

POSSESSION
theWORD

CONVERSATIONS

possessionTheWORD

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REMARK

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PREFACE

AVPD

In the winter of 2000 we reached the decision to allow exorcism as a fascinating motif to become the point of departure for an art project.

The project came to be known as *POSSESSION*, and now appears in its second version under the title *TRANSFORMER - possession 2*. The project comprises two main elements: the book *possessionORDET* [trans: possessionTheWord] and the installation *possessionRUMMET* [trans: possessionTheRoom]. Fascination has been and still remains a key notion within our artistic production, and makes itself evident in projects such as 'Files - fascination - ideology and extremes' (1998), 'SecondSighted' (1999), 'My Violence Is a Dream' (2000), and most recently *POSSESSION version 1* (2001) and *POSSESSION version 2* (2002). Our involvement with phenomena

exerting a fascinating hold, which find themselves in the grey zone of the systematically elucidated and rationalised world we find ourselves part of, functions as a common thread between projects.

In short, we experience that the explanatory models imposed upon us don't always offer clarification as to why we travel out into the periphery and then search for an explanatory model for our existence. We consider demonic possession and exorcism to be just such peripheral instances.

One of our fundamental ambitions with AVPD's art practice is the attempt to establish cross-disciplinary co-operations, where differentiated modes/areas of thought are drawn together, thereby strengthening and concentrating the content and expression of individual projects. In this

manner, we've established a working group in this project with David Varming Winsløw, a student from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Copenhagen.

With exorcism as the fixed point within the project, we ventured into uncharted territory, into an area we only had vague ideas about.

It quickly became apparent to us that if we wished to get close to the phenomenon, we would have to engage in some investigative research within religious, scientific and artistic landscapes, and then find our way towards a deeper understanding.

To draw up a framework for our investigation, we chose to limit ourselves to the Christian community in Denmark, and concentrate exclusively on individuals who've participated in or who, in some form or other, have been affected by, demonic possession / exorcism. This book, *possessionORDET* represents a selection of these discussions.

Our project group consisted of people with ordinary as well as specialist access into the phenomenon of demonic possession. What was unique in this context was the way in which discussions evolved out of personal questionings of existential themes while still being within a more specific, overarching discussion involving accounts of possession / exorcism and related phenomena.

possessionORDET

It's our definite opinion that this is a collection of significant commentaries / perspectives / reports, which, each in their own deeply personal way, not only help illustrate exorcism as a phenomenological figure, but also point towards how our culture is increasingly subscribing to other perceptions of reality than those offered by the sciences.

The book searches for a deeper insight into the increase of public interest towards exorcism over the past few

years. Prominent themes of discussion include the notion of evil; the transformation from evil to the Evil One; perceptions of reality and fictional space; the relationship between event and narrative; religion as reality or social construct.

We feel the juxtaposition of these five discussions, with their incompatibilities and multifaceted perceptions, within one consistent point is both significant and a considerable contribution to the discussion about the underlying values within our Protestant culture.

*possession*ORDET operates as an autonomous element within *TRANSFORMER - possession version 2*.

possessionRUMMET

In literature and countless films, the space of home is offered as an icon of comfort and security: a segregation from the outside we don't want to be confronted by, from a penetrating force/power that approaches from the outside, which burdens and interferes

with this space. The individual is taken by surprise, self-control is obliterated. This perception of space no longer exists. On a filmic level, for example, David Lynch operates with non-static architecture within the domestic context, which gradually transforms itself and interferes with the personalities of the characters, in a physical just as well as psychical manner.

At the end of Arthur C. Clark's sci-fi novel '2001: A Space Odyssey', the astronaut Bowman is confronted by a room which comes across as indistinguishable from a well-equipped hotel room. But closer inspection reveals that the room and its inventory merely mimic its surfaces in a refined manner: the drawers cannot be opened; the magazines on the shelf consist only of their covers; the food in the fridge is all the same consistency. From an experience of recognition he becomes subject to a peculiar form of alienation in relation to the known.

In art, Bruce Nauman deals with similar notions in his installations: when

the observer is forced into a narrow corridor; when he mirrors a room across the horizontal axis, or when observers find themselves within a form of reality-dilemma through the use of surveillance equipment.

In a parallel manner, one can consider the subject, with its body and psyche, as a corresponding space that can be taken by surprise, fortified, or occupied by something approaching from the outside, as those who've been delivered from demons describe it. Free will is strained to such an extent by an alien force that the subject changes character. The individual can be either aware or ignorant of this. The installation possessionRUMMET confronts this static space and attempts to create a break in reality, which confronts the intellectually orientated subject with a physical anomaly.

Through a treatment of this phenomenon, a matrix of cultural and religious meanings is brought into play, as well

as a questioning of the religious and scientific conventions, which influence perceptions of contemporary life. This is also where we find the discussion about the relationship between good and evil, as a concrete force within human existence, which, in this instance, isn't just abstract content within an intellectual universe, but rather a physical/corporeal manifestation of a trans-personal power, the field of tension between word and body within space.

It's not our aim to arrange these different sources - the religious, the scientific, and the artistic - against one another, but, rather, we wish to draw these positionings together so as to create a pillar of meaning, which stretches out over the normally separate images of the central topics of existence, which leap out when you squeeze upon the roots of good and evil.

AVPD | *Aslak Vibæk & Peter Døssing*

LINDHARDT

JAN LINDHARDT

Dr. Theol, Bishop of Roskilde

*D - David Varming Winslow
How should we consider the exorcisms carried out by Jesus, which emphasised his authority as one sent from God - in other words, someone who has divine authority?*

We also see that, just after his baptism, he was sent into the wilderness and tempted by the Devil. We find it also in the Creed, where we renounce the Devil. In the Lord's Prayer we ask not to be led into temptation. How should we understand the Devil? As a force? My immediate response would be to dismiss it as a completely psychological phenomenon. But, of course, you can't do this if you - as a believer - have experienced being tempted by the Devil.

L - Jan Lindhardt

I'd like to say, if we start with evil, it's normal in our day and age to speak of

evil but not of the Evil One. Hitler: was he evil? If you discuss evil long enough, it becomes almost impossible to talk about evil at all - because Hitler wasn't evil: it was his mother who raised him incorrectly, and the appalling social conditions in Vienna at that time. So you can't actually talk about evil, if you don't have the Evil One. The moment you move from the Evil One to evil, evil seems to slip through your fingers. Thus, a whole dimension of our comprehension of reality also disappears, because evil no longer exists, and you can't have a society or culture where there is no evil, because if there is no evil then there is no good either. That is, it becomes a strange worthless existence. But on the other hand, we also have difficulty holding on to the Evil One as a mythological character, a genuine character. But this is something we

have to do, not least when we travel through the Scriptures, because there one doesn't 'speak about', but 'speaks to': one doesn't pray to a notion of god, but to a father - Our Father who art in heaven. Similarly, we don't renounce evil; we renounce the Devil and all his work. When it's really important, you have to make it personal.

But let me jump to exorcism: it wasn't possible to speak seriously about exorcism during my time of study, not within theology either. One couldn't for two reasons, the first being that science doesn't allow for such a concept. A famous theologian said in the fifties, 'You can't both speak on the phone and believe in miracles.' The moment you use a phone, you accept modern science and technology, and are thus unable to have miracles and evil spirits at the same time. These belong in another box. That's why they said that when Jesus uses the Word of God, then it's probably very sensible that he does it within his own time; but it would be foolish if he did it within our time, because it would seem a little

mysterious and supernatural.

