

8. Acquisition of freedom. Focusing on the art of living and the development of the will in pastoral care¹ – Aneignung der Freiheit. Lebenskunst und Willensarbeit in der Seelsorge

Summary: The present text presents a discussion between pastoral care and practical philosophy and is therefore linked to the beginnings of Oskar Pfister's pastoral psychology. It discusses the causes for the widely missing integration of practical-philosophical impulses into pastoral care. The article examines what it means to focus on the art of living within the field of pastoral care and how to work on basic skills, which are essential to living. In other words, how to lead a non-predetermined life under predetermined circumstances. In this context, nurturing an individual's free and independent will plays an essential role, which in view of specific social-psychological changes in society presents a special challenge.

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Beitrag führt einen Dialog zwischen Seelsorge und Praktischer Philosophie und knüpft damit an die Anfänge der Pastoralpsychologie bei Oskar Pfister an. Dabei werden die Hintergründe für die weithin fehlende Integration praktisch-philosophischer Impulse in die Seelsorge diskutiert. Der Aufsatz erörtert, was es heißt, Lebenskunst ins Blickfeld der Seelsorge zu rücken und an Basiskompetenzen zu arbeiten, derer es bedarf, um leben zu können, d. h. unter vorgegebenen Bedingungen ein nicht vorgegebenes Leben zu führen. In diesem Zusammenhang spielt die Aneignung eines eigenen Willens eine wichtige Rolle, die angesichts spezifischer sozialpsychologischer Veränderungen in der Gesellschaft eine besondere Herausforderung darstellt.

1. Basic skills of the art of living

It is surprising that the theory and practice within the field of pastoral care – which is basically geared to the *consultation for life's sake* – have been connected, throughout their history, to psychology, sociology and lately also to cultural studies, but have shied away from a dialogue with philosophy. But philosophy is, besides theology, the one discipline, which like no other has embraced the

1 For the English translation edited version of a lecture given at the German Society for Pastoral Psychology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Pastoralpsychologie); German original version "Aneignung der Freiheit. Lebenskunst und Willensarbeit in der Seelsorge" published in WzM, 58, 2006, no. 1, 28–48.

fundamental questions of a suitable form of human living. We have philosophy to thank for the idea of a skillful discussion of vital questions. Practical-philosophers regard it as their duty to support human beings with living.

Pastors choosing the art of living as the topic of a conference presents a good reason to re-establish the dialogue, that stopped about 100 years ago, between (practical) theology and (practical) philosophy – between pastoral care and philosophical context. There are more than enough starting-points for this dialogue. One of them is human's inspection of themselves, a cultural practice, which is equally rooted in the Jewish Christian as well as the philosophical tradition. Γνωθι σεαυτόν – Know thyself! –, is the motto of Socratic philosophy. Μετανοεῖτε – Rethink radically, reflect, avail yourself of your μετα-νοῦς, your Meta-reason! –, is the final call to repentance of Christianity in Late Antiquity.

Furthermore there is an abundance of philosophical-theological parallels in the quest of the art of living, which I cannot discuss in detail here.²

In this context, one should also think of Jesus of Nazareth, whose gospel does not only contain faith, but also knowledge, which should be useful to life, a certain life-knowledge. And as it should be for a proper “knowledge”, it is *taught* in a philosophical manner, among other things, in conversation. Jesus chooses teaching as his main occupation.³ His motto goes as follows: “You will be living because I am living” (John 14,19). What this means and how it should be accomplished is not self-evident. To accomplish it, one needs to know a few things: “A man's life is not made up of the number of things which he has” (Luke 12,15). “Blessed are those who let themselves not be dictated by the ‘Zeitgeist’ – for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (loose translation after Matt 5,6). “He who is in love with life will have it taken from him; and he who has no care for his life in this world will keep it for ever and ever” (John 12,25). “But let your first care be for his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these other things will be given to you in addition” (Matt 6,33).

There is a breakthrough into one's own life, which cannot be directly attributed to salvation or healing, but to the passing on of a certain life knowledge, which aims at perceiving a previously unknown and more ample scope of action.

2 For further information see Wilfried Engemann: Die Lebenskunst und das Evangelium. Über eine zentrale Aufgabe kirchlichen Handelns und deren Herausforderung für die Praktische Theologie, in: ThLZ, vol. 129, 2004, no. 9, 875–896, esp. 875–879. Apart from these examples a special reference should be made to the analogy between philosophical and religious life practice, e.g. between meditation and prayer.

3 It is mentioned 54 times in the New Testament that Jesus taught (ἐδίδασκεν). In pastoral theology, the teachings of Jesus were mostly presented as passing on a message to the soul (!). E.g. see Eduard Thurneysen: Seelsorge und Psychotherapie, in: Volker Läßle/Joachim Scharfenberg (eds.): Psychotherapie und Seelsorge, Darmstadt 1977, 137–158, here 151. Given the fact that the message of Jesus aims at a radical rethinking (μετάνοια) and causes in a man a new understanding of himself, it needs to be noted that this is a clear functional shortening.

Human beings start to understand themselves and their existence in a new way and to live driven by their meta-reason,⁴ for which the Beatitudes and other worldly wisdoms do not present the end of reason, but a paradox of successful life. Provided that such teaching has its place in pastoral care, too, one could talk about a *teaching dimension* or philosophical dimension within pastoral care.

The reference to the teaching dimension of Christian religion in this context is not a symptom for yet another neo-kerygmatic sudden feeling of faintness of pastoral care. Instead it reflects the fact that inexperience in questions of self-awareness, helplessness in view of contradicting wishes or unreasonable ideas about a fulfilled life are not illnesses.⁵ An unskillful life-style does not require healing or alleviation, nor simply forgiveness, but a discussion looking at life and aiming at being able to *lead* it. This includes strengthening humankind's self-awareness and thus their faculty of judgment and their ability to make decisions, helping them to assess their desires and to develop a (free) will in order to be able to live.

With that said, there are various possibilities to further develop the theory and practice of pastoral care in connection to practical philosophy: Starting with the aforementioned culture of critical self-perception, to the common basic elements in conversation in the field of Socratic philosophy and pastoral care, to the unique, almost singular culture of conversation within a community, as a privileged place to learn about the *ars vivendi et moriendi* – just to name a few possibilities.

One possibility to reawaken this dialogue is to pose the question of the meaning of free will in the life of a man. This question focuses on a topic that has been widely discussed in philosophy, has been dismissed and forgotten by Protestantism, and fallen from view in pastoral care. Oskar Pfister, the founder of pastoral psychology, ascribed such an importance to this question that he dedicated a whole book to it.⁶ In it he explains what it means, if human beings – in consideration of their outer circumstances⁷ and their inner, personality-specific conditions⁸ – strive to deal⁹ with their emotions and wishes and to

4 At this point, existential hermeneutics aiming at the understanding of the "Holy Spirit" could be further developed.

5 Preliminary considerations in: Wilfried Engemann: *Lebenskunst als Beratungsziel. Zur Bedeutung der Praktischen Philosophie für die Seelsorge der Gegenwart*, in: Michael Böhme et.al. (ed.): *Entwickeltes Leben. Neue Herausforderungen für die Seelsorge*. FS für Jürgen Ziemer, Leipzig 2002, 95–125.

