

Life as a Pilgrimage.

John Bunyan and the Modern Life Course

Frits de Lange

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Better, though difficult, the right way to go,

Than wrong, though easy, where the end is Woe.

(*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 39)

Protestantism is not only a religious conviction but also a culture. It did not only create churches and doctrines but also shaped people. American and Northern European culture cannot be imagined without the Protestant, and in particular the Calvinist ethos. Calvinism, according to Ernst Troeltsch in his *The Social Teaching of Christian Churches*,^[1] has been the most important entity of Christendom in history to shape culture after Thom-ism. Max Weber's classical study on the *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*^[2] made the connection between economic rationalism and utilitarianism on the one hand and the way Protestants conducted their lives seeking assurance of salvation on the other. Without Calvin – or rather, without Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards – no capitalism. The same kind of relationship has been posited between radical liberal democracy and Calvinism.^[3] The equality of every believing individual before God serves as a model for a 'one man one vote' political culture.

However, Calvinism did not only puts its mark on our economical and political culture, but also on psychology and morality, not only on the public domain but also on the soul of the citizen. In this article I want to investigate how Calvinism has contributed to the development of a view on the course of a human life that continues to be dominant in our political culture. In contemporary social philosophy and public policy a person's course of life is described as a 'biography of choice', an individual 'trajectory' that is not determined by being embedded in external facts (age, phase of life, class), but by one's personal reflexive choices for which the individual is responsible all through his/her adult life.

In his by now classical *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Anthony Giddens has depicted the life course of this modern self.^[4] He describes the self of the high modern individual as a reflexive project (32). Self-identity is a matter of reflexively organized life-planning (5). Under the circumstances of modernity the life span becomes an *internally referential system*, an entity of meaning by itself, isolated from its

historical and social environment. (145ff.) Giddens mentions a number of disembedding mechanisms that are distinctive of modernity.

1. Life span is detached from *time*. The individual life trajectory is seen as a distinct time segment apart from the cultural and historical setting in which it is embedded. Traditions become tools.
2. Life span gets detached from *space*. The natural environment in which a person lives is arbitrary. It does not determine a person's identity, but conversely becomes the object of choice in terms of one's life planning.
3. Life span also gets detached from any external *kinship* ties. They too become the objects of choice in a certain sense, by becoming dependent on commitment.
4. Life span is organized around '*open thresholds of experience*', no longer around ritualized passages. There is a decrease of collective ritual. Each transitional phase in the trajectory of life tends to become an identity crisis and is often experienced that way by individuals.

In this article I want to present an experiment in *moral archeology*. What is the cultural-historical background of the 'biography of choice' of the reflexive self? My thesis is that this idea has deep roots in the religious mythology of modern Western civilization. I argue here that the biography as an individual trajectory of choice has found a fertile religious breeding ground particularly in continental Protestantism as it was developing. It is more than a social-philosophical concept; it is also a primal story put together so cogently by modern Protestants in the 16th and 17th centuries that it still dominates the western world, even though for many its religious charge has evaporated.

In this article I will be looking for 'elective affinities' (Weber, German edition, 77: 'Wahlverwantschaften'; a concept borrowed from Goethe; the translation, p. 91 gives the flat 'certain correlations') between the Calvinist idea of the Christian's pilgrimage on earth and the dominant liberal myth of the biography of choice. I will concentrate on Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and the view on life course elaborated there. I will go about it as follows. I will start with the metaphor of the life course as a pilgrimage. Via a brief glance at the way Calvin uses it in his dogmatic instruction and Jonathan Edwards in one of his sermons, I will arrive at Bunyan, for whom it is the primary image in his literary depiction. The form and content of his *The Pilgrim's Progress* so profoundly determined the horizon of the imagination of millions, that they were no longer able to make a reflexive distinction between a metaphorical life course *construction* and their own life span. Their life *was* a pilgrimage to eternity. Bunyan turned the individual pilgrim into more than a doctrine or a metaphor. Like no other he contributed to the shaping of his myth.

The Life Course as a Pilgrimage

We must distinguish between the life course itself and *depictions* of the life course, to indicate that life course ideas are not an ontological datum but a cultural construct. What happens to people between birth and death can be called their life span. But as soon as one *tells* what happened, one construes. Life course depictions are the result of interpretive activity. 'Interpretive practice is the situationally sensitive interactional practice through which people construe and represent reality.' [5] People use stories to make sense of their changing lives in time. These individual constructs are in turn embedded in 'collective representations' (Durkheim) that can be markedly different from each other culturally and historically. Life course, stages of life, transitions in life - 'they are not just things experienced or encountered; they are interpretations assigned to experience.' [6]

In the life course construct as an interpretive practice, metaphors play an important part. Metaphors are more than a creative instrument of language. They are an intrinsic part of how we proceed in reality and experience it. [7] Besides a cognitive, they also impart to life course conceptions an emotional dynamic; besides a descriptive, they also have a driving and persuasive power. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) distinguish between imaginative and conventional metaphors. Using *vital conventional metaphors*, handed down to us by cultural and worldview traditions, we structure the experience of the life span. If one sees one's life as a struggle, one is always competing or expecting resistance. This person's life is about winning or losing. Others see their lives as a dance or a game of chess, an adventure or a mission, a school or a prison. Each of these elementary images influences one's relationship to others (partner, playmate, challenge, object, fellow-sufferer), one's attitude regarding the future, evaluation of the past, current choices, etc.

'Life is a journey' is a conventional metaphor that derives its vitality from the fact that it closely fits the fundamental physical experience of space and time. As long as human beings have walked upright, have travelled from A to B and told others about it, they have interpreted their lives or the life of their community in terms of travel, quest, passage, voyaging, pilgrimage, exile, homelessness, homecoming, wandering, sojourning, etc. Gilgamesh, Odysseus (his name means: wanderer, traveler (by foot), pilgrim), Abraham, Virgil (Aeneid), Dante (Divina Commedia), Chaucer (Canterbury Tales), Swift (Gulliver's Travels), Defoe (Robinson Crusoe) - life as a journey is central myth of the Old, but also of the New World; it did not only determine the self-understanding of Homer, of Israel (via the Sinai desert to the Promised Land) and of the Christian faith community (the way of the cross), but also the frontier mentality of the American citizen (Robert Bellah), and the collective realm of the imagination of successive Hollywood generations. [8]

In the pilgrimage metaphor the image of the life journey receives an – equally archetypal – religious interpretation.^[9] After all, the pilgrimage phenomenon is almost as old as humanity. Almost all religious traditions find the sacred in some *place* and celebrate movements to, from, and around this place. According to anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner pilgrimages must be regarded as a rite of passage, in which people either collectively or individually go through three phases: 1. a separation or detachment from the ordinary that leads to an ambiguous ‘outsider’ status, 2. a ‘betwixt and between’ phase of ambiguity – a walking in the margins termed ‘liminality’ – which then produces reincorporation with a new stability (aggregation), and 3. the resumption of ordinary life.^[10]

In the history of Western Christendom the pilgrimage has become an established practice (Jerusalem, Rome, Compostela). Unlike primitive rites of passage, Christian pilgrimages are voluntary, can take place any time, are undertaken by individuals (even if they travel in groups), and, most of all, challenge society by turning participants away from earthly concerns to heavenly ones.^[11]

In its ordinary non-metaphorical sense, a pilgrimage is a journey from an earthly home into the world to visit a sacred destination. Pilgrims often hope to return home but cannot expect to do so. When used as a metaphor, the pilgrimage is a metaphor for choosing a life lived from a spiritual perspective. Religious discourses persistently invoke the language of the pilgrimage, depicting human life as a meaningful journey, whether or not believers expect individual salvation. The Latin word for pilgrimage – *peregrinatio*, derived from *per agros*, ‘through the fields’ – grounds the pilgrimage journey in its physical process, its choice of homelessness on a temporary or permanent basis.