But within the time that he used it, it was part of a normal scientific way of comprehending the world. If we take the awakening of the dead, it was probably unusual but not impossible. There were many other cases of the dead being awoken, but, of course, he was a very charismatic figure when he did it.

In our day, however, the awakening of the dead would be something quite different. It would be a total break from what we know about medicine, physics. In other words, if we accept the awakening of the dead, then all our medical and scientific knowledge begins to crumble. It becomes impossible to go to hospital.

A - Aslak Vibæk

During that time it was considered a fact that things were like that. Just like nowadays we take it for granted that it can't be done. We are therefore able to look at it from a relativist perspective and question whether the way we view things today has a greater truth-value than at that time.

Nowadays, we take science as being truth, in relation to, for example, a religious-mythological explanation of the way things are.

L This is also what I want to say: this was the prevailing perception in my youth, but now it's not quite the same; there's not such a blind faith in science as there once was. There are now an incredible number of healers - my mother's one of them. This is totally ordinary. There are just as many people who go for treatment with them as there are in the official medical system. Almost just as much money is spent on these forms of treatment. In other words, our understanding of science has become much softer than it once was - much softer; much more is possible. This is why we also see such an increased interest in religion. We could say that the Christian religion is now just one of many religious possibilities. This is also the way it was in ancient times. One can more easily accept this sort of thing than earlier. One could say that we've become more talented at being

schizophrenic: having both a scientific side to our brain while still having another.

D And this holds together, even if there would seem to be a logical contradiction between the two?

L Precisely, it's said that the majority of people under twenty-five believe that The X-Files is real. Now that's interesting. This is a kind of a gestalt-like evaluation of the notion religious conversion. UFO's and near-death experiences aren't impossible, not at all; therefore healing and exorcism no longer seem so strange.

P - Peter Dössing
Another aspect of this seems to be that fiction and reality seem to be melting together, so to speak. It seems to have become very difficult to locate a concrete reality where you're able to say, 'This is definitely real'. Every subject has their own comprehension of reality, their own fictional space. Take the news on TV for example: intrinsically, it could be one big fic-

tion. Just consider how much post-production there is in a news report before it emerges on the screen.

L You're highlighting something extremely important. This is also what we're seeing with The X-Files: that distinguishing between fact and fiction isn't what it used to be. I wrote a book about this a few years ago. This distinction, which first appears in the Renaissance and up till our time, didn't exist in the Middle Ages. If you read a story from the Middle Ages: 'Once upon a time there were three daughters...' then you conceive the Middle Ages as belonging to a 'Once upon a time'. It's a piece of reality. This is what is beginning to return. Our comprehension of reality is expanding to include what had previously been fiction. This is where we turn back to the Middle Ages' use of the word reality [trans: "virkelighed"], that is to say, in the sense of something that works [trans: "virker"]. Another thing I find interesting: exorcism proposes that you aren't a fixed thing, but can become something very

different. Someone who is possessed by a demon is no longer himself, he's out of himself.

[...]

D Exactly. This is also the point where you're no longer accountable for your actions - something very significant, where many young people draw the line, because it's so important to accept responsibility for yourself.

L Yes, there isn't much faith in this any more. People just don't have any - this includes philosophy, this includes psychology and hopefully theology, as well - people don't have a rigid ego. They have what we refer to as a flexi-ego or a fluid subject. 'A cherished child has many names.' In other words, you're not the same all the time. Nowadays, we have a greater sense of how people change character, dependent on who they're together with; which situation they're in; who influences them. All this prepares for a better understanding of the fact that

you can be possessed. The moment you have a more elastic ego, the more pressing the possibility of possession becomes. It's one of the preconditions necessary for accepting it.

P How do you explain why our sense of ego has become so fragile?

L From a social and humanistic perspective, sociology is now the most important of all sciences. This is where it's happening. It can't operate using a fixed ego; it's in the nature of the subject. Those you choose to study, so to speak - what happens to them when people come together? What happens when conditions change? This is the task of sociology. That is to say, we develop a sociological ego. All studies try to reveal to what extent there is interdependence when you behave in a certain manner -right down to advertising: if you advertise in a certain way, then people will act in a certain way and so on and so forth. This is flexi-ego - it's impressionable. If we didn't have a flexi-ego, advertising would be a waste of time.

D One chooses to attach this and that onto one's identity; one becomes receptive to various influences!

L Exactly. That's why the philosophical double-strategy of accepting that you're influenced by things but, in spite of this, still have personal choice, is becoming more and more contemporary. It's as if you have total control over yourself, but you don't, of course.

A This is interesting, because it breaks with many legal conventions in our country. Here, you're held responsible for your actions. Fundamentally, you're in control of what you do.

L If we go back to the sixteenth or seventeenth century, it was irrelevant what your motives were for stealing. If you stole something, you had your hand chopped off. The motive had no real importance. We haven't returned to this point, but we do have something called 'negligent homicide', and this is something you're punished for. You don't escape just because you

weren't in control of events. If you're of unsound mind at the time of the crime, you're punished anyway, possibly by being admitted for psychiatric treatment.

A *Fundamentally, do you consider possession as being a reality?*

L Definitely. You can see it when you fall in love. You act as if you're possessed. You might say, 'Hello! Hello! That girl you're with is just awful!' but he doesn't hear a thing. Love is blind. But this is all very banal; other major events can momentarily or permanently alter your life.

A *Niels Underbjerg mentioned - and come to think of it, so did Lars Messerschmidt from the Catholic Church - that people have come to you saying they're possessed. This also refers to some everyday things you're compelled to do, which you yourself are not in control of, but which you believe someone else is controlling. They say the number of such cases has*

increased in the past five-ten years. This is perhaps because there's more of a tendency to explain things from a religious perspective. Where many people might have gone to a psychologist, they now use a religious phenomenon as an explanation. How do you feel about this? Is this a coincidence or are more people being possessed?

L Or maybe there are more people who are prepared to talk to those who are possessed. We should remember that the doctor creates the patient. As far as I understand it, paranoia is largely a medically defined disease - does this mean you get paranoid delusions that you're being persecuted? I'm not sure if it's correct, but here in Copenhagen they say that one of the characteristics of paranoia is that you sit in church thinking someone is sitting behind you. Here we can see how these types of thought take shape. In the old days, you were persecuted by forces or energies, which had their own personalities. When you talk to patients with paranoia nowadays, then, likewise, they're subjected to

radiation or other scientific phenomena. It's starting to go back in the other direction. It's beginning to be described in personified terms again. But we've had a period where these patients were forced to describe it as if it were scientific.

D So they could get acceptance for their illness?

L Yes.

[...]

A Religion and psychology - are they overlapping fields?

L Yes, definitely, but at the moment we have a type of psychology that means priests often get a head start - because we have a form of psychology that is completely integrated within a scientific outlook. This is also the case for priests, but not to such a great extent. Priests, of course, have an entire history and all the biblical texts, which assert the connection between body and soul. One can't have a psy-

chologist who uses the laying on of hands, but priests can do this quite legitimately.

