

FROM TURBULANCE TO TRANSFORMATION THROUGH LOVE: THE INNERLANDSCAPE OF ETTY HILLESUM

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Abstract

When recently given the task of proof reading the diary's of Etty Hilleum for the second publication in Swedish (first was in 1983) I was once again deeply moved and impressed by this young woman, her life story and her spiritual journey. I know of no other example that so clearly - though example and not theory - can teach the world that the inner world can transform the outer, regardless of circumstances. It seems she already at the start had a sense that the diary may be read by others than herself, with this in mind her total honesty and capability of literally being what we call, "an open book", is astounding. Her troubled family filled with anxiety and conflict, paired with her own complicated relationships with several men, and a raging world war creeping closer and closer for this young Jewish lady in Amsterdam seems more than any human

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could bear. Yet she does the most important of all things - she sees and accepts her need of help. First, in the person of Julius Speir, and - through him - in her inner life, where she gradually understands God is living and working in her. That this simple yet profound truth can affect a soul, indeed, transform this soul so completely that from total confusion and anguish within she thoroughly enjoys each sunset as a prisoner at the work camp. And that she in one of her final entries writes that she keeps coming back to the words in the Gospel about leaving your father and mother if you wish to follow the Lord and love him. When everyone around her desperately search for their loved ones, ETTY's love has deepened and grown to be universal. Yet, and this is a great hope and comfort to the rest of us, her progress is not without drawbacks and failures. Her secret in these times is, yet again, honesty and meditation/prayer. This combination of what some traditions call self-inquiry and withdrawing within, recollection in prayer and meditation is at the same time so simple yet so demanding, as anyone who has attempted anything similar will confirm. Yet, this is what shines forth on almost every page of ETTY's amazing diary making the book an astounding and profound example of a young woman striving to live in complete honesty, vulnerability and trust in the love and compassion of Someone greater than herself, and so - in the midst of both outer and inner turmoil, being transformed into a woman of hope and comfort to her friends in the barracks of Westerbork concentration camp and thus becoming what she in one diary entry wishes to be; the thinking heart of the barracks.

Keywords: suffering, happiness, concentration camp, transformation, psycho-chirology, holism, rationality, irrationality, logotherapy.

ETTY (Esther) HILLESUM was a remarkable woman - even though she had undergone inner struggles like restlessness, depression, despair, fear, emptiness, physical pain, suffering, uncontrollable sexual passion and emotional imbalances. She transformed herself through an inner journey with the aid of others and attained peace and purpose in life and moved from atheism towards a belief in God, even to a state of strongly defending God against the accusation that God is being silent even in the context of the holocaust. ETTY, in the beginning of her life thought that "she was the most unhappiest person in the world".

However, at the end of her life, Etty found her axis in God, became capable of being cheerful and happy in the context of violence, cruelty, hatred, privations and restrictions. She commented that all humanity is carrying within their own inner space such violence and observed that it is "the rottenness we all carry within us".

Inner peace in inner space is the recurring theme in the diaries she had written down from 1941-1943 just before her extermination in the concentration camp. Starting with simply sitting and looking inwardly, Etty had grown into an intimate relationship with God expressing "that part of myself, that deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call God". So this remarkable pilgrimage of Etty Hillesum from immersing in a hedonistic life, from her depressions and uncertainties in life towards a fortress of inner peace and intimate relationship with God and affirmation of life, keeping a forgiving smile with affectionate presence, even in the midst of the certainty of death and unfathomable inhumanity is an inestimable witness of purpose and meaning in life. The life witnessing of Etty Hillesum is indeed complimentary to the Logotherapy of Victor Frankl and perhaps goes beyond it. It is worth pondering, how she achieved peace and purpose in life in the midst of turbulence and tribulations! This transformation of life from turbulence will definitely be an example for everyone who struggle with one's own inner shadows and the external pressures as she shows to us how to encounter them and achieve inner peace and poise. Etty's vision for the future is expressed in the following lines as well as in her description of life at home.

I want to live to see the future, to become the chronicler of the things that are happening now (downstairs they are screaming blue murder with father yelling, "Go then!" and slamming the door; that too, must be absorbed, and now I am suddenly crying since I am not all that objective really and no one can breathe properly in this house; all right, make the best of it then); oh yes, a chronicler. I notice that over and above all my subjective suffering, I have an irrepressible objective curiosity, a passionate interest in everything that touches this world and its people and my own motives. Sometimes I believe that I have a task. Everything that opens around me is to be clarified in my mind and later in my writing.

Poor head and poor heart, what a lot there is still in store for you. Rich head and rich heart, you still have a lovely life, though, both of you. I have stopped crying. But my head still throbs. It is sheer hell in this house. I would have to be quite a writer to describe it properly. Anyhow, I sprang from this chaos, and it is my business to pull myself out of it. S (Spier) calls it "building with noble material; he's a real treasure.

From a pathological life situation, troubled by her own inner passions, this young woman undergoes a transformation through love in all its aspects experiencing *eros* and moving towards a transcended *agapeic* love, surrendering everything and accepting everything without any complaints and even defending the helplessness of the infinite. It is an amazing life story of a luminous personality. It is praiseworthy that how this ordinary but talented Etty could encounter all these life changes and yet got placed on the pedestal of humanity as a beacon of light as a role model for encountering suffering and pain to achieve meaning and transformation in the face of horror and violence. The face of the other definitely induces and welcomes her to be responsibly caring and nurturing towards the other in the context of hatred and cruelty. The treasure Etty discovered in life will definitely change our perspectives on life. Pope Benedict in his first general audience on Wednesday after his resignation on 13, February, 2013, quoted Etty Hillesum. "...I am also thinking of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch girl of Jewish origin who died in Auschwitz. At first far from God, she discovered him looking deep within her and she wrote: "There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there, too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then he must be dug out again" (Diaries, 97). In her disrupted, restless life she found God in the very midst of the great tragedy of the 20th century: the *Shoah*. This frail and dissatisfied young woman, transfigured by faith, became a woman full of love and inner peace who was able to declare: "I live in constant intimacy with God". This quote shows how important Etty has become in the discussions of today not only in common and psychological parlance but even in theological discussions. The quote of Pope Benedict XVI shows how she is considered as a role model for today's human being in search of meaning and love.

