THE RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISTS AND THE REDEMPTION OF FEELING

Edited by Anthony Malagon and Abi Doukhan

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—Anthony Malagon

Introduction

Anthony Malagon

In a brief conversation with a literature student I met at a coffee shop, I described my area of research as existentialism, to which the response was: "Oh! I love existentialism. It's interesting how Kierkegaard was the only existentialist who was religious!" This was not the first time I had encountered such a statement, but given the fact that my graduate studies focused upon those we might call the religious existentialists,[1] it is always quite shocking to hear the complete and common lack of awareness of the long list of religious existentialists. It might even be said that the majority of those whom we would properly call existentialist were in fact religious individuals of some form or other.[2] Such an encounter is just one of the many reminders of the grave misunderstandings still pervading the movement and philosophy of existentialism, both within and outside academia. This anthology aims to be corrective to some of the most prevalent confusions about existentialism, such as the problem of definition, and the details of its history, thus helping to properly situate those we are calling the religious existentialists.

It has been said: "A collection of philosophical readings is justified if it responds to a need."[3] In light of the above anecdote, I can think of no more urgent a need than to begin correcting the recurrent misconceptions about the history and nature of existentialism. It has been over seventy years since the prime of existentialism, and there is still a great deal of un-clarity about the meaning of the term itself, let alone about the movement as a whole; there is even little agreement as to whom we should include or exclude in our list of existentialists. Given this long history of controversy—in large part due to the difficulty of defining the term itself—it seems quite appropriate and important to revisit this history and correct the errors that have seeped into our understanding of such a significant and influential philosophical movement. The fact that we are no longer at the beginnings of the movement

might allow us a clearer perspective as to what occurred in the heyday of existentialism and improve our understanding of this difficult subject within our current historical-philosophical context.

The first question to address before beginning to tackle the problem of definition is the one hinted at above, in our initial story—why is existentialism so commonly associated with atheism? Or, put differently, why are the religious existentialists so little known as compared to the atheist existentialists? The simple and popular answer—which anyone familiar with existentialism might guess—is that Sartre, an atheist, became one of the most famous proponents of existentialism, and as a result, essentially defined the philosophical movement in the popular mind, and this, internationally. The movement, then, often came to be identified, or confused with, Sartrean existentialism, as if he were its founder—especially to those outside of academia.

To complicate matters further it is well known that Sartre fully embraced the title of existentialist—unlike many others of the time—and even attempted to define the term himself. He was the only existentialist, in fact, who ventured to express a strict definition of existentialism, contributing to the view that he was the spokesperson for all existentialists—clearly perpetuating the inappropriate impression in the minds of many that he was a kind of founder of the movement—though years later he recanted stating that existentialism could not be defined.[4] As a result of his fame via his novels and creative writing the movement became almost completely identified with atheism and nihilism; and this, in part, with the help of his close compatriots in the atheist existentialist camp, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. Consequently, many anthologies and books began to leave out, or fail to mention, important religious existentialists, and even began to identify existentialism with Sartreanism, atheism, or both. Even recent scholarship is tainted with such an erroneous slant. Consider, for example, this recent anthology's definition of existentialism: "By existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity. . . . Existentialism is the philosophy that considers the human as the starting point, an empty one, without any definite essence—a starting point that needs to be built up through our free and authentic choices."[5]

The shocking element of this statement is that it makes no distinction between this essentially Sartrean definition of existentialism and the way any other religious existentialists might have defined it. This basically expels all religious existentialists from the movement of existentialism. The quote clearly echoes Sartre's claim that "existence precedes essence," his statement that "subjectivity must be the starting point" is clearly paraphrased, as well as his notion that man must create himself as being born into the world with no essence. The most important problem with this categorical statement about

existentialism is that most existentialists did not in fact hold this view at all. Virtually every religious existentialist, including Heidegger—though usually not thought to be religious (thought agnostic by many, ambiguous by others, and secretly religious by some), rejected this notion that man has no essence—though they agreed that man is bound to make choices in his or her life, and thus, that we must "create" our lives (or choose our lives), in a certain sense, but certainly not in a Sartrean sense.

