

# New Machines, Old Ghosts and the Bigger Soul: Opening for the Eschatological Gift<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The experience of post-Soviet Lithuania suggests that the reductive coercive industrial, mechanistic reconstruction of the human and social world need not prevail. It is especially instructive because the collapse of Soviet project was also a rupture – a period of overall spiritual, cultural, political openness and creativity. Christian faith played an important part in resistance prior to this renewal and resurged in manifold ways contrary to what might have been expected. But while this period was characterized by eschatological moods and promise, its realization felt short. As similar moods resurge, the article will look at this brief moment of openness to the future through the lens of the trinitarian reflection on the activity of the Holy Spirit. The article will contend that the notion of the “event” of the Holy Spirit as eschatological Gift is crucial to assess its potential for ongoing theological engagement, offering a view of human activity and creativity.

**Keywords:** post-Soviet Lithuania; Yves Congar; Chinghiz Aitmatov; Holy Spirit; eschatology

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## Introduction

News cycles and popular imagination are captivated by technological developments. The attempts to decipher the effects of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and automation follow, societies grow accustomed to their presence. Anxieties abound – their effect on employment, use and misuse in education, arts and entertainment – but also excitement. Scenarios range from optimistic to apocalyptic. There are striking similarities in some of them with artistic imagery of the late Soviet epoch. Familiar “ghosts” return in the dystopian vision of industrial and technological effects on human person and social fabric. Perhaps we are undergoing momentous change? The experience of post-Soviet Lithuania suggests that the reductive coercive industrial, mechanistic reconstruction of human and social world need not prevail. It is especially instructive because the collapse of Soviet project was also

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a rupture – a period of overall spiritual, cultural, political openness and creativity. I will look at it theologically because Christian faith played an important part in resistance prior to this renewal and resurged in manifold ways contrary to what might have been expected. But while this period was characterized by eschatological moods and promise, its realization felt short. As similar moods resurge, I will look at this brief moment of openness to the future through the lens of the trinitarian reflection on the activity of the Holy Spirit. I will contend that the notion of the “event” of the Holy Spirit as eschatological Gift is crucial to assess its potential for ongoing theological engagement. It is essential to a wholesome view of a human activity and creativity.

## Machines, Work and the Bigger Soul

Contemporary researchers of automation look at technological development in the light of what went before and signal that the undergoing change is immense. Thus, also, will be the effects of technological, social and political developments on human freedom, agency and flourishing more generally. I take cue here from Carl Benedict Frey. Even if contemporary experiences seem disorienting, there are historical precedents. What for Bill Gates is the paradox of our age – “innovation is faster than ever before ... yet Americans are more pessimistic about the future” – for Carl Benedict Frey is not a paradox at all.<sup>2</sup> Frey, approaching the issue of contemporary innovation through history with an eye to political economy, gives a helpful analysis and discernment in assessing these developments.<sup>3</sup> His exploration of the advances in automation and the rise of living standards in the Industrial Revolution distinguishes between “replacing” and “augmenting” technologies. He shows that living standards did eventually rise in the long run, but reminds us that “the short run can be a lifetime for some.”<sup>4</sup> This indicates that we are undergoing a momentous change which will seriously affect large swathes of people. Frey helpfully does not look at technology in isolation. There is a hope in his contention that the challenge is not primarily technological,

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2 Carl Benedict Frey, *The Technology Trap* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019), 10, 11. The quote from Bill Gates is from E. Brynjolfsson, 2012, *Race Against the Machine* (MIT lecture), slide 2, <http://ilp.mit.edu/images/conferences/2012/IT/Brynjolfsson.pdf>.

3 Carl Frey, *The Technology Trap*, 13, 21.

4 Frey, *ibid.*, 295.

but that of political economy. “In a world where technology creates few jobs and enormous wealth, the challenge is a distributional one. The bottom line is that regardless of what the future of technology holds, it is up to us to shape its economic and societal impact.”<sup>5</sup>

He insists on the relation of the technological and political, with the latter having to discern and ensure the flourishing of society. There is a dynamism in the technological development that can bring in human and societal flourishing. But also indisputable is the novelty this particular technological advancement brings to human experience and activity in the world. But perhaps this novel development introduces something which is liberating? James Steinhoff challenges the optimistic claim that AI and full automation “heralds the collapse of capital under the weight of its own contradictions” as some say Marx has predicted.<sup>6</sup> Steinhoff looks at AI, understood as “an automation technology” as an “AI industry” and demystifies the optimistic concept of “immaterial labour” which some have associated with AI.<sup>7</sup> He uses Tiziana Terranova’s bleak image to make his point: “The Marxian monster of metal and flesh would just be updated to that of a world-spanning network, where computers use human beings as a way to allow the system of machinery (and therefore capitalist production) to function.”<sup>8</sup> For Steinhoff, rather, “AI work presents us with yet another example of the fragmentation, deskilling and automation of labour.”<sup>9</sup> While these images suggest a new era, this era does not suggest the future of human empowerment, quite the contrary.

This is perhaps best illustrated by Phil Jones in *Work Without the Worker*. The marginalized workers stand invisible behind the automated dream

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>6</sup> Steinhoff refers to Marx, “The Fragment on Machines”, in *Grundrisse*: “by mechanizing and automating labour processes, capital ‘works towards its own dissolution as the form dominating production.’” James Steinhoff, *Automation and Autonomy* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 46, quote from Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 700.