D If we take the *Confessio Augustana* on the subject of the cause of sin, it says that the Devil and the desires of the impious are the cause of sin. So in the life of every Christian exists a force, known as the Devil, which has an influence over one's actions. How is this to be understood?

L An episcopal portrait was painted of me - this is something that has to be done, as I have to hang together with all the other portraits of bishops in the cathedral. I was painted while standing in the cathedral grounds. Down in the gravel, about a metre behind me is a little lizard or salamander, it's hard to tell. It almost disappears against the gravel, but people always notice and ask, 'What's that?' I don't give an answer; but here, together with you, I feel able to say that it could very well be an ambiguous sign that evil is always waiting for us. Luther saw the Devil, quite literal-

ly, perched on the gutter outside his window. The Devil does as devils do, sticks out his behind and shits on us. This is just how matter of fact they saw it- something we probably have difficulty with now.

D But these aren't, of course, the images we think in today. Our image of the Devil builds upon images from, for example, television and cartoons, but this isn't the image you're referring to when you're talking about the Devil in its religious sense - then it's a kind of power, I suppose?

L No, I have children who are twelve and fourteen. They sit playing computer games. They're becoming more and more religious. In no way can you talk about evil here -it's the Evil One or the Evil Ones who make an appearance - and increasingly angels, as well. Albeit a different type than those we're used to. These aren't your soft-focus angels. These are angels who fight with their fists, and have all kinds of magic and special powers at their command. It's an utterly reli-

gious universe, a bit like in the Star Wars films, but a lot more refined. It's a mythological universe. My children journey through a completely mythological universe. Try going into your average toyshop - you'll get a shock if you think about your own childhood, because it's totally different. Now they're filled with all sorts of mythological figures. Toyshops are a mythological space, which are most definitely related to the fresco paintings of the Middle Ages.

That's why there's such an enormous interest in the Middle Ages, because it's such an interesting mirror. There is, of course, an enormous difference, but at the same time, there are some interesting similarities.

You mustn't be like Americans who say, 'Only what has been experienced is real for me.' You can easily have a much bigger reality than the one you just happened to have felt on your own body.

BREINHOLDT

THOMAS BREINHOLDT

Journalist, producer of the danish Television Series

»Åndernes Magt 1« [The Power of the Spirits] for the tv-channel TV2-zulu

B - Thomas Breinholdt

In reality, what I believe, the theory I've developed, which is my own personal theory - maybe you're not interested in hearing it?

P - Peter Døssing

We are!

B In light of everything I've experienced, in light of all the programmes I've made, and in light of all the discussions I've had with both specialists and non-specialists, I can suddenly see a pattern... or at least an explanatory model that helps me to clarify many of these things.

I'd like to begin by naming the things that have puzzled me - things, which I haven't managed to piece together:

Those people who experience strange things in their apartments have many

similar experiences with people who, for example, are mentally ill. They see things which others can't see; they hear things which others can't hear; they are very anxious; they can't sleep at night; they start to develop a kind of persecutory madness. That is, they start to be scared that someone is watching them, and so on and so forth.

I've also wondered why various types of narcotics can induce the same condition - LSD, cannabis. Cannabis can actually induce very serious psychoses, which don't then disappear. If you go beyond a certain threshold with cannabis, there's no turning back. Cannabis is therefore far more dangerous than you think. This is something I've studied - I've studied the phenomenon in psychiatric wards where you find people with cannabis-induced psychoses. It's the same with ecstasy and those other pills.

How can this be?

How can you have seemingly spiritual experiences through the use of drugs? This has also puzzled me. How can it be that a third way of achieving this is through various types of meditation? That is, now I'm talking about being channelled into this insane universe. How is it possible to suddenly leap into this insane universe? -What we others consider to be insane. But you can do this through various types of meditation. There's a very frightening phenomenon known as Kundalini arousal, which has effected many hundreds of people here in Denmark. Nobody has been able to explain it, but, put basically, it means that during a particular meditation technique, you suddenly feel an energy, a snake, rise up in your spine, and, from that moment on, life as you know it is over. Spontaneously, you become hypersensitive; spontaneously, you become clairvoyant; spontaneously, you become sensitised and experience poltergeist-phenomena. Just within those five minutes it takes, you quite simply

turn into a lifetime psychiatric patient. It's an extremely frightening phenomenon. There's an association here in Denmark for people who've been hit by this. And it can occur during seemingly harmless meditation. These people have no way back and end up as invalidity-benefit claimants and get directed into the psychiatric system. This is also something that's puzzled me. What really happens in these cases? And I've also wondered why certain forms of serious trauma, and incest, and extreme mental experiences in youth or old age, can also trigger these things.

So there are apparently many routes into these things.

The last thing, I forgot to mention: dabbling with the occult, such as, if you start playing 'Genie in the Bottle', or start being initiated in satanic rituals, or start to experiment with spiritualism, then the same thing can happen...

How is it possible that all these different experiences seem to be able to open up to sensations, which normal people don't have?

There are many routes into this area. There's not just one way, but many different ways into this area. Umm... So I asked myself: how is it possible that you can get into it through so many different ways? - And then I asked myself: how do you come out again? How do you turn back to reality? What method can be used for this? - This is what I studied.

If we talk about the work you're involved in - exorcism - then exorcism is of course a method of actually getting people back out, back to reality again, and switching off these sensations. No matter what exorcism is, it is certainly something that switches off these sensations.

On the psychiatric ward, they use medicines to stop these sensations. Schizophrenics receive various forms of neuroleptics and psychopharmaceu-

tics; and there are various drugs, which can lessen the hallucinations they suffer from.

Then there are those who can turn it on and off themselves: some of the so-called clairvoyants. They can switch on this sensitivity and then turn it off again. Graham Bishop is one of them. That is, he can find a way in and a way out by himself.

Then I asked myself: how can it be that psychotherapy helps some, and exorcism others? How can this be?

Because it shows that some psychotherapy does actually help. But some exorcisms also help. Are these two sides of the same coin or not? Because a table that moves by itself isn't a psychological phenomenon, but a physical phenomenon. And this is also what exorcists actually mean: something completely physical is manifested by something spiritual.

So now we've arrived at my own pocketbook philosophy, which sounds something like this:

I myself envisage that within our bodies is a soul, we have an anchoring, a spiritual doppelgänger, as professor Plum would have said. Much of our consciousness resides in this - I don't know how much, but there's definitely some consciousness in it. This is what is able to leave us when we have 'out of body' experiences. This is what those people leave their bodies with, when they talk about how, while on the operating table, they flew up and went into other rooms, and saw what was happening in these other rooms, before returning and flying back down again. I've interviewed many of these people. They were able to describe in considerable detail what was in the other rooms. You have to consider that this spirit, or soul, has some sensations, which correspond with the sensations of the physical body. It is fastened into our body in a particular way, anchored in our body, maybe through what Indians refer to as chakra - if you can imagine that they're these big screws. There must be a connection between the incorporeal substance and the physical substance. And

these connections, these bolts, can be attached in totally different ways. Maybe the different methods I've discussed - maybe they all help to loosen our attachment to our spiritual twin, so it's not held so tightly as is usual in us normal people. And, of course, the tighter it's held, the fewer of these experiences we have. The looser it's held, the greater the tendency for it to periodically leave us, or have a life of its own, or have it's own will, or I don't know...