Aside from the otherwise excellent contribution of this anthology to scholarship on the possibility of ethics within an atheistic existentialism, the book leaves the distinction between existentialism in general and an atheistic existentialism vague; resulting, once again, in an arbitrary exclusion of the religious existentialists, thus painting an incomplete picture of existentialism as a whole. It is indeed quite strange how the above anthology includes Kierkegaard out of the religious existentialists as the only one who has something interesting to say about ethics, while leaving out thinkers such as Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, or Emmanuel Levinas, to name a few. It is, perhaps, because the editor intended to focus upon the existentialists who "want to avoid transcendence and escape a-moralism,"[6] i.e., on the ones who want "to establish the proposition, 'everything is allowed is false,' without recourse to the transcendent."[7] Such a focus would be a fine academic endeavor, but the editor simply uses the categorical statement "the existentialists," or "they," in her discussion, leaving the reader with the impression that this is the program of all existentialists, including the religious existentialists, and this was clearly not the case. If the intent was to exclude the religious existentialists because of the desire to focus on the existentialists who attempt to struggle with ethics without recourse to the transcendent, then such a goal should have been stated explicitly, but this was not done, to the detriment, unfortunately, of the religious existentialists.

The perpetuation of this misconception is quite common and began long ago. For the purposes of this introduction, I will generally trace it back to—though not meaning to place all the blame on this text alone—the still popular book *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* by Walter Kaufman. In this work, Kaufmann intentionally leaves out many of the religious existentialists from his "story" of existentialism for several, not so convincing, reasons. First, Kaufmann decides to exclude the religious existentialists from his anthology—with the exception of Kierkegaard—on the paradoxical basis that religion is inherently existential, and second, that they have not made significant contributions to philosophy or literature.

This exclusion on the part of Kaufmann has been observed and refuted by Maurice Friedman so eloquently that it is worth quoting him at length:

> In the introductory essay to his anthology . . . Kaufmann explains his omission of the religious existentialists, such as Berdyaev, Buber, Bultmann, Tillich, and Marcel, first, on the all-too-true ground that "religion has always been existentialist" (which would seem to us more a reason for including them than for excluding them), second on the palpably false ground that "not one of the later religious existentialist has so far left a mark, like Kierkegaard, on literature or on philosophy," and third on the rather whimsical note that an anthology "is not a collection of flowers or a meadow on which we pick a blossom here and there" but "an attempt to tell a story and follow a path." "The religious existentialists have not played an important part in our story," he adds—for the reason, we might note, that he has arbitrarily shaped his story to exclude all of them but Kierkegaard. The fact is that there is no one story to tell, and any attempt to reduce existentialism to a single story is an unwarranted oversimplification of a tremendously complex group of interrelated phenomena.[8]

Thus, Kaufman's exclusion of the religious existentialists is especially suspect on the grounds that inasmuch as his first disqualifying statement that "religion has always been existentialist" seems rather a powerful reason for including them rather than excluding them, since it appears something almost akin to not allowing a group of feminist women into a discussion of the movement because they are too feminist by nature! The rest of the quote is self-explanatory and shows clearly how Kaufman's depiction of the existential movement is one that is consciously biased in favor of the atheistic existentialists, and therefore excludes the religious existentialists, portraying them as an unimportant or minor aspect of the movement, although any serious student of the times should notice otherwise.

Anyone who briefly studies the history of existentialism—including the influences of Sartre himself—will quickly discover that such a picture of existentialism is gravely inaccurate. It could justifiably be said that to continue to perpetuate, or allow, such an obviously false depiction of the movement and its defining qualities would be shameful. For, contrary to Kaufman, it is actually the religious existentialists that form the bulk of the movement and not the other way around. As Friedman, who has written one of the best, most encompassing, and well-written anthologies on existentialism to date, has put it, "there is an ever-growing testimony here and abroad to the significance of such thinkers as Buber, Nicholas Berdyaev, Gabriel Marcel, Franz Rosenzweig, Paul Tillich, Jacques Maritain, and Ferdinand Ebner."[9] He adds: "Today no mature anthology of existentialism can omit the religious existentialists. Not only is Kierkegaard himself a basically religious existentialist, but, for all the fame of Sartre and Heidegger, it is the religious existentialists who make up the large majority of those who are properly considered existentialists."[10] These sentiments of Friedman so long ago still ring true today.