<sup>7</sup> Steinhoff, *Automation and Autonomy*, 2. “Immaterial labour” refers to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). The argument Steinhoff seeks to dispel is that the information technologies through “the proliferation of information technologies” the “immaterial labourers [...] can obtain an increasing autonomy from capital. Eventually, they can throw off capital completely and transition to a new autonomous mode of production.” Steinhoff, *Automation and Autonomy*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 87. This is not a Terranova’s point, but this is precisely what Steinhoff argues for.

<sup>9</sup> Steinhoff, *ibid.*, 8.

world of smart devices. They clean data and oversee algorithms in “badly paid and psychically damaging tasks” to make digital lives possible.<sup>10</sup> And, this, according to him points to the end or the apocalypse of work as we know it. The whole concept erodes as the distinction between formal and informal work dissolves, work is becoming precarious, contingent and badly paid.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the substantial connection between work and wage is disrupted, the process of work is fragmented into small chunks.<sup>12</sup> This has an effect on how the human being is viewed. There is a shameless reference to “humans-as-a-service,”<sup>13</sup> when occupations turn into pseudo-occupations, this alienates “memory, knowledge and tradition, [...] experience itself” and “work as a way of life.”<sup>14</sup> The picture shows that this erosion cannot be limited to the non-Western world but actually penetrates into all corners of the world. However, this should not hamper human imagination, but on the contrary, call for new utopias.<sup>15</sup>

For Aaron Bastani the apocalyptic moods are not at all the accounts of resignation. They are rather the calls for struggle, movements and summoning of new Utopias. In *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (FALC) Bastani proposes such a utopia based on the post-scarcity (in labour, energy, resources, health and sustainability) which is driven by the automation.<sup>16</sup> As to the distorted image of the human being, the utopia spills over into renewal of human agency and participation.<sup>17</sup> He finishes with the third part which is called “Paradise Found.” According to Bastani, ours is a rapidly changing world

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10 Phil Jones, *Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2021), 13.

11 Jones, *Work Without the Worker*, 16, 39. The work is “by default informalized, parcelled into badly paid, erratic piecework, and torn from the regulatory frameworks that legislate pay and rights.” Jones, *ibid.*, 80.

12 *Ibid.*, 81, 84.

13 92. Reference here is to Jeff Bezos’ marketing of Amazon Mechanical Turk, referring to Moritz Altenreid, “The Platform as Factory: Crowdwork and the Hidden Labour behind Artificial Intelligence,” *Capital and Class* 44/2 (2020).

14 Jones, *Work Without the Worker*, 120, 125.

15 On the movements and organization of the wageless and Utopias, like “a Microwork Utopia”, see Jones, *ibid.*, 228.

16 Aaron Bastani, *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (Verso, 2019).

17 “[...] technology is of critical importance, but so are the ideas, social relations and politics which accompany it. Thus in making sense of how we arrived at the present, from AI to synthetic meat, we must look at social movements – from Indigenous land rights to protecting animal welfare – as much as the underlying dynamics of extreme supply. Bastani, *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*, 239.

calling for new utopias, “because the old ones no longer make sense.”<sup>18</sup> Several intersections emerge from these readings from contemporary literature on automation. First, it is the effect of technological and political overlap on human experience through human activity of work. It is, according to their account, predominately alienating, disrupting social fabric, numbing human beings, thus destructive. Consequently, this requires political imagination and intervention adequate to the developments in scale and depth. Secondly, its sense of urgency testifies to the emergence of overwhelming challenges extending to the core of human experience. It is here, in this intersection of social, experiential and technological that an apocalyptic and even religious language resurfaces. This, thirdly, calls for and invites a theological perspective and engagement adequate to participate in discussions concerning human agency and creativity.

The distinction of “mechanical” and “mystical” by French philosopher Henri Bergson can pave the way for a theological perspective. Bergson proposes that mechanical evolution is at its source mystical.<sup>19</sup> What was to become mechanization is for him connected with the first “yearnings after democracy.”<sup>20</sup> Human being can rise above earthly things, and towards “open” society, only if “powerful equipment” allows humanity not to be “obsessed by the fear of hunger.”<sup>21</sup> The development was to lead in this direction, but instead it turned not to the liberation of all, but luxury and comfort for the very few. The essence of mechanization, which began as a spiritual impulse, but proceeded automatically, mechanically, was distorted.<sup>22</sup> It was left with the body extended out of all proportions and with the soul “too small to fill

18 Bastani, *ibid.*, 243.

19 For Bergson in is “the mystical summons the mechanical.” Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 298.

20 Bergson, *Two Sources*, 296. This has to be viewed in the light of Bergson’s distinction between “open” and “closed” society, described as “two types of motivation [...] obligation and moral aspiration [...]. The first acts as a type of pressure, a centripetal movement of closure, fostering a closed model of society (or association) and a static form of religion. The second is an outward, dissociative and centrifugal movement, bearing within it the seeds of open sociability and dynamic spirituality.” John Mullarkey and Keith Ansel Pearson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings* (London: Continuum, 2002), 39.