Etty before her deportation to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp gave the diaries to her close friend Maria Tuinzing to pass them to the Dutch writer Klaas Smelik with the request to publish it if she would not come back from the camp. Around 1947 the diaries were entrusted to Klaas Smelik and some portions of it were typed by his daughter Johanna Smelik. Though many publishing houses were approached to publish the diaries of Etty; nobody was interested in it. Klaas son was able to find a publisher in 1981 and the diaries were published as *An Interrupted Life* in Dutch. Then the translations came in English and French and Etty Hillesum became a household name for her brilliance, perseverance, and transformative power. Though she perished in the gas chamber of Auschwitz, Etty continues to inspire millions of youngsters for her ability to accept suffering, pain and tribulations and transform her attitudes irrespective of her drastic living situations.

The Chaotic House

Etty Hillesum as a child experienced a chaotic home. Her parents were Jewish. Her father Louis Hillesum came from a Dutch Jewish family, while her mother Riva (Rebecca Bernstein) was Russian by birth and had fled to the Netherlands because of religious persecution in Russia. Etty was born on 15th January 1914 and had two younger brothers, Jacob (Jaap) born in 1916, and Michael (Mischa) born in 1920. They were both brilliant in their different fields – Jaap in medicine and Mischa in music – but both suffered from serious mental illness and spent time in psychiatric institutions. Her father taught classical languages and was the headmaster of schools while her mother taught Russian.

Etty's parents unfortunately had extreme opposite temperaments. Louis was a silent, shy and scholarly man who could not cope with the world smoothly. He had an impaired vision and deafness in one ear. It seems that the school caretaker used to bring him to the school every day because of his bad eye sight. Born in Amsterdam in 1880, he was the fourth child of a Jewish merchant and the grandson of a Rabbi who had been Chief Rabbi in the north of the Netherlands, and so his background and upbringing were very much as a Dutch Jew. He was definitely an intellectual. He studied classics at Amsterdam University where he gained a bachelor, master's and a doctoral degree and began teaching classical languages. Since he was unable to control

the unruly students, he used to be very strict with them. Personally he was an affectionate and gentle person with a sense of humour. He was one of the leading citizens of the locality and was known for his cultural interests. Etty's mother, Riva (Rebecca) Bernstein, arrived from Russia in 1907 dressed in the uniform of a soldier and soon her family followed. To make her way, she started teaching Russian. Riva and Louis were married in 1912. Riva's entire family then immigrated to USA. She is said to be emotional, chaotic, extrovert and noisy and known for her sudden emotional outbursts. Withdrawn husband and extrovert wife, on opposite poles as foundation, the married life of the Hillesum started. Etty was the first fruit of this unusual union.

Etty Hillesum narrated her family experiences as confused and chaotic. The words she used to describe her family and home were home –'degenerate', 'tainted, a 'madhouse'– but the word most frequently used to sum up the disturbed atmosphere, was 'chaos'. "It is a sheer hell in this house". (An Interrupted Life, p. 41).² Etty narrated that her mother could drive "everyone crazy with her perpetual fussing over the housekeeping." (Life, p. 39). The underpinning forces of this chaos could be seen as the incompatibility of the parents and the problems and the difficulties, they have encountered not knowing how to resolve them. Etty found that there was psychological and emotional inadequacy that might have evolved from the contrasting backgrounds of her parents. Temperamentally she could be identified with her mother who was really a hot-blooded Russian. The passion for Russian language, culture, spirituality, all Etty inherited from her mother, along with her emotional turbulence. Etty saw that the confusion in her mother was also inherited by her too. That was the reason why Etty commented that "Mother is a model of what I must never become". At times Etty felt revulsion about her mother though she had pity for her. Etty observed that "she revolted me, sitting there, and at the same time I was filled with incredible pity for her. I really can't explain it. Her gluttony gave her the air of being terrified of missing out on anything. There was something terribly pathetic about her as well as something bestially repulsive ... If I could only fathom what I really felt deep down, why I observed her so closely, then I would understand a great deal about my mother". (Life, p.60) Etty

¹ Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted life, The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943*, Washington Square Press, New York, 1985. Hereafter the book will be referred as Life.

felt that her father was a nuisance and in his presence her freedom was curtailed. (Life, p.68) She continues to describe her father's uncertainties and the inferiority etc., vividly. "At a fairly advanced age, my father had traded all his uncertainties, doubts, and probably also his physical inferiority complex, his insurmountable marriage problems . . . Beneath the surface, his resigned philosophy simply means: oh, well which of us knows everything, all is chaos, within and without. And it is that very chaos that also threatens me. . . And no doubt my father's expressions of resignation, humour and doubt, appeal to something in me that I share with him, but which I must nevertheless outgrow.(Life, p. 70)

The two siblings of Etty had serious mental illnesses. Japp who studied medicine had been placed in psychiatric hospitals on several occasions while Mischa was treated for schizophrenia though he was a talented pianist. Psychologically he was fragile and at times refused to play concerts in public places because of the absence of his parents. Etty had seen how her brothers were behaving during the time of their psychological illnesses and often thought that they were 'ridden with hereditary disease'. Once she saw how her younger brother Mischa was forcefully taken to the Psychiatric Hospital, because of feeling the horror she felt within, decided that "no such unhappy being would ever spring from my womb". Once she wrote about her house thus: "I always used to go to pieces in this madhouse. Nowadays I keep everything inwardly at arm's length and try to escape unscathed . . . it is as if every bit of energy were being sucked out of me." She also complained that her house was always like the wailing wall of Jerusalem. 'In my dreams it was like the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. I never remember anything definite when I wake up, all I know is that there has been a lot of heavy sighing and piteous sobbing.'" Because of his inability to cope up with the situation at home, her younger brother ran away and stayed with his friends and did not want to come back home at all. Etty endorsed his action positively! Another time she lamented that "our house is a remarkable mixture of barbarism and culture. Spiritual riches lie within grasp but they are left unused and unguarded and carelessly scattered about. It is depressing, it is tragicomic. I don't know what kind of madhouse this really is, but I know that no human being can flourish here." The pathological culture and asymmetry prevalent in the house was absolutely described by Etty in a truthful way. The following lines were an evaluation of her

home and her parents' ability to groom them up! "I think my parents always felt out of their depth and as life became more and more difficult they were gradually so overwhelmed that they became quite incapable of making up their minds about anything. They gave us children too much freedom of action, and offered us nothing to cling to. That was because they never established a foothold for themselves. And the reason why they did so little to guard our steps was that they themselves had lost the way." (Life, p.79) Though Etty grew up in such a pathetic environment, she could evolve into a beautiful personality, deeply immersed in God and totally extended to others through loving service.