6 Oskar Pfister: *Die Willensfreiheit. Eine kritisch-systematische Untersuchung*, Zürich 1904. In this book he presents a theory of the freedom of will, which overcomes the false alternative between naturalistic determinism and radical indeterminism. Pfister also examines the principles of naturalistic determinism on the basis of physiological research. His subtle, non-polemical critique has not lost any of its actuality, in view of the neo-deterministic, philosophical thesis from the field of neuroscience (loc. cit., 130).

7 Loc. cit., 29–115.

8 Cf. loc. cit., 2f., 8, 10, 27f., 135, as well as altogether 115–223.

practice how to want something. As a result he develops the idea of “organic determinism”, which posits that for any manifestation of *will* to count as *my own*, it must be an integral part of my personality and relate to the environment in which I live.¹⁰

Why should we occupy ourselves with such questions in pastoral care? One reason is, that the question of a human being’s will touches, in its core, the question of their identity. The will – according to Pfister – “ist meine im Wollen sich betätigende Persönlichkeit”¹¹ [is my personality engaging in wanting something]. Whenever we do things in accordance with our own will, when everything is clearly ‘up to us’, as we say, and when we are ready to give reasons underpinning a certain manifestation of our will, we are wholly ourselves, and we can recognize ourselves in the activities we intentionally engage in. Humans gain profound insight into themselves when they know what they want and what reasons there are for a specific aspiration. Thus they can account for all their doings, unless we need to deny somebody his predictability for very special reasons, for example because he has lost his mind, in other words his ability to want something for a reason and to act according to understanding.

Another reason to be concerned with a person’s will in pastoral care is its significance for the question of freedom. Personal freedom and freedom of will belong together – also according to Pfister’s summary¹² – as long as we understand freedom not only as freedom *of* something, but also as freedom *to do* something – all this stemming from the experience that we are the originators of our own actions and that we understand our future as open.¹³ If we act as subjects, we are determined in our actions by what we want; and we are unhappy, desperate, despondent – and perceive ourselves as not free –, if we do not manage that. The more we succeed in it, the bigger share of our present we gain, the more we get the feeling of living *our* life, the more passion enters into our lives, the freer human beings we are. – The more we succeed in »it«? What is this »it« that needs to be mastered?

We could call it *basic skills of the art of living* and thus focus on the following abilities: to discover our wishes, to perceive scopes of action and their borders, to make decisions, to stand up for a wish which as a consequence takes on the

9 Loc. cit., esp. 119–122, 130.

10 Cf. loc. cit., 138, 141. What Pfister describes as “organic determinism” shows many similarities to the concept of “limited freedom” that Peter Bieri developed about a 100 years later. Cf. Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit. Über die Entdeckung des eigenen Willens*, München/Wien 2001, 27–151.

11 Oskar Pfister: *Die Willensfreiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 6), 136.

12 Cf. loc. cit., 12, 29.

13 Because the exercise of one’s own will implies “self-perpetration”, it is – for ethical reasons – very important to Pfister to strengthen the organic “causality of the will”, in other words its connection to the whole person. Cf. loc. cit., 147.

quality of our will, to weigh possibilities, to give shape to our will, to take the initiative, to step out of the process of pondering into acting.

Such basic skills require a lot of things, which can be practiced, acquired and strengthened through pastoral care and consultation: Sufficient knowledge about oneself, self-perception and self-awareness, but also creative imagination, which is needed to develop ideas about one's own future in the course of a conversation and – last but not least – the appropriation of one's own will. In the Berlin-based philosopher Peter Bieri's understanding this signifies the "Gesamtheit der Dinge, die man unternehmen kann" [totality of things, that one can undertake], in order to live according to one's own will, that is not perceived as alien, but as a will that one wants to have, that one can identify with.¹⁴

It is no secret that this can cause problems. They manifest themselves in the impression to do something under coercion and in absence of expectations towards one's own future – or in the impression of experiencing one's own actions as alien: "I did not want that." "I had no choice". "I did it against my will". With sentences like these we express that our doings are not in accordance with our self. – Does this have anything to do with difficulties with regard to those basic skills of the art of living? The answer to that question requires a closer look at the term art of living.

2. Curiosity about the self. The beautiful art to live

My working hypothesis is: *The art of living is the art to lead a non-predetermined life under predetermined circumstances by discovering a scope of action and making free decisions based on one's own judgment, which reflect my own will and determine my behavior. All this can be reached through the analysis of my possibilities and borders on the one hand and my wishes on the other hand. The use of this art is linked to an intensive experience of the present and enables us to lead a life out of passion.*¹⁵

Let's have a closer look at the elements of this definition:

1. *The predetermined circumstances:* The art of living is connected to living with knowledge of my borders. Whatever can happen in my life through me is limited by the circumstances as they are: Starting with the reality the world provides, to my social context, the family situation in which I grow up, to my financial resources, to my individual conditions, for example my talents. These facts lead to a certain determination in my doings; what I can want in

¹⁴ Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 383f.

¹⁵ Cf. the "idea of an action" according to Bieri, loc. cit., 31–36.

and with my life, I want in relation to prevailing circumstances and not 'just like that'. The way I behave necessarily bears relation to the circumstances as they are. It would be nonsense to want something regardless of prevailing conditions. Nevertheless it is possible that I am mistaken with regard to these conditions and that virtually I am living 'under false prerequisites'.¹⁶ But prevailing conditions are no determinants. This leads us to the second element of this definition:

2. *The non-predetermined life*: It would not be possible to predict a person's life in the year to come and his or her decisions in this or that situation, based on details about his or her marital status, ownership, and talents. This is where our "scope" shows, this free space that requires skill if we want to stimulate it: We cannot do otherwise but to *act ourselves* under the predetermined circumstances and to show ourselves as willful individuals who are in charge of their own lives. In real life, nobody will ever say "I" in our place and by doing so suspend us from our effective autonomy. Sometimes this is strenuous indeed. "Wie schön wäre es" [How beautiful would it be] – writes Martin Walser –, "wenn man sich allem anpassen könnte. Auf nichts Eigenem bestehen. Nichts Bestimmtes sein. Das wäre Harmonie. [...] Ichlosigkeit. [...] Aber nein, dauernd muss man tun, als wäre man der und der."¹⁷ [if one could adjust to anything. Not insisting on anything that is one's own. Not being anything in particular. This would be harmony. [...] Egolessness. [...] But no, constantly we have to act as if we were this one and that one]. That is precisely it. And we are adding something more: By deciding this or that in the course of our life, by acting one way or another, we do not only *pretend* as if we *were* this one or that one; we *become* this one or that one.
3. *Dealing with our wishes*: To a certain degree we can express who we are by telling about our wishes: About *substantial* wishes – they concern family, partnership, occupation, politics – and about *instrumental* wishes, which reveal something about our favored means and ways to reach our goals. Then there are those wishes, that accompany us like the stars in the sky – wishes that we do not want to tick off ever, on the contrary, wishes whose presence we would miss, if they ever became true. It is necessary to assess and evaluate all these different wishes, to determine to what extent we want to give them room in our lives. Besides, this analysis is also important, because we can only really want what we consider as desirable.