21 Bergson, *Two Sources*, 298.

22 Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey point out that for Bergson if closed morality is obedient to the law, open morality works by “‘appeal’, ‘attraction’ or call,” requires a privileged personality, a hero of a religious type, thus “these mystics are creators, transgressing the boundaries of life, mind and society in their inspirational morality. [...] In crossing all frontiers, mysticism goes ‘beyond the limits of intelligence’, the

in [...] too weak to guide" this body.<sup>23</sup> Thus initially the mystical summoned the mechanical, but now this body, larger, "calls for a bigger soul, and that mechanism should mean mysticism" and "mechanization will find its true vocation by enabling humanity, to stand erect but look heavenward."<sup>24</sup> The last sentences of Bergson's book are particularly telling:

"Mankind lies groaning, half crushed beneath the weight of its own progress. Men do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not. Theirs the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods."<sup>25</sup>

This is a kind of mystical humanity, where the "mysticism of 'dynamic religion'" means a sovereignty over things but not human beings.<sup>26</sup> Bergson's concept of mystical, its effect by attraction, and the role of "mystics" allows for the possibility of a spiritual or religious event to inscribe itself on a mechanized (or automatized) world. But it also might appear unduly optimistic as to human agency. Bergson wrote the book in 1932. I read it from a post-Soviet Lithuanian perspective. What this perspective provides is comparable to the literature from automation and has to be kept in mind before returning to Bergson's proposal with a theological proposal.

## Complications of Post-Soviet Lithuanian Experience

For a person who grew up in Soviet Lithuania and then witnessed its transition to the Western world, an encounter with apocalyptic language is not new. It is not the first time in my life-time that the apocalyptic moods come with the questions of personal and political agency, and the struggle for freedom and creativity. Precisely such feeling accompanied the times of Lithuanian restoration of its independence in the 1990s. Independence came after the years of resistance to Soviet regime with the prominent role

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ultimate end of mysticism being to establish a partial coincidence with the creative effort which life manifests." Mullarkey, Pearson, *Henri Bergson*, 42.

23 Bergson, *ibid.*, 298

24 Bergson, *ibid.*, 299.

25 *Ibid.*, 306.

26 *Ibid.*, 299.

in it duly attributed to the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania. The Soviet atheist regime sought to dismantle its communal structures and forcefully secularize the society by industrializing it.<sup>27</sup> It is possible to compare this experience to that from the literature on the new social reality of work with its effects on human experience, but also introduce the dimension of faith. Arguably, this was also a coercive atheist regime, however, sociologists have successfully compared the two industrializations, Western and Soviet, especially in their effects.<sup>28</sup> Then came the collapse of the Soviet regime and a resurgence which had many dimensions, not only spiritual, but also political, ecological, cultural. Resurgence of religious life was also abundant. Such event thus raises two questions. Firstly, keeping in mind the effort at dismantling the religious life and its relation with industrialization, what does a mere presence of this revival tell about the depth of its effects? Sociologists have pointed out that Roman Catholic Church helped to resist russification and played a role in consolidating civil society. However, this role was not sufficient to deal with the challenges that came with democratic pluralism and adjusting to developing and westernizing institutions.<sup>29</sup> So, secondly, what was the theological significance of this event, what was its depth and implications for life of the society if any? Can, in other words, this event be assessed as mystical event of the growth of “soul” averting the effects of mechanization? To assess this, it would be first helpful to look at the artistic image exploring what these effects could look like.

To do this I turn to one of the most dystopic images of suppression of human agency and creativity which comes from the arts, literature and theater. It will help to tie together the experiences of the Soviet period and more recent discussion of effects of technological developments. It is the legend about mankurt, a person turned into non-person by removing his memory. The novel of Kirgiz author, Chinghiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*, where this legend is told, was turned into

27 This includes massive displacement of population, dismantling of rural religiosity, lay organizations, religious education, eliminating religious consciousness and promoting even secular rites of passage and state funeral houses. Arūnas Streikus, “Shifts in religiosity in the face of Soviet type urbanization: the case of Lithuania,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 48/2 (2017), 8–10, 235–249.

28 Milda Ališauskienė and Ina Samuilova, “Modernizacija ir religija sovietinėje ir posovietinėje Lietuvoje,” *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas* 2/3 (2011), 79.

29 Valdas Pruskus, “Katalikų bažnyčios kaita Lietuvoje transformacijų laikotarpiu,” *Problemos* 63 (2003), 45–61.

a stage performance and premiered in Lithuania in 1983, the last decade of Soviet Lithuania.<sup>30</sup> The drama reconstructed the almost never-ending and multilayered journey of the novel of a protagonist who travels to bury the body of the friend of his youth. He travels to a cemetery only to find out that there is no cemetery, but a cosmodrome. The imagery from this novel lingers in Lithuanian cultural memory, but it is not univocal. It muses about the destruction of the past, also the dawn of the “new” world brought by technology. When read in the contemporary context, the relation of memory and the “new” world brought in by technological advancement is even more pertinent.<sup>31</sup> The success of the story in the last stage of Soviet Union is itself the triumph of creativity over the repression. Yet the story’s sting remains. If human memories and the social structures that sustain them are dismantled in a new technological era what is left of human agency and creativity? Viewed from Lithuanian context, can the persons in a new society become active and creative, or perhaps servility persists? What would be necessary to truly address the effects of servility and mount a challenge to the instruments that implement it? These questions lead to explore the legend in-depth.

The mankurt image plays an important role in the novel which immerses the reader into the journey to cemetery.<sup>32</sup> Cemeteries are the places where one is surrounded by the past, but this cemetery in the novel, Ana-Beiit, is also a pantheon. It dated back to the times when Kazakh nomads inhabited Sarozek and this land was attacked by the other people, cruel Zhuan’zhuan. The legend is about the young captive nomad warriors, whom the Zhuan’zhuan turned into slaves. The details of the cruel method betray a gruesome intent:

30 “Ilga kaip šimtmečiai diena,” *Menufaktūra* (premiere 1983), <https://www.menufaktura.lt/?spk=28709>; “Eimunto Nekrošiaus spektakliai,” *Lietuvos teatro, muzikos ir kino muziejus*, <https://ltmkm.lt/muziejus/spektaklis-kvadratas/> (accessed 29. 3. 2023).