Celebration of the Body

As Etty wanted to escape from her home and ran into the world, she got opportunities to interact with many and found pleasure in enjoying her body. She first moved into the house of a 62 year old widower Han Wegerif, in 1937, where she became part of a warm human community for the first time. Etty felt deeply at home in him and the house while he was gentle and not demanding. Though, he neither did understand her complex mind nor her intellectual appetite, he gave her affection and sexual intimacy. She felt as a comfortable couple with him that was what one can draw from her diaries. Etty had written her diaries largely in her room provided by Wegerif. Along with her there were not only Wegerif, but also Wegerif's son Hans, the German housekeeper Käthe Fransen and a chemistry student by the name of Bernard Meylink were living together as an extended family. Also the close friend to whom, Etty entrusted the diaries Maria Tuinzing lived in this house. It was through a friend that on Monday, 3 February 1941, Etty went to serve as 'model' for the psycho-chirologist Julius Spier, in Amsterdam.

Before settling in the house of Wegerif, as a student, Etty moved restlessly in many lodgings and had many affairs. Perhaps the lack of values and the feeling for bonding and belonging to someone and certainly the feeling of insecurity drove her to these turbulent sexual relationships. This is the period in her life where she expressed herself erotically and indulged into sexual relationships and fantasies. She is explicit in her diary: "If someone makes an impression on me, I can revel in erotic fantasies for days and nights on end.'" And she felt happy about her power as an 'accomplished' lover. In her first entry

in the diary – 9 March 1941 – she had written, ‘I am accomplished in bed, just about seasoned enough ... to be counted among the better lovers.’ These days she also copied down many love letters perhaps with the intention of writing to her lovers. This was the time of her life that was immersed in seeking erotic pleasures through physical intimacy and engaged in visualizing sexual pleasures. Etty’s first interaction with Spier induced in her this power of erotic love. “But the way his hands reached for me during the fight, the way he nipped my ear and held my face in his great hand, all that drove me completely mad. I could sense the skilled and fascinating lover behind all these gestures”. (Life, p. 20) She had mixed impressions of Spier, one experiencing a revolt within her while another embracing his tenderness. “And that’s how I went home, with the most conflicting feelings, rebellious ones, because I thought he was mean, and tender ones, overflowing with human kindness and warmth. And all the while I was overwhelmed by erotic fantasies brought on by the guileful movements of his hands”. (Life, p. 21) “But then we come to that confounded eroticism, with which he is bursting, as am I. As a result we are irresistibly driven towards each other physically, though neither of us wants it, as we both once said in so many words”. (Life, p. 25) Etty lamented that in the initial stages of her life, she “wanted just be a woman, or perhaps even less, just a piece of cherished flesh. I dwell too much on my sensuality!” (Life, p.51) Ever since she came into contact with Spier who opened her into the wider possibility of maturation, through his physical intimacy, intellectual sharing and introducing her into Bible, St. Augustine and providing her psychological techniques in transforming her into a luminous personality. Spier was like a catalyst who dug her up and catapulted her into the transformed life. “Ever since I met him, I have been experiencing a process of maturation, something I would never have thought possible at my age. . .he spoke about Bible, later he read me something from Thomas a Kempis, . . (Life, p. 25) He introduced her into meditation and contemplation which enabled her to transform herself into a sublime personality by confronting her own shadows and the unconscious anxieties, insecurities and imbalances. “I will turn inwards for half an hour each morning before work and listen to my inner voice. Lose myself. You could also call it meditation. . . And half an hour of exercises combined with half an hour of meditation can set the tone for the whole body”. (Life, p. 27) She was indeed transcended from the gutter towards an enchanting horizon. In one

of her diary entry, an observation made by one of her former lover was indeed revealing of her maturation.

Etty writes about meeting a former lover named Max in a diary entry of 12th March 1942, a full year after she had begun meeting with Spier. He observes that she has tremendously changed. "you have turned into a real woman . . . your features, your gestures, they're as lively and expressive as ever, but now there's so much more wisdom . . ." She reflects later: ". . . it was the body of this man, who now walked beside me like a brother, to whom I had once clung in terrible despair. That, somehow, was the most gladdening thing: something had survived . . . the revival of memories that no longer haunted us, who once had lived so destructively off each other". (Life, pp.89-90) Etty observed that the erotic passion in her "has been gradually conditioned to play a subordinate role to human warmth, although that warmth is intense and passionate enough." (Life, p.108) This is the remarkable transformation she has achieved. How that happened? If Etty, an ordinary person could do it, wouldn't it be possible for everyone else!

Search for Inner Peace

It was Julius Spier who became the catalyst in Etty's transformation. He was a successful business man for almost twenty five years before he was interested in psychology. He was born in Frankfurt, Germany in 1887. He came in contact with the famous Swizz psychologist Carl Jung and spent two years under him as an apprentice and became a 'psycho-chirologist'. Jung wrote the introduction to his book "The Hands of Children" that described the basics of Jungian psychology and how it could be applied to hand reading! Under Jung's advice Spier opened a practice in Berlin in 1929. This practice became very successful. Experiencing turbulence in his family life, Spier immigrated to Amsterdam. He divorced his wife and then involved in a few affairs with his students and engaged with his secretary Hertha Levi. Levi immigrated to London in 1938 and Spier was committed to her in his own terms. They were in communication until he passed away in 1942.