16 Our behavior or our life does not reflect, as is known, the objective conditions, but we behave according to how things are from *our point of view*.

17 André Ficus/Martin Walser: Heimatlob. Ein Bodensee-Buch, Friedrichshafen 1982, 13.

“Gewolltes ist Gewünschtes, und was sich zu wollen lohnt ist wünschenswert. [...] Dass ein Wunsch das Verhalten im Sinne eines Willens zu lenken beginnt, bedeutet, dass ein gedanklicher Prozess in Gang kommt, der sich mit der Wahl der Mittel beschäftigt.”¹⁸ [Something wanted is something desired and what is worth wanting is desirable. [...] A wish starting to direct behavior in the form of the will means that a thought process has gotten under way, which occupies itself with the choice of means.] One of the most remarkable analogies between O. Pfister’s approach and P. Bieri’s is the emphasis on continuity between the will and a sort of fundamental basic impulse, which can intentionally be strengthened or pushed back by our will. According to Bieri the *wish* is precursor to will. Pfister describes *feeling* as “nichts anderes als ein Anfangsstadium der Willensentwicklung”¹⁹ [nothing else but an initial stage of will-development].

4. *The basis of own opinions*: Since there are always several possibilities to act in different situations in life, we try to form an opinion about a specific situation by searching for reasons that tie our will. In the course of this process we do not only use our analytical intellectual capacities. Thanks to our imagination we can anticipate situations and therefore judge in a better way, whether this or that situation ‘suits’ the person that we have become. By using pure intellect on the one hand and fertile imagination on the other, we look at ourselves from a certain distance. If we managed that, then we were ‘able’ to do something. Now it is important that we do not keep this distance, that we do away with this willfully created state of uncertainty of our will, but come to a decision.
5. *Coming to free decisions which reflect my own will*: Being able to tie our will to certain reasons is an expression of our freedom. An unlimited will without reason would be an accidental, impelled and compulsive will, in any case it would be no developed will, not my own will and neither an instrument of my own freedom, nor a characteristic of my personality. Somebody, who has not been witness to our inner development, who has not noticed the changes in our forming an opinion, somebody, who does not know the interior view of our behavior, maybe tells us one day: “But I don’t recognize you anymore!” This is linked to the fact that when we make this or that decision for our life, we do something *to ourselves*. *After* a difficult decision we are someone different than *before*. As a consequence, who we become is also linked to the decisions that we take in the course of our life. But of course developing a will of our own entails more than just being able to say which inherent wishes we have, or what we would write to Santa Claus, if someday we really had enough time for it. Wanting something means to turn to an option for one’s own life, to give it a form. The art of living therefore entails:

18 Peter Bieri, *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 37.

19 Oskar Pfister, *Die Willensfreiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 6), 123.

6. *The congruence of wanting and acting*: After we have got it clear in our mind what we want, it is important that we also act upon our insight. To the same degree as we manage to do that, we will perceive our actions as free and meaningful at the same time. We can quite possibly live through experiences with breaks and turns, with wrong decisions, with self-over- and under-estimation, but still have the feeling that we are responsible for our actions, that we live in our own time and with open future prospects.
7. *Passion and present*: Since the continuation of our individual personal-story is open, we can never know beforehand what we are going to want and to do in the end – until the time has come.²⁰ But this preserves our curiosity about life, the curiosity about ourselves, the contact to our current present. “Nichts schafft so intensive Gegenwart wie eine Leidenschaft.”²¹ [Nothing creates a more immediate present than passion.] The better we manage to want and to do what corresponds to our insight, the more passionate we will live, the more the life that we lead will become a life in which we recognize ourselves.

Isn't the art of living, looked at in this way, the most beautiful art among the fine arts and the secret queen among the *artes liberales*²², not only an *expression* of the freedom of humankind, but the *instrument* of freedom, used out of curiosity about the person that I am becoming by living? How could one not develop a passion for this art? What on earth could keep us from thriving in this metier, what could make us live our life without participation, putting it off and constantly doing things that “actually” we do not want to do? That we cannot answer that by frankly saying “Nothing, of course!” is linked to contradicting experiences, during the course of which we see – with sorrow and resignation, sometimes with anger and self-hatred – that our actions are not corresponding with our convictions. No matter whether we perceive this as an attack against our personhood or not – we then experience ourselves as not free, we feel impelled or forced or overlooked. We get the impression of not living *our life* but to be in a “geborgte Gegenwart”²³ [borrowed present].

20 Still while *carrying* out an action we can realize that a decision, which is leading us, does not suit the person that we have become. As a result we can judge our possibilities differently and therefore start to want something else. Cf. a corresponding example mentioned by Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 77f.

21 Loc. cit., 126.

22 The influence of Christianity on the Hellenistic culture of science led to the following change: the *artes liberales* were not understood only as a canon of subjects anymore, which a free man could occupy himself with, but more and more the *freeing effect* of studying the *artes liberales* on a man's soul became the centre of interest. Cf. HWR, vol. 1, 1992, 1080 as well as Augustin: *De doctrina christiana*, II 60.

23 Cf. Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 127–151.

Provided that ‘the art of living’ is an expression of appropriated freedom, the art not only to *be* alive, but to *lead* a life in relative autonomy, there needs to be a stronger integration of the *will as a category of personal identity* into the theory and practice of pastoral care. Pastors are becoming the advocates of freedom for a person by helping them to acquire a free will. Thus they contribute to lift a man’s alienation towards his own life.

The fact that the skill to develop a free will hardly plays a role in pastoral care has many reasons. Hereafter I want to name a few and link them to a needs assessment for focusing on the will²⁴ in pastoral work.