31 Joseph P. Mozur, *The Parables from The Past: The Prose Fiction of Chingiz Aitmatov* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994) recounts how Chingiz Aitmatov probed the advantages of the late-Soviet era by inserting a chapter called The White Cloud of Genghis Khan into the novel in 1990 (124–129). But he also refers to the caricatures like “remote-controlled human beings,” ecological disaster brought about by the large scale irrigation projects, “terrifying side of technology for both man and beast” in the missile launch, and more general implication “that technology has taken away one’s basic right to be buried alongside one’s ancestors” (121).

32 Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), chapter 6, 121–147.



"First of all their heads were completely shaved and every single hair was taken out by the root. When this was completed, expert Zhuan'zhuan butchers killed a nearby nursing mother camel and skinned it. First they removed the heavy udder with its matted hair. Then they divided it into several pieces and, in its still warm state, stretched it over the shaven heads of the prisoners [...]. The man who was subjected to the ensuing torture either died because he could not stand it, or he lost his memory of the past for ever. He had become a *mankurt*, or slave, who could not remember his past life."<sup>33</sup>

The effects of the merging of human person and serving animal were illustrative and devastating. The skin of the animals constricted under the searing sun and the human hair grew into the camel's skin or unable to penetrate it, bent back. Thus, through a person was turned into "a living carcase" of the former self.<sup>34</sup> The interpenetration of human skin with that of the subservient animal made *mankurt* valuable, ten times worthier than other slaves, because he could not recognize himself as a human being: "deprived of any understanding of his own ego [...]. He was the equivalent of a dumb animal, and therefore absolutely obedient and safe [...] absolutely impervious to any incitement to revolt."<sup>35</sup> This chilling description culminates in the story of the encounter of one of the *mankurts* with his mother Naiman-Ana. She heard from travelers about a young herdsman who was talking "as if he had been born yesterday."<sup>36</sup> Naiman-Ana correctly suspected that it might be her lost son, she appeals to his memories and hopes for his awakening. The legend concludes with the mother killed by her *mankurt* son. Then, the cemetery was named after her "Ana-Beiit cemetery – the Mother's Resting Place" and carries on the memory of the encounter. The mother's image encapsulates the past, the embodied connection with one's roots. The *mankurt* kills his mother driven by fear as his master threatens that the mother will tear his slavish cap and steam his head.<sup>37</sup>

There are several aspects of the story which are particularly relevant. First, and most troubling, is the invasion through the external effects on the body (torture) into the human memories.<sup>38</sup> Yet Aitmatov does not primarily have torture in mind. Rather, according to Mozur, it is the russification of

33 Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, 124, 125.

34 *Ibid.*, 125.

35 *Ibid.*, 126.

36 *Ibid.*, 129.

37 *Ibid.*, 144.

38 "They can take your land, your wealth, even your life," she said aloud, "but who ever thought, who ever dared to attack a man's memory? Oh God, if You do exist, how did You give such power to people? Isn't there evil enough on earth without this?" (140)

Kazakhs, the manipulation of local language through “alphabet reforms” and “national delimitation of the region” in 1924.<sup>39</sup> Thus the external effects of the political actions is evident. But the servility is internalized and this leads to loss of agency, creativity and freedom as evident from the interactions of the protagonist in his journey to the cemetery. Then, secondly, the telling of the legend is interjected by the refrain, “the trains in these parts went from East to West and from West to East” and then the exchange of coded messages on the “aircraft carrier Convention” with cosmonaut controllers “on the Parity orbital station.”<sup>40</sup> These are clear images of technological advancement which precipitate the ultimate discovery that the cemetery was levelled for the sake of a cosmodrome. It is thus valid to read the image as a kind of reflection on a new human being formed through industrialization and technology, prepared for a new world, but essentially servile and unable to act in it and yearning for some external control. The key factor is the severance of the human being from the sources of personality and the reduction of his concern to the piece of skin of servile animal, the sign of servility imposed on him. This is a strong and disconcerting (not to mention pessimistic) image.

## Theological Vision of Resistance, Its Limits and Pneumatological Potential

The image carries with itself not only the effect of traumatic, violent eradication of the past. It can be read alongside with the effects of automatization on human activity and tradition mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the retelling of the legend is itself a powerful literary sign of human resistance. It is thus also possible to read it alongside Bergson’s account of the mystical and mechanical. It is even more relevant as it shows the point of the assault – human body – and human activity, work, which is an embodied social and cultural activity. Turning to the Lithuanian context this helps to appreciate the theological vision of resistance to totalitarianism. In the beginning

39 Mozur, *The Parables from The Past*, 112, 113. The essentially homogenous Turkic territory was divided into “five ‘independent’ central Asian republics” and then their distinctive contributions were encouraged. Mozur, *The Parables from The Past*, According to Mozur “throughout Aitmatov’s novel ‘dividers’ are cast in the negative light – similar to the *shiri* that constrained the memory of the the *mankurt*.” Mozur, *ibid.*, 114.

40 Aitmatov, *ibid.*, 135, 136.

of the 20th century Roman Catholic theologian Yves Congar argued that for the faith to survive, a milieu favorable to faith and to the human existence through “politics of presence” has to be recreated.<sup>41</sup> The theological rationale of this suggestion is a logic of a continuity of incarnation of faith into ever new milieus. Yet such emphasis on the milieu would present a grim picture in the context of totalitarianism and forced secularism bent precisely on disrupting it. These efforts at disrupting, however, were resisted and the remnants of the milieu were maintained.

