

Summary of Text 34: 'Dis net die oortjies van die seekoei'

1. The Hidden Reality

The text begins with the South African expression 'Dis net die oortjies van die seekoei' (*It's only the ears of the hippopotamus*). This means that we only perceive a small fraction of reality. Just like a hippo, which remains mostly underwater and of which sometimes only the ears are visible, a much larger, hidden reality lies behind the visible world.

In this context, we can refer to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus and the psychiatrist Sigmund Freud. Both paid attention to aspects of reality that are not immediately visible or conscious, yet can be of great importance.

This insight is also well known within traditional African worldview. According to Bantu philosophy, subtle life force plays an essential role in human health and happiness. This life force is considered more important than material wealth. According to this view, it can be exchanged between people, ancestors, spirits, and deities. This exchange can have a healing effect, but life force can also be stolen, resulting in illness and misfortune.

Christianity also recognizes the concept of life force. In the Bible, God is the creator of all life and vitality. An example is the story of the sick woman who touches Jesus' clothes. She believes that his garment shares in his overwhelming life force and that, upon touching it, part of it transfers to her. According to the biblical story, her faith in that power leads to her healing.

2. Sister Marie-Madeleine and the School in Eswatini

In Eswatini, former Swaziland, Father Henry and a group of missionary sisters founded a convent and a small school. The Flemish sister Marie-Madeleine teaches first-grade children there. She carries out her work with great enthusiasm and has developed a method through which children learn to read through play. By comparing words and sounds with each other, they discover similarities and differences themselves and learn to understand the structure of the language.

Marie-Madeleine keeps a daily diary. In it, she describes the progress of the children, life in the convent, her positive and negative experiences, and her thoughts on love and compassion. She also writes texts and poems.

However, her relationship with the Mother Superior, who is also the principal of the school, is difficult. The Mother Superior places a strong

emphasis on obedience and discipline. Furthermore, she condemns traditional African religion and regards local rituals and paranormal healings as superstition.

Marie-Madeleine finds this attitude disrespectful toward the local culture. When she makes an ironically intended remark about the Mother Superior's striking modesty, the latter reacts very angrily. From that moment on, the relationship between the two remains tense.

Gradually, Marie-Madeleine notices that her work in the classroom is not going as smoothly. She feels unusually tired and experiences discomfort in the presence of the Mother Superior. Eventually, she even develops a mild fever. The Mother Superior does not take her complaints seriously, attributing them to negative thinking and a lack of willingness to work. According to her, the joy of working with the children will give Marie-Madeleine energy again. However, Marie-Madeleine feels this remark as accusatory and suspects that there is more going on, although she does not know exactly what.

She finds comfort in her diary, her prayers, and biblical passages about love, forgiveness, and an unwavering trust in God.

3. The Extraordinary Experience During the Jubilee

When Father Henry celebrates his fifty-year priestly jubilee, Marie-Madeleine is asked to write an address for the occasion. She gladly accepts. During her speech, she feels that those present are deeply absorbed in her words. Remarkably, she experiences their involvement as an increasing pressure on her body. Suddenly, she experiences an out-of-body experience: her subtle body, or aura, seems to detach from her physical body. According to her experience, both remain connected only by a kind of subtle cord, which she compares to an umbilical cord.

From her subtle body, she sees herself continuing to speak. At the same time, she perceives luminous threads originating from the attendees and joining together at the level of her solar plexus. Together, the threads form a cord that rises through her crown to an overwhelming, luminous world. From there, the energy returns amplified. To her surprise, the beam does not stream back to the attendees via her crown chakra, but to Father Henry.

Marie-Madeleine gets the feeling that circumstances have made a kind of magical ritual possible. The enthusiasm of the listeners and their collective thoughts had created a subtle thought-form, which gained strength with the

help of like-minded higher beings. She experiences this power as a form of communal prayer intended to help Father Henry continue his religious mission as best as possible.