Via the influential theology of Augustine the pilgrim metaphor becomes firmly anchored in Western spirituality. It exemplifies the spiritual journey to God that the individual believer must make as well as the fortunes of the elect community of faith, the city of God on earth on its way to fulfillment. The *Confessions* have been characterized as an ‘Odyssey of Soul’, a ‘*peregrinatio animae*’.^[12] According to Augustine pagan spirituality is a spirituality of cycles in which one gets lost and stuck, whereas Christian spirituality is about ascendance, progress, salvation.^[13] For the earthly life of the Christian is true: ‘so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a stranger to God, he walks by faith, not by sight’ (*City of God*, XIX, 14; cf. 2 Cor. 5:6; also Phil. 3:20; 1 Petr. 2:11; Hebr. 11:13; Ef. 2:15). With Augustine the emphasis is on being a foreigner, the provisionality of this life and the corresponding abstention (*uti, no frui*) in which the Christian must live.

Calvin: the Pilgrimage as Heavenly Pedagogy

In modernity the significance of the pilgrim metaphor shifts. The Reformation had an aversion to pilgrimages. After all they were closely connected with the adoration of the saints and with the suspicion of a works-righteousness.^[14] At the same time there is the rise of civil society with its emphasis on individual agency and active subjectivity for which Protestantism creates a religious framework. Also the conduct

of daily life in a ra-tionalizing world of labor hardly allows for the lengthy interruption of one's professional life that a pilgrimage requires. From an institutionalized practice of a temporary interruption of daily life, the pilgrimage becomes a metaphor for the daily 'inner-worldly' life of the Christian as such. Calvin's theology reflects the future-oriented, but at the same time continually threatened shape of the existence of the rising bourgeois culture.

His verdict on the pilgrimage as a practice is negative;[\[15\]](#) yet it becomes one of his beloved metaphors for the Christian life course.[\[16\]](#) It is right next to another central metaphor, that of life as a *struggle* against the powers of evil. That struggle can only be fought by carrying the cross. A Christian should suffer the calamities in life with equanimity, in anticipation of the deliverance he – as a soldier waiting for the morning; the gender bias is ob-vious – is yearning for. They serve to educate and discipline him in humi-lity and watchfulness. The second metaphor for the Christian life em-ployed by Calvin is that of a journey or pilgrimage. In his life the traveler should steer a course for heaven. Struggle and journey, *agon* and *hodos*, these two have been widely accepted metaphors for the life course since Homer. An intriguing passage from the *Institutes* shows how Calvin puts these conventional metaphors into a new framework. The life span is an active quest for improvement toward personal perfection.

But seeing that, in this earthly prison of the body, no man is supplied with strength sufficient to hasten in his course with due alacrity, while the greater number are so oppressed with weakness, that hesitating, and halting, and even crawling on the ground, they make little progress, let every one of us go as far as his humble ability enables him, and prosecute the journey once begun. No one will travel so badly as not daily to make some degree of progress. This, therefore, let us never cease to do, that we may daily advance in the way of the Lord; and let us not despair because of the slender measure of success. How little soever the success may correspond with our wish, our labour is not lost when today is better than yesterday, provided with true singleness of mind we keep our aim, and aspire to the goal, not speaking flattering things to ourselves, nor indulging our vices, but making it our constant endeavour to become better, until we attain to goodness itself. If during the whole course of our life we seek and follow, we shall at length attain it, when relieved from the infirmity of flesh we are admitted to full fellowship with God (Calvin, Inst. III, vi, 5).[\[17\]](#)

We don't belong to ourselves; we belong to God, according to Calvin (III, vii, 1). Life derives its value from what God in his grace has planned for it. From that point of view the Christian life is a test, a learning process, an exercise 'in the school of Christ' (III, ix, 5), a pedagogical journey to eter-nity. Apart from that, the present life only deserves contempt (*contemptus mundi*). 'If heaven is our country,

what can the earth be but a place of exile? If departure from the world is entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulchre, and what is residence in it but immersion in death?' 'whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord', Calvin repeats after the apostle (2 Cor. 5:6) (III, ix, 4).

The Reformation brought about a spiritual turnabout. We do not bring about our salvation, but in his grace God elects us to it. So the believer does not need to hold on to God (or his salvation), but conversely, as the chosen one he must be maintained in salvation by God. The believer does not need to grimly guard the new God-given existence himself. He must give God space to reveal Himself in it. The believer becomes an instru-ment of God's grace. 'As an "elect" person the individual has no value of his own, but as an instrument, to be used for the tasks of the Kingdom of God, his value is immense' (Troeltsch, 589).

Even though we will never reach the goal of an existence totally devoted to God, we should actively pursue the perfection that befits a life elected by God. 'Sanctification' is the watchword: a life commensurate with justification. The ethos resulting from this is one of constant self-denial. It struggles against greed, ambition, and the hunger for power and earthly fame that keeps people from a theocentric existence.

The passion of the Protestant is aimed at the glory of God. Calvin calls him to the mortification of the flesh and the virtue of temperance. In the service of God he must learn to keep his passions in check.^[18] Not that they would bring people in this world closer to happiness; Calvin is no this-worldly eudaemonist in the Aristotelian tradition. But because it better equips us for our pilgrimage to eternity.

In a second passage in which Calvin works out the life course meta-phor, the virtue of temperance is central:

For if we are to live, we must use the necessary supports of life; nor can we even shun those things which seem more subservient to delight than to necessity. We must therefore observe a mean, that we may use them with a pure conscience, whether for necessity or for pleasure. This the Lord prescribes by his word, when he tells us that to his people the present life is a kind of pilgrimage by which they hasten to the heavenly kingdom. If we are only to pass through the earth, there can be no doubt that we are to use its blessings only in so far as they assist our progress, rather than retard it. Accordingly, Paul, not without cause, admonishes us to use this world without abusing it, and to buy possessions as if we were selling them (1 Cor. 7:30-31).

But as this is a slippery place, and there is great danger of falling on either side, let us fix our feet where we can stand safely. (...)

Let this be our principle, that we err not in the use of the gifts of Providence when we refer them to the end for which their author made and destined them, since he created them for our good, and not for our destruction. No man will keep the true path better than he who shall have this end carefully in view (Institutes III, x, 1).

The path of life is slippery on both sides. So it is important to stay in the middle. Calvin's opposition here is directed at two 'sides': against the ethics of the Stoa, the inhuman philosophy that makes people into an unfeeling 'piece of wood' by wanting to rob them of all their senses, as well as against the hedonism of those whose unrestrained self-indulgence keeps them from godly pedagogy (III, x, 3). The balanced, temperate middle is not good because it makes us happier (the *mesotes* as a way to *eudaimonia*, Aristotle), but because it enables us to concentrate our lives on God and his eternal salvation.