In Amsterdam, Spier started a centre in hand reading and psychological counselling not far away from where Etty was living. Spier had a group of students, mostly women and always invited

new people to hand read as models. Etty was also invited to this group in order to be a model in his hand reading sessions. Spier not only read hands but also wrestled with them too. On one of such demonstrations, Etty defeated this strong Spier and threw him down to the dismay of the spectators and even to Spier. A small young woman could throw such a big man like Spier down. Etty observed later about this incident in her diary. "All my inner tensions, the bottled-up forces, broke free, and there he lay, physically and also mentally, as he told me later, thrown. No one had ever been able to do that to him before, and he could not conceive how I had managed it". Spier justified his wrestling experience with students with the observation that body and soul are one and through the psychological counselling they could be united. In those days psychoanalysis was a popular movement that even insisted that in order to have a successful therapeutic relationship a physical relationship was also a necessity. Spier gave Etty inner freedom and intuited her inner strength. She was excited about the immense possibilities offered by him. She yielded to him totally which was indeed a risky and dangerous surrender. The intense erotic emotions in her as a young sexual person was infinitely fired by him and thus, she was plagued by it which she called it as "confounded eroticism". All the demons that tormented her physical passions once again resurrected in her, awakening her erotic passions and fantasies which tormented her internally. She saw in him a saviour who delivered her from her own deeper shadows and confusions. Etty was ruthlessly determined "to come to grips with herself" and wanted to redirect and discipline her own inner energies. This determination for transformation and seeing Spier as a possibility for her own transcendence, enabled Etty to surrender herself to him and their relationship widened into intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy. Thus from student, then to a secretary, and eventually she became the lover of Spier.

The relationship with Spier was indeed a deepening bond crossing and fusing over into to an intimate intertwining! Spier induced in Etty, intellectual stimulus, psychological insight and spiritual truth. Spier had a conspicuous influence on Etty Hillesum's spiritual development; he taught her how to deal with her depressive and egocentric bent, and introduced her to the Bible and St. Augustine. Etty Hillesum had been reading other authors, such as Rilke and Dostoevsky, since her schooldays, but under Spier's therapeutic inner

dynamics their work also took on a search for a deeper meaning. In spite of Spier's deficiencies it was because of his direction that Etty moved towards liberation and enlightenment. Later she commented that "You taught me to speak the name of God without embarrassment. You were the mediator between God and me". Etty was also in intense love with Spier though she knew he was in love with Hertha Levi. The distance in the living space between Spier and Hertha, gave Etty a close proximity to Spier and to experience life as his lover. However, she felt jealous and hatred towards Hertha Levi for taking away her precious prerogative of being with Spier. This intense agony is expressed by her in the following words. "I suddenly had the feeling that Hertha was coming back. My heart broke...several times over. I waged a heroic struggle and then took off for faraway Russia. After first having written him a heartrending letter to tell him I was but a frail human being who could not cope with him and Hertha combined. Nor did I want to have anything more to do with his work, and I suddenly puzzled hard whether I had not chosen the work for the man's sake rather than to the man for his work's sake. And though I knew I would never want to marry him, I could not put up with him having another woman." Initially Etty was against bringing in God in the group's discussions and this is how Etty was writing about her disinterest in the concepts like God and love etc. "... my rejection of S. [Spier] and his circle was back. They seem far too ponderous and emphatic with their 'love' and their God, etc., etc. No doubt that my feelings are what is called ambivalent. But for Heaven's sake, why shouldn't there be room for everything inside me? In fact, everything is inside me The heavy and the light must be accepted as two different aspects of my being. Why deny the one aspect as soon as the other asserts itself more strongly? That is nothing but lacking the courage to be oneself." She also expressed that God is an experience and that is the only reality and all others are constructions of the mind. It rhymes like Spinoza or like an atheist. "I know people for whom the encounter with the strange power within themselves was such an overwhelming experience that they called it 'God'. So experienced, 'God' too is a theory in the most literal sense, a way of looking at the world, an image which the limited human mind creates in order to express an unfathomable and ineffable experience. The experience alone is real, not to be disputed; but the image can be soiled or broken to pieces."

Towards the end of a long entry of 29th December, after nine months of working with him, she writes: 'I am beginning to understand something about my youth, about those recurring headaches and lethargic spells lasting for weeks on end, succumbing to the chaos within'. Gradually Etty evolved herself into maturity and could stand by herself. All her passions for Spier evaporated away and she could detach herself from him and her own erotic fantasies into deeper contemplation and prayer. When Spier died 15th September 1942 she could evaluate her relationship towards him with equanimity. Etty remembered Spier as someone who pushed "me towards my own inner space. . It is thanks to him that I have found a way of expressing myself, but he must release me again into a cosmic space". (Life, p. 131) Etty elaborated her interactions with Spier and how much he had contributed to her growth and her intense connectivity with God thus. (Life, pp.209-210)

There you lie now in your two small rooms, you dear great, good man. I once wrote to you, 'My heart will always fly to you like a bird, from any place on earth, and it will surely find you....And even if they flung me into a dungeon, that piece of heaven would still spread out within me and my heart would fly up to it like a bird, and that is why everything is so simple, so terribly simple and beautiful and full of meaning.' I had a thousand things to ask you and to learn from you; now I will have to do everything by myself. But I feel so strong that I'm sure I'll manage. What energies I possess have been set inside me. You taught me to speak the name of God without embarrassment. You were the mediator between God and me, and now you, the mediator, have gone, and my path leads straight to God. It is right that it should be so. And I shall be the mediator for any other soul I can reach.

Etty remembered Spier as someone who had introduced her to God. "... great discerner, God-seeker, and God-finder that you were. You sought God in every human heart that opened up before you—and how many there were!—and found a little bit of Him in each one." Through her Spier was also transformed. "But I shall always carry him with me; he, too, has become substance of my substance and has transformed it". (Life, p. 137) Around the same period of

time, she was continuing to face the ego's inherent deficient emptiness that her relationship with Spier laid bare, and what was evolving in relationship to the emptiness:

I used to be genuinely hysterical and desperate then. And would have felt betrayed and let down by his failure to console me in my emptiness and sadness. But now I was sitting there perfectly calm and collected, telling myself, you shouldn't be so ambitious, thinking you have to inspire a man every minute. You must accept the fact that you can be empty and tired and just want to get away from him...In the past I would refuse to acknowledge that sort of emptiness in myself, and then make forced attempts on all fronts, from the intellectual, to the erotic and sexual, to restore contact at any price, and if that failed, I would later have orgies of loneliness all on my own...In the past, I would have expected him, and other friends as well, to work miracles of solace. And now, I was bearing my own emptiness, and tiredness, and malaise, and that too was part and parcel of life, and there was no need to feel so forlorn.

Etty then launched herself towards God deeply and in conversation with God as if He is a real person and asking Him, what were His plans for her. A deep and intense falling into a love life with God had taken place in the life of Etty. . "Not my will, but Thy will be done. . . Have You any other plans for me, God? ... what are Your plans for me?" affectionately, Etty asked.