According to Lithuanian Catholic theologian Ligita Ryliškytė, the image of Rūpintojėlis, which she uses to interpret post-Gulag experience, illustrates this.<sup>42</sup> This Lithuanian image of Christ is a wooden sculpture, a part of popular culture. Its name could be translated “One who cares” or “Dear One, who provides.”<sup>43</sup> He provides a kind of continuing touch in a popular religiosity and identifies with the spirituality of resistance, points to Christ’s suffering with and for us. However, Ryliškytė also points to the ambiguity of the image and a helplessness it projects. So, she points out the challenge post-Gulag Christology faces, “that of remodeling its approach to salvation and eschatology.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps herein also lies theological potential to cope with the new challenges.

This reference to eschatological when viewed in the context of the collapse of the Soviet regime provides a corrective to a theological perspective and invites a revisiting of the image of “mankurt.” Congar, in his later work, was aware of the limits of a focus on incarnation and ecclesiology, and called for the correction of this theological stance with an eschatological perspective. After the initial stage of his work focusing on reform of the church, he argued for a wider theological stance, interpenetrating the Revelation, anthropology and theology of the world. He argued for an “[...] even more radical idea [...] that is] the very notion of faith and the correlative idea of revelation [...] the idea of God as the living God which is the indissoluble link [...] between theology, anthropology and cosmology.”<sup>45</sup> To respond to the “modern unbelief” the

41 Yves Congar, “Une conclusion théologique à la enquête sur les raisons actuelles de l’incroyance,” *La vie intellectuelle* 37/2 (1935), 248.

42 Ligita Ryliškytė, “Post-Gulag Christology: Contextual Considerations from a Lithuanian Perspective,” *Theological Studies* 76/3 (2015), 468–484.

43 Ryliškytė, “Post-Gulag Christology,” 473.

44 Ryliškytė, *ibid.*, 479.

45 Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 23.

intimate connection between the realities of faith in God and the prospect of the divine reign had to be credibly demonstrated.<sup>46</sup>

Dealing with the issue of “mankurtism” provides a way to test this proposal. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the liberation of countries under it and the ushering in of a new era provides a setting to ask if mere revival of the past is sufficient to go forward. The movements which have led to independence, like Lithuanian Sajūdis, present an intriguing case. They cannot be explained merely as restoring the past. It was also an unleashing of creative energies, empowerment, agency, solidarity, all-about creativity. It would make sense to view it using Bergson’s categories of “mystical” in terms of its genuine openness to the future and creativity. In the Lithuanian case, it was a also “Singing Revolution,” non-violent popular upheaval, and comprised ecological, popular political dimensions.<sup>47</sup> A theological focus on the continuity of the past is not sufficient. One has to introduce an eschatological dimension to assess such an event.

## Holy Spirit: History, Gifts, Event

Reference to eschatology allows us to connect Bergson’s insights about mystical event and Congar’s theological proposal around the attention to the activity of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, when reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit in history, which interests me primarily in this article, Congar has Bergson in view. In his article “Theology of the Holy Spirit and Theology of History” Congar quotes Claude Trésmontant: “In biblical thought, as in Bergson, eternity coexists with creative and inventive time. Time is not the unfolding of what had already been given beyond time [...]. Time really is the perpetual beginning of unforeseen novelty.”<sup>48</sup> And Congar clearly has the

46 Ibid.

47 On Lithuanian Sajūdis see Martha Brill Olcott, “The Lithuanian Crisis,” *Foreign affairs* 69/3 (1990), 30–46. This article correctly marks out the importance of ecological movement beside the political. On the largest non-Catholic religious churches in “Lithuania’s bustling ‘religious market’” in post-Soviet times, see Gediminas Lankauskas, “The Civility and Pragmatism of Charismatic Christianity in Lithuania,” *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union* (2009), 108; Ainė Ramonaitė and Jūratė Kavaliauskaitė, “Who led the ‘Singing Revolution’ across Lithuania? A typology of the pioneers of the Sajūdis movement,” *Ethnologie française* 170/2 (2018), 305–318.

48 Yves Congar, *The Spirit of God* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 138.

activity of the eschatological Gift, the Spirit, in mind. "[...] The Holy Spirit is, within history, the principle of continuity or identity and the principle of newness, [...] the principle proper to the 'new creation,' which looks toward the eschaton [Congar writes 'eschatology'] and rises toward it."<sup>49</sup> This allows us to place alongside each other such an event of vibrancy and manifold creativity (including ecclesial), and the activity of the Spirit, but also to read Congar and Bergson together. In a different article, "The Holy Spirit in the Thomistic Theology of Moral Action," in which he explored the activity of the Holy Spirit in its relation to human activity, he wrote as much. He contended that with the role of the Spirit highlighted, his account "corresponds better to the morality and religion of aspiration than to the morality and religion of constraint, in the sense of H. Bergson in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932)."<sup>50</sup> Besides evident opposition to constraint, how can such an account of human activity address the challenge raised by the legend of the "mankurt?"