It could almost be said that there has not been any mature anthologies since the early days of existentialism—with the exception of a few recent works, which may indicate a shift in the right direction. Despite this passionate and accurate statement written over sixty years ago, it is quite surprising that many anthologies on existentialism continue to exclude many of the religious existentialists without proper explanation. Aside from Maurice Friedman, and perhaps William Barrett, the literature tends to be quite imbalanced. It is obvious that a corrective to such a prejudice and misconception about existentialism should be forthcoming. This continual misrepresentation of the movement should unquestionably be rectified for the sake of academic honesty and proper philosophical history.

This collection, then, specifically seeks to help remedy this long history of marginalizing the religious existentialists and the tendency of identifying the origin of—and definition of—existentialism with Sartreanism and atheism, without, of course denying his importance to the movement. It is for this reason that the following chapters center around some of the most important religious existentialists—though the list is not exhaustive—and some of their the essential contributions.

Nevertheless, before highlighting both the contribution of the religious existentialists as a whole and illustrating their specific contributions—showing their continued relevance—it will be appropriate to attempt a more accurate depiction of existentialism—even if a precise definition is never reached. Only then shall we be able to truly appreciate the significance of these thinkers within existentialism as well as justifying the list of existentialists that we shall cover in this text. As such, the rest of this introduction will revisit the problem of defining existentialism and briefly explore its history, then move to a consideration of the contribution and relevance of the religious existentialists as whole, followed by a summary of the individual essays included in this collection, along with a discussion of the connection of each essay to the project as whole.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

The difficulty of defining twentieth-century existentialism goes back to its origins. From its early stages there was some confusion as to who began to use the term first. Some attributed it to Jaspers, others to Marcel, and still others traced its use back to Kierkegaard, and so on. While it can generally be said that Kierkegaard began to use the term, it is typically agreed that its conscious use to signal a philosophical approach only became popular with later thinkers such as Jaspers, Marcel, Heiddeger, Maritain, etc. Early on there were problems and debates over whom to include in the list of existential thinkers. Many of whom we now categorize as existentialist, as we know,

repudiated the term, often vehemently. Marcel seems to have embraced the term at one point—just as Sartre did—calling himself a Christian existentialist, only to reject the term as distorting the nature of his philosophy.[11] It was clear, as time went on, that his motivation for rejecting the term was to dissociate himself from the philosophy of Sartre, whom he staunchly criticized throughout his philosophical career.[12]

Many others whom we now consider existentialist also rejected the term for similar reasons, though we now group them together. This was done of course with some justification; but it must be borne in mind that existentialism as a form of doing philosophy, pattern of thought, way of thinking, or attitude, can be seen as arising in different parts of the world, and not as a linear movement plainly deriving from one thinker, or root, so to speak. As such, it has to a certain degree escaped a clear definition and often been articulated as a mood or attitude that does not amount to any kind of unified philosophical doctrine or approach. It has been said, "Existentialism is not a philosophy but a mood embracing a number of disparate philosophies; the differences among them are more basic than the temper which unites them."[13] In another instance we have the statement: "Existentialist philosophy is the explicit conceptual manifestation of an existential attitude—a spirit of 'the present age.' . . . It is an attitude that recognizes the unresolvable confusion of the human world."[14] Both of these indicate that existentialism cannot be defined because it is more of a mood, or attitude, than a strict philosophy.

Yet, the admission to the impossibility of a strict definition of existentialism should not discourage us from attempting a kind of descriptive consensus as to the general nature of existential thought, or its tendencies. We might suggest two general orientations that have been ascribed to the movement of twentieth-century existentialism: The centrality of subjective experience in the concrete human subject versus an objective or scientific approach, and, as a consequence, the dissociation with Cartesian philosophy. Consider, for instance, how Friedman attempts to "define" existentialism in an encounter with a student: "'So could you give me a brief definition of existentialism?' 'Would it not be better,' I replied, 'if I told you something directly about Buber instead of offering you a general category from which you deduce something about him?' After a pause I added, 'And I have given you a definition of existentialism in what I just said.' Insofar as one can define existentialism, it is a movement from the abstract and general to the particular and the concrete."[15]

Thus, according to Friedman, existentialism might be defined as a return to the concrete experience of the human subject versus an abstract approach borne out of a strictly rational stance toward reality. It is a turn from the abstract to the concrete, from "the general to the particular":

