and indestructible negative possibility of society, or of being human. It is not something that can be fought against only outside myself, because evil is not 'something' (ontological) outside, but a negative possibility, connected to my being human and to every human being and society. For this reason, we do not need to create a second evil God to understand evil (e.g., 'Duterte' himself), or to situate evil in God (which would only be a projection of our human condition). Nor do we need to declare God dead based on the ontic reality of evil, because moral evil is a consequence of the exercise of our moral freedom, not an expression of the will of (an unacceptable) God or a punishment for our sins. God and evil are absolutely asymmetrical. In monotheism, only God is real in the ontological sense of the word, as are all good things created by God. Evil is often the consequence of human beings who are making of evil an ontological reality, against monotheism that only recognizes one absolute reality. On the basis of this analysis, one can say from a theological point of view that God is absent in evil, at least in the lives of the perpetrators, or better, God was made absent, or even more precise, an effort was made to make God absent in evil.¹⁹ But even for the perpetrators, the voice of (the) Go(o)d could not be silenced completely, since the perpetrators needed self-deception to continue their crimes, which is a proof, *e contrario*, of the indestructible and interruptive presence of (the) Go(o)d, also in the Philippines. The eclipse of God was not total, even not for the perpetrators, and even not while they were helped by ideology to 'eclipse God'. In this self-deception, not only the good, but also God became perverted.

What is characteristic for the monotheistic concept of God is that God always resists such efforts to define and to pervert good and evil. God is understood as *autrement qu'être* (Levinas): God is always the Other, the One who escapes our efforts to define and to capture good and evil in binary system and to act inhumanly in the name of such system. The history of humanity, and also the history of the Bible, is the history of people wrestling with the question of good and evil, the drama of their trials and errors to realize the good (and doing effectively evil). In this process, God comes to us—in the first place in the Torah and prophets—in criticizing this endless series of failures, in the face of the vulnerable other: the victim of our efforts to define

good and evil as symmetrical or binary categories, as systems of self-righteousness. Even Nazism and Dutertismo can be understood as a (perverted) effort to define and to capture good and evil in a closed system. The central idea of monotheism is the continuous breakthrough of the 'Other than being' (*autrement qu'être*) in the persistence of closed systems of good and evil.²⁰ This goodness always remains possible so that fatalism is excluded. Also, the 'ethic' in Dutertismo did not work perfectly, neither in the perpetrators or bystanders, nor in the victims. God is always 'greater' or 'other' than evil. Of course, this is not the basis for a kind of naïve optimism concerning the good end of history. After Auschwitz, it is our human responsibility to learn not to base our moral life upon the historical prospects of an intervention or salvation by God. The suffering of the victims invites us to understand ethics and human history independent of a happy end or an ultimate divine guarantee. It is not because we can no longer call upon God to save us in God's almightiness from evil that we should give up the God of Sinai. God spoke to us through the Ten Commandments, and God continues to do so, also in evil today. We must continue now without being rewarded for our goodness and without knowing for sure that history will have a happy end. That we must give up fulfilling the call for goodness is not because God was silent, or somehow silenced in the catastrophes of our time and that we can no longer count upon salvation. It is not because Auschwitz was there, that we should do the opposite of what the Torah asks us and become murderers, thieves, liars, racists, etc. Goodness keeps its meaning, even without the almightiness of God. In this sense, we can say that after Auschwitz, we should "love more the Torah than God".²¹

Conclusion: man made in the image of God.

In idolatry, one tries to adapt God to the ideological ends of one's own group. Precisely as a fundamental critique of such an idolatrous use of God, the biblical tradition asks us not to make images of God, or even to pronounce God's name. When the Bible says that human beings are created in the image of God, this also means that the essence of being human can never be defined in closed terms since God transcends all categories. When we try to seize the essence of being human into binary, Manichaean categories, we always risk that we do so according to our own benefit. This is, for us, the primary lesson of the Nazi genocide, but also of other forms of racism and discrimination, such as the politics in the Philippines today. Every effort to grasp the essence of being human in closed terms opens the way, mostly in the name of one or another so-called human or pseudo-religious good, to violence against the dignity of humanity, as well as against the dignity of God. In this way, it is no accident that Nazism turned itself so violently