Towards God

Etty Hillesum moved towards God and this longing towards God is expressed by her through the following lines confessing her sensual past and describing her spiritual present filled with joy and that only God can quench her thirst for Him almost rhyming that of St. Augustine. "I was too sensual, I might almost write too greedy. I yearned physically for all I thought was beautiful, wanted to own it. Hence that painful longing that could never be satisfied. . . It all suddenly changed, God alone knows by what inner process, but it is different now. . I reacted quite differently. I felt that God's world was beautiful despite everything, but its beauty now filled me with joy. I

was just as deeply moved by that mysterious, still landscape in the dusk, as I might have been before, but somehow I no longer wanted to own it." An eclectic view of God was at that time possessed by Etty. Concepts of God tailored together from psychology, literature, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, philosophy and from many other sources fused into a togetherness; that was God for Etty initially. But it seems that Etty had a very special affinity to Christ and she even dreamt that "Christ himself came to baptize me". (Life, p.211) This conceptual or epistemic concept of God was complimented by her own search and inner experience that gave a vision about God. But she knew she had to work hard to dig this deep sense of God hidden in herself. "There is a really deep well inside me. And in it dwells God. Sometimes I am there, too. But more often stones and grit block the well, and God is buried beneath. Then he must be dug out again." (Life, p.44) She had the belief that she was called like an Old Testament Prophet to expose a great message to the world transmitted to her by God. She was convinced that she was the heiress of a rich spiritual legacy. In that way her life and thoughts are now fulfilling; a prophecy towards Jews, Christians, towards all people who have a conscience and commitment towards humanity that God is love and humans should love each other without boundaries. It is all the more meaningful in the present context of the atrocities perpetrated by the ISS against the Christians, the Yazeedis and other innocent people in the Middle East and other places in the name of religion, race, caste tribe etc.

Etty feels an intense urge to speak and open herself to God. She is thankful to God for gifting Spier to her because he helped her to connect and reconcile with God. This intense longing for God is expressed in her prayer which is indeed moving every tender heart! (Hillesum, 2002, p. 514)

I am a little numb and bewildered and helpless, but at the same time I am trying to scrape together what patience I have from all the corners of my being, and I shall have to find a new kind of patience to meet this entirely new state of affairs. I shall follow the tried and tested old method, talking to myself now and again on these faint blue lines. And talking to You God, Is that all right? With the passing of people, I feel a growing need to speak to You alone. I love people so terribly, because in

every human being I love something of you....But now I need so much patience and thought, and things will be very difficult. And now I have to do everything by myself. The best and noblest part of my friend, of the man whose light You kindled in me, is now with you. What was left behind was a childish, worn-out husk in the two small rooms in which I experienced the greatest and deepest happiness of my life. I stood beside his bed and found myself standing before one of Your last mysteries, my God. Give me a whole life to contain it all.

As we go through her diary, it could be noticed that on 30 May 1942 she copied down a passage from Saint Augustine: 'My soul shall praise Thee in all things, God, Creator of the Universe'. She wanted to deeply immerse herself in God; she thanked God for wanting to dwell in her soul and for having created her. Created in the image of God that she took from the Book of Genesis became her *leitmotiv*. Even good and bad, negativity and positivity, life and death are part of God and hence we could find a holistic account of God in her conception. Suffering, pain, tribulations do not make her to resign from life. Etty believed that life is worth living in spite of the misfortunes one may encounter in life, because it was created by God and she advised others to continue to live irrespective of the context which she really showed that it was possible to live in contexts such as a concentration camp infested with hatred, violence, and all other inhuman expressions of life. To such a strong conviction, Etty has evolved. "... to be truly, inwardly happy, to accept God's world and to enjoy it without turning away from all the suffering there is. ... even if you live in an attic and have nothing but dry bread to eat, life is still worth living. ... There is so much to relish, life is rich, even though it has to be conquered from minute to minute". According to her there are two types of loneliness, one isolated from the human beings and the other isolated from God. When connected with God, Etty feels that she is also in union with the fellow human beings. She is indeed coming up with a holistic account of the union of humanity and God. In God, everything is enfolding. She came to such a deep experience of the union with God. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 82)

I know two sorts of loneliness. One makes me feel dreadfully unhappy, lost and forlorn; the other makes me feel strong and happy. The first always appears when I

feel out of touch with my fellow human beings, with everything, when I am completely cut off from others and from myself and can see no purpose in life or any connection between things, nor have the slightest idea where I fit in. With the other kind of loneliness, by contrast, I feel very strong and certain and connected with everyone and everything and with God, and realize that I can manage on my own and that I am not dependent upon others. Then I know that I am part of a meaningful whole and that I can impart a great deal of strength to others.

One can be mystified by observing how this God denying Etty is kneeling and folding her hands in prayer in a complete submission to God. "I had never before felt as I did this afternoon And the quite simple fact is that now I just let it happen to me As I sat there like that in the sun, I bowed my head unconsciously as if to take in even more of that new feeling for life. Suddenly I knew deep down how someone can sink impetuously to their knees and find peace there, with their face hidden in their folded hands". Kneeling was not natural to Etty who was Jewish. Etty acquired that prayerful frame from her own disposition or might have been transmitted to her through the group activities. She is not resistant to it, but it became her natural disposition in front of her God who is a personal experience for her. As all the mystics used to say, Etty also expressed that God-experience is beyond the description through words. "My love of life is so great and so strong and calm and makes me so grateful that I shall refrain from putting it into words again. There is such perfect and complete happiness in me, oh God. What he called "reposing in oneself." And that probably best expresses my own love of life: I repose in myself. And that part of myself; that deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call 'God.'" Etty's whole being had become a total prayer towards Him. She wrote that prayer had become a culture for her. "I keep myself in prayer. And that is something I shall always be able to do, even in the smallest space: pray. And that part of our common destiny which I must shoulder myself, I strap tightly and firmly to my back, it becomes part of me, as I walk through the streets even now. (Life, p. 181) Again in another section she confirmed her long and continued conversations with God in a deeper way thus. "I am beginning to feel a little more peaceful, God, thanks to this conversations with you. I shall have many more conversations with

