

### The time that you are given

Beloved person,

It is (nearly) summer holidays (in the Netherlands); an outstanding time to switch off from daily life for a while. Not having to concern yourself with deadlines for a while, where you need to finish something or you need to rush to be somewhere on time. Even when you don't work anymore, it may be necessary to distance yourself from what is occupying you or what you are concerned with. It can be quite liberating to not have to follow an agenda. You can then enjoy the moment more.

Time is a special phenomenon. From ancient times humanity has been occupied with the measuring and organising of time. Apparently, there was a desire to fix time. Sun dials appeared and much later, mechanical clocks. The ancient Greeks spoke of 'chronos', meaning the passage of time. This understanding of time divides our lives into, for example, years, months, days and hours. This ensures that we can indicate in advance whether we have time for something or not or whether we can make time for something.

The ancient Greeks also had another word for time, namely the word 'kairos'. With this they meant the right moment or the right opportunity to do something. It is the time of the soul, where time seems to stand still, the time we experience when we have attention and pause to ponder. You could describe Kairos as qualitative time and chronos as quantitative time. In chronos we are doing and busy, it is time of 'having', while in kairos we are simply allowed to 'be'. It helps, if circumstances allow, that we don't let ourselves be rushed by time, but see time as an ally. Sometimes you can experience moments where, with something seemingly minor, you can mean something to the other. If it succeeds, could you call that a divine moment? How is that for you?

The poet Ed. Hoornik expressed it in the poem "Having and being" as follows:

*At school they were written on the board.  
The verb having and the verb being;  
With this time, eternity was indicated,  
The one reality, the other show.*

*Having is nothing, is war. Is not living.  
Is being part of the world and its gods.  
Being is, lifted above these things,  
Being filled with divine pain.*

*Having is hard. Is body. Is two breasts.  
Is hungering and thirsting for the earth.*

*It's just sentences, just blunt duty  
Being is the soul, is listening, is yielding,  
Is becoming a child and looking at the stars,  
And slowly being raised there.*

Eternity and transience. Moments of attention, silence and connectedness can be of value in many of life's circumstances. Sometimes there are situations where it feels as though life is unfair or unnecessarily harsh. For example, when you are confronted by the finiteness of life in a young family. A man or woman must continue without their partner, or a parent loses a child. Sadness and loss can cause almost indescribable pain. It is so moving to see when people succeed in integrating loss into their lives. It doesn't happen by itself and sometimes it doesn't work out.

When we use the word "eternal", there is something intangible in this because we have no conception of how long that is. How can we let our voice be heard in eternity during the tiny length of time that we have on earth? What do we say with, and often also without, words?

It is important to ponder time for a short while, to reflect on the things you do. Not only in times when life is hard or difficult, but also in times of lightness and joy. Just as, centuries ago, the Greeks searched for words for the value of time, so too we are now occupied with giving meaning. The time that is given to me could be much shorter than originally thought. My life matters and influences future generations. That requires me do good things *now*: for myself, my fellow human, my surroundings and the earth which we have on loan from our children.

With a warm-hearted greeting,  
Martien Hoendermis and Paul Joor



Again and again, we baptise young and old with our meaningful body of thought