> Existentialism is . . . a reaction against the static, the abstract, the purely rational, the merely irrational, in favor of the dynamic and the concrete, personal involvement and "engagement," action, choice, and commitment, the distinction between "authentic" and "inauthentic" existence, and the actual situation of the existential subject as the starting point of *(all)* thought.[16] [Emphasis mine]

For Friedman, the emphasis in existentialism is clearly on the subject and on the meticulous exploration of his or her experience in the world: "One part of this foundation is phenomenology. . . . A second part of this foundation is the emphasis upon the subject."[17] This however, constitutes a profound reversal of Cartesian philosophy: "Practically every existentialist philosopher has undertaken a fundamental critique of Descartes' *cogito*."[18] He adds that, "The revolt of all modern existentialists against the Cartesian cogito must be seen as an emphasis upon the existential subject in all his wholeness and concreteness—the willing, feeling, thinking person who decides and acts and does so from the limited perspective of his particular life-situation rather than from some universal vantage point provided by reason or history."[19] If this is the case, that most other existentialists critique Descartes and define their philosophy in light of such a critique, it appears quite reasonable to suggest that if we are to define existentialism at all, it should be based precisely upon such a rejection of Descartes. Under this perspective, one of the essential elements of what we should characterize as modern existentialism would be precisely this rejection.

Now it is profoundly ironic that although, as Friedman points out, "Practically every existentialist philosopher has undertaken a fundamental critique of Descartes' *cogito*,"[20] those who have been credited for defining and popularizing the movement did not wholly reject the Cartesian model. The disturbing truth that one discovers upon reading Sartre is that, much like Husserl, his phenomenological descriptions of the subject never completely overcome the structures of the Cartesian ego. Although both Sartre and Husserl see the subject as intrinsically relational, that is to say, as externalized in a world and deriving its interiority from its thrownness in a world, the Sartrian and Husserlian subjects retain the Cartesian stance of mastery upon reality. In Husserl, consciousness ultimately has the last word as to the constitution of the world around it—although it does allow itself to be informed by its surroundings. As for Sartre, consciousness still retains the sovereignty of a free will unblemished by a given context or horizon. Both the Sartrian and the Husserlian subjects remain transcendental, that is, the sole condition of the possibility of knowledge in the case of Husserl, and of action in the case of Sartre. But as such, one hesitates to call this description of the subject

existential, inasmuch as it does not manifest the characteristics of "thrownness" or "being in situation" that characterizes mainstream existentialist philosophies such as those of Heidegger and Marcel.

This is also why, incidentally, both Sartre and Husserl remain trapped in the subject-object dichotomy that will become the focal point of criticism on the part of the rest of the movement. Both of them struggle with this dichotomy to be sure but they never completely overcome it. This becomes particularly evident in their treatment of the other. In his *Cartesian Meditations*, we see Husserl struggle with his phenomenological descriptions of the other as ultimately constituted by a transcendental consciousness, knowing full well that the human other is not and cannot possibly be reduced to an act of constitution. In his famous description of the "regard," Sartre also fumbles in his phenomenological descriptions of the other, which ultimately never truly explode the temptation of objectification to which this encounter is often reduced.

Thus Sartre never overcomes the remnant of Cartesianism passed down via Husserl. The transcendental ego that remains central for the larger part of Husserl's career and phenomenological stance is a residue of the Cartesian model and view of the subject. Hence, Husserl himself remains Cartesian in some of his presuppositions or treatment of the subject, and Sartre never rejects this, but embraces it. Indirectly then, through Husserl, (though it might be the case that the late Husserl becomes more existential in his view of the subject), Sartre embraces a Cartesian view and treatment of the subject, and thus does not remain or (ever become) truly existential, specifically because his view of the subject remains Cartesian as opposed to closely tied to the concrete living individual that remains the central focal point and mode of philosophizing of people like Kierkegaard, Unamuno, Marcel, and even Levinas. This implicit Cartesian view of the subject in Sartre also results in his technique sometimes not seeming purely phenomenological but retaining the taste of a rationalist of sorts. Indeed, he gives the impression of a rationalist at times in his arguments, approach and presuppositions.