This can be gleaned from Congar's Trinitarian proposal, rereading a Thomist theology of action. Here the role of the Spirit is articulated in the role of "the gifts of the Holy Spirit" and "the New Law" and is set in the general picture of how creatures "are moved and move themselves toward their goal," which is God.<sup>51</sup> Over against the image of an enslaved human being under coercive external rule, it paints the picture of a human being who is free, self-determining and furthermore, creating themselves through their own actions and habits. But crucial for this freedom is that this movement is achieved by the new dynamism, the action of God in them, as God "moves" them, and this works within their very freedom.<sup>52</sup>

This presents to the complex situation of the "mankurt" a divine action, which goes beyond to that which is "outside of human persons," meaning

49 Congar, "The Holy Spirit in the Thomistic Theology of Moral Action," in *The Spirit of God*, 138, 139.

50 Congar, "The Holy Spirit," 159.

51 "God in God's properly divine life, insofar as it is communicable and is in fact communicated by grace, which communication is appropriated to the Holy Spirit." Congar, *ibid.*, 146, 147, 155. Congar provides extensive references to Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* in particular on the "gifts of Spirit" *ST* 1a2ae, q. 68, on God moving human beings through their own freedom *ST* 1a2ae, q.9, a.4 and 6; q. 68, a.3, ad2; 2a2ae, q.23, a.2; q.52, a.1, ad 3. [3]. On "New Law" *ST* 1a2ae, q. 108, a. 1 (body) and ad 2; a. 4.

52 Congar, "The Holy Spirit in the Thomistic Theology of Moral Action," 147.

the “law”, but shows a divine help through grace.<sup>53</sup> “Grace” is where Congar highlights the activity of the Spirit, through the gifts (of the Spirit) “the faithful person acts ... [beyond the human mode] ... [moved by a higher principle].”<sup>54</sup> And this “beyond the human mode” points to that which implies the activity beyond human capacities within human activity. These “gifts of the Spirit” are divine impulses and inspirations, but the role of the Spirit becomes most prominent in the event of the Spirit. This is the intervention of God personally, to give fullness to Christian practice and activity as children of God.<sup>55</sup> So, Congar argues, Thomas makes room for the “event of the Holy Spirit,” [italics Congar’s] whereby what “is settled” in morality “still calls for the event of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>56</sup> Such intervention seems adequate to address the state of the “mankurt.” But one cannot look at a human being in this obliterated state in isolation.

Congar’s look at the role of the Holy Spirit in human activity does not stop at this personal level. For him (following Aquinas) even the communal structures wherein faith is inscribed or instilled are open to the activity of the Spirit. This point is significant because it reminds us of the “mankurt’s” encounter with his mother, who appealed to his memories. Even if there were stories of resistance and dissidence to the Soviet regime, the communal fabric, the milieus, were disrupted. The immediacy of a healing and transformative encounter with the Spirit need not be hampered as Congar’s next step, “the New Law” or “the Law of the Gospel”<sup>57</sup> suggests. This new law “consists primarily in the interior grace of the Holy Spirit which produces faith, which is active through love.”<sup>58</sup> The emphasis on interior in our context points to its non-coercive, cooperative and free nature. Read against the backdrop of “mankurt”, this suggests an interior transformation adequate to the external trauma. It revives human freedom and creativity.

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53 Congar, *ibid.*, 148.

54 *Ibid.*, 149.

55 Christians “have their actions normed by something beyond the virtues, beyond reason indwelt by faith, beyond supernatural prudence – by Another, infinitely superior and supremely free, the Holy Spirit, the Third Person, to whom the operations of love and of gift are appropriated.” *Ibid.*, 149. See also Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), vol. 1, 120.

56 Congar, “The Holy Spirit in the Thomistic Theology of Moral Action,” 150, 152.

57 Congar, *ibid.*, 152–161.

58 *Ibid.*, 153.

Congar's concern is primarily ecclesial, so he writes in detail about the relation of this New Law with "the logic of Incarnation:" the necessary connection of interior grace with exterior means, "teaching of faith," "the sacraments," "precepts which order human affections and human actions."<sup>59</sup> In terms of our story what is passed on might refer to the "mankurt's" mother. Mere references to memories are not sufficient. Yet, what is passed on externally is not all there is, neither is it determinate. This "New Law is primarily the grace of the Holy Spirit."<sup>60</sup> As it is primarily the grace, then all what is external, even the letter of Scripture, is "wholly subsumed by grace," and it is because of this that "the Gospel Law or New Law can be called 'the law of freedom.'"<sup>61</sup> The picture of the human being which emerges from this encounter with the Holy Spirit is the human being who determines and who does the will of God not out of constraint, but freely and spontaneously. The structures and means that instill this are also porous to the activity of the Spirit and serve it.

## The Event of the Holy Spirit Reviewed

Congar's emphasis on the activity of the Spirit can be read with the image of the "mankurt" in mind and present a picture of restoration of human creativity and even more. There is another kind of dynamism due to the activity of the Spirit which goes beyond restoration. This activity subsumes what is external, the structures and institutions that pass on memory. However, the application to the state of "mankurtism" is not evident, neither is it clear how to apply it to the revival which surrounded the regaining of Lithuania's independence. Furthermore, this does not address the eschatological overtones of the event, and the unleashing of creative energies in the political sphere, arts, ecology. Yet for Congar the Spirit is "the eschatological Gift and the agent of fulfilment of God's plan and work."<sup>62</sup> How can it relate to Bergson's call for a growth of a bigger "soul," "mystical" for the expanded mechanized body of humanity? To begin with, Congar sees the activity of the Spirit beyond ethics and he relates his thoughts on the activity of the Spirit to Christianity at large. For him it is not a law and not a morality, while

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 153, 154.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>62</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3, 144, 145.

having law and morality, but rather the reality of grace which produces “by the gift of the Spirit of Christ” adequate qualities and behaviors.<sup>63</sup> These come by appeal rather than imposition, in a “mystical” way in Bergson’s sense, and this is precisely because of the activity of the Spirit.<sup>64</sup> In this way Congar himself positions Christianity vis-à-vis Bergson’s “mystical,” and the latter implied the events and personalities. This shows that what Congar has written about the “event of the Spirit” should be extended to apply his theology of the Spirit to the social and political realm.

