

FEBRUARY 16–18, 2024



NEW YORK  
ENCOUNTER X  
2024

# “TEARING OPEN THE SLEEPING SOUL”

GREGORY THE GREAT

What is happening to our humanity?

There is no shortage of reasons to ponder this question: daily images of gratuitous violence; an epidemic of suicide; feeling suffocated by the imposition of opposite ideologies and their language, starting in school; the potential threat of generative AI; a sense of paralysis in front of the future; suffering and evil devoid of meaning or redemption; general weariness, malaise, numbness, and lack of desire.

These signs suggest that our humanity is asleep. What can reawaken it?

“Something unexpected is the only hope.”  
—Eugenio Montale, *Before the Trip*

When something wakes us up, things come alive again. If we pay attention to our experience, **these very same signs** reveal that what makes us human is irreducible. We are ill at ease with our apathy because we are made to desire. We feel lonely because we are made to be in relationship. We feel empty when we “check-out” because we are meant to be “checked-in.” We feel disappointed because to be born comes with a promise. We are afraid because we have something to lose. We feel suffocated because we are made to be free and to affirm what is true. And we feel lost because we are made for a purpose.

“Childhood memories ... tears of happiness ... the bitterness of parting ... a mother’s tenderness ... friendship ... sudden hope ... a fortunate guess ... melancholy ... unreasoning joy ... The machine may be able to recreate all of this! But the surface of the whole earth would be too small to accommodate this machine.”  
—Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*

Join us on February 16–18, 2024, for a weekend of public discussions, exhibits, and live performances to verify that **our “soul” is still there, waiting to be rekindled.**

[www.newyorkencounter.org](http://www.newyorkencounter.org)

Friday–Sunday  
February 16–18, 2024

Metropolitan Pavilion  
125 West 18th Street  
New York City, NY 10011

- open to the public
- free of charge
- no registration required

New York Encounter is an annual three-day cultural event in the heart of New York City, offering opportunities for education, dialogue, and friendship.

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