A number of characteristics of the way Calvin reconstructs the traditional metaphor of the pilgrimage in his interpretive practice:

1. The Christian life journey is aimed at *one transcendent goal*: a life at the service of the glory of the gracious God, an active meditation of the future life. In it all lines and patterns in the life course must consciously and actively be organized. Here we already see the entire outline of the Calvinist ethos that requires a regulation of the whole of conduct ... penetrating to all departments of private and public life (Weber, 36).[\[19\]](#)

2. The journey is *individual*. The Institutes are a book of instruction for the individual believer. For Calvin the church is primarily a pedagogical means by which believers support each other and build each other up, an external vehicle, not a goal in itself. The congregation is primarily an *institute of sanctification* (Troeltsch, 591, the German original (626) speaks of 'Heiligungsanstalt'). She is a mother, strict rather than nurturing. In Calvinism the individual gains independence over against the church.

3. Perfection is sought by rationally controlling the passions and the senses. Enjoyment has no intrinsic value but at best is a herald of eternity or a pedagogical means that points to God's goodness. There is no denial of the passions and emotions. Stoic apatheia is not a goal. Joy, but also suffering must be lived through. 'For Calvin denial of passion is a denial of the passion'.[\[20\]](#) The passions must not be denied, but they must be ruled and governed by reason. However, *rationality* in its controlled no against passionateness out of control is not an intrinsic virtue that leads to happiness, as with Aristotle, but a reflexive means by which one can effectively order one's life. For the believer who seeks the glory of God, rational reflection is an instrument of sanctification.

4. It is also striking that progress is indeed possible and acutely advisable, but that perfection is never reached. One could say that in his life span the pilgrim remains an *adolescent*, who never reaches the confident discernment of the adult or the mature wisdom of old age, even though he has the years.

'The perfection of heaven should be our mark' (Jonathan Edwards)

The metaphor of the life span as a journey continues to play an important part in Calvinism. Well known is Jonathan Edwards' sermon 'The Christian Pilgrim or The True Christian's Life a Journey Toward Heaven' (1733), a sermon on Hebr. 11:13-14 ('And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country').^[21] The subject of the sermon is: This life ought so to be spent by us as to be only a journey towards heaven.

The image of the journey is widely drawn out to speak to the heart of the hearer. We recognize the traditional elements from the biblical and patristic tradition: human life as a pilgrimage, and putting earthly life into perspective over against life in heaven, the temporal over against the eternal.

With Edwards, too, we recognize the emphasis on the individual. The entire sermon is about and directed to the individual person. Only in the very last paragraph does the sermon get a social dimension. Edwards call upon Christians to 'help one another in going this journey' and not to hinder one another. The church is not so much a community of destiny as it is a society for mutual assistance. The other is primarily a helper, a supporter. 'There are many ways whereby Christians might greatly forward one another in their way to heaven, as by religious conference, etc. Therefore let them be exhorted to go this journey as it were in company: conversing together, and assisting one another. Company is very desirable in a journey, but in none so much as this. - Let them go united and not fall out by the way, which would be to hinder one another, but use all means they can to help each other up the hill.'

What is new with Edwards in comparison to Calvin, however, is the rhetoric of *choice*. Edwards paints the stark contrast between the road to heaven and the road to hell, 'the broad way to destruction' and the 'straight and narrow way to life', and then presents it to the pilgrim to make a choice: 'You are placed in this world with a choice given you, that you may travel which way you please, and one way leads to heaven.' (...) Where can you choose your home better than in heaven?' Edwards places the doctrine of double predestination, which with Calvin had remained in the background, in the center of his theology. In 16th and 17th century Calvinism the parable of the narrow and the broad way (Matt. 7:13-14) receives a dogmatic

framework in which the believer is never sure of his eternal life but is continually faced with the choice: is my life the life of the elect or the rejected?[22] The believer can never be sure. He cannot enter into God's secret decree. What he can do, is strive to make his life that of a saint. Honoring and serving God and thus showing that one truly belongs to Him. Edwards, at the conclusion of *The Christian Pilgrim*, referring to 2 Peter 1:10: 'They who are converted, should strive to "make their calling and election sure."' [23] 'All those who are converted are not sure of it, and those who are sure, do not know that they shall be always so, and still, seeking and serving God with the utmost diligence, is the way to have as-surance and to have it maintained.' Active sanctification puts up a barrier against uncertainty and fear. It confirms for the believer that he is 'on the right road'. The choice facing him is to stay on this road. If he does not continually persevere, if he does not concentrate on growth and perfection, that could be a sign that he is a reprobate. He, who does not choose time and again, has never made a choice.

16th and 17th century Calvinism saddles the individual up with a para-dox: God's sovereignty renders him a passive object of his grace on the one hand, yet at the same time challenges him to restless activity. In order to obtain assurance regarding his eternal salvation, which is beyond his control, the believer in his sanctification in the end becomes ... himself responsible for his eternity.

The Rationalization of One's Conduct of Life (Max Weber and the Calvinist Paradox)

Max Weber devoted his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* to the culture-shaping force of this paradox. The reception of this classical work concentrated on the connection it was making between Capitalism and the Calvinist ethos. But it also keenly describes the consequences of this ethos for one's personal conduct of life. If we want to understand the construc-tion of the life course using the metaphor of the pilgrimage by Calvin, Edwards and particularly Bunyan, some of Weber's observations and ana-lyses are helpful.

Good works are essential to the Calvinist Protestant. But they are so as a 'technical means', not to buy salvation, but to allay the fear of losing one's salvation. He creates his own (i.e. the *assurance* of his own) salvation, as it were. This creation does not consist of saving up individual merito-rious accomplishments as in Catholicism, but 'in a *systematic self-control* which at every moment stands before the inexorable alternative, chosen or damned' (Weber, 115). In Calvinism the moral life remained under strain, without a priest that could relieve it now and then. The God of the Calvin-ists does not demand individual good works from his own, but a works holiness that has been raised to a system. The ethical practice of the com-mon person was 'subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole' (Weber, 117).

According to John Bunyan, any sin could destroy everything 'meritorious' that would have been built up by 'good works' - assuming a person could acquire them - in the course of one's life. Only a life guided by constant reflection can be an elect life. The Calvinist takes his *own* pulse daily, in a constant state of readiness, continually alert to any sign of elec-tion. His rational self-reflection is not aimed at introspection or contem-plateation but at systematic inspection and effective control of the conduct of life. 'The process of sanctifying life could thus almost take on the character of a business enterprise' (Weber, 124).

Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress

With Calvin the metaphor of the life course as a pilgrimage is still part of doctrine. Conversely, in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*^[24] doctrine has become part of the metaphor. The journey of Christian who moves away from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City on Mount Zion has deeply influenced the collective imagination of - primarily - the Western world.^[25] In its use of the archetypal metaphor of life as a journey, the book is far from original. But in *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan interprets and reconstructs it in such a way that this traveler has served as a model for the modern western citizen right up to the 21st century, even if he is not (or no longer) religious. Christian is no Abraham, no Odysseus, no Virgil, though he too makes his life journey. Christian is a Calvinist Protestant: he goes through life as an individual, in a broken relationship to his often hostile environment, not on earth to become happy there himself, but called to realize a higher commission. He has one goal in his life, and that is to serve the God on whom his eternal salvation depends. Constantly living on the edge of the sword, alert, living intensively, continually needing to make choices. He is oriented toward the future, does not look back with nostal-gia or resentment; he is not really attached to what lies behind him. His life is a learning process, in which maturity stands for an increased sense of reality and self-knowledge. The further on the road of life, the fewer illusions about the world and himself and the more he watches out for what could take him off his road. He is active, a real striver, doesn't give himself any rest or time. But does he really make any headway in life? Does he grow personally, does he make any progress? Finally he reaches the moment of his death - salvation - every bit as uncertain as when he started on his way as a young adult. He will never be able to blindly navigate by the wisdom of his experience of life; right before the gate of heaven yawns anew still another road to Hell.