3. The free, but exhausted self. The bipolar discourse of pastoral care in the 20th century and the psychosocial challenges of the present

In a certain way the obvious distance to deal with (free) will in pastoral care is linked to the Lutheran dogma of the unfree will,²⁵ or rather to the dreadful reception of this temptingly unclear idea. As interesting as it would be at this point to further discuss the weaknesses of this idea, the aforementioned problem does have deeper roots that go back to the doctrine of creation, to soteriology and to the study of humans: Protestant anthropology, for example, is particularly interested in man as – above all – man in crisis, whereby the individual, allegedly diseased with his own autonomy, seems to be a particularly interesting case.²⁶ There is nothing to say about a healthy personality, which, having escaped sin, death and disease, needs nothing more but to devote itself to life.²⁷ A healed, saved and freed man does not present a fruitful topic anymore. There is a lack of perspectives for an art of living that is more than the overcoming of a crisis.

24 The notion of working on one’s own will is hardly established. It appears occasionally in cognitive psychology or in Integrative Therapy according to Hilarion G. Petzold. The therapy he developed is one of the few forms of therapy that – especially on the basis of the analysis of consciousness – considers the issue of the individual will. Cf. especially Hilarion G. Petzold (ed.): *Wille und Wollen*, Göttingen 2001.

25 In this context, some problems need to be pointed out, that among other things have to do with the reception of the doctrine of the unfree will. Cf. Wilfried Engemann: *Die Lebenskunst und das Evangelium*, loc. cit. (s. note 2), 883–885.

26 In particular there is a lack of a positive term of autonomy, in which man’s self-determination is not only played off against God’s will, but in which it forms part of the freedom that man is destined to have.

27 “Rebirth” and “new beginning” are to that effect central categories of therapeutic and pastoral pragmatism. There is certain pretence that the freed self – just after having been born and having taken the first steps – can already dance, live in community with other people and things and lead a life under ever changing circumstances. But this skill needs to be acquired.

Even if the practice of pastoral care, common here in these parts, cannot be reduced to nonsensical alternatives of salvation and healing, “therapy and annunciation” have been, without any doubt, two decisive focuses, that have shaped the work of pastors down over several generations. In this tradition, on the one hand it was tried to stimulate a *healing process* together with the client, to overcome crises or to quasi-therapeutically accompany processes of mourning in face of suffering, disease and death. On the other hand, at the *kerygmatic* pole of the poimonic practice, man has been lead with “law and gospel” to a specific engagement with himself. If things were going well, he realized parts of his own wrongdoing in the actual state of his life and could then possibly have the experience of forgiveness and maybe be convinced that he cannot continue like that.

The art of living, however, has hardly been discussed in the bipolar discourse of pastoral care in the 20th century.²⁸ This does not mean that there was no successful fighting for freedom together with the clients and that there were no major improvements in their experience of a more bearable life. On the contrary, the motive of liberation is one of the few indestructible threads that until today holds together the different perspectives of reflection of pastoral care. Nevertheless it comes to attention that it primarily has to do with the liberation and the overcoming *of something*, with the liberation of sin or the overcoming of feelings of guilt, with the liberation from the superego and the neuroses linked to it. In this context there was a bigger interest for the being able to live *again* than for the being able to *continue* to live or the being able to live *at all*. From a therapeutic point of view it was sufficient that the patient was healthy; from a kerygmatic point of view it was sufficient that the sinner had been absolved. If somebody experienced both, salvation and healing in the course of pastoral care, it was marked as “successful pastoral care”. With reason! I am way too attached to the therapeutic tradition of pastoral care as to mark the aforementioned possibilities of pastoral acts as unsuitable.²⁹ But what do we do in pastoral care, if there is

28 We find exceptions in those approaches to pastoral care theory, in which the conveying of life competence beyond the overcoming of a crisis is already in sight. In that context I particularly think of the impulses given by Albrecht Grözinger: *Geschichtenlos inmitten von Geschichten. Die Erlebnissesellschaft als Herausforderung für die Seelsorge*, in: *WzM*, vol. 48, no. 8., 1996, 479–487; Heribert Wahl: *Seelsorge in der Individualisierungsfalle. Pastorale Zu-Mutungen in der Spätmoderne*, in: *TThZ*, vol. 107, 1998, 262–282; Hermann Kochanek: *Die Erlebnissesellschaft. Eine postmoderne Herausforderung für Seelsorge und Pastoral*, in: Hermann Kochanek (ed.): *Religion und Glaube in der Postmoderne*, Nettelal 1996, 151–218.

29 Referring to the kerygmatic tradition, there are a number of pastoral elements which do not have an imposing character and which can belong – a corresponding theological competence provided – to the repertoire of professional pastors.

nothing more to treat and if moreover we are dealing with a justified sinner, who on top everything believes that he is justified?

A hundred years ago the answer to this question was clear. But not because pastoral care in those times was more professional, but because it was natural to rely on a third dimension of pastoral acting: Besides healing and consolation in view of the *suffering* man, besides admonition and forgiveness in the face of a *sin*, there was an emphasis on teaching “in Beziehung auf den irrenden Menschen” [in relation to the *erring* man], on “didaktische Seelsorge” [pedagogic pastoral care], as Christian Achelis called it.³⁰ On the one hand he supposed that “Unwissenheit” [ignorance] could turn out to be a secret “Macht der Trostlosigkeit” [force of miserableness], on the other hand that “klare Erkenntnis” [clear insight and understanding] is paving the way for consolation. In relation to the realization of the didactic dimension of pastoral care he naturally thought about the pastor’s advice as an answer to the ignorance and the “Zuvielwissenwollen”³¹ [wanting to know too much] of the person in need of pastoral care. Soon pedagogic pastoral care had a bad reputation.

Achelis had in mind to put advice seekers on the right track and to give peace to their doubts – first by teaching catechism, then through his own *praxis pietatis*, then through his own testimony of faith. Here the mixing of a pedagogic dimension in pastoral care with a paracletic dimension is already in the making, which has helped during the exposure of its teaching dimension. In the times of the so-called theology of the Word of God, the understanding of pastoral care as an instructive discourse was reduced to a subtle strategy of the instruction of the Word of God and misunderstood as a personal form of the annunciation. This development reached its peak in the 1950s: “Seelsorge ist Ausrichtung der Botschaft des Evangeliums an den einzelnen [...] Seelen sollen gerettet werden, wenn Seelsorge geübt wird.”³² [Pastoral care is the telling of the message of the gospel to the individual. [...] Souls are to be saved, when pastoral care is being practiced.] Here, the pedagogic interest of an instructive discourse in a philosophical sense – counting on logical thinking and insight, on understanding and re-thinking – is not important anymore. The bipolar character of pastoral care has been introduced. From now on it revolves around body and soul.³³ Where holistic pastoral

30 Ernst Christian Achelis: Lehrbuch der Praktischen Theologie, Bd. III (Poimenik), Leipzig 1911, 132–157. Achelis falls back upon Otto Baumgarten: Beiträge zu einer psychologischen Seelsorge, in: Mkp, vol. 6, 1906, 468–477.