When she shares her experience with him, he takes her seriously once again. He is familiar with such phenomena and explains that out-of-body experiences are described across various cultures and eras. He refers to the Bible, which speaks of a 'silver cord'.

Marie-Madeleine also tells him about her difficult relationship with the Mother Superior, her fatigue, and her fever. In addition, she criticizes the Mother Superior's attitude toward the local religion. Father Henry finds this attitude unacceptable. He also criticizes missionaries who reject traditional religions without first delving into them.

4. *The Green Eyes and the Crocodile*

Finally, Marie-Madeleine dares to talk about her nocturnal experiences as well. She has trouble falling asleep because every time she sees a pair of green eyes looking at her threateningly and maliciously. At the same time, she feels a heavy weight on her body, making it difficult for her to breathe.

One night, she believes she clearly sees what is threatening her: the eyes of a crocodile. She even has the impression that the animal's weight is flattening the folds of her blanket. To her, this experience no longer feels like an ordinary dream, but like something that is actually happening.

Frightened, she tells Father Henry. He is also familiar with such phenomena and connects them to what is called *nahualism* in certain religious-philosophical circles: a subtle connection between humans and animals, which according to this view is sometimes abused for black magic.

5. *A Different View on Religion and the World*

In subsequent conversations, Father Henry develops a broad and dynamic vision of religion. Among other things, he discusses clairvoyance, paranormal healings, spirits, the influence of ancestors, and especially the power of the Trinity. He clarifies his insights using biblical stories, religious-philosophical reflections, and testimonies from different cultures.

6. *The Visit to a Sangoma*

Father Henry suggests visiting a *sangoma* together with Marie-Madeleine, a traditional African healer. The healer could explain what lies behind the

beginning materialization of the crocodile. Furthermore, the visit offers Marie-Madeleine an opportunity to become acquainted with the methods of someone who possesses special prophetic gifts within the local culture.

During the consultation, the healer uses animal bones, joints, stones, and photographs of people. Such objects are not decisive in themselves. Divination, dowsing, reading coffee grounds, or gazing into a mirror are said to be primarily tools to concentrate the seer's mind.

The healer concludes that the cause of Marie-Madeleine's problems is to be found with the Mother Superior. According to his interpretation, her deeper soul, her so-called occult status, radiates something negative. When she cannot stand someone and harbors angry thoughts while falling asleep, this can unconsciously cause an out-of-body experience. In the Mother Superior's case, it takes the form of a flesh-eating and blood-drinking predator.

7. Good and Evil in the Convent

The Mother Superior also exerts a negative influence on the children and the other sisters. She unconsciously steals the subtle life force of people around her. Particularly people who are sensitive to this suffer the consequences more intensely. That is why Father Henry provided Marie-Madeleine with some powerful and protective Trinitarian prayers.

Apparently, the other sisters have insufficient or even no insight into what is truly happening. On the contrary, they admire the Mother Superior for her dedication and merits.

Eventually, the threat posed by the crocodile and the loss of vitality become so severe that Marie-Madeleine's life is put in danger. Father Henry decides to intervene. In a magical manner, he reportedly deprives the demon inhabiting the Mother Superior of a large part of its occult power. Life in the convent remains difficult for Marie-Madeleine, but the situation becomes more bearable.

8. Epilogue: Love, Faith, and Hope

Years pass, and eventually, Marie-Madeleine closes her diary. She looks back on her experiences and the lessons she learned from Father Henry. She realizes that not everyone will easily believe her testimony, but hopes that future readers will reflect on it calmly.

She recalls an experience from her youth in which she perceived a sunny world on one hand, but which, upon closer and deeper inspection, was nevertheless bathed in darkness.

On a summer day, the Mother Superior is honored by the entire community for her years of tireless commitment. Once again, despite the warmth of the sun, Marie-Madeleine experiences an oppressive darkness that seems to enfold the entire village.

Yet, the story ends hopefully. Marie-Madeleine believes that evil will ultimately lose its power through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. She thinks back to Father Henry, who has since passed away and who guided and protected her for years. She also remembers his promise that their bond would not end with death.