

Finding Room For God?:

A Practical Theology For Spiritual
Care In Healthcare



Expanding our Imagination

- What is imagination?
- Plausibility structures and the shaping of our worlds
- Cultural knowledge provides a range of possibilities within which we choose to make sense of our worlds

IAIN MCGILCHRIST

'A landmark new book ... it tells a story
you need to hear, of where we live now'

—Bryan Appleyard, *Sunday Times*

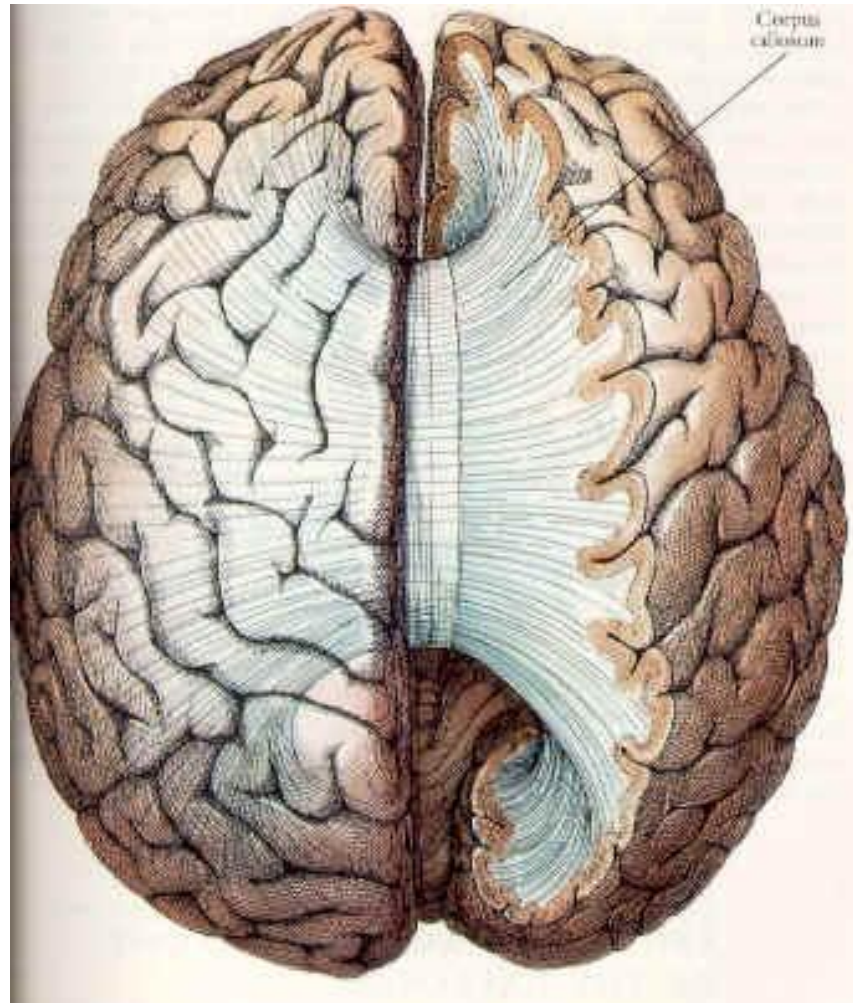


The
MASTER
and his
EMISSARY

The Divided Brain and the
Making of the Western World

Iain McGilchrist:
The Master and
His Emissary

Corpus Collosum



The Nature of Attention

- Human beings have two very different and indeed incompatible kinds of attention which need to be applied to the world at the same time.
- we use our left hemisphere to grasp and manipulate, and the right to understand the world at large and how things within it relate to one another, as well as our relationship with it as a whole.
- The issue between the hemispheres is not thinking versus feeling as has been commonly understood, but rather two very different kinds of thinking:




McGilchrist's key point is that "the hidden story of western culture ... is about how the abstract, instrumental, articulate and assured left hemisphere has gradually usurped the more contextual, humane, systemic, holistic but relatively tentative and inarticulate right hemisphere."

- In other words, it is the left hemisphere's take on the world that has come to dominate post Enlightenment western cultures, much to the detriment of culture in general, but particularly and importantly for current purposes, issues of religion and spirituality which no longer make any sense to many westerners or if they are accepted, they are demoted the realm of the private. This observation is crucial for the subject of this paper. McGilchrist puts it this way:

The Nature of Attention

“The nature of the attention we choose to pay alters the nature of the world we experience, and governs what it is we will find. This in turn governs the type of attention we deem it appropriate to pay. Before long we are locked into a certain vision of the world, as we become more and more sure of what it is we see.”