I propose that to do this the notion of “event” of the French poet and philosopher Charles Péguy as identified by the contemporary French philosopher Camille Riquier is key. Firstly, there is an inscription of the spiritual into the socio-political. Riquier shows that Péguy has extended Bergson’s notion of inscription to include social and political dimension.<sup>65</sup> This means, that for Péguy there is “no idea without a body, no mind without matter, no event without the promise for the world.”<sup>66</sup> So, if Bergson in his explorations of the relation of body and mind focused on individual memory, Péguy looked at the memories that resonated together and enveloped individual memory and took “dimensions of a people and a civilization.”<sup>67</sup> This “insertion” is “an event” and Riquier marks out that for Péguy it encompasses the extraordinary scope of God and world, so that in it the temporal roots are plunged into eternity.

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63 Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 2, 126.

64 “[Christianity] is an ontology of grace which involves, as its fruit or product, certain attitudes that are called for and even demanded by what we are [...]. The Spirit [...] is a law imposed not by pressure, but by appeal, as Bergson commented in his book *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932).” Congar, *ibid.*, 126.

65 “Everything is in the incorporation, in the incarceration, in the incarnation. And here again, in this matter, we are compelled to speak the Bergsonian language, and will never speak another. Everything is in the insertion, and insertion is extremely rare. Of God there has been only one incarnation, and even of ideas there are very few incorporations. When, instead of considering an idea in the air, it is all of a sudden taken seriously, this is what is and makes a revolution. And history counts only three or four of these great upheavals.” Charles Péguy, *Notes on Bergson and Descartes: Philosophy, Christianity, and Modernity in Contestation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 153.

66 Camille Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l’événement,” in Debaise Didier, *Philosophie des possessions* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2011), 197–232, 197.

67 “If, for Bergson the body is the point of insertion of individual memory, i.e. what realizes and limits the spirit [mind], for Péguy a people, a race, a homeland, a world must serve as a body if a political and social spirit [mind] is to realized.” Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l’événement,” 201.



This is its theological aspect of reaching beyond the contemporary situation. This eternity for Péguy, Riquier explains, is “not the eternal eternity of God, but rather a temporal eternity” whereby humanity reaches out to its roots in God to receive a “nourishing sap.”<sup>68</sup> The “event” consequently is a point of intersection “between the ascending, vertical line of human race and the horizontal line of time” is the birth or event.<sup>69</sup> Congar was aware of this relation between temporal and eternal when he classified Péguy under “natural analogues of prophecy.”<sup>70</sup> Reading alongside Péguy’s “event” Congar’s “event of the Spirit” acquires or is inscribed into the socio-political realm, with memory acquiring a spiritual dynamic of reaching beyond to eternity. This can be placed alongside Congar’s earlier mentioned remark on the activity of the Holy Spirit in history.

Secondly, there is a parallel in emphasis on “within” and the experiential dimension. Riquier shows that for Péguy the event is not something which can be explained “from without” nor reduced to historical account. Participation in the event is a Bergsonian “integral experience,” not the one of becoming familiar with the thing and then having sympathy for it, but rather an intimate knowledge of participation “I only know a real event when I live it, body and soul, even if I have to return to it from within my memory as time goes by.”<sup>71</sup> [*italics in the original*] It has a “within” character. Riquier refers to a major opposition of Péguy between history/analysis [*Clio*] and Memory/intuition [*Mnemosyne*], where *Clio* as daughter should come after not before.<sup>72</sup> If history revolves around the event and multiplies perspectives on it from the outside, memory “enters it and knows it from within.”<sup>73</sup> This “within” is compatible with the “within” character of Congar’s event of the Spirit and allows it to be seen as social and political. Such an overlap indicates the potential porousness of the social and political events for the activity of the Spirit if both accounts are viewed together. Furthermore, it also situates

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68 Riquier, *ibid.*, 203.

69 *Ibid.*, 203 quoting Charles Péguy, *À nos amis, à nos abonnés*, in Charles Péguy, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, édition présentée, établie et annotée par Robert Burac (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 1313.

70 Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 186, 195.

71 Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l’événement,” 205.

72 Major opposition in Charles Péguy’s book *Clio*, found in English in Charles Péguy, Alexander Dru and Pierre Manent, *Temporal and Eternal* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001).

73 Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l’événement,” 205.

the “within” of faith within the larger scope of revived creativity, so a comparison might be extended with Congar’s role of the Spirit in virtues and spiritual gifts. Péguy reflects on the liveliness of what was initiated by the event. What gives grace to short-circuit time, “never grows old,” and “opens a crack to let in, even for an instant, a new beginning,”<sup>74</sup> is the “supernature (holiness) [...] grace, hope essentially counter-habit.”<sup>75</sup> As was already shown from Congar, for his, grace was the activity of the Spirit, this allows to see it in socio-political setting.