Maybe some of these clairvoyants are able to use this faculty to travel to different places using the power of will. Professor Plum mentions, in particular, a man named Olof Jönsson, who he used in many experiments - a Swedish guy from Malmö who was able to do the most incredible things. Professor Plum did many experiments on him. One of the things he was capable of doing was that professor Plum could say, 'In there, in my bookcase, upon the top shelf, book number 23, page number 208 - what do the first five lines say?' Then he sat there and concentrated for a moment, and was then

capable of reading the first five lines almost word for word. And he's made countless tests on Jønsson, and documented it all in the presence of witnesses and such, and this is what this man was capable of.

So professor Plum imagines that he's able to travel and look around with his second sight and his power of will.

Then comes the question of possession. These people who feel that they're possessed by demons or spiritual forces or the like, if this is true, I could imagine that if consciousness outlives death in one form or another, well, then it's possible that there are consciousnesses around us wishing to manifest themselves. I don't know exactly why. I haven't a clue, here. But it's certainly a fact that around six percent of the population, I think it is, are extremely receptive to hypnosis. In about six out of one hundred people, the hypnotist can almost completely take over their consciousness. They can simply go in and take control of their will. And nobody's come up with an explanation for why things are like

that. You can't find any scientific explanation, but you just know that it works. In the same way, you could imagine that imperceptible consciousnesses could be capable of taking over someone else's consciousness. This isn't such a ridiculous idea, if you believe that your consciousness continues to survive.

It hit me that maybe this is what it took, and this is where my theory comes into the picture: it's that, the looser our spiritual twin is held within us, the more susceptible we become to manipulation, the more open we become, the less we are the masters in our own house. And, for me, this all fits nicely with the fact that, on a battlefield, you can get people to do just about anything, even the most good at heart person is capable of killing someone. One can actually collectively take over people's consciousnesses, if you use some thoroughly militaristic training techniques. One of the most crucial aspects is to repeatedly undermine their self-esteem. One simply tramples them all the way down, and then slowly builds them up again. This

is like a very classical military technique for training killers.

So what exactly is going on here?

Maybe they're going in and destroying that 'exist-within-yourself' principle - maybe they're unscrewing it and making them more open and susceptible to manipulation. It's clear that this type of person, who we refer to as weak - they're the ones who become enrolled in neo-nazi groups, with fanatics, and the Red Army Faction - you can get them to do just about anything.

P Isn't this, in some way or other, a very simplified image?

B I'm also explaining now how I imagine it in a very simplified manner. So we could go into a discussion whether it's oversimplified or not. But what I'm imagining is that it's the spiritual soul that retreats, thus, who knows what can come and take control in that person and take over their will.

A - Aslak Vibæk

If it becomes unscrewed?

B Yes, well, screw sounds rather mechanical, but you could express it in another way: if you destroy this person's ability to exist within himself. But that's why many of those occult rituals, satanic rituals, concentrate on transgressing the person's boundaries. When you're initiated into these satanic cults, you first have to kill one or maybe two animals. You have to constantly transgress your own morality. And this results, I believe, in you losing yourself. And then you become susceptible to that world, which is maybe capable of manipulating you. That's why psychotherapy helps, because psychotherapy allows you to move back into yourself again. Psychotherapy allows you to be yourself.

ROTHSTEIN

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R - Mikael Rothstein

Our entire culture regards a number of myths as being particularly significant and doesn't consider them to be myths in the same manner as I do. For example: Jesus was born of a virgin; God created the world; Jesus rose from the grave; He walked on water; Moses received the Commandments on Mount Sinai. None of these things are historically factual, but are narratives about the world, which make it possible for people to comprehend and function within the world, as they help define the world in a particular manner.

On the micro-scale, we have the narratives you're referring to at the moment: supernatural phenomena presented as event - but I say no! This is not event! This is narrative! And this narrative has the character of reality: it constructs reality for those who tell

them. But note that it has nothing at all to do with status or talent or respectability or education or what have you. It comes down to the ability to think in mythological terms.

You yourself possessed this ability the moment you spoke to me earlier about something like, 'blahblahblah... believe in God.' To say the phrase 'believe in God', and take it as given what's meant by this, is to refer to a story, specifically the story of the creator who governs over this world. But he isn't a given thing: his appearance within history is due to the narratives of certain people at a certain time - it becomes established as a social category at a given time. In other words, it's very, very easy to navigate on the linguistic level within a mythological universe without really thinking about it. My job is to think about it, and therefore I'm aware of it. But it's impos-

sible to say, when President Clinton makes an oath with his hand on the Bible, whether or not he actually believes in it. We don't know this. On this level, it just becomes rhetorical. It could also be a total scam, with the guy telling the story thinking to himself, 'Blimey! This idiot actually believes it!' We can also have the exact opposite situation where it becomes an internalised aspect of those people's perception of reality, and there being nothing particularly extraordinary about it. This doesn't alter the fact that I, from my external vantage point, still claim that they're narratives and not events.

*D - David Varming Winslow
But within the actual context, when we're sitting and interviewing a priest or bishop, and trying to understand him - within this process, we just accept those presumptions within what he says, just to be able to have a discussion - namely, the existence of God!*

R This is the very capacity we have, of being able to go into someone else's presumptions and accept them, because then we're able to listen to the story and, while it's being told, it's true. While you listen to what he's saying, he's referring to reality. One can't really bring the contextual into question, but this doesn't have to be the case analytically: we're able to say that's the way it is for him, this is how I interact with him, but reality isn't like that. Subsequently, we construct a Reality with capital R, which we're able to assert. This is the point where I think - stop - I can't be bothered to have the discussion about what is real and what isn't real, because if we don't somewhere or other say, 'This, this is real!' then we can continue with various criteria. If we don't consider anything to be real, then I can't understand how we can talk about the world, about ourselves, or anything at all.

*A - Aslak Vibæk
It's at this exact point this project and this phenomenon start to become*

interesting, because it's one thing to be able to discuss, intellectually, some of the concepts surrounding God...

R Whoops! There it was again! Notice what just happened: you allude to a very specific mythology. This is God with capital G we're talking about. What you're saying alludes to several presuppositions. If we are to understand what you're talking about, we'll have to enter your mythological universe.

A *When I talk of God, it can both be a construct that we two have created - this is, of course, a complex notion - but it could also be the concept of God held by a priest or another believer. I find it interesting that it's precisely in connection with exorcism that God becomes physical. It actually becomes a physical thing that steps into the material world.*

R There's absolutely nothing new in this. This is precisely what Christia-nity is all about, by claiming Christ as divine: the material manife-

station of the divine. It may now be gone, but it will return again from beyond the clouds. And where do we come across it? We come across it in the writings, in the proclamations, in the word and in the Creed, or what have you, and in the rituals and in the bread and in the wine.

God quite literally materialises, in the religion we are referring to. So here we have just a small version of the fundamental theme: namely the manifestation of God through Christ. We're looking at spiritual manifestations as a whole. Now, of course, it's the Devil we're dealing with, but it's still Christ who's going to come down and drive him away. So the question is: just how much is altered by this?