you. . . . but believe me, I shall always labour for You and remain faithful to you and I shall never drive You from my presence." (Life, p. 187) In another write up, Etty confirmed "Well, I am in God's hands". (Life, p. 191) Etty was even thanking God for the sufferings he had sent her. "I am grateful to You for driving me from my peaceful desk into the midst of the cares and sufferings of this age". (Life, p. 196) The depth of Etty's closeness with God became so strong and even though she would be confined in a small cell she would always try to make God at home! "But somewhere inside me the jasmine continues to blossom undisturbed, just as profusely and delicately as ever it did. And it spreads its scent round the house in which you dwell, oh, God. You can see, I look after you, I bring you not only my tears and my forebodings on this stormy, grey Sunday morning, I even bring you scented jasmine. . . I shall try to make You at home always. Even if I should be locked up in a narrow cell." (Life, p. 188) As she was walking on the street, she felt that the only adequate gesture was kneeling. "The only adequate gesture left to us in these times: kneeling down before You". (Life, p.197) Etty transformed herself into a being of prayer and was indeed living constantly in His presence and ready to genuflect anywhere as the urge for being connected with him emerged.

Defending God

One can also observe that Etty had a loving trust in God and hence she wanted to defend him when others are attacking Him. Also if God could not help her, then Etty was ready to help him as well. This trustful countenance with God could be observed in these lines. "If God does not help me to go on, then I shall have to help God". One curious and interesting attitude of Etty was that she was not praying to God for anything. Her prayer was not a shopping list. It was a close relationship almost like that of a lover. If he was not able, then she was ready to help him. It evolved from the deep relationship she felt with God.

I shall try to help You, God, to stop my strength ebbing away, though I cannot vouch for it in advance. But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, that we must help You to help ourselves. And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little

piece of You, God, in ourselves. And perhaps in others as well. Alas, there doesn't seem to be much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold You responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You and defend Your dwelling place inside us to the last.

The absolute self surrender she has made to God is visible in the following lines. "I shall have to surrender much more of me to You, oh God". (Life, p.227) She has the feeling that He is abiding within her. And she thanks for His love and for being abiding within her. This deep continuous presence of God definitely gives her a joy that is exhibited in her life even in front of imminent death. "I thank You, God, peace and quiet now reign in my great inner Domain, thanks to the strong central authority You exert. The furthest flung boundaries sense Your authority and Your love and allow themselves to be guided by You." This sense of helping God was in a way helping others. So she once again expressed the holistic account of her spiritual depth, towards God and fellow human beings in an eloquent way. "I don't fool myself about the real state of affairs, and I've even dropped the pretension that I'm out to help others. I shall merely try to help God as best I can, and if I succeed in doing that, then I shall be of use to others as well. But I mustn't have heroic illusions about that either." Quoting the beautiful and universal prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, Etty proclaims that she wanted to heal and help others than being helped or consoled. Etty experienced the marvellous walking with God and then life becomes a fascinating pilgrimage. "For once you have begun to walk with God, you need only keep on walking with Him and all of life becomes on long stroll—such a marvellous feeling." Etty acknowledged that her transformation was due to the unfathomable experience of God and that provided her all the qualities she wanted to have such as equanimity, endurance, calmness and thanks God for her own inner total refocusing. "Had all of this happened to me only a year ago, I should certainly have collapsed within three days, committed suicide, or pretended to a false kind of cheerfulness. But now I am filled with such equanimity, endurance, and calmness that I can see things very clearly and have an inkling of how they fit together. I don't know what it is, but despite everything I am very well, dear God". It is curious to observe that Etty is not asking anything from God, but she is ready to defend God and she

accepts that God is not responsible for all the difficulties and problems in the world or in her life. She is absolutely certain that God is like a little Child who could not help her and the humanity. Instead she assures that she will help God. "And if God does not help me to go on, then I shall have to help God". (Life, p.181) She continued her musings on helping God further. "But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You (God) cannot help us, that we must help You to help ourselves. (Life, pp. 186-187) These convictions are evolving out of the compassionate and trustful personal relationship with God. Thus she goes to the extent of defending God and even accepting God's inability to help and even in this aspect ready to defend Him. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 488)

Dear God, these are anxious times. Tonight for the first time, I lay in the dark with burning eyes, as scene after scene of human suffering passed before me. I shall promise You one thing, God, just one very small thing: I shall never burden my today with cares about my tomorrow, although that takes some practice... I shall try to help you, God, to stop my strength ebbing away, though I cannot vouch for it in advance. But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, and we must help You to help ourselves. And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little piece of You, God, in ourselves. And perhaps in others as well. Alas, there doesn't seem to be too much You Yourself can do about our circumstances, about our lives. Neither do I hold you responsible. You cannot help us, but we must help You, and defend your dwelling place within us to the last.

Love

Etty experienced erotic love and was capable of transcending that love towards the divine love. Etty confirmed through her life experience that "you cannot heal disturbed people without love". (Life, p.61) Experiencing deep affection and love, she turned it towards the divine and her conversations with God is that of someone deeply fallen in love as God is a person, a constant inner dialogue with God, translating all her energy to be in dialogue with God. . "Oh God, my life is one great dialogue with You. . . . I am already secure in You,

God. . . but I always end up with just one single word; God. And that says everything and there is no need for anything more. And all my creative powers are translated into inner dialogues with You; the best of my heart has grown deeper, more active and yet more peaceful, and it is as if I were all the time storing up inner riches". (Life, p.255) She is really fired by this divine love which is expressed in the following lines. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 105)

Yes, we foolish, idiotic, illogical women, we all seek Paradise and the Absolute. And yet my brain, my capable brain tells me there are no absolutes, that everything is relative, endlessly diverse, and in eternal motion, and that is precisely for that reason that life is so exciting and fascinating, but also very, very painful. We women want to perpetuate ourselves in a man. Yes, I want him to say "Darling, you are the only one, and I shall love you for evermore. I know, of course, that there is no such thing as eternal love, but unless he declares it for me, nothing has any meaning. And the stupid thing is I don't really want him forever or as the only one in my life, and yet I demand it of him. Do I demand absolute love from others because I'm unable to give it to myself? And I always expect the same level of intensity.... After all, I wouldn't know what to do if somebody really was on fire for me all day long. It would annoy me and bore me and make me feel tied down. Oh, Etty, Etty!