31 Loc. cit., 132f.

32 Eduard Thurneysen: Seelsorge und Psychotherapie, loc. cit. (s. note 3), 144f.

33 Pastoral care “erstreckt sich auf die Ganzheit der Existenz des Menschen” [extends over the entirety of the existence of the human being], i. e. over “Seele und Leib” [soul and body]. Therefore, the pastor “wird also fragen nach den *seelischen*, aber auch nach den ganz gewiss damit verbundenen körperlichen Ursachen der Verschlossenheit” [is going to ask for the *psychological* reasons, as well as the connected physical reasons for the taciturnity] of a human being (loc. cit., 148, 150). The understanding of the “Ganzheitlichkeit” [entirety], which has been reduced to the double perspective of body and psyche, is particularly

care is being discussed, *contemplation*, collective *thinking* or *forming of an opinion* by the individual are not looked at anymore, but it has become about the perception of complex fields of experience, whereby the rediscovering of the human being as a living body and a social being plays an important role.

In view of the subsequently following kerygmatic reduction of the teaching dimension of pastoral care, it is not surprising that in the last third of the twentieth century there was a move away from the idea of imagining pastoral care also as an educational conversation. This meant that the elements of an in effect – not in form³⁴ – consultative conversation well known from philosophical as well as pastoral practice are being put into the service of the art of living: an encounter among equals, raising awareness of problems, bringing into question pre-existing convictions, working on preserving insights, and the demand for changes.³⁵

As far as working on the will is concerned, it would be essential in such educational conversations to enable people, who are driven through life by the chaos of their wishes – wishes that partly originate from One Thousand and One Nights, partly from a conscience controlled by the superego, and partly from the “Willenskitsch” (will rubbish)³⁶ of a TV series – to live according to their own will, for which they are able to give their reasons. These people would have learned something important in life, without having the dull feeling of simply having to apply the knowledge of others to their own lives.

It appears to me that the demand for conversations of such kind has largely increased, whereby – due the context of consulting at university – I particularly think of the growing feeling of a loss of orientation among many students on the one hand, as well as of the cultural-sociological and social-psychological diagnoses of society of the past 15 years. Both reveal in their specific way the difficulties people have mastering their lives in a postmodern world:

common in the publications of integrative orientated pastoral care (which also includes body-experience and -work), as for example in the early works of Hilarion G. Petzold: *Integrative Gestalttherapie in der Ausbildung von Seelsorgern*, in: Joachim Scharfenberg (ed.): *Freiheit und Methode*, Freiburg i. Br./Basel 1979, 113–136, here 119.

34 Examination talks on questions about pastoral care are frequently opened by students with an enthusiastic monologue, in which they state that it is not allowed to give any advice to or to instruct others. The teaching dimension of pastoral care is widely merely known as instructing others. Pastoral care that serves the art of living is, however, always also “instructive”. But this means by no means that one has to give advice in order to be there for someone, in order that the other one leaves the conversation “well-advised”.

35 Cf. Wilfried Engemann: *Lebenskunst als Beratungsziel*, loc. cit. (s. note 5), 114–125.

36 Cf. Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 426–428. According to Bieri a kitschy will is a will without “Innenweltgeschichte” [an inner-world story], a will, “den man hat, weil man glaubt, ihn haben zu müssen” [that people have because they think they need to have it] (loc. cit., 426).

Ulrich Beck talks about a *Risikogesellschaft* (*risk society*), in which individuals constantly face the *agony of choice* and which makes them aware of the risk of life.³⁷ Uncertainty and overload concerning the judgment of risks have become, according to Beck, a fundamental experience of our daily life. The individual is free. People are free to do whatever they want. Against this background the art of living requires to be able to live with risks, and this also includes living with the risk of taking far-reaching wrong decisions.

A similar perspective is offered by the theory of the *Erlebnisgesellschaft*³⁸ (experience society), which puts the individual under continuous time pressure. One could attend so many events, just not at the same time, which leads to an uneasy feeling of probably being “at the wrong party” or “kostbare Zeit mit Uneigentlichem zu verplempern, während irgendwelche beneidenswerten anderen [...] den richtigen Riecher hatten”³⁹ [to waste precious time with unessential matters, while some enviable others [...] had a good nose for the right things]. According to this, those who manage to consume as many highlights as possible in as little time as possible are most successful. Thus the value of life becomes quantitatively measurable.

For our context a study by Alain Ehrenberg, which was published in German in 2004, is particularly interesting. It starts from the observation that by the start of the 21st century individuals are hardly under the pressure of having to conform to norms of society any longer. The dilemma of having either to adapt to these norms or to rebel against them has become unfamiliar to them. School, friends and even employees constantly call on individuals to be inventive and proactive, to take their own decisions and act on their own responsibility instead of working to the rule. Those who act in a self-determined and autonomous way and who relate themselves to the world in a self-referent manner are considered as being clever and efficient. Not too much but too little individuality makes people outsiders.

Bearing all this in mind, Ehrenberg developed the term “das erschöpfte Selbst”⁴⁰ [the exhausted self]. To begin with, he portrays a change in mental disorders: in the 20th century neuroses that were caused by a conflict between social restraints and personal wishes were the prevalent disorders. However, due

37 Ulrich Beck: *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt a. M. 1986.

38 Gerhard Schulze: *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft, Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a. M. 1995. More detailed information on the practical-theological relevance of the diagnosis of an experience society in: Wilfried Engemann: *Praktische Theologie und gesellschaftliche Realität. Zur Bedeutung der ästhetischen Perspektive*, in: Wilfried Engemann: *Personen, Zeichen und das Evangelium. Argumentationsmuster der Praktischen Theologie*, Leipzig 2003, 213–231, here 218–223.

39 Marianne Gronemeyer: *Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit*, in: Michael Schlagheck (ed.): *Leben unter Zeit-Druck. Über den Umgang mit der Zeit vor der Jahrtausendwende*, Mühlheim 1998, 34–53, here 41–45.

40 Alain Ehrenberg: *Das erschöpfte Selbst. Depression und Gesellschaft in der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a. M. 2004.

to profound socio-economic changes, the demands on the individual have changed, too: being bound to permanent self-reference, individuals have to work hard in order to prove their autonomy to themselves as well as to others, to increase their self-esteem and to be perfect in their self-fashioning.

This constant self-preoccupation is exhausting and causes depression – the disease of freedom. People are worn out and tired of persistently having to be themselves,⁴¹ despite having been told that the whole thing was so easy, that it would happen automatically, as soon as they can do as they please, as soon as they cross certain boundaries and get rid of all outer influences. Obviously this was a mistake. Within the course of the progressive liberation from social, moral and religious restraints, the self was apparently deprived of that vital conflict that – in the blissful times of Sigmund Freud – resulted from the tension between what was desired and what was allowed, a conflict through which the self grows and becomes a subject. Whereas nowadays, the self cracks up and has to turn to antidepressants, in order not to freak out.