We are thus left in the ironic position of implying that the many existentialists excluded by Kaufmann because of their religious inclination are in fact more authentically existential than Sartre—and perhaps Camus and Beauvoir. It appears that the religious existentialists should not only be viewed as part of the canon, but as a fundamental part—if not the most essential part—of modern existentialism. It can reasonably be argued that their contribution is a more authentic aspect of what might be called the spirit of twentieth-century existentialism than that of Sartre. Under a certain understanding of existentialism, such as the one proposed here, Sartre and other atheistic existentialists fall short of the existential spirit by remaining Cartesian.

The religious existentialists should thus be viewed as an essential part of "the story" of existentialism at the very least, and whose contributions help to clarify the nature of this diverse movement itself. Contrary to Kaufman, the fact that religiousness can be thought of as existential by nature should be treated as more of a reason to include those thinkers whom we would term "religious"—though many would dislike the term, as mentioned above—since by their very essence, so to speak, they could provide clarity as to the authentic embodiment of an existential thinker. Further, they could also provide us with some of the unique insights that we would have otherwise missed if we only considered the "atheistic" existentialists. A fuller picture of the movement of existentialism would not only add richness and accuracy to what historically occurred, but it would enrich our philosophical resources and philosophical reflections moving forward.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS EXISTENTIALISTS

This introduction endeavors to achieve two goals: first, to justify and explain the subtitle of this text i.e., *The Redemption of Feeling*; second, to argue for the collective contribution of religious existentialism and why we are justified in seeing them as essential to the movement of modern existentialism.

It can hardly be denied that since the beginning of Western thought, reason has been given a divine status, if not quite literally, *de facto*. Throughout philosophical history we see the glorification of reason over and above the passions—or, what I am choosing to categorize as "feelings." Aristotle famously defined man as a rational animal, and throughout history many have followed him and claimed that reason is what separates men from animals. Even Shakespeare calls reason "god-like," and Goethe the "glimmer of divine light," while philosophers proceeded to cast doubt on the passions as inferior to reason; untrustworthy, blind, and as temptations that can lead us astray. The passions have always had a subordinate role within philosophy; being viewed with suspicion, disdain, and sometimes fear. It is not surprising; therefore, that they have traditionally not been the center of philosophical attention, but this all has changed with the advent of existentialism.

It could be argued that, in large part, the religious existentialists are responsible for this fundamental shift in philosophy from the purely rational and abstract to a focus on the subject, or what is often called the concrete individual, and philosophizing from the center of said subject. It is undeniable then that Kierkegaard is a principal figure in catalyzing such a turn given that his central focus throughout his philosophical career was upon "that single individual."[21] The individual, thus, became a central category for much philosophy after him; and many of those whom we would label religious thinkers began to follow suit in this new form of philosophizing from

the place of the living subject, and of his or her experience in the world. This move can be distinctly perceived in many religiously oriented thinkers after Kierkegaard—and yet preceding Sartre—such as Rosenzweig, Jaspers, Berdyaev, Ebner, Buber, Unamuno, and so on. It appears that this fundamental turn began occurring decisively and most predominantly within the philosophies of the religious existentialists; though this is not to suggest that it was exclusive to them, since existentialism had many sources of influences, as already noted.

Yet, if this is the case—and it is unlikely that any contemporary and honest scholar on existentialism would deny this—it appears that the long list of religious existentialists before Sartre are more significantly the ones that helped shape the character of existentialism during the twentieth-century. If this move from the abstract toward the concrete—which by now can hardly be denied as one of the fundamental aspects that can be ascribed to existentialism—is most profoundly exemplified by the religious existentialist in their sharp focus on the concrete individual and his or her world, then we should all continue to echo Barrett's plea many years ago that "Jean Paul Sartre is not existentialism." Though, again, this is not to take credit from Sartre's importance in the popularizing of the movement; but it simply should not be at the expense of making opaque this rich and varied philosophical phenomenon. Aside from this sorely needed corrective, however, is there something that the religious existentialists contribute to our philosophical enterprise from which Sartre, Camus, Heidegger and all the rest have benefited? If the shift mentioned above toward concrete existence of the individual is ascribed to them—at least in large part—then anything that religious existentialists have derived from this shift could be considered their contribution.