Etty now is up against and present to the abyss, death, in any numbers of forms. Her inquiry is fuelled by fear, curiosity and love. She says: (Hillesum, 2002, p. 459)

Suffering is not beneath human dignity. I mean: it is possible to suffer with dignity and without. I mean: most of us in the West don't understand the art of suffering and experience a thousand fears instead. We cease to be alive, being full of fear, bitterness, hatred and despair...And I wonder if there is much of a difference between being consumed here by a thousand fears or in Poland by a thousand lice and hunger? We have to accept death as a part of life, even the most horrible of deaths.

Etty observed that one should learn to move from the object of love towards love itself and then only it could become real love. (Life, p.135) Etty universalized her love and got out of the exclusivist view of love extending to anyone who is crossing over the path of life. She went to the extent of affirming that "through suffering I have learned that we must share our love with the whole of creation". (Life, p.154) However she critically commented that "woman always looks for the one man on whom she can bestow all her wisdom, warmth, love and creative powers. She longs for a man not for mankind. . . Its typical that I always do end up wanting to be desired by a man, the ultimate confirmation of our worth and womanhood, but in fact it is only a primitive instinct. . . the essential emancipation of women still has to come". (Life, p.33) She says that woman should transcend this one pointed primitive instinct of love and try to love everyone since every human is created in the image of God. So she exhorts in the midst of the loss of one's beloved ones due to the killing through the concentration camps and other man made calamities. "I know that we must not lose ourselves so completely in grief and concern for our families that we have little thought or love left for our neighbours. More and more I tend toward the idea that love for everyone who may cross your path, love for everyone made in God's image, must rise above love for blood relatives. Please don't misunderstand me. It may seem unnatural—And I see that it is still far too difficult for me to write about, though so simple to live." (Life, p.175) As a person who has experienced carnal, bodily love and pleasure, one can notice the transformation of Etty into the often interpreted *agapaic* love, surrendering everything for the other in freedom where love become a responsibility. Etty has transcended herself to a divine love where total submission and surrender to the other is taking place in absolute freedom which enables one to take even risks for the sake of the other. The other is becoming a part of herself, and her actions are not because of the selfish genes that may be carried by her in the hope of the survival of the common pool of the same genetic material often interpreted by the sociobiologists as the basis for altruism. However, it is indeed a conscious decision that is made for the other in love for the better future of both the individuals. This stunning remarks reveal the inner transcendence of Etty that she reached by the end of her pilgrimage in life. (Hillesum, 2002, P. 81)

And suddenly as if through clear tears, you have a vague inkling that, even as a lover, you need solitude, that sorrow, not injustice, is meted out to you and envelops you when, in the midst of an overwhelming urge to reach out to the beloved person, it suddenly dawns on you: yes, you can only develop and make complete even this apparently most closely shared fellowship, which is love, by yourself, separately; if only because in the union of strong affections you set up a current of pleasure that carries you along and finally casts you out; whereas if you are enveloped in your own feelings, love becomes a daily task performed on your own self and a constant series of bold and magnanimous challenges to the other. Beings who love each other in this way call up infinite dangers around them, but they are safe from the petty risks that have frayed and crumbled so many great emotional beginnings. Because they always hope for, and expect, the utmost from each other, neither can wrong the other through limitation; on the contrary they incessantly create space and breadth and freedom for each other.

Even this *agapeic* love gushes out of her love towards God. Thus, one can find in her the holistic account of love in its vertical and horizontal dimensions, namely towards God and fellow human beings. Beautifully she expressed it as a prayer. "My love of life is so great and so strong and calm and makes me so grateful that I shall refrain from putting it into words again. There is such perfect and complete happiness in me, oh God. What he called "reposing in oneself." And that probably best expresses my own love of life: I repose in myself. And that part of myself; that deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call 'God'."

Because of her intimacy with God, she is melting with tenderness. And to be remembered that she was living in the context of the extermination camp, where all kinds of human limitations such as hunger, anger, injustice, persecution, suffering, lack of freedom, helplessness, anxiety, violence, etc are existing in its fullness. Even in this drastic context it is remarkable that Etty was capable of expressing tenderness and calmness not only in words, but love affirming through smiling and cheerful actions. "I was sometimes filled with an infinite

tenderness, and lay awake for hours letting all the many, too many impressions of a much too-long day wash over me, and I prayed, "Let me be the thinking heart of these barracks. And that is what I want to be again. The thinking heart of a whole concentration camp. I lie here so patiently and now so calmly again that I feel quite a bit better...". When she could not withstand the suffering she asks God why He is doing these things to His beloved people! It is a cry of despair in the midst of love, as if the only hope too is abandoning, the ultimate state of despair! "God Almighty, what are You doing to us? The words just escape me. Etty hope not for herself, but for the entire humanity. She is not fearful of her own death, but she is hopeful about the love and goodness that would be brought in the future. Her suffering is the birth pangs for a harmonious and peaceful future; a new civilization of partnership, love and glory. The horrors of the present will be washed away by the future. Suffering, according to her, leads to liberation and magnificence that will make one stronger in the soul. Even in the midst of horror and violence, Etty sees the dawn of the magnificent future, a resurrection. The words are self revealing. (Hillesum, 2002, pp. 616-617)

All I wanted to say is this: The misery here is quite terrible; and yet; late at night when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire. And then, time and again, it soars straight from my heart – I can't help it, that's just the way that it is, like some elementary force – the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent, and that one day we shall be building a whole new world. Against every new outrage, and every fresh horror, we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves. We may suffer, but we must not succumb. And if we should survive unhurt in body and soul, but above all in soul, without bitterness and without hatred, then we shall have a say after the war.... Life here hardly touches my deepest resources – physically, perhaps you do decline a little, and sometimes you are infinitely sad – but fundamentally, you keep growing stronger.

In the last letter she wrote to her friend Christine and thrown into the outside from the wagon that would take her to the death

camp, she confirms her belief in God as he is the tower, the beacon which is guiding her life. She rejoices and helps others to sing even when almost absolutely sure that they were moving to be butchered by the Nazis because of their race. She thanks her friend for all the kindness she received. It is thanksgiving and no bitterness at all in her heart. Etty became a love transmitting and reverberating heart. These words will definitely wells up our eyes! (Hillesum, 2002, p. 658)

Christine, Opening the Bible at random I find this: "The Lord is my high tower." I am sitting on my rucksack in the middle of a full freight car. Father, Mother and Mischa are a few cars away. In the end, the departure came without warning. On sudden special orders from The Hague. We left the camps singing. Father and Mother firmly and calmly, Mischa too. We shall be traveling for three days. Thank-you for you for all your kindness and care.... Good-bye for now from the four of us. Etty.