Thirdly, and this is where the political dimension of the “event of the Spirit” can be delineated, are parallels with Péguy’s reflections on the revolution. Riquier shows that for Péguy revolution “is not imposed on a people from the outside, it comes from (the depths of) within, and is for each individual a matter of inner conversion.”<sup>76</sup> It comes from “within,” and thus binds together what has been just said with the social movements. Yet for revolution to have a real novelty, there is “the probe” to be launched “into a deeper tradition if it was to make ‘a deeper humanity emerge and arise than the humanity of the tradition it opposes’<sup>77</sup>: ‘a revolution essentially amounts to delving deeper into the unexhausted resources of inner life.’”<sup>78</sup> This allows this “probe” and connection with the sources to be read together with a revolutionary event as an eschatological event of the Spirit. And the eschatological dimension can be extended even further, as Péguy’s reflections on socialism and Christianity indicate. For Péguy, Riquier writes, “the new socialist city, if it is to exclude no-one, must be older than the old Christian world, and solidarity must spring from a ‘deep attachment to life’, from an animal or even vegetable ‘rootedness’ that the Christian still lacks.”<sup>79</sup> This allows us to see the event of Sajūdis as an opening to the encounter with the eschatological Gift with a potential to

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74 This new beginning then “like Monet’s first *Nymphaea*, which contains all the following ones.” Riquier, “Charles Péguy. *Métaphysiques de l’événement*,” 210.

75 Ibid., quoting from Charles Péguy, *Notes on Bergson and Descartes*, 238. This disobeys the universal law of aging, and the event which springs from its interweaving with temporal, cannot be explained linearly by looking at causes and effects but is “time cut by eternity.” Riquier, “Charles Péguy. *Métaphysiques de l’événement*,” 211.

76 Riquier, “Charles Péguy. *Métaphysiques de l’événement*,” 217.

77 Riquier quotes from Charles Péguy, *Avvertissement au Monde sans Dieu* (1904) in Péguy, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, 1305.

78 Riquier, “Charles Péguy. *Métaphysiques de l’événement*,” 221.

79 Ibid. Riquier quotes Charles Péguy, *Toujours de la grippe* (1900), in Péguy, *Œuvres en prose complètes*, 463.

renew all life, and faith here could have a role to deepen it and permeate the venues the event opens up for it.

This comparison enables envisioning within our post-Soviet experience the “event” of Sajūdis as a locus of event of the Spirit, an activity of the eschatological Gift. On the one hand, it was overwhelming, capturing and enabling, and on the other, interweaving personal, political, even, ecological awakenings. While faith played an important part in resistance to Soviet experience, this novelty cannot be explained as its result. This novelty itself revived and gave birth to faith in a new context and socio-political fabric. Inscribed within this movement faith required new forms and was challenged by the new tasks. And while feeling eager, it soon enough has faced its limits. True, “mankurtism” was substantially addressed by this event “from within” in the revival of the whole society and its fabric, but it was not a decisive break with it. Subsequent years would reveal the fragility of this experience. Both faith and society did not have adequate ways to reflect on the novelty which overtook it. It is here that the notion of “event” viewed as an encounter with eschatological Gift might play an important role. With its restoring, interweaving and fulfilling availability, but also its non-coercive fragility, this Gift allows for reflection, reorientation and further engagement. On the one hand, our Lithuanian experience challenges the pessimism with which Péguy views the “modern, capitalist, bourgeois world.” In it for Péguy “temporal powers and spiritual powers” go in parallel without intersecting.<sup>80</sup> We have experienced this “insertion,” the event, the loss of which Péguy laments.<sup>81</sup> On the other, what Péguy writes about attunement to “soul,”<sup>82</sup> can be reread

80 Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l'événement,” 227. Riquier refers to Charles Péguy, *L'Argent* (1913), *Œuvres en prose complètes*, vol. 3, 791, 789, 790.

81 This pessimism echoes the situation of “mankurt.” According to Riquier for Péguy the world “has lost its point of insertion in the real, just as it continues to abandon the event, each time it takes place, in favor of its historical inscription.” Riquier, “Charles Péguy. Métaphysiques de l'événement,” 228.

82 Riquier, *ibid.*, 231. Riquier calls Péguy new Hypatia and quotes him about Hypatia's attunement with Hellenic soul “with an accord so deep, so interior, reaching so deeply to the very sources and roots, that in total annihilation, [...] when the whole world was going out of tune for the whole temporal life of the world and perhaps for eternity, she alone remained attuned even in death.” Charles Péguy, *Bar-Cochebas*, (1907), *Œuvres en prose complètes*, vol. 2, 658. So for Riquier Péguy “enslaved by the modern world, he wants to be faithful to the memory of vanished worlds, so that dialogue beyond his generation can be renewed, and in the hope that the event can once again occur and take us into itself.”

as the attunement with the eschatological Gift, ever available and potent to produce “event” and unravel its potential.

## Conclusion

This article began from the contemporary reflections on the role of the new technologies and their effects on contemporary society, human activity and experience more generally. I have asked what are the possible ways to think about the connection of mechanical and spiritual in the development of human society and turned to Henri Bergson’s call for “a bigger soul.” But read from the post-Soviet Lithuanian experience this issue evoked the memories and imagery on the brink of collapse of the Soviet regime. The image of the “mankurt” invited us to reflect on the depth of the effect oppressive industrialization has on human beings, their agency and creativity. Our Lithuanian experience, especially the revival of faith communities, fragile and arguably momentary, allowed for a challenge to the pessimism and pointed to the eschatological dimension. Could this address the call for “a bigger soul” and address the challenge of “mankurtism”? I have argued that with a closer look at the activity of the Holy Spirit and expanded notion of “event,” it does. The overwhelming event of the Spirit carries with itself restoration, reconnection with all life and opens what is closed for the future. But it is also a non-coercive Gift which calls for attunement and further inscription. Such rereading of the “event of the Spirit” allows us to position it to the contemporary events that denigrate human social, political and ecological existence.

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