After an easy-going youth (see *The Pilgrim's Progress'* description of Vanity's Fair, 120) John Bunyan (1628-1688), a tinker from Bedford, ends up in a lengthy and serious religious crisis around 1648; the question whether he is elect or reprobate drives him to desperation.^[26] After his conversion he joins a congregation of non-

conformists (open-minded Baptists, for whom believer baptism is not a condition for membership) in 1653 – he is 25 years old then.^[27] He becomes a traveling lay preacher. In 1660 he is arrested, because he ignores a government preaching ban. Bunyan now enters a 12-year period of continuous imprisonment. But he does keep preaching ('a measure of personal integrity', Sharrock, ix). In 1672 he becomes a minister in Bedford, where he dies in 1688.

Almost the entire *Pilgrim's Progress* is written during his first prison period, after Bunyan had completed *Grace Abounding*, his spiritual auto-biography. Started in 1670, it was almost completed in 1672.^[28] *The Pilgrim's Progress* was first published in 1678. Already during his lifetime 11 editions were published of part I. Part II (in which Christiana with her children follow the road Christian has gone earlier) follows in 1684.^[29]

Bunyan can be seen as an exponent of the prime of radical Puritanism.^[30] The Puritans created 'a new kind of Englishman', a generation of rebels and pioneers, with an earnestness and a missionary drive that was unknown up to then. Today Puritanism is associated with a restrictive morality and a culture of sexual guilt and shame. But in the middle of the 17th century it exemplified a religious and social dynamism that is comparable to Marxism in the 19th century rather than with modern fundamentalism (Sharrock, xii).

If one wishes, *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be read as an allegory of the stages of the Puritan psychology of conversion, as a picture accompanying the autobiographical *Grace Abounding*. Yet one would seriously be selling the book short if one were to read it only in *this* way. The reason it has gained such an important place in literary history is that it manages to create within itself a fictional world through literary means with such dramatic intensity that it has inescapably fed the imagination of readers for three centuries.^[31]

Bunyan uses three stylistic devices in a masterful way, the dream, the allegory, and the dialogue. The primordial myth of man who must do battle on his way through life, receives a masterful reinterpretation within the strict Puritan coordinates of a Bible reading convert who is restlessly trying to gain assurance of his eternal salvation.

'This Book will make a traveller of thee,

If by its counsel thou wilt ruled be;

It will direct you to the Holy Land,

If thou wilt its directions understand:

Yea, it will make the slothful active be,

The blind also delightful things to see.'

(Bunyan, Apology, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 8)

The narrator is dreaming the entire story from the first person point of view, and has the reassuring overview in time and space that the other characters – continually subjected to new dangers and temptations each of which could have been fatal – lack. Christian, the central figure, is in fact the only one whose character acquires psychological depth. His partners in discourse are more or less allegorical types that sometimes only get a place in the narrative because of their names. Only Faithful and Hopeful, companions for a long time on his journey from the City of Destruction to Celestial City, receive clear personal outlines.

A short survey of the narrative is perhaps helpful. Christian is still called Graceless, when he, desperately concerned about the salvation of his soul (What shall I do to be saved?), leaves wife and children on the recommendation of the Evangelist and goes on his way to Wicket Gate. Obstinate and Pliable, two fellow townspeople, try in vain to persuade him to return. The company ends up in the Slough of Despond. Pliable gives up and returns home. Christian, assisted by Help, continues and meets Mr. Word-ly-Wiseman, who represents middle class wisdom. He refers him to a town called Morality, where Legality lives with his son Civility. A perfect place where Christian could go live without the burden on his back and reunited with his family. But terrified by Mount Sinai that seems to overwhelm him, he is placed on the narrow way by Good Will.

'GOOD-WILL. This is the way thou must go.

CHR. But, said Christian, are there no turnings nor windings, by which a stranger may lose his way?

GOOD-WILL. Yes, there are many ways but down upon this, and they are crooked and wide. But thus thou mayest distinguish the right from the wrong, the right only being straight and narrow (Matt. 7:14).'

Next Christian ends up in the House of the Interpreter, the catechetical school for meditation and Bible study where – via meeting the children (!) Patience ('he stays for the best things') and Passion ('he will have all now'), among other things – he is led to the cross. There he is delivered from his burden. Christian experiences a moment of subjective assurance of salvation, although it does not last long.

But this moment of conversion is just the beginning of the temptations and dangers that still await him. Christian remains prone to having subjective doubts; there is still a long practical-spiritual-knowledge-way to go to reach the corresponding objective salvation truth. Here the literary form turns the book into a book of comfort: the reader knows what Christian does not yet know: that he will be saved. A breathtaking journey filled with action follows, alternated with quiet moments at stopping places where Christian receives instruction. Christian must overcome resistance and remain vigilant right up to the moment he wades through the river of death. Christian meets Formalist and Hypocrisy, climbs the Hill Difficulty, falls asleep – a deadly sin for a Calvinist! – in the Arbour, where he leaves his scroll (his admission ticket to the Celestial City). Next he is allowed to relax in Palace Beautiful, where he is received by Piety and Prudence, women that represent the middle class Puritan family and give Christian the feeling of being at home. In the meantime he is allowed to catch a glimpse from afar of the Delectable Mountains. But then he must first descend into the Valley of Humiliation for a terrible struggle with the diabolical monster Apollyon that is armed to the teeth. He escapes the Valley of the Shadow of Death ('a very solitary place') and continues his journey with Faithful. Together they meet Talkative, who does eloquently articulate the faith, but falls silent when Christian presents him with what is essential: 'The soul of religion is the practicable part. Their ways part.'

The journey continues via Vanity Fair, where the pilgrims are exposed to the seductions of the marketplace of life ('an imaginative shorthand for all the pride and show of the acquisitive life' (Sharrock, xxi). [32]'You are not yet out of the gun-shot of the Devil', Evangelist warns Christian and he is proved right: Christian and Faithful are taken prisoner, assaulted, and condemned to death after a lawsuit. The arrest of Christian and Faithful and the lawsuit against them bring to mind the fate of the dissenters in 17th century England, but also point to the first time Christians were persecuted. Faithful's sentence is carried out; Christian survives.

He will not remain alone for long; a new fellow-pilgrim joins him, Hopeful, and he will accompany him to the gates of the Celestial City. Together they meet tempting conversation partners like By-ends, Mr. Money-love, Mr. Hold-the-World. A relaxing stay along the River of the Water of Life is followed by a terrifying confrontation with Giant Despair and an imprisonment in Doubting Castle, that drives Christian to such despair that he starts thinking of suicide. The temptation of *acedia* [sloth] is always present. The Key of Promise enables the pilgrims to escape, after which an idyllic and comfortable stay awaits them in the Delectable Mountains that Christian once had only seen from afar.

Once more new encounters with hypocrites and self-deceivers follow. Certainty with regard to truth remains controversial, the temptation to settle for less than the absolute remains great. This is apparent from the long but futile conversation with a fellow-pilgrim, Ignorance. A complicated character that misleads himself in all sincerity. It appears he is unable to carry out the painful self-examination of the truth seeker (*Christian: Who told you that thy heart and life agrees together? Ignorance: My heart tells me so.*). The attempt at his conversion fails. Apart from this fellow traveler

there is also a pilgrim they come upon because he has turned back: Atheist. He so radicalizes doubt that it has become his certainty: salvation is an illusion, the heavenly city an optical illusion.