These social-psychological diagnoses are well in line with those rapidly spreading relieving messages from brain research, according to which our doings are by no means the result of mature reflection and even much less the expression of a free will. Whatever we do is rather orchestrated and controlled by our limbic system, which is programmed by physical and chemical processes and which has to be regarded as the real cause of our actions. According to this, our behavior is actually determined.⁴² The alleged evidence for this physicalistic argumentation is brought forward in a language and based on examples that have to do only little with the notions of freedom or unfreedom.⁴³

A lot could be said about associated *procedural and reasoning errors* that would expose the thesis that our willing is determined as fallacy. Just one remark here: Benjamin Libet's experimental design is a merely physical one. He bases his results on a series of experiments that are geared to reactive body movements. Libet experiments with ar-

41 This comes across much better in the French original title of the book (*La Fatigue d'être soi*) than in the German translation.

42 Even Hitler did what he did because he was "psychisch schwer krank war, [...] [und] wie seine kranke Psyche ihm das vorgeschrieben hat" [severely mentally ill and what his diseased psyche dictated him to do]. Gerhard Roth in an interview with Frank Gerbert in: Kants großer Irrtum, in: Fokus, no. 24, June 7, 2004, 142–145, here 145. See also Gerhard Roth: Worüber Hirnforscher reden dürfen – und in welcher Weise?, in: DZPhil, vol. 52, no. 2, 2004, 223–234. The lesson of all these texts is clearly a physicalistic causalism: mental processes are entirely based on physiological causes (cf. loc. cit., 231).

43 Cf. Benjamin Libet: *Mind Time. Wie das Gehirn Bewusstsein produziert*, Frankfurt a. M. 2005. Here terms, such as 'to decide', originally from the linguistic world of the humanities are being smuggled into the talk about the brain, in order to declare that there are no such things as decisions, a free will or a self, but that the brain, as a secret homunculus, is in control of our wanting and doing (Peter Bieri: *Untergräbt die Regie des Gehirns die Freiheit des Willens?* Manuscript, March 2005, 9).

tificially created stimuli without any situational context that amount to totally abstract decisions (such as stretching out one's hand) and have nothing to do with the conditions of an action.⁴⁴ To bring up the question of whether we have a free will or not in connection with such an experimental design has to be regarded as scientifically incongruent.⁴⁵ Because the notion of free will necessarily implies the notion of action, and the notion of decision implies that it is bound to reasons. Weighing reasons against each other is a complex process, which implies taking into account different alternatives – and certainly also perceiving one's own feelings in view of these alternatives etc. This form of reasoning of brain research is not suited to address the question of the freedom of will or to doubt the notion of a free will, just because a brain participates in the complex decision-making process and brains unwittingly operate on physical natural laws. For the category of freedom it is relevant, "was der Handelnde absichtlich tut, was ihm freisteht und für dessen Ausführung er angemessene Gründe hat"⁴⁶ [what people do on purpose, what they are free to do and what they have adequate reasons for].

Even more remarkable and significant for the demand for pastoral care dealing with the art of living is the enormous public response these theses have triggered. A great many of popular scientific publications have since then propagated the *end of having to think and to will*: If my brain being on autopilot does the job that otherwise "I" would have to do "myself" – to painstakingly struggle for decisions – it is much easier to turn to gut decisions, as these "Bauchentscheidungen funktionieren viel besser als alle rationalen Entscheidungsstrategien. [...]. Denken ist gefährlich, weil man zu viel abwägt, auf zu viele Möglichkeiten kommt"⁴⁷ [gut decisions work much better than all those rational decision-making strategies anyway. Thinking is dangerous, because it means that we consider too many possibilities far too carefully].

Here the baby is not thrown out with the bathwater, the baby is drowned in the bathtub: Because the self is called upon to no longer grapple with alternatives,

44 Benjamin Libet: *Mind Time*, loc. cit. (s. note 43), 57–122. See also the control experiment by Gerhard Roth: *Fühlen, Denken, Handeln*, Frankfurt a. M. 2003, 518–528.

45 Loc. cit., 159–199. In fact Libet represents the idea of a moderate determinism by admitting that "die meisten von uns *das Gefühl* haben, dass wir *eine Art von freiem Willen haben*, zumindest bei einigen unserer Handlungen und innerhalb bestimmter Grenzen, die uns vom Status unseres Gehirns und von unserer Umgebung auferlegt werden" (197) [most of us *have the feeling* of being in possession of *a sort of a free will*, at least in connection with certain actions and within certain limits that are imposed on us by the state of our brain and our environment]. However, what Libet signifies as limitations here, are in fact factors of the necessary conditions of our will, without which it would be neither free, nor unfree, but no will at all!

46 Donald Davidson: *Handlungsfreiheit*, in: idem: *Handlung und Ereignis*, Frankfurt a. M. 1985, 99–124, here 114. For more about this debate, see also Jürgen Habermas: *Freiheit und Determinismus*, in: *DZPhil*, vol. 52, no. 6, 2004, 871–890.

47 This is the conclusion the mathematician Laura Matignon comes to in a dossier by Heike Winnemuth: *Was soll ich bloß tun?*, in: *Amica*, no. 9, 2002, 54–60, here 59.

but to decide with gut instinct according to their perceived wishes, the exhausting symptom is even increased: the self is continuously kept running by feelings and wishes that come and go just as they want. They – and this is their purpose – drive and stop, torment and please the self. Life becomes one great experience, without any scope of action. It only remains for me to wait and see what happens to me. One wish, one feeling follows the next. My presence loses every depth. I just stumble somehow towards my future.

In order to end this condition, I could resort to an antidepressant therapy. But I could also take a closer look at all these worrying feelings and wishes, with the objective of developing and acquiring a free will of my own.

4. The emerging self and the acquisition of a will of one's own

One reason for focusing on one's own free will within the scope of pastoral care is the fact that we cannot help but repeatedly be an issue to ourselves, because we are constantly faced with the question of what we want in life. This is not a merely pragmatic, but a profoundly creative one, provided that – by wanting and deciding on certain things – we do something *to ourselves*. When we clarify what our will is, we sound out who we want to be and thus work on and with our self-perceptions. Is this expecting too much of the exhausted self? Let us have a look at what this could be all about.⁴⁸

4.1 Clarifying one's wishes and articulating one's will

“Ungewissheit über das, was man will, [kann] wie ein Gefängnis sein” [Uncertainty about what we want can feel like prison] and can be experienced as a lack of freedom.⁴⁹ Thus a critical stock taking of our own wishes, of the intentions that determine us, as well as of the ideas and assumptions that guide us has to be regarded as a step into freedom.