• People may be
hard wired not
to take Spiritual
things seriously!



GOD?

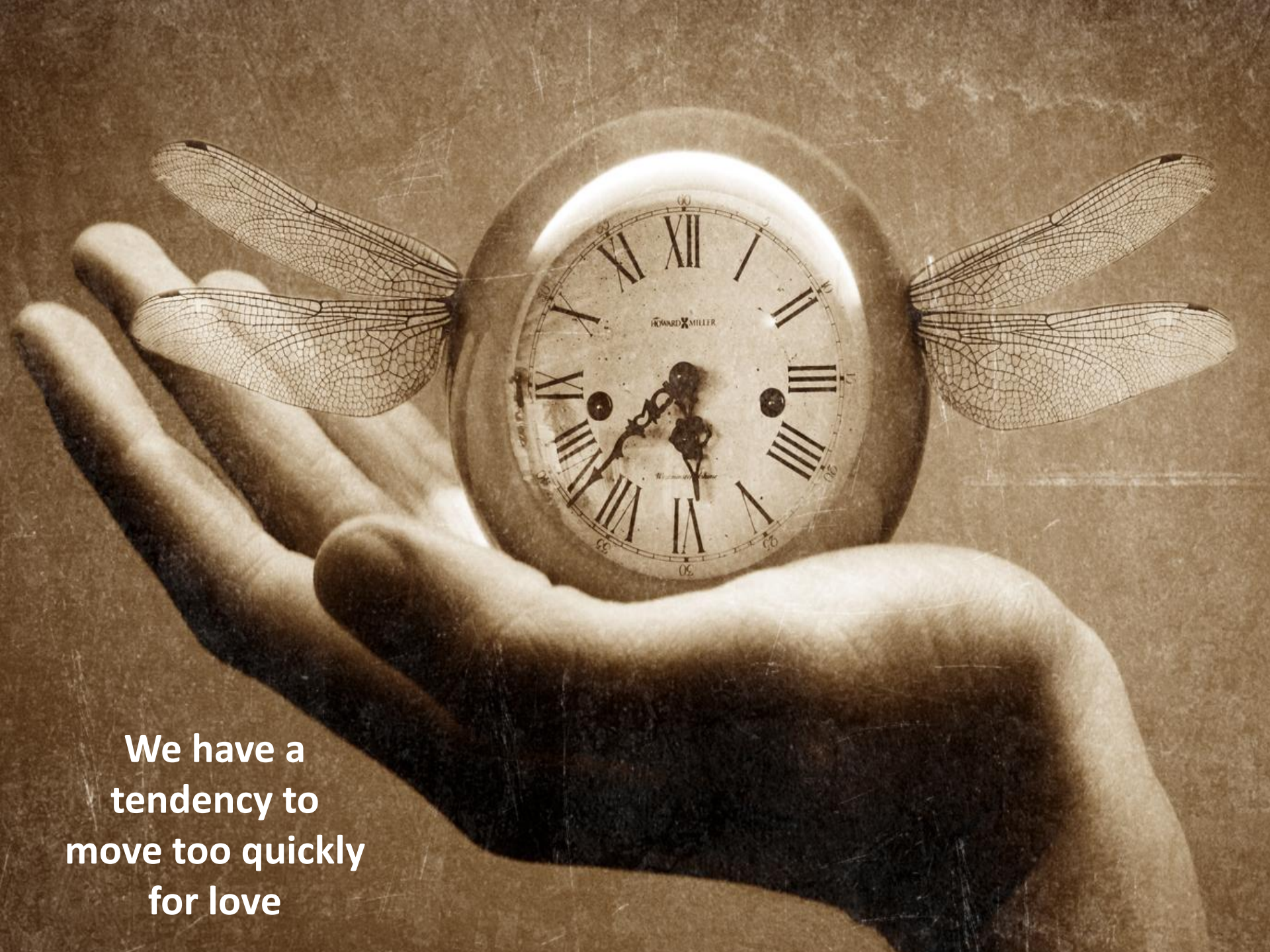
Empiricism and Philosophical
Materialism