This is my wife; here we have my spouse. [Shows a framed photo.] She means very much to me. So I say to myself, 'Here is my wife'. But if I hadn't told you she was my wife, then you'd probably just look at her and say, 'Well, here we have a forty year old bit of all right,' or whatever comes to mind, and you may very well form

other ideas of her than now, after you've found out she's my wife. Things change character, depending on which words you receive along the way. And when I spend so much time talking about event and narrative, it's because I could have shown you a totally different picture and told you this was my wife, and you'd have believed it. Even if, in reality, she'd been my aunt, she'd still have been my wife for you. My point is that it's the narrative and not the substance which is central: what you say about the picture is more important than what it actually is, and it's therefore completely inconsequential what's actually involved when these people are exorcised in church. Explanation, interpretation and narration are what define the event. Then once in a while it happens that explanation, interpretation and narration don't necessarily correspond exactly with what actually took place.

A *Unless it's the same? Is there not a contradiction in what you just said?*

R No. I just mean that if one says, 'Jesus rose from the grave', then it's the truth, an irrefutable fact: Jesus rose from the grave. It's utterly irrelevant whether he actually did or not. What's decisive, what's crucial, is the interpretation of his death.

D *One could also say faith in it!*

R One could also say faith in it; one could certainly say that. Faith in something that actually means something slightly different, when you begin to think about it. In reality, this means the agreement of what we agree.

D *No, I have to break in here...*

R It doesn't necessarily mean this, from a theological perspective. But what is faith other than people who consent to invest within a given relationship?

D *Luther says about the Holy Communion, for example, that it must be received within faith. So it's also*

the particular individual who receives it in faith. So this is also what happens?

R I'm not considering it as a theological concept. I considered it in its everyday usage: 'We have faith in this.' The fact we can say this - this is what I was thinking about. Maybe it's more precise to say, 'We've come to the conclusion that this is the way it is.' Who has the power and authority to decide whether this is a microphone or a device from Saturn for sending cosmic energy into space or what have you?

*P - Peter Døssing
Which it is, as well!*

R I rest my case!
But let's look at something else. Take this for example, [holds a pen] which isn't what it seems to be. We can now all agree that this isn't a pen. It's the object of our deepest devotion. And if we mean it, if our decision is genuine, well, then that's the way it is.

A *If you're to believe that this is a communication device from Saturn, is it possible to do this while simultaneously understanding that this is a construct, in as much as we've agreed upon its function?*

R I think you've misunderstood me. It's me who's claiming it's an agreement.

A *You say it, and we believe it?*

R Exactly. Because if you say, 'I believe in this', then you allude to the existence of what you believe in. But I hand over all power and authority to you and say: what you refer to as 'I believe in', means I construct that god, I agree upon the existence of this god, and relate to him within the framework of a specific mode of speech, which I will refer to as faith. We are still dealing with a terribly outmoded rationalism here, but my point is that we only understand these things if we interpret them as expressions of a specific social behaviour, a specific form of communication, a specific way of

comprehending the world. Religions are classification systems, which organise and structure the world, and it's in relation to this that I myself become organised and structured: me in relation to my surroundings; me in relation to authority figures; good in relation to evil; the divine in relation to the profane. This is how I used to see it: in the most general terms, a space to exist within, a cosmos I move through. This is what I thought was most important. One can obviously say, 'We've seen people while they were being exorcised and can't rationalise it. Something happens that simply doesn't occur in other situations.' I don't know if you've had this kind of experience?

A *We haven't seen anything.*

R In that case, I'd just like to say I don't believe you'll see anything you'll find unusual in some fundamental way from what you might otherwise imagine. But clearly, things are pieced together differently, depending on who and where you are. I've

worked as a care worker with the mentally ill for six years, and I've seen these people do things physically, with sound, behaviour, reaction, that I've never seen anywhere else. But it was of course people that did this.

A *And you never considered it as inhuman, if you understand what I mean?*

R No, not inhuman. Let's take an example: for one reason or another, you want to hit yourself all the time. So you go around doing this to your head all the time. This is a typical symptom for many psychotics. And I've seen people hit themselves until they've drawn blood; tear at themselves until they've drawn blood and needed hospital treatment; scratch their skin apart. Things that are totally incomprehensible for me -it's not normal. I'm not making a parallel with religious behaviour, but it's an expression of human potential, the scope of humanity, what we're able to do, physically, mentally and so on. It could go in a totally different direction and not

be self-destructive in the same manner, but sort of awaken things in us, which we may possess latently, but which we don't cultivate. This is something I've often thought about.

D This scope should actually be within the Church of Denmark, in as much as one of its ambitions is to encompass various theological and Christian perspectives. Within the Church of Denmark, we have both strict evangelical groups and people with a much more liberal attitude towards the Church. This I guess is one of its strengths, but also be one of its weaknesses.

R I believe there's an intimate correspondence between the Danish democratic tradition that's developed over the last 150 years and the Church of Denmark's principle of openness.

A One leads to the other perhaps? The democratic mode of thought has its roots in Christianity?

R I think they compliment each other very well. But humanism is a break with Christianity in many ways, and in other regards it's a continuation with Christianity, so it gets very tangled.

If we were to play Inquisition and say: can you fully endorse the Creed - yes or no? I imagine you'd be left with a very, very small, very, very restricted group, because there's a genuine tension within it, but this is of course a marginal phenomenon. It could well happen that it becomes theologically fashionable to speak of evil again, that he comes in from the cold, so to speak. But now of course we have a god in the Church of Denmark who forgives everyone, who offers everyone salvation, who loves everyone. There isn't any hell; there isn't any Satan; there isn't any damnation. It could well be it's on its way back in one form or another, I don't know.

A *This definitely corresponds with the way the people we've spoken to - priests and bishops - say that you shouldn't speak about evil and good as concepts, but speak about Satan and God. This includes Jan Lindhardt, who considers the Devil as real.*

R There are some strange barriers when discussing Christianity, in as much as it's our culture's religion. If I now say to you Allah revealed the Koran to Mohammed in 602 by way of the archangel Gabriel, and therefore the Koran is understood as a kind of channelled message from a creator, how do you all respond?

D *Then we regard Islam and Muslims as an offshoot of Christianity.*

R In a certain sense. What you're also saying is that this is what Muslims believe in. And you go on to say to yourselves: this didn't actually happen, but it's something they believe in, and they're welcome to do so.

D *That's not what I'm saying, but I do respect their faith.*

R Yes, but aren't you also saying that this didn't really happen?

D *No, actually I'm not. I'm very interested in the relationship between Christianity and Muslims. This dialogue is very important.*

R When we are confronted with narratives, assumptions, ideas, mythologies or what have you, that touch upon the counter-images of our culture, namely Satan, evil, and so on, it becomes very difficult for many people to remain objective and see it as an expression of a, shall we say, authentic religious position. It's either regarded as idiocy, nonsense, deceit, or the opposite: something one should be incredibly scared of, or that they're deranged and mentally ill, or that priests are manipulating them, or the priest is deranged. I really think the position they have in society plays a role in the cultural interpretation of these phenomena. Is it us or is it the others?