Finally both pilgrims enter the land of Beulah where seeing the Celestial City makes them sick with yearning to enter it. First a dramatic crossing of the River of Death awaits them before the angels welcome them with the sound of trumpets. Ignorance, trailing behind, is denied entry; he did not have the necessary certificate. He is led away. 'Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of De-struction ! So I awoke, and behold it was a dream.' Thus run the last lines of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The Art of Dialogue (but Especially of Ending it)

Why did *The Pilgrim's Progress* have such a long effective history? First and foremost because it is a popular book of the people, written by an unlettered tinker in the style of working class people. But *The Pilgrim's Progress* does not only owe its success to its breadth, but also to its depth, to its dramatic intensity. The book must have kept its readers in breathless suspense because of the extraordinary urgency of the narrative. Christian's soul is at stake in every encounter. In the dramatic journey past the Slough of Despond, the Hill of Difficulty or Vanity Fair, in the encounters with Apollyon, Giant Despair, and Ignorance, 'Bunyan provides the reader with a vocabulary and a topography according to which they can think about and plan their own spiritual lives.' Is it not easier to imagine fighting Giant Despair than getting over a depression? *The Pilgrim's Progress* supplies a role model for the individual that helps him defend himself against a hostile world. Christian's radical quest for the salvation of his soul is more important than the prevailing values of society. Worldly Wiseman, Formalist, Hypocrisy, Civility, Legality – the representatives of conventional wisdom are no match for the individual seeker of truth. Christian refuses to compromise in any way for the sake of peace and quiet. Life is a constant struggle against sloth and against one's own recognized weakness – the inner enemy – to make do with less. This takes painful observation, analysis, and self-criticism.^[33] With this, *The Pilgrim's Progress* appeals to the reader in a way that transcends the doctrines of grace, salvation, and faith in which it is embedded. It individualizes the reader; it makes him responsible for his life course. The obstacles along the way represent opposition that must be resisted, not inevitable fate.

For however much others accompany Christian on his journey, in the end what holds true for the destination is that: 'you must obtain it by your own faith' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 136).

After his conversion at the cross, Christian wears a spiritual armor that proves to be indispensable in his struggle with the heavily armed monster Apollyon – a climax in the allegory – the demon of spiritual doubt. The pilgrimage leads Christian through a hostile landscape. Except for a few oases of rest and security (Palace Beautiful, the meadows of the Delectable Mountains), the road leads across steep mountains and through wilderness, and Christian walks in the dark. For the most part, the world is a topo-graphy of obstacles: the Slough of Despond, the Valley of Humiliation, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Vanity Fair, and so on. This traveler has a broken relationship with his natural environment. Being called means inwardly bidding farewell to what one loves and knows. The ties of birth are the ties of evil, and they must be broken. The City of Destruction is the name of ‘the place also where I was born’ (*The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 13). Christian cannot blindly trust anyone or anything. Nothing is just given to him. He must regard everything and everyone as an immediate test, an attack on his identity.

Regularly this entails a social rift. It is never a preconceived intention for Christian to say good-bye, but always the dramatic result of an uncom-promising quest for the truth in the course of which the ways part. Christian is a social ‘animal’. He continually looks for companionship and enjoys it. He notably takes pleasure in the proximity of Faithful and Hopeful. ‘He saw Faithful before him, upon his journey’, we read when he meets the former. ‘Then said Christian aloud, “Ho! ho! Soho! stay, and I will be your companion.” ... they went very lovingly on together, and had sweet discourse of all things that had happened to them in their pilgrimage’ (*The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 60).

After Faithful’s dramatic fate, Christian does not stay alone for long. ‘... that Christian went not forth alone, for there was one whose name was Hopeful ... who joined himself unto him, and, entering into a brotherly covenant, told him that he would be his companion. Thus, one died to bear testimony to the truth, and another rises out of his ashes, to be a companion with Christian in his pilgrimage’ (*The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 86). The relationship between Christian and (‘Ah Brother!’) Hopeful is intimate. They become close friends, who, after a *faux pas* on the part of one of them, will not be surpassed by each other in vicarious courtesy.

CHR. Good brother, be not offended; I am sorry I have brought thee out of the way, and that I have put thee into such imminent danger; pray, my brother, forgive me; I did not do it of an evil intent.’

HOPE. Be comforted, my brother, for I forgive thee; and believe too that this shall be for our good.

CHR. I am glad I have with me a merciful brother; but we must not stand thus: let us try to go back again.

HOPE. But, good brother, let me go before.

CHR. No, if you please, let me go first, that if there be any danger, I may be first therein, because by my means we are both gone out of the way.

HOPE. No, said Hopeful, you shall not go first; for your mind being troubled may lead you out of the way again (99).

'Two are better than one. Hitherto hath thy company been my mercy', Christian observes to Hopeful, after which he invites him again for a good talk; 'let us fall into good discourse' (119). Their journey together through the River of Death is touching as well. Hopeful takes his Brother Christian to the other side by keeping his head above water (137). Even here, in his moment of death, his 'mineness' (Jemeinigkeit, Heidegger) par excellence, he is not alone, but receives assistance.

Finally in the Celestial City both receive a warm welcome; they dive into a warm bath of fellowship. 'There you shall enjoy your friends again', is promised to them (139) and it comes true: 'They walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother, how welcome they were into their company, and with what gladness they came to meet them;' And they will be able to enjoy such company, 'forever and ever' (140).

So from beginning to end the pilgrimage is a social happening, even one of intimate friendship. At the same time there is always some distance between the fellow travelers, which is expressed by terms denoting space and speed. They encounter each other, or trail behind one another; they overtake each other, stay behind with one another.^[34] But sometimes their ways part and one loses the other's company. Christian endures being left alone as the ultimate consequence of his commitment to salvation; he never starts out with this intention. For those that do not share his commitment to the truth – like Talkative, 'a man whose religion lies in talk' (75) – the company of saints is 'too hot' (76) to handle in the end. For the saints he is nothing but a burden: 'he had rather leave your company than reform his life. But he is gone, as I said; let him go, the loss is no man's but his own; he has saved us the trouble of going from him; for he continuing (as I suppose he will do) as he is, he would have been but a blot in our company; besides, the apostle says, 'From such withdraw thyself'. Faith 'But I am glad we had this little discourse with him; it may happen that he will think of it again; however, I have dealt plainly with him, and so am clear of his blood, if he perisheth' (75).

The conclusion of some dialogues is dramatic.^[35] Especially the parting of ways with Ignorance is harsh and unrelenting: his lonely and terrible lot is his own fault, brought down on his own head by himself. Yet this last bit of knowledge does make the pain of the separation bearable again.

IGNOR. You go so fast, I cannot keep pace with you. Do you go on before; I must stay a while behind. Then they said

*Well, Ignorance, wilt thou yet foolish be, To slight good counsel, ten times given thee?
And if thou yet refuse it, thou shalt know, Ere long, the evil of thy doing so.
Remember, man, in time, stoop, do not fear; Good counsel taken well, saves: therefore
hear. But if thou yet shalt slight it, thou wilt be The loser (Ignorance) I'll warrant
thee.*

Then Christian addressed thus himself to his fellow-CHR. 'Well, come, my good Hopeful, I perceive that thou and I must walk by ourselves again.' Ignorance follows the pilgrims, 'bobbling after', and Christian feels sorry for him. But Hopeful cannot ease his mind; there probably are many more like him. 'HOPE. Alas! there are abundance in our town in his condition, whole families, yea, whole streets, and that of pilgrims too; and if there be so many in our parts, how many, think you, must there be in the place where he was born?' (130).[\[36\]](#)

The social separation manifests itself most clearly at the beginning of the allegory. Christian does not only make a break with his neighbors, but also with his family. He abandons his wife and children. After Evangelist referred the desperate Christian to the Wicket Gate, the narrator sees 'that the man began to run. Now he had not run far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it began to cry after him to return: but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on crying, 'Life, life, eternal life'. So he looked not behind him....'[\[37\]](#)

Individualism?