The content of our will is by no means self-evident or clear. Inasmuch as people change, their will changes, too, as well as their ideas of how they want to live in the long run and the wishes they want to be guided by. Such a change of will can come to light in a time of crisis, when someone experiences that the will they once had does not support them any longer.

48 In the following I refer to the ‘strategy’ for appropriating one's will outlined by Peter Bieri (cf. Bieri, *Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. [s. note 10], 381–415).

49 Loc. cit., 384.

For example there is this student, in the fourth year of his study of Protestant theology, who seeks advice in order to assure himself whether it is possible that the profession he once chose could suddenly turn out to be the wrong one. He does not know how to carry on, or what will could possibly take the place of the previous one. The faculty and the time he spends there suddenly feel so unfamiliar to him. He senses that something has changed within the ensemble of his wishes – that he has become someone different over the course of the past two years. One could literally feel his embarrassment and his worries to disappoint others as well as his hesitation to give up on a self-perception he has obviously enjoyed – the picture of himself standing at the pulpit in his preaching gown. Now what?

Certainly there are many different ways to continue this (also therapeutic) conversation. One possibility would be the concise analysis of his will. (Of course there would have been no sense in committing himself to know what he wants: to complete the degree or to drop out.) Instead we tried to describe his not wanting anymore in as much detail as possible: What is it that you don't want anymore? Is it the church? Is it the profession, the prospect to go into ministry etc.? In further talks we precisely tried to take into account other aspects of this choice of profession as well as alternative choices that seemed desirable to him, to call into question the reasons for these sympathies, to compare them to previous expectations – and to put into words how reality appears to him in each of the cases gone through: after a possible drop-out, when taking up a new study, in another profession, in (newly understood) ministry.

They were difficult talks, because articulating one's will includes the revelation of life-lies and self-deceptions, of that Sartrean "mauvaise foi"⁵⁰, those "interessegeleiteten Irrtümer über uns selbst"⁵¹ [errors about ourselves directed by our own interests]. The troubles of this young man were at least partly linked to the fact that he was mistaken about his will, which originally strove for appreciation of the religious group he belonged to. By the time of our talks he was about to abandon this piety that had been the main cause many years ago for his desire to enter the ministry and had substantially filled his will. He was not yet aware that the will to become a pastor could be motivated differently and related to a different self-perception. Finally the student developed another relationship to his studies as well as to his profession and it seems that he feels more 'at home' in the faculty again.⁵²

50 Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre: *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Paris 1943, esp. 87, 94, 111.

51 Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 387.

52 Pfister put on record: "Ich habe oft gesehen, wie gewaltig der Wille zur analytischen [Mit] arbeit gesteigert wurde, wenn der Klient erkannte, dass es sich um den Kampf mit [...] Lebenslügen und unwürdigen Fesseln, um die Durchsetzung der Wahrheit [...] handle"

As a qualified place of dealing with oneself, pastoral care is a suitable place for working on how to articulate one's will. Therefore the current practice of pastoral care has a whole range of "exercise elements" at hand: I am thinking here of the practice of systemic pastoral care, in which clients are encouraged to anticipate concrete changes in the system they live in, to 'concoct' their world for testing purposes, in order to visualize what they really want. Concerning the articulation of one's own will one could also think of non-verbal symbolic acts, as they exist in gestalt therapy, painting pictures and much else.

For a long time psychoanalysis made use of imagination especially as a reproductive means for understanding one's own personality or experiences in past and presence. Initially the tenor was that happy people do not need to fantasize about anything; reality is their preferred world. However, O. Pfister and later also A. Mitscherlich argued that imagination as a future creating reservoir of perspectives is virtually a productive force that can create new realities.⁵³

If and when people are able to articulate their will, the odds of gaining a new, adequate relationship towards it increase. By knowing what they want, they experience their present as a part of something that extends to the future. Their present is no longer the mere presence of events, that fit their expectations or not. Their experience of time gains depth. It gives it the "Echo eigener Gegenwart"⁵⁴ [echo of their own present]. Working on the articulation of one's own will won't exhaust the "exhausted self" even more, as it aims at the abolition of the infinity of people's wishes, at the *resubjectification of the self*. In this process people are encouraged not to let themselves – stimulated by the imperative of experience and consumption – be created a product any longer. It does not allure the exhausted self with a new *make-a-wish* and *want-as-you-please*, but helps shape himself.⁵⁵

[Very often I could observe how the own will was enhanced for the analytic work and collaboration, when the client realized that it was all about a fight with life-lies and unworthy shackles as well as about the assertion of the truth] (Oskar Pfister: *Psychoanalyse und Weltanschauung*, Leipzig/Wien/Zürich 1928, 89).

53 Cf. Alexander Mitscherlich: *Krankheit als Konflikt. Studien zur psychosomatischen Medizin I*, Frankfurt a. M. 1968, 131 f., 159, 166.

54 Cf. Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 127–130.

55 Taking up the suggestion developed by Scharfenberg following Pfister, to understand i.e. prayers as an education of desire, M. Klessmann discusses resulting pastoral-psychological aspects. Cf. Michael Klessmann: *Das Gebet als Erziehung des Wunsches. Eine religions- und pastoralpsychologische Perspektive*, in: PTh, vol. 94, no. 3, 2005, 73–82.

4.2 Interpreting wishes and understanding one's will

People's unfreedom can be caused by their will being opposed to their understanding and thus appearing unfamiliar to them: "Ihn sich anzueignen bedeutet dann, den Eindruck der Fremdheit aufzulösen, indem man nach einer Betrachtungsweise sucht, die ein neues Verstehen möglich macht. [...] Die Anstrengung, das Verständnis des eigenen Willens zu vergrößern, ist oft das einzige Mittel, um eine Lebenskrise zu bewältigen."⁵⁶ [To adopt it means to solve this impression of unfamiliarity by searching for a perspective that allows for a new way of understanding. [...] The struggle to increase one's understanding of one's own will very often is the only way to cope with a life crisis]. As for example when somebody says: "I really don't understand why I want this or that. It doesn't suit me at all." In order to assist this person with clarifying his problem, it is not enough to explain to him that the superego has once again taken control or that the Id has once again outwitted the judgment of the I. It is important to understand the deeper *meaning* of that wish, to perceive its "verborgene Stimmigkeit"⁵⁷ [hidden coherence], to realize to what extent it – surprisingly – fits me quite well.

In doing so, people might realize that they know much less about the landscape of their own wishes than they are aware of. In order to adopt a will that fits their personality, they have no option but to get things straight concerning the operating system of their wishes. When, and only when people take up this challenge, there is a chance that their previously unfamiliar will becomes more familiar to them through a growing understanding.⁵⁸ Here, too, it is about people, who are uncertain about their will and thus feel unfree, understanding and realizing the "Logik der Unfreiheit" [logics of unfreedom] and "warum es nötig war, sich etwas vorzumachen"⁵⁹ [why it was necessary to deceive themselves].