Versus

Mystery, Wonder and Uncertainty

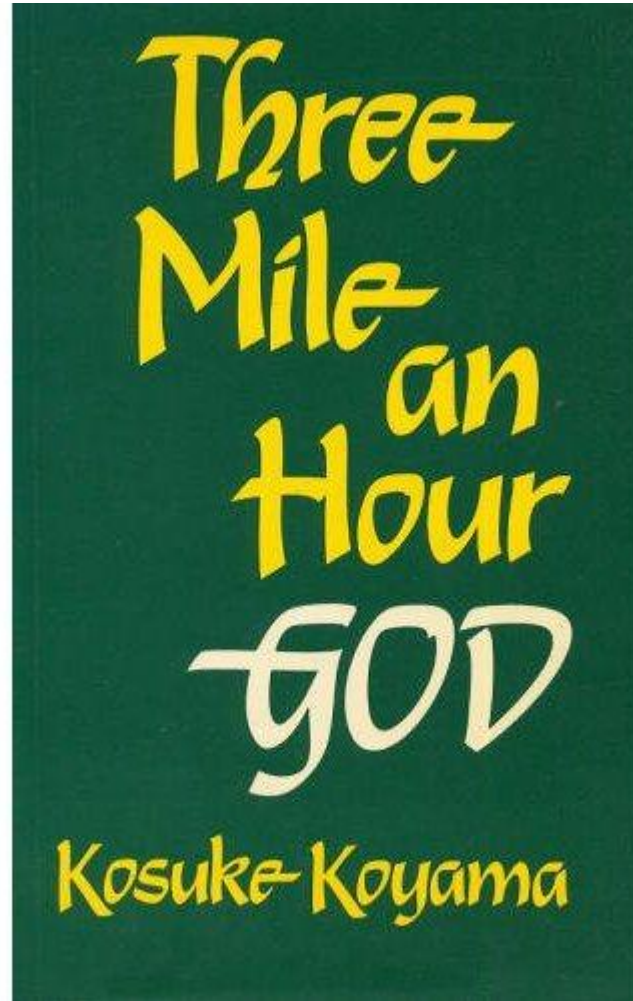
Paying Attention to the Right Things

Recovering Time




**We have a
tendency to
move too quickly
for love**

The Three Mile an Hour God



Love has its speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It goes on in the depth of our life, whether we notice it or not, at three miles an hour. It is the speed we walk and therefore the speed the love of God walks.

- (Kosuke Koyama, *Three Mile an hour God*)