It's easy enough to claim that it's the others, who come from the outside, that they're strange. Well, of course, they're like that where they come from. But when we ourselves start behaving strangely, if I can put it like that, then they become a kind of cultural traitor. Thus, the person who claims to be possessed by demons violates the normal perception of these things. If the person in question comes from far away, out there in the big world, then we could say, 'Oh well, that's their way of thinking, they're so exotic and strange'. But when it's ourselves who say it, it transgresses prevailing principles, a transgression of some taboo, a transgression of some accepted theology and so on. Taboos are broken and so on. That's why I think this project is exciting for you: it's because we're dealing with cultural treachery, the taboo-breakers, who insist that what we're dealing with is part of reality, even if there's general acceptance that it's not. In this perspective, they look almost identical to members of new religious movements, who claim to be in contact with beings

on Venus, or talk with dolphins, or say that pastor Moon is the returned Christ, or something else, where we also have unusual religious enunciations, which are essential for these people's understanding of themselves and the world, but which are considered a kind of cultural treachery. I'm rather happy that I invented that expression! It helps explain these reactions very well: 'This is unacceptable, this doesn't fit into our worldview.' And the funny thing is, if we stay in the context of the church, this worldview, which now dismisses exorcism, is based on texts, which explicitly speak of exorcism as being not just possible but something completely natural and taken for granted.

D As is well known, the guidelines for missionaries state that you should expel demons!

R Precisely! This is just the last example in a train of thought where we have to conclude that, everything considered, we continue to find interpretation and narration - in this con-

text, the dominant church's interpretation of the Scriptures. And by interpretation I mean classification. The Acts of the Apostles, which in my opinion is the central text of the New Testament, if it's about what it means to be Christian, has a low profile: it's not something that is worshipped in any depth. But all the more specific proclamations, primarily the evangelical texts and Paul, that knock the theology together, have a high profile. So there isn't really much room for the more peculiar things. But people in the Pentecostal Movement speak in tongues, and those people who are exorcised and so on actually refer to the original texts of Christianity and, in this perspective, are completely authentic - I was almost about to say more authentic than the Protestants who've picked these things away, if we take the way Christians live to its extreme. That's why it's so interesting to observe the power struggles within interpretation, which actually lie behind the timely or scandalous fact that people can become possessed by demons and that they can be driven away.

P We spoke to Niels Underbjerg about temptation, which is of course mentioned in numerous places in the Bible. Temptation can kindle desire, and this can end in sin. From your perspective, from your description of the world, from your thirty-nine years of life, how do you consider temptation and desire?

R What you're saying is utter theology. To be able to relate to the concept 'sin' demands that there's a defined norm of what is sinful and what is not, which, again, demands that someone has defined it, which is to say the creator, the divine or what have you. One can't discuss the concept sin, which is a specifically Christian notion, without doing so within the framework of a specifically Christian worldview.

P Let's then discard sin and talk about temptation. As far as I'm concerned, this also exists outside Christianity.

R Well, it becomes a question of ethics and morality. The question then becomes: what is this morality founded on? If we stick with the example of Jan Lindhardt, who you mentioned earlier, he says that ethics can't exist without a god because there has to be an absolute norm of the way things are, and man is unable to create this. It stands as a kind of prerequisite of what is human. And this is where I'm in total disagreement, because I consider this god, the one who defines all norms, to be a social construct: man invents a deity who defines what man wishes to establish as absolute norms. From this perspective, man is still at the controls and alters god the moment there is a need to alter the norms. This is what we do all the time. Our god no longer punishes us for adultery: you're not killed and sent to hell for adultery. This is because social practice alters - a different set of ethics? Then we change god's attitude. This signifies that it isn't god but man who is in charge. But this is trifling. Of course we can discuss concepts such as temptation and all that, but the

question is what do they mean for the individual? Yes well, for me, it means that I've almost turned forty and put on too much weight thanks to too many chocolates and the like. They tempt me - be warned! But the rationale is that I don't want to be fat, and as I play football as goalkeeper, I would still like to fit between the goalposts ten years from now. It's a crude example. It could be something else: I have 200,000 female students here whom I could try to seduce, if I wanted to, if I dared, if I was able to. Who makes the definitions here? Temptation or boundaries or whatever it is - yours truly. So of course you can talk about it. But the question is what are the criteria that provide its foundation. What is normal decency? What is normal morality? What's interesting is that you can cut across the religions from different directions and reveal that, to a large extent, they're pretty much in agreement about what constitutes sinful behaviour. Then there are areas where they're in radical disagreement. I've written this book together with

my colleague Tim Jensen. It deals with what the major religions think about the themes listed here. And we demonstrated how they were thoroughly in agreement, and how they were thoroughly in disagreement. The point is that they all do it by referring to trans-empirical forces. So the point is then that we're dealing with two things, the first being that this is what religions do. So I say that this isn't actually what happens, because we ourselves create these trans-empirical forces, even though the self-perception of religion considers them not as man-made but just there, so to speak! And I think that when we are actually able to live in peace together, or, rather, when we wage war on one another within the same framework - when we wage war on one another, it must be because we are mostly in agreement, and this must be because the religions conceive good and bad in the same manner as people, as a whole, conceive good and bad, in as much as it originates in the way people think, like when I was talking about biological change, earlier on. But it all becomes a little

way out, as it's the big, big questions we're dealing with - there are, of course, philosophers far smarter than I could ever dream of becoming who've already given up on this.

D *We've forgotten to ask: do you believe in the existence of God?*

R Could I ask in a different manner? If I take a concrete example: do you mean God with a capital G, or in other words, the god who's constructed in The New Testament, or do you mean the divine being constructed in The Old Testament, who's normally referred to as Jehovah, or do you mean Allah, who many Danish Muslims refer to as God, but who is constructed in other sacred texts, within other forms of worship, and within another kind of narrative, which alludes to other things, which preside in a different manner?

D *I'm referring to all the definitions you've just reeled off.*

R But they're all completely different gods you're referring to. If I believe in these - in this case three gods, one of which becomes three - that's to say actually five, six examples? Yes I do, in the same manner that I believe in Krishna who's standing over there as a little sandalwood figure; because gods are social constructs; it's words; it's images; it's text. And words, image and text exist! There he is! That's where he is! This is Krishna, and he has no existence beyond that figure over there. But there he is, and that's my point. Similarly, one can say that as long as a piece of bread lies on a silver plate somewhere or other in a church, then God exists, in as much as it's now Christ we're dealing with. But that's where God exists.

D *In the physical?*

R There are no other places. This is what is interesting, here: as a performance - God as a performance. But the idea is conceived within a physical brain. As my colleague Morten

Warmind says, 'How can people ask whether gods exist? You can see them. They're painted all over the place, on I don't know how many altarpieces, and they stand on just about every altar arrangement. Of course the gods exist - do keys exist?' He's of course saying this to tease, in the same manner as I am. The answer is of course self-evident from what I've said: if you're asking from within the presuppositions of religion, then the answer is naturally no. And, by the way, I should add that the question 'do you believe in God?' and the answer 'no' and the subsequent answer 'no, I'm an atheist' is philosophically unsatisfactory, because it implies that you've considered the existence of God. In other words, you've already imagined him; you've already constructed him; he's become real for you, and then you've decided that, no, I'll dismantle him again. This means being an atheist implies that at a certain point you've actually constructed a deity, because there he is, as a possibility, within the brain. So if you deconstruct him again then you become an atheist. First

you're a mythologist, then you become an atheist. This could happen in the same split second, but this is the process. One can't avoid speculation the moment that the question is asked. When you ask me this, I'm obliged to instantly activate my assumptions, wherever they may come from, and they will typically be the mythologies from which you yourself think. And then I'll have to test them through deliberation and so on. And this is where the divine is created. It's actually quite beautiful: they are being constantly created and then they disappear again. I like that. But I suppose the final answer must be a no!