In the reception of *Pilgrim's Progress* the individualistic tendency in Prot-estantism was pointed out, which is said to reach its literary apotheosis here. Max Weber set the stage for this criticism. In his view Calvinistic Protestantism represents an illusionless and pessimistically-colored individualism (Weber, 104ff.). For Weber the Christian who abandons his wife and children, puts his fingers in his ears, and hastens toward the heavenly city crying out 'Life, eternal life!', is the image of the Puritan believer who in the end is only concerned with himself, thinks only of his own salvation. Only once he is saved himself, the thought occurs to him that it would be nice if his family could also join him (*Ibid.* 124). Fear of death and hell drives him on.

Weber speaks of a doctrine with an extreme inhumanity, 'a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual' (Weber, 104). With regard to the issue that concerns this human being most, the eternal salvation of his soul, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from

eternity. 'Humanity' in relation to one's 'neighbor' has, so to speak, died off' (Weber, 226, note 34).

Weber portrays the Protestant as having a kind of salvation autism. A careful reading of Bunyan corrects this image. There is an individualizing tendency in this Protestantism. But it is ethical rather than social. It makes him responsible, not necessarily lonely. Christian is a thoroughly social creature. *The Pilgrim's Progress* consists of *dialogues* to which he surrenders himself with conviction. Christian does not construe his world through introspection, but by way of a continuous conversational practice. The journey *is* a dialogue, the dialogue a journey.[38]

Bunyan's pilgrims progress from one discussion to another. For those that avoid the dialogue, like Ignorance – 'I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it the better' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 125) – things end up badly. The nature of the con-versations varies a lot. On his journey Christian enters into almost a verbal chaos. He runs into a variety of conversation styles and partners, of every degree of reliability and formality, from wrangling to debate to catechism. The discourses feature giving counsel (Evangelist), joint self-examination (Talkative), they are mirroring (Faithful) or argumentative and conflictual (the armed conflict discourse with Apollyon). The dialogue can be a public lawsuit with the stakes being life or death (Vanity Fair), but also occasion-ally a confirming and comforting conversation (House Beautiful). There is debate, religious instruction, coffee talk, gossip, cross-examination. Some-times conversations are supposed to test and try the other ('You lie at the catch, I perceive', says Talkative, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 73)[39], sometimes to tempt him, to reprimand, to invite or to instruct. The hallmark of all dia-logues, however, is that they serve the goal of finding truth and certainty. Discourse is not a value in itself, as Talkative thinks; neither is it a means of expressing feelings (that is an eschatological experience, somewhat re-lected in the conversation in Palace Beautiful). That gives the dialogues in *The Pilgrim's Progress* their impelling vitality. They have an exhorting nature, not an expressive one; the partners in the dialogue are not dwelling upon each other, but are impelling each other. They need each other to get to the truth, but at the same time the truth drives them apart.

Conversations must be useful, Faithful says to Talkative: 'Come on, then, and let us go together, and let us spend our time in discoursing of things that are profitable' (67). A discourse is profitable only if it brings a soul closer to its salvation. 'Let us talk away the time in this solitary place' Christian whispers to Hopeful, right away turning to Ignorance aloud in order to let him hear what he means by 'talking away the time': 'Come, how do you do? How stands it between God and your soul now?' (125). Truth is at stake in the dialogue, but it also only comes to light in a dia-logue. Conversation is supposed to reassure. And the art of conducting a conversation, which unmask illusion after illusion, is equally as important as fearlessly ending it at the right moment. A dialogue, according to Plato, is an exercise in friendship. Ending a dialogue, with Bunyan, is an exercise in courage.

The most dramatic moment of loneliness occurs when Christian thinks somebody will accompany him in the night of the Valley of the Shadow of Death ('a very solitary place'), but tries in vain to make a contact. The journey is not making headway any more, Christian loses his orientation, he doesn't know whether to go forward or backward. He no longer recognizes his own voice and thinks he is hearing the voice of someone (the Psalmist?) of whom he does not know whether he's there or not.^[40] Christian hallucinates. Where dialogue has become impossible, progress in life's journey comes to a halt.

Bunyan's pilgrim, I conclude, is everything but a quiet, introverted *Einzelgänger* [loner].^[41] He is a social animal, a keen conversationalist. He likes to keep the conversation with others going, to practice fellowship. Better still: he depends on it. But he does not value conversation or fellowship for its own sake and at any price: in conversation testing and checking out assurance of the soul's salvation is at stake. As soon as it no longer contributes to this, it is terminated. Christian has many companions with whom he has intensely sought eternal truth; but none of them has accompanied him all the way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. Truth surpasses loyalty.

The pilgrim intensively partakes of social life. He does not measure its quality, however, in terms of the degree of solidarity of communities or family ties, but he tests and tries those relationships on how they contribute to his knowledge of the truth. Therefore he becomes a master in forging new contacts and breaking old ones. Every conversation is an instrument. But at the same time it asks for total commitment, because it is a matter of life and death.

The Eternal Adolescent

The life span is a purposeful 'walk and talk' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 138), says Bunyan, in line with Calvin, 'from this world to that which is to come'. But does the Christian ever reach his destination? The title *The Pilgrim's Progress* gives the impression that the pilgrim is advancing, as Calvin would have liked. But that remains the question. The way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City does not run in a straight line from A to B. Bunyan puts forward the illusion of a landscape that does not fit the internal disorientation of Christian. Actually it is impossible to draw a map of Christian's pilgrimage. Illustrators will sometimes let his journey run in a spiral with the Celestial City in the middle.^[42] The scenery in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is in fact internal. Nowhere is there a fixed point of orientation, a horizon against which Christian can actually situate himself.^[43]

While space seems to have no end, hardly any time elapses in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The journey takes place in the dream of the narrator, who is now awake; it is in fact over before it has begun. Time is present as acceleration and retardation, not as

duration. Acceleration, restless hurry, is good ('It also shows you how he runs, and runs, Till he unto the Gate of Glory comes', *The Pilgrim's Progress* 8, cf. 130: Ignorance: 'you go so fast, I cannot keep pace with you'), retardation or standstill through sleep, doubt or resistance is bad (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 39). The future is present as desire, the past as memory. But they only enter the now of the dialogues as an instruction.

Thus Christian learns by remembering his earlier experiences. He guards against sleeping, for example, which almost became fatal to him at the beginning of his journey (119). It would be foolish to forget good advice. About wandering pilgrims we read 'They catched are in an entangling net, / Cause they good counsel lightly did forget' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 117). 'A remembrance of former chastisements is a help against present temptations', Bunyan notes in the margin when Hopeful warns Christian against Atheist (118). But never does experience teach him in such a way that it diminishes the danger. In *The Pilgrim's Progress* remembering is not a mental and physical process, but an act of the will, equally non-self-evident as faith.^[44] Every encounter, every event is a potential crisis. And: 'Every crisis in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a crisis of memory' (Fish, 251). Even in the River of Death Christian can still drown. At the Gates of Heaven there is still the road to hell. The path of life is not a cumulative learning process but a continuous test of the project of life.