As a concluding note one can read in the diaries Etty's credo. "And I also believe, childishly perhaps but stubbornly, that the earth will become more habitable again only through the love that the Jew Paul described to the citizens of Corinth in the thirteenth chapter of his first letter." Love flowing from the heart of Etty, it is not a love evolved from eros, but from transcendence, transformation and a continuous experience of God in every moment that suffering, pain and tribulations are coming from a loving God though at all times she could not understand the meaning of it; but as a close friend she asks Him, why? But she doesn't complain, she is in thanksgiving, rejoicing and hopes for the future, the day horror will be transformed into love! A love that does not count, that understands . . . the beautiful teaching of love given by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 13 is a sum total of Etty's life vision.

Between 20 and 21st of June 1943 Etty and her family was picked up by the Nazi authorities and placed in the Westerbok concentration camp. Before that Etty was working for the Jewish Council. On 7th September the whole Hillesum family was deported from Westerbok to Auschwitz. Etty's parents probably died on the way to Auschwitz or soon after reaching the concentration camp. The date of their death was given as 10 September 1943. According to the Red Cross information, Etty died in Auschwitz around 30 September 1943. Her

two brothers Mischa and Jaap also perished in the concentration camps. The whole family burned in the fire of the cruelty and atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime in the name of race and purity. However, the light that emerged from the candle is now lighting the whole world with love. Etty is an example that a human person can survive on God who primarily represents security, inner riches and source of riches, in a barbaric world where humanity and human dignity are deleted.

Holistic account of Love

The growth of God in her is expressed by Etty as the growth of a child in the womb of its mother. As the baby is kicking which the mother could experience and enjoy, Etty enjoys the presence of God and feel it even externally and that gives her peace, security and happiness. (Hillesum, 2002, p. 85)

A strong straight pillar is growing in my heart, I can almost feel it growing, and around it all the rest resolves; I myself, the world, everything. And the pillar is an earnest (symbol) of my inner security. How terribly important this is for me, being in touch with my inner self! I don't go on losing my balance or tumbling from one world into the next...Something is being consolidated within me, I seem to be taking root instead of continuously drifting, but it is still no more than the fragile start of a new and more mature phase. You must keep watching your step, little one, but I am well pleased with you all the same, your pulling through, truly, you are pulling through..."

Thus to the question, who is Etty, it can be said that she is indeed a chronicler of our times; who celebrated the flesh, the trivial, the carnal, the external and yet lived without anchoring in any of these. Like a medical doctor, she diagnoses the problems of our times because she herself had gone through that madness and the celebration of the body and found her lover after chasing many physical bodies. Her head led her to the heart and in the heart she found the pure love that was within her and buried deep inside her beyond the objectivity. That is why she feels that she herself is the symbol of our times and she felt that she had to reveal everything in its bare nakedness like Augustine in a confession to cleanse as if like a catharsis and then

move towards the love that only can quench the thirst of all human search. Etty found it any inhumanity, indignity or violence did not deter her from experiencing it. This strong rock foundation in a loving God enables her to live a life of calmness and peace in the midst of all atrocities and murder about which she was aware. That is why she could write about like the mystics! "The sky is full of birds, the purple lupines stand up so regally and peacefully, two little old women have sat down on the box for a chat, the sun is shining on my face – and right before our eyes, mass murder. The whole thing is simply beyond comprehension." She wanted to describe this bipolarity which she experienced in her and in the world. Thus she is the chronicler of herself and of our times and shows how to reconcile and hope for the future holistically and in love. A chronicler of the chaos of herself and of the humanity, which moved from mythos to logos, from myths to rationality and from there towards a leap into the darkness, a state of faith and of security that which is beyond all anxieties.

I want to live to see the future, to become the chronicler of the things that are happening now (downstairs they are screaming blue murder with father yelling, "Go then!" and slamming the door; that too, must be absorbed, and now I am suddenly crying since I am not all that objective really and no one can breathe properly in this house; all right, make the best of it then); oh yes, a chronicler. I notice that over and above all my subjective suffering, I have an irrepressible objective curiosity, a passionate interest in everything that touches this world and its people and my own motives. Sometimes I believe that I have a task. Everything that opens around me is to be clarified in my mind and later in my writing. Poor head and poor heart, what a lot there is still in store for you. Rich head and rich heart, you still have a lovely life, though, both of you. I have stopped crying. But my head still throbs. It is sheer hell in this house. I would have to be quite a writer to describe it properly. Anyhow, I sprang from this chaos, and it is my business to pull myself out of it.

The bipolar account of rationality and irrationality, reason and faith, truth and falsehood, good and evil, Etty tried to merge all of

them through her life experience. She synthesized the theory and praxis, God and human, immanence and transcendence, all integrated in her own faith in God. She described that deep experience in search of the truth thus: "Truly, my life is one long hearkening unto myself and unto others, unto God. And if I say that I hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside of me." Etty who could not withstand the idiosyncrasies of her mother, is capable of accepting with thanksgiving the atrocities against her and humanity and still can sing the songs of joy and keep a heart filled with love towards God and fellow human beings. This is indeed a remarkable transformation model for all generations. A heroic life that was born into the gutter, pierced by the rays of the divine grace, evaporated and transcended towards heaven, travelled with the stars and eternally remained there as a shining star even when suffering and tribulation were there as a beacon of hope and peace. She is the St. Augustine of our times who confesses her own weaknesses and the glory of the love of God; she purified her desire for the body and immersed herself in the desire for the infinite. She is the St. Francis of our age who consoles others in times of tribulations knowing her murder is at hand yet she consoled others! Etty, an ordinary woman who is also talented, polished herself and burned herself in the crucible of love went beyond logotherapy of Frankl with her vision for the future, and expressed her meaning in God and the transmission of that meaning as love towards her fellow human beings through actions of kindness and joy. Etty is a symbol of achieving meaning, hope and transcendence irrespective of the context. Etty compliments logotherapy and explains what is meaning! Meaning for her is love in the surrender and submission to God and taking up the responsibility for the other to create a world of love and peace which gave her ultimate happiness, wholeness and holiness.