For Pfister *dream analysis* was a particularly appropriate means to gain an adequate insight into someone's wishes, in order to come closer to desirable solutions and to overcome conflicting wishes.⁶⁰ Thereby he argued against the antagonistic tension between wish and reality (in other words between pleasure principle and reality principle). According to him, wishes can definitely serve as ideals for orientation.⁶¹

56 Peter Bieri: Das Handwerk der Freiheit, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 384, 388.

57 Loc. cit., 395.

58 Loc. cit., 392.

59 Loc. cit., 396.

60 Oskar Pfister: Wahrheit und Schönheit in der Psychoanalyse, Zürich 1918, 21f.

61 Cf. Eckart Nase: Oskar Pfisters analytische Seelsorge. Theorie und Praxis des ersten Pastoralpsychologen, dargestellt an zwei Fallstudien (= APTh 3), Berlin/New York 1993, 486.

Whatever people come to know within this process of clarifying their will: The growing awareness that is based on the articulation and understanding of their own will means an increase in freedom. In a way “Selbsterkenntnis [ist] ein Maß für die Willensfreiheit”⁶² [self-awareness is a measure for the freedom of will]. The detection of conflicting wishes as well as the interpretation of my own wishes enables me to form an opinion about for which reasons I espouse some wishes and stand back from others.

4.3 Judging wishes and affirming one's own will

As important as it is not to judge the utterances of those who come to seek advice, it is essential to support them in judging their own wishes, in order to enable them to approve their will and to come to their own decisions. The interest in judging my own will can – as is recommended in many self-help books – be driven by an interest to find out, which of my own wishes are a potential source of friction with my environment and which of them are advantageous for an efficient advancement. A little more might be expected of a pastoral conversation. After all, the question of which will I would like to adopt, and which not, again has to do with my personality and self-perception. I want to recognize myself in the will I approve. The appraised and finally adopted will is – eventually – the one I would like to have, regardless of whether it is advantageous or not.⁶³

Whenever something is judged good or bad, moral values are required. One of the values related to working on one's own will is freedom. Thus, when judging one's will, it seems legitimate to focus on the question whether the will in question really is an expression of freedom or rather perpetuates the experience of not willfully participating in what happens in one's life.

Is it presumptuous to declare the question of the free will a moral issue of pastoral care? This would mean that the self-perception that someone has acquired within the consultation process, would have to be regarded as part of a developed conscience that could lead to such insights as: “I cannot want that. That's not me – or rather: that's not me *anymore!* The will I have to abandon is not in line with my judgment anymore.” The attitude gained within this process would not be an egocentric one, but a necessary result of a potentially hurtful confrontation that is associated with leaving behind a wrong self-perception.

Given the bad reputation of the notion of free will in Protestantism as an allegedly latent slight against God,⁶⁴ this attitude of solidarity seems all the more important to me.

62 Peter Bieri: *Das Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. (s. note 10), 397.

63 Cf. loc. cit., 398f.

64 There are still voices that claim that the purpose of pastoral care is to overcome the in-

Although times are over, in which living with a broken will was considered as a virtue in pastoral care, experiences with the exhausted self foster the traditional Protestant ideology that working on one's own free will is the expression of a selfish, postmodern identity management and thus to be condemned.

The analysis of one's will can lead to a detection of wishes that no longer fit one's old self-perception, but still do not feel unfamiliar. Such wishes provoke a re-consideration of one's self-perception and thus raise awareness of how it has changed over the course of time – of how we have become someone else. In such times, in which we work our way from an old to a new self-perception, it is not possible to tell whether it is more apt to speak of freedom or unfreedom regarding one's own existence.⁶⁵ We merely sense that certain changes are in progress, which also affect our will and which only come to rest once we readopt it.

Maybe the "Rich Young Ruler" was in a similar situation. Driven by the desire for a fulfilled existence he asks Jesus about eternal life and begins to understand why he has still not arrived in his life: because his goods still take top priority. However, this judgment begins to appear strange to him, he can no longer identify with it. Otherwise he would not have walked away sadly.

And what if you have managed to develop the will you want to have? One possible option could be that you are so proud of it that you never ever want to give it away anymore. We can easily fall in love with a will that significantly represents our freedom and want to preserve. However, this would mean to "freeze"⁶⁶ the results of the previous confrontation with the self and to cease the process of working on the self. This would come close to locking the studio of the art of living, because the freedom, of which we make use in our wanting and doing, is – referring to people and things – a relative and limited freedom. It is not about always wanting the same in future, but about a consistency between our will and the rest of our self, especially in view of the ever-changing content of our will. This consistency is only maintainable or restorable, respectively, on the basis of an ever *emerging self*,⁶⁷ that can experience continuity despite wanting different things in different decision situations.

educable, egoistic will of the individual and to replace it with the will of God. Cf. recently Jay A. Adams: *Nuthetische Seelsorge am System*, in: Michael Dietrich (ed.): *Der Mensch in der Gemeinschaft*, Wuppertal/Zürich, 1998, 209–217, here 211 f.

65 "Sich einen Willen anzueignen, ist ein holpriger Prozeß mit Rückschlägen. [...] Man gerät stets von neuem in den Strudel des Erlebens, die einen Willens taumeln lassen und dazu zwingen, die Anstrengung der Aneignung zu unternehmen" [To develop and adopt a will of one's own is a rough process full of throwbacks. One constantly gets caught in a whirlwind of experience that leaves the will tumbling and forces us to take on the effort of adopting it.] (Bieri: *Handwerk der Freiheit*, loc. cit. [s. note 10], 3, 415).

66 Loc. cit., 408.

67 For more information about the "fluid self" cf. loc. cit., 408–415.

In view of the permanent return to freedom that is deeply anchored in Christian faith, it goes without saying that conversations about such questions should find their way into the context of pastoral care. Wherever such conversations succeed, they contribute to people arriving in their own time and their lives gaining in presentness.

By the end of the 1920s Pfister argued in favor of a pastoral care that works under the premise of regarding life itself as a piece of art, rather than pondering how art could be instrumentalized for the purpose of counseling. One of the most important elements in this process of continuously working on this piece of art is the “Erziehung des Wunsches” [education of desire], which he considered as the essential task of pastoral care. According to Pfister this task is necessary “für den Gewinn wahren Lebens” [for the gaining of true life] and contributes to “dass das Leben ein Kunstwerk der höheren Ordnung werde”⁶⁸ [life turning into a piece of art of a higher order].

68 Eckart Nase: Oskar Pfisters analytische Seelsorge, loc. cit. (s. note 61), 517 with reference to Oskar Pfister: Wahrheit und Schönheit in der Psychoanalyse, loc. cit. (s. note 60), 113f., similarly 90, 111f.