HEDEGAARD

CHRISTIAN HEDEGAARD

Leader of the common ecclesiastical mission organisation Evangelist
(The Pentecostal Movement)

Doctor Joseph Sawana from Kampala, Uganda. He has a HUGE church in Uganda. He came to Denmark in 1995 to a church, here in Hillerød. He'd never been to Denmark before. First time. He knew absolutely NOBODY and absolutely NOBODY knew him. He came on the recommendation of another Ugandan priest. So he comes to our church one Sunday morning, and I was in the Bible school, and had been through many deliverances, you know, during a time where the Word of God was trying to reach me. And I thought I'd said goodbye to karate. Then this man shows up. I'd sat playing the piano during the service and then he says, 'Before I start my sermon, there is something the Holy Ghost is telling me to do - you, sitting on the back row, please come forward.' I thought: that's me. Does he have something to say to me from God? A

little revelation or something? Yippee!

So I come forward and stand there, a metre in front of him. The church was full because of our guests from Africa. Then he says, 'While I was standing here and you sat playing the piano I saw a feline creature upon your shoulder.' 'I see a tiger!' he says. This man who's never been to Denmark before. He knows nothing about me, he knows absolutely NOBODY, the first time he's here. He was just far more receptive to the spiritual world.

So he says, 'I saw a lion or a tiger. A tiger, a feline creature, stand upon your shoulder. And I saw it stand with its claws out.' And the whole church was thinking this man must be crazy. The very first time he spoke in Denmark. But he says, 'I saw a feline creature stand with its claws out upon your shoulder.'

Then he says, 'I don't understand what it means, but I see a demon from Japan.' Everything just went Whoosh...

When I came round, the entire congregation were standing and crying, scared senseless.

I was thrown backwards they say. I don't remember it. I just heard a crrrr... and then woke up on the floor and they were lying on top of me to hold me down.

I was thrown into a backward summersault and landed on my fingertips and roared like a tiger and attempted to leap on him. Then I was set free.

Well, when I sat myself down after it all, I was scared and thought, 'Help! When will I ever know that I'm free?' Because it had now been going on for a year and a half; a process where more and more had come out.

And then the man comes over to me, and he's never seen me before, and says, 'Young man, from today - from today you are free. Never again will you be troubled by evil spirits.' Then I stood up. Then he said to the priest, 'From today, you are able to use him.'

After I'd sat myself down, I thought what on earth was all that about - feline creatures from Japan? But do you know what? I practiced something called Shotokan Karate, which is well known here in Denmark. I'd gone around with this logo of a tiger standing with its claws outstretched and its tongue hanging out of its mouth, just like he said. So when he said this - and Shotokan Karate comes from Japan - that was the end of that. And from that day on, I've been free.

MESSERSCHMIDT

LARS MESSERSCHMIDT

Vicar-General in the Danish Catholic Church

M - Lars Messerschmidt

Therefore evil didn't exist, neither as a principle. It only existed as a possibility, and a possibility is not yet reality. The possibility is there because spiritual beings, that is to say, the angels and people, possessed a free will. Because of a freedom, a relative but actual autonomy, these beings, humans and angels, could choose something other than God, something other than the good: they could say no to God. They could say no to the good; they could say no to love. This possibility is inherent to free will, and this was what happened. At one time, parts of the spiritual world - a part of the world of angels - actually rebelled, or however you wish to phrase it - stood in opposition to God; said no to God and became evil spirits. Having been good spirits, they turned themselves into evil spirits; one also speaks about

'fallen angels'. It's the same with humans. Evil already appears with our earliest ancestors: Adam and Eve. They turned from God and chose each other instead of God. That's, of course, a longer story, but it's common knowledge. The moment they did the same as these fallen angels - rebelled - and, furthermore, the Bible says lured by the evil spirits to rebellion, they became allies of evil, and in this way the Devil, because it was built up in hierarchies just like the angels also had a hierarchical arrangement, got a structure. It's not just a series of equally ranked beings; there's a system and a structure, also in their world. They got power, relative but real power in the world of men, and have had, and to some extent still have it, and use this power in a variety of ways. One of the ways in which they exercise their power is by taking possession of an

individual, that is, to occupy someone. And as people are made of a body and a soul and emotions, one could say different dimensions, one could ask: what is it the demons get hold of, attack - respectively - and take control of? The word 'occupation' is an experimental expression. It is of course taken from human military terminology, because one experiences it as a battle to be occupied. The enemy occupies an area that doesn't belong to them, attacks it, takes it into occupation (either completely or partially).

We use this experience from the human world to describe how one experiences possession. This means what really happens is a mystery - we can only say how it's experienced. But what is typically experienced, and is characteristic of what one refers to as possession, is that one or more demons - because it's possible for there to be more than one - takes the body or the corporeal dimension into possession. It's primarily the body, because they don't have direct access to what is deepest within us: our hearts, that is to

say, our spiritual centre. They can't just get hold of this. Actually, they can't just possess someone's body. But they start, so to speak, from the outside, that's to say with the body, and they try, by all means possible, through control and coercion, to get the person to surrender their control centre, which is their spirit, their soul, to the Devil. This is the strategy. This means we have a kind of control centre within us, where we direct ourselves. This is what we call the heart. Intellect - this is what we call will. They can't just possess the spiritual. They can only tempt. In other words, they can only pressure people into doing something.

*P - Peter Døssing
Create an opening?*

M Create an opening, where people are willingly prepared to do something wrong. We call this 'to sin'. When you yourself do something evil, that is to say, the same as the Devil, you're instantly in league with the Devil, because you make common

cause with the Devil by doing something evil. But what the individual does is still their responsibility. He could be under incredible pressure from within, not just from the outside, but within his body and within his emotions, maybe also within his intellect. Through God's eyes, the criterion that something you do is evil, is that you - through sufficient use of the intellect - understand that this is evil, but do it anyway. Only then is it evil from a moral point of view. If it's the Devil who's attacking your intellect, that's to say, your thoughts, and you become crazy and do something evil, then God doesn't understand this as an accountable evil act: an evil deed, an accountable evil deed. This, then, is the point, and this is why the Devil doesn't come and take direct control of our soul, of our spirit. This belongs to us. But we can surrender it by giving in to something. And by wishing to do something evil, we surrender control over ourselves, and can be possessed throughout nearly all our being. It stands to reason that the external possession of the body is the most

obvious when it eventually runs amok, because it's the one you can see. Then the Devil or the demons manifest themselves in an obvious manner throughout the body, and I was close to saying that this isn't the most dangerous type. It's the most dramatic, but the most dangerous is if the person gives consent from within and opens himself up, for then you're in league with the Devil. Being possessed doesn't necessarily mean that you're in league with the Devil, but more a victim of evil.

A - Aslak Vibæk

As long as we're talking about bodily possessions?