Christian doesn't really become older and wiser in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Ages and life phases are not mentioned. We do realize that Christian is past his childhood and has renounced the sins of youth. He has left behind him the confrontation with and between the children Patience ('he stays for the best things') and Passion ('he will have all now'). More than from the fact that he has a wife and children his adulthood is shown by his self-knowledge. 'When I was come to years, I did as other considerate persons do, look out if perhaps I might mend myself', he says to Apollyon, to whom he had promised allegiance in his 'noneage' (52). But he has lost the youthful recklessness of Ignorance, 'a very brisk lad' (108). On the other hand Hopeful says 'You are the elder man' when he asks Christian for his opinion of Ignorance (130).

The Christian who finally wades through the River of Death is an ageless adult. We don't know how long his life journey has taken nor whether he ever became an old man. His quest for truth doesn't only detach him from his natural environment, but also from his natural time. It doesn't matter how old he has become. All his life he has inwardly remained an adolescent^[45], who chose reaching the Celestial City as his one and only life project without ever being certain that he could realize that plan. At any moment the assurance he has built up can be taken from him, at any moment what appears to be the truth can turn out to be an illusion. Every road has a new fork that evokes that eternal doubt again in the pilgrims: here they knew not which of the two to take, for both seemed straight before them'... (115). The school of eternal life has no grades, no promotions, and is never out.

Conclusion

The life course, rendered as a mythical fiction with Bunyan, is, just like the late modern self, a risky trajectory in which the individual's freedom of choice to actively impart a coherent shape to one's life is the determining factor. There is a clear structural affinity between the Puritan Christian who detaches himself from space, time, tradition, determined to go to heaven, and the environment and the reflexive life project of the liberal self. 350 years lie between the tinker from Bedford and the Cambridge sociologist. The religious content of Bunyan's Protestantism has completely evaporated in Giddens' world. But for both the life course is considered to be a reflexive project in which one is individually responsible for the choices one makes. *Disembedded* from his natural framework of space, time, kinship, and tradition, the modern individual seeks the truth about himself – seeks authenticity – in intensive but usually short-term relationships. He no longer seeks eternal salvation for his soul, but rather his true self, which he is trying to reflexively realize in his life project. That is his one goal in life. The Calvinist's transcendent God-ward orientation has imploded, as it were, into the active orientation of the late modern citizen toward the construction of his self as a meaningful narrative. For this, however, the self is just as dependent on others as Christian was dependent on the dialogues with Talkative and Faithful. The other is the source and guarantee of its authenticity, by recognizing its significance as a self. Just like Christian, people in late modernity start conversations joyfully and courageously end them. They have great relational mobility. Every new relationship is an opportunity for self-realization but at the same time a continuous source of crisis in their life project.[\[46\]](#)

As soon as Christian has entered the narrow gate, it is clear that he belongs to the elite of the elect. Predestination has made a positive decision regarding his eternal fate. He will arrive. Many others will not complete the journey. Here Bunyan's world appears shockingly harsh and elitist. The arbitrariness of the divine decree of grace offends modern, democratic readers. However, the ideal of the biography of choice could very well be every bit as elitist as the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Is the modern individual who manages to realize his life project not also a chosen one? Just like the pilgrim Christian he makes *free choices* from the very moment he chose to set out on his journey, again and again.[\[47\]](#) But the person who really manages to plan a life project and realize it, remains an exception.

1. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of Christian Churches*, New York 1960. (Transl. of *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, Tübingen (1912) 1919.)
2. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London 1930 (Transl. of: *Die protestantische Ethik. Eine Aufsatzsammlung* (1920), Hrsg. von Johannes Winckelmann, Gütersloh 1981).
3. Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints. A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, Cambridge, Mass. / London 1965.
4. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in Late Modern Age*, Cambridge 1991.
5. James A. Holstein/Jaber F. Gubrium, *Constructing the Life Course*, London 2000², 41.
6. We might conceptualize the life course and its various stages as descriptive resources that ordinary people use in the course of their everyday lives to 'make sense' of what they encounter as they, and those around them, orient to issues of age and change (Holstein/Gubrium, *Constructing*, 24, 29).
7. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago/London 1980, 6, claim that part of 'the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined.' This means that we tend to conceptualize metaphorically certain aspects of life in a systematic way.
8. For a recent philosophic-literary treatment, see Alain de Botton, *The Art of Travel*, London 2002.
9. About the universal scope of the pilgrim metaphor, see Mircea Eliade, *The Quest. History and Meaning in Religion*, Chicago/London 1969.
10. Victor W. Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, New York 1978, 2.
11. Robert A. Segal, Review of Victor W. and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, in: *The Journal of Religion* 60 (July, 1980), 346–47, quoted by Bonnie Wheeler, 'Models of Pilgrimage: from Communitas to Confluence', <http://syllabys.syr.edu/ETS/Pamooddy/ETS363/wheeler.html>.
12. R.J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul*, Cambridge, Mass. 1969.
13. *The City of God* XII, 14.
14. Victor W. Turner/Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 30.

15. Pilgrims believe that 'if they sweat, [they] think that every step ought to be reckoned to their account by God and that God would be unjust unless he approved of what is offered him at such a trouble' (Comm. Jer. 6:20, quoted in W.J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin. A Sixteenth Century Portrait*, New York/Oxford 1988, 62). Calvin shares his disdain with humanists like Erasmus: 'Another goes to Jerusalem, Rome, or to St. James [Santiago de Compostela], where he has no business, while he leaves behind wife and children' (Praise of Folly, XLVIII).
16. William J. Bouwsma, 'John Calvin (1509-1564)', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2002 (<http://www.hfac.uh.edu/gbrown/philosophers/leibniz/BritannicaPages/Calvin/Calvin.html>).
17. Cited as *John Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion A New Translation*, by Henry Beveridge (<http://www.smartlink.net/~douglas/calvin/entire.html>).
18. Calvin compares our 'carnal nature' with 'refractory horses, which, if kept idle for a few days at hack and manger, become ungovernable, and no longer recognize the rider, whose command before they implicitly obeyed.' We must be kept in check by discipline. (III, viii, 5). The thought that Calvin was a passionless 'Stoic' both personally and in his work in the sense of being an enemy of the emotions, is a persistent misunderstanding. Cf. Kyle Fedler, 'Calvin's Burning Heart: Calvin and the Stoics on the Emotions', *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 22 (2002), 133-162. With Calvin life is neither punishment nor feast. Life even is a blessing, to the extent that it enables us to understand something of God's goodness. Therefore it does yet contain 'one particle of good' (III, ix, 3). So we should not hate life. The blessings here are to be seen as a foretaste of what awaits us yonder.
19. A comparison with the prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* elucidates the difference. The group of travelers 'longen ... to goon on pilgrimages' and set out for Canterbury, 'the hooly blisful martyr for to seke.' But Chaucer never tells us why any of the pilgrims are making the journey. He chooses instead to let his readers answer that question.
20. Fedler, 'Calvin's Burning Heart', 149.
21. [Http://www.biblicaltheology.com/classics/JonathanEdwards/edwards71.html](http://www.biblicaltheology.com/classics/JonathanEdwards/edwards71.html).
22. With Luther God's gracious decree is a fundamental experience, but as a doctrine it remains in the background; just the opposite is the case with Calvin: the more he is at loggerheads with his dogmatic opponents, the more it comes to the fore. Only fully developed in the third edition of the *Institutes* (1643) (see book III, xx, 21, 1559 edition), and only becoming of central importance posthumously in the culture war underlying Dordt and Westminster. Calvin saw himself as an instrument in the hands of God and had assurance of his position of grace. He had but one answer to that pressing question about the assurance of salvation: trust in Christ. With Calvin personally the *decretum horribile* is not, as with Luther,

‘derived from religious experience, but from the logical necessity of his thought.’
(Weber, 102).