against Judaism (and Christianity) as monotheistic tradition(s). Monotheism warns us time and again that there is only One Absolute. It confesses and reveals a God who always comes 'from elsewhere', questioning our ethical self-righteousness, a God that cannot be controlled or manipulated, who interrupts our self-deception in the name of a (moral) truth that is always greater than ourselves, and gives itself only in the vulnerability of things. It is so hopeful that Curato and Franco have not only revealed the dynamics of evil of Duterte, but also have illustrated how the voice of the Other God is not silenced, not even in the Philippines today.

¹ See test Curato and Franco.

² DIDIER POLLEFEYT, *Ethics and Theology after the Holocaust*, Leuven, Peeters, 1998.

³ This speech was given by *Reichsführer-SS* Himmler on October 4, 1943 in Poznan addressed to a group of SS officers. The speech was printed in *Trials of war criminals before the Nuernberg military tribunals*, Washington, U.S. Govt. Print Off., 1949-1953, vol. XIII, p. 323. Cited in LUCY DAWIDOWICZ, *A Holocaust reader*, p. 133 ('Hitler's summation'); for the English translation of the speech, see: FACING HISTORY, *Himmler Speech in Posen (Poland) in October 4, 1943*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/Holocaust-human-behavior/himmler-speech-posen-1943> (accessed 09.08.2021).

⁴ Cf. HANNAH ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York, Viking Press, 1963, p. 150.

⁵ PETER J. HAAS, *Morality after Auschwitz: the Radical Challenge of the Nazi Ethic*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988.

⁶ PETER J. HAAS, *Essay: the morality of Auschwitz: moral language and the Nazi ethic*, in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3(4)(1988)383-393, p. 385: "I propose a theory of ethics which makes our conceptions of right and wrong ultimately a function largely of discourse, that is, of patterns of thought, language and action".

⁷ See text Curato and Franco.

⁸ See text Curato and Franco.

⁹ PETER J. HAAS, *The morality after Auschwitz*, p. 132-133: "The Jew as bureaucratic invention".

¹⁰ MARTIN BROZAT, *The Third Reich and the German people*, in HEDLEY BULL (ed.), *The Challenge of the Third Reich: The Adam von Trott Memorial Lectures*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 90.

¹¹ HANS-HERMAN. WILHELM, *Euthanasia Program*, in Israel GUTMAN (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, New York, Macmillan, p. 451-454.

¹² See PETER J. HAAS, *The morality after Auschwitz*, p. 203: "The silence of the West was no longer to be taken as evidence of moral acquiescence but was rather to be understood as the result of an inadequacy in international jurisprudence".

¹³ DIDIER POLLEFEYT, *Ethics and Theology after the Holocaust*, chapter 10.

¹⁴ EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, *Nazi 'Ethic', Nazi Weltanschauung and the Holocaust: A Review Essay*, in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 83(1992), nos. 1-2, pp. 167-172.

¹⁵ HANS-DIETER GONDEK, *Cogito and Séparation: Lacan/Levinas*, in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* 2(1995/1996).

¹⁶ LEONARD Cohen, *Anthem. Special CD Release*, Sony, 1992: "Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in".

¹⁷ ROBERT J. LIFTON, *Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York, NY, Basic Books, 1986.

¹⁸ STANLEY HAUERWAS and DAVID B. BURRELL, *Self-Deception and Autobiography: Reflections on Speer's Inside the Third Reich*, in STANLEY HAUERWAS, RICARDO BONDI, DAVID B. BURRELL, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 82-98.

¹⁹ See further Didier POLLEFEYT, *Ethics and Theology after the Holocaust*, chapter 7.

²⁰ See EMMANUEL LEVINAS, *Autrement que savoir. Les entretiens du centre Sèvres*, Paris, Osiris, 1988, pp. 60-61 about *conatus essendi*, rights of the person and the egoism of nationalist-socialism.

²¹ EMMANUEL LEVINAS, *To Love the Torah more Than God*, in *Judaism* 28(2)(1979)216.