M It could be deserved. You might have done something that opened the door, allowing these forms of possession to result in either total or partial physical possession. So it could be brought on yourself, but this doesn't necessarily have to be the case. This is actually something that's being discussed a lot, but if we build on our experiences, then it's very hard to

deny that other people are able to bring demons upon others.

So if a person wishes to do harm and summons the Devil, reads out a curse, or uses witchcraft, or black magic - this is something you can read about in many books - upon another person, there's a possibility for the Devil, for the evil spirits, to attack this person in a certain way. It's still possession, but it can be that crack in the wall, which the enemy comes through, and this can lead to something that looks like possession, or, at least, a physical, and therefore also psychic, condition which is very, very painful. This is 'to bewitch', an old expression, or to practice witchcraft. Some say it's impossible, but study the facts. Serious exorcists, I'm talking about Catholics - not that the others aren't serious, but now I'm talking about those I associate with, my colleagues - work with this at the moment, not least in countries such as Italy, France and England, with exactly this kind of induced demonic activity, where people function as vehicles, so that evil spirits can come and influence people. There's a lot of

black magic in Italy at the moment; one bewitches things such as food, and then smuggles it in. People eat bewitched things, drink bewitched things and come into contact with bewitched things. One hides talismans and bewitched things inside a house, or wherever it might be, hiding it so nobody knows anything about it.

But it can have a very unpleasant effect. The problem is if you can't find the source of evil, the bewitched object, and destroy it in the correct manner, not just physically destroy it, you won't be able to release these places (often houses, farms or landscapes) from the Devil's influence.

A To perhaps make a parallel to some of Thomas Breinholdt's programmes, where farms host evil spirits, it seems to be in agreement with what you're saying.

M It's reality, so it'll be stupid to dismiss it off hand. Of course, one always has to - this counts for all these issues - make a diagnosis. The direct confrontation with an exor-

cist or a Christian, who indeed also functions as an exorcist - by using the authority that lies in the name of Christ, and which Christ bestows upon us - is a real threat against the devastation and dominion of the demons, who therefore avoid confrontation, for they are the hidden ones. It's a strategy: where is the enemy, where must we fight?

So they attempt mock-assaults: they highlight something, which isn't the problem, at all. Therefore, a diagnosis is extremely important if you're going to be able to effectively take up the fight. This is the case with possession. Are we really dealing with possession, and why has possession occurred? What was the cause?

A That is, in what way have you become susceptible?

M What is the actual cause of all this? It's not always necessary, but the really experienced exorcists say it's often necessary to find the cause before you can stop or disrupt the powers of evil. Otherwise it just returns

again. You may be able to stop it now, but two weeks later, or already the day after, it's back, and this is how it can go on and on. Experience tells us: it's a mock-attack. They have a power, a hidden power that we've yet to discover. This is what we have to hunt after; this is what we must discover.

P In our previous discussion last autumn, you mentioned that exorcism was a prominent area of research within Catholicism.

M Yes, that might have been a slight overstatement, if only this was the case. What I mean is: one could make it an empirical - in quotation marks - science; that's to say, a science that starts by describing phenomena, and there's certainly phenomena enough to describe. One collects an enormous wealth of documented material, and one can therefore, in a certain manner, speak of a science, as you're able to make controls. One must make diagnoses, which means there's a regulatory function over the phenomena one is dealing with. If they are tested

like this, you'll have something you can have confidence in: that here is something you should investigate, or should simply dismiss as fantasy. It's really a question of employing a control: a critical supervision of these phenomena, or so-called phenomena, of demonic activity. When one has discarded material that is doubtful or irrelevant, under these conditions, you'll be left with a very rich and detailed material. Then you'll be able to take the next step and try to see if you're able to find a pattern, for instance, a demonic strategy: how do these things come about? Can you produce some form of rules that allow a slightly greater degree of understanding? It's the purpose of science to help give us an insight in and an understanding of reality. We will never - and I believe there are some fundamental reasons for this - be able to fully penetrate reality, but we could learn a lot more about what occurs, if we adopt a methodical consideration as our point of departure, towards the things we actually experience. I could take the book 'Dämonische Besetzung Heute' - tha-

t's, 'Demonic Possession Today' - as an example. It's written by a Catholic priest, a Jesuit, who worked as an exorcist during and then after the War, and, among other things, he had a much discussed occurrence. That's what this book is about, and it's actually just like a medical journal. After each exorcism he wrote down his experiences: exactly what happened during the exorcism, and between the exorcisms, and how the possessed woman - it was a woman - reacted. So on the strength of his material, he wrote this book; and you could almost call it a handbook about possession and exorcism.

A *Did he write down which rituals he used?*

M But it was this ritual, the old ritual. No, it's everything he'd obtained from the possession, the insight he received, how the whole thing functions. Just take the table of contents: he first describes the actual course of events from start to finish, how it began with all these exorcisms, and how it ended. The second section is tit-

led 'Der Teufel' - 'The Devil', 'the spirits', and here, using his findings, he describes in precise terms the various demons, devils, he had encountered in the woman. That is, she was multiply possessed. He was able to say that all demons linked to this person had something in common, and he goes on to write that not all demons are equal. Through his work he'd ascertained that they behave differently. One could say that each had their own speciality. There are some demons who - in quotation marks - can only torment the body, and there are some who can torment the mind, the powers of the soul and so forth.

P Torment the body - cause it physical pain, for example?

M Yes, of one kind or another. The third chapter of the book deals with the individual devils he'd come across. And they have names, for instance: Cain, Judas, Herod, Barabas, Nero, Beelzebub or Lucifer. He expressly draws our attention to the fact that they're not their real names,

but that they're the names they symbolise, and they correspond to the characters in history, as we know them. That's to say, we know the Devil is named Cain from the Bible, he was the one who murdered his brother. It also becomes clear that the true exorcist, who bears full spiritual power - he has control during an exorcism - it's not the Devil who has it. No matter how high the status of the devil, it's the exorcist, with all his human frailties, who, through the power of God, holds the authority. This means it's the exorcist who decides what happens during the exorcism, and he's therefore able to say, 'You demon, tell me your name.' You can read in the guidelines for exorcism that you have to be aware that the devil will attempt to lie, either by not answering or by offering a different name. Why? Well, because the moment you know the name that characterises him, then you have a very different confrontation. It's about concealing yourself. There's a big difference between 'someone is sitting over there' and 'Hans-Peter is sitting over there'. It's a meeting between two

individual beings: the exorcist and the demon. That's why the name is so important in many cases, because it's also an agenda for the demon, in as much as the demon is a murderer, even a fratricidal killer, someone who literally has murder as their principle, to make blood flow. In this way he's been able to identify with many of these names: Herod and Judas, Judas, this is the traitor. It most certainly wasn't little, trivial demons this guy was confronting.

That's why I said that, when the body is possessed, it means that the demon, in the moment of exorcism, that's to say when the exorcism takes place, actually takes control of the functions of the body, takes the body into possession.

A *Speech and gesture?*

M Yes, and you can see this. The face changes character. Mouth and voice change. Women can suddenly have a coarse, male voice. The face becomes demonic, revealing characteristics of that spirit. These are all facts. In the moment that the exorcist directly confronts the demon - who is physically present in the body - then a dialogue is possible. This is how the exorcist is able to command the demon to explain why it's there, what it does, and what it wants.