23. Philippians 2:12-13 also tells Christians to ‘continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling’.
24. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), Edited with an introduction and notes by Roger Sharrock, London 1965.
25. Sharrock, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Introduction. An allegory depends on an intellectual framework: ‘this = that’. But the significance of images and figures like Ignorance, Vanity-Fair, the Slough of Despond, the Delectable Mountains, the scenery and the traveler can no longer be separated from the image in which they have been incorporated. They become a symbol: the reference becomes part of the image itself. Bunyan takes traditional symbols like the journey and the struggle up again and re-styles them in a way recognizable to modern people. ‘... the image of the purposeful journey through life still has great evocative power; it is reflected in all those long fictions of which the main theme is individual growth, from Proust to Anthony Powell and C.P. Snow’ (idem, xxi).
26. ‘His vivid imagination was possessed in a simple and terrible form by the Calvinist doctrine that all men were predestinated either to salvation or to damnation; he battled with doubts of his own faith.’ (Introduction, Sharrock, viii). ‘A voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?’ (Works III, § 22, 8 cited in Barry E. Horner, Introduction. *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 7).
27. ‘Non-conformists’: a collective name for Baptists, Presbyterians, Independents, people that didn’t wish to conform to the authority of the state church; Congregationalist (see Horner, Introduction, 13). Bunyan did not want to call himself a Baptist. ‘those titles of Anabaptists [though I go under that name myself], Independents, Presbyterians or the like’ come from hell and Babylon, for they naturally tend to divisions.’ Communion with the visible saints (see Christopher Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People. John Bunyan and his Church*, Oxford 1988, 92) was possible (*ibidem*, 294). The sacraments didn’t matter that much, by the way. Bunyan shared ‘traditional protestant hostility to ceremonies: what matters is the motive of the heart, not the outward activity’ (295). Baptism concerns the individual, not the church; participation in the Lord’s supper is a duty of individuals to the church as a whole, part of the process by which flowers help one another to grow in the well-tended garden’ (Hill, 295, cf. 91).
28. Sharrock, see *Pilgrim’s Progress*, 107, note 106. For arguments for this early dating, see Hill, 197f. ‘It has the urgency, the air of absorbed self-discovery, that hangs about a prison book; and it is easy to see how its allegory builds on the first-hand experience of the autobiography’ (Sharrock, x).

29. 'Part I deals with an individual fighting alone to save his soul, which is his and only his. Part II deals with a family, a community, on the way to the heavenly city' (Hill, 200). In 1672 Bunyan became the minister of Bedford, perhaps his experience in pastorate becomes visible here.
30. He is called a 'classic Puritan', 'an experiential Calvinist' (Horner, Introduction, 9). Bunyan teaches double predestination. Election in Christ is the ground of salvation. 'Though earlier troubled as to whether he was of the elect or non-elect, yet following his conversion the truth of particular election was strongly asserted' (idem, 11).
31. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was translated into more than 200 languages and published in more than 500 editions (of which 80% were illustrated). For more than 300 years the book was an integral part of the daily life of working class Protestant families throughout the world. In many families it was the only other book next to the Bible. About its reception history, see Hill, 335 ff.
32. Before his conversion Bunyan himself was also known for his 'love for social life, sorts on Elstow Green and dancing, along with bell tolling in the Church belfry' (Horner, Introduction, 7).
33. 'I was too precise' he admits, when evaluating his relationship to wife and children (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 47).
34. BY-ENDS. You must not impose, nor lord it over my faith; leave me to my liberty, and let me go with you.
CHR. Not a step further, unless you will do in what I propound, as we.
Then said By-ends, I shall never desert my old principles, since they are harmless and profitable. If I may not go with you, I must do as I did before you overtook me, even go by myself, until some overtake me that will be glad of my company. Now I saw in my dream, that Christian and Hopeful forsook him, and kept their distance before him' (88 f .).
35. Cf. also the taking leave of Pliable: 'Well, neighbour Faithful, said Christian, let us leave him, and talk of things that more immediately concern ourselves' (61).
36. 'The elect are a small minority - perhaps one out of 1,000 men and one out of 1,000 women.' (So Bunyan, see Hill, 171.)
37. On account of this crucial passage a lot of criticism was already leveled at Bunyan after publication of the first edition; how can a Christian abandon his wife and children just like that? (Hill, 227). Starting with the second edition Bunyan therefore made adjustments: Christian defends himself (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 21 referring to Luke 14:26) and in the Palace Beautiful (a metaphor for the church community) an enduring concern emerges about the fate of his family. (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 71) The cruelty of part I was probably also an important reason for Bunyan to write part II.

38. Even in the Eternal City the prospect of 'walk and talk' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 138, cf. 140) is held out to him, but now with the Lord himself. Cf. the observation of Wolfgang Iser: 'dass das in den Dialogen sich vollziehende Geschehen das eigentliche Thema ist. Was wir von dem jeweiligen Charakter der Figuren wissen, erfahren wir durch die im Gespräch fassbar werdende Selbstenthüllung' (Wolfgang Iser, 'Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Die kalvinistische Heilsgewissheit und die Form des Romans', in: idem, *Der Implizite Leser. Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Becket*, München 1972, 13-56, 32). If the dialogue here is an image for the journey, with Plato the journey conversely is an image for the dialogue, as a locus for the more abstract dialectical progression. Socrates calls a phase in the dialogue a long and difficult way (*hodos*) and explicitly refers to the method (*methodos*). If one loses one way, one ends up in an *aporia* (literally: waylessness).
39. Some sessions remind of Calvinist *censurae*, ways of criticizing each other's behaviour in the (Congregationalist) church.
40. The dark passage is difficult to interpret. 'So he went on, and called to him that was before; but he knew not what to answer; for that he also thought himself to be alone.' Does the singer of Psalms also hear 'voices' and does he think that it is he himself? (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 58).
41. If we see Christian once going by himself, it is still in dialogue: 'Christian kept before, who had no more talk but with himself...' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*, 38).
42. Cf. the depiction on the inside of the cover of Monica Furlong, *Puritan's Progress. A Study of John Bunyan*, London 1975.
43. Hill points out that the linear sense of progress was not customary in the 17th century either. Kings that went on 'progress' were making a tour to visit their territory. (Hill, 222) See R.R. McCutcheon, 'Election, Dialogue-Wise, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*', <http://www.marshall.edu/engsr/SR1997.html>. He speaks of a circular journey. Cf. also Stanley E. Fish, 'Progress in *The Pilgrim's Progress*' in: *ibid. Self-Consuming Artifacts. The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 1972, 224-64: 'In short, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is anti-progressive, both as a narrative and as a reading experience. To be sure the illusion of a progress and of a fixed and eternal way is often present, but it is just as often undermined.'
44. Fish, 'Progress in *The Pilgrim's Progress*', 251.
45. Cf. William J. Bouwsma, 'Christian Adulthood', in: *Daedalus* 105 (1976), (77-92) 81: for the biblical ideal of maturity, all of Christian life is like adolescence, 'that stage in which the adult seems, however ambiguously, trembling to be born.'
46. See for this also Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge 1992.

47. C. Hill, *A Turbulent, Seditious, and Factious People. John Bunyan and his Church 1628-1688*, Oxford 1988, 209.