*Remember the
Sabbath Day
and keep it Holy.*

Exodus 20:8



***Finding
Sabbath spaces***

**The sacrament
of the present
moment**

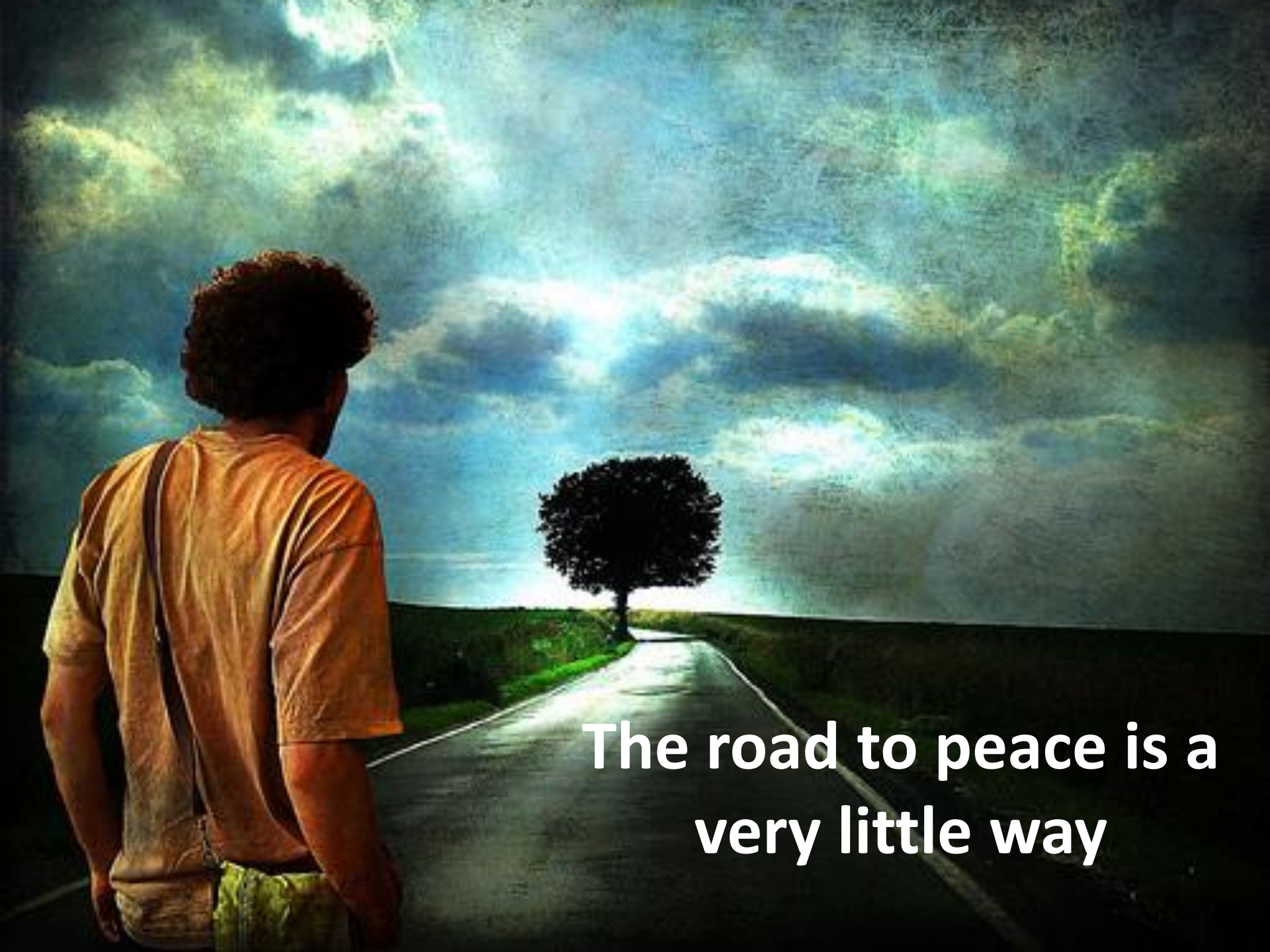
**Chaplaincy
changes the speed
of healthcare**

**slow
down.**



"The fundamental principle of peace is a belief that each person is important. Do you believe you are important? Do you believe-do we believe-that we can do something to make this world a better place?"

Jean Vanier



**The road to peace is a
very little way**

**Chaplaincy
Creates Room
for the Heart**





Baroness Mary Warnock

“If you’re demented, you’re wasting people’s lives – your family’s lives – and you’re wasting the resources of the National Health Service.”

“...putting it rather brutally, you’d be licensing people to put others down. Actually I think why not, because the real person has gone already and all that’s left.”

**Making room for
the heart**



The Person is the Heart

*The heart is the
deepest most
fundamental aspect
of the human being
that is touched and
transformed by the
Spirit*



The affective core of humanness

“Behind all the barriers built up since childhood, there is the pure and innocent heart of a child where the gift of God resides. The heart is capable of receiving and giving love, of living in communion with another person and with God, capable of being a source of life for others. In the designs of God, it is the heart which is meant to inspire all human activities.”

Jean vanier



*the
little
things*

**We care for the heart in the
everydayness of our practices**

*Its good that you
are here...I'm glad
that you exist!*

**Love takes
time**





**Chaplaincy
opens up the
soul care**

The soulfulness of the body

- And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7; KJV)
- St. Augustine described human beings as *terra animata*, “animated earth.”
- Human beings are thus seen to be created from matter, but inspired/given breath/brought into living existence by the very breath of God. **We are our bodies as we are our souls.**

All Human Encounters are Holy Moments

- As earth animated by the breath of God, human beings are seen to be “holy creatures living among other holy creatures in a world that is holy
- **Every-Body** is holy
- Attending to God’s creatures is in fact a mode of attending to God

Paying Attention to the Right Things

Dementia



**Our Bodies
Remember:**

**Recall and
presence**

Modelling Hospitality



The Rhythm of Hospitality: Guesting and Hosting

Expanding the Healthcare Imagination

Finding room for God means opening up our worlds to a certain form of attention, wherein the fullness of our humanness is not occluded by a false consciousness that prevents us from seeing one another properly

Finding Room for God: Paying Attention to the Right Things

- Chaplaincy helps the system to pay a particular kind of attention to healthcare
- Chaplaincy changes the speed of healthcare
- Chaplaincy creates room for the heart
- Chaplaincy opens up the soul of healthcare
- Chaplains model a certain kind of hospitality