Although it is tempting to derive a completely unified and specific contribution from all existentialists, it is not my intention to argue for such a claim. My view is that their contributions are quite varied. Yet, as a consequence of what has been said so far, there is a general result that could reasonably be maintained. It has been argued that the one essential feature of existentialism is a move from the abstract to the concrete. It has also been maintained that the particular form of twentieth-century existentialism often entails, whether directly or indirectly, a rejection of Descartes. If these two defining qualities of existentialism are accepted as embodied in the religious existentialists' move toward the existing concrete individual, or subject, then this turn could be characterized as one that redeems, or reinstates, the value of personal experience within the bounds of our philosophical enterprise. They might be credited, then, for being the main contributors for introducing the existential individual with all her concrete complexities into philosophy—though of course, not exclusively[22]—which includes all the commonly known existential categories and themes such as anxiety, despair, dread, faith, hope, etc.

This move toward the concrete individual within the religious existential movement leads to a re-valuation of the subjective experiences of the individual within philosophy, which provides for the foundation of all the other existential themes and approaches that existentialists are known for. Note that these themes include despair, love, hope, anxiety, fear, jealousy, guilt, and all of the messy experiences within our subjective lives that philosophy often calls the passions. This reinstatement of the subjective life of the passions in the individual within our philosophical approach, which includes all of the complexities of our moods, passions, and experiences in the world, is what I am choosing to call the redemption of feeling. It is this redemption of feeling—or subjective experience—as of philosophical importance that I am taking to be in large part the contribution of most religious existentialists, in one form or other. In other words, it is the increased suspicion of old approaches to philosophy largely because of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (and others), as well as the horrors of the war that philosophy failed to address (prevent or explain), that philosophers were forced to rethink their usual or traditional approaches. That is, tradition usually exhibited a dependency upon abstract thought, which forced philosophy to reinvent itself because of the historical context of the times; otherwise their way of philosophizing could be seen as not addressing the "real" problems of the world and the individual. It has been said that this is why existentialism arises from different parts of the world or many different sources; what cannot be denied is that many of the people we would call religious existentialist were the great majority of the pioneers of this monumental change in the philosophical thinking of the times. After all, can we really imagine Sartre without a Heidegger, and Heidegger without a Kierkegaard? Existentialism without Rosenzweig, Buber, Jaspers, and Marcel? Not only would it appear lacking in important ways, but it is unlikely that it would have developed or taken root in the way that it did without them. They, and their contributions, are indispensable to the movement.

In conclusion, it has been argued that most existentialists could be seen as embodying a certain kind of reversal, or rejection of, Descartes. This is what ultimately results in the existentialist interest in subjective experience as our primary access to truth or reality. This refocusing and re-valuing of subjective experience—this redemption of feeling—helps us to more clearly discern which thinkers truly belong to this historic movement. With this new orientation we are then able to include some philosophers which normally do not make the anthologies of existentialism but which properly belong to it. This re-thinking of existentialism thus allows us to broaden our list of thinkers within the movement without allowing the term to lose all meaning, as well as to perceive the possible contribution to the entire movement without which the movement would lack its luster.

CONTRIBUTORS AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The chapters in this collection hope to show the continued relevance, as well as how each of these thinkers contributes, in their unique way, to the "redemption of feeling," or to our general subjective experience in the world. As has been argued, it is likely that it is to the religious existentialists that we owe the renewed interest in current times to subjective experiences such as the emotions, the passions, and so forth. Indeed, if it is accepted that such a redemption of feeling has decisively occurred within philosophy, it is largely thanks to the religious existentialists of the last century.

The reader should be aware, moreover, that this anthology will regroup philosophers who are not usually considered part of the mainstream of existentialism, but who, by virtue of the broad strokes by which we have defined the movement, show family traits, so to speak, which justifies our regrouping. All of the philosophers contained in this work, thus, contain anti-Cartesian tendencies and show an explicit intention to return to concrete experience versus an intellectual or rational approach to truth. Likewise, all of the philosophers assembled in this anthology show a focus on concrete human experience, and more specifically on affective or sensible human experiences, i.e., on feeling. All of them, interestingly, show a kindrid positive interest in affective experience, each showing in his or her own way the relevance of the affective in developing of a coherent phenomenology of human existence.

The first two thinkers featured in our volume—perhaps best characterized as early pre-cursers to twentieth-century existentialism as many other could be, such as Augustine and Pascal—are medieval thinkers who might be understood as a brand of existentialism as described above in their interest in developing a notion of an affective, non-rational approach, to God and to human destiny. Both are Italian and both are philosophizing in approximately the same time period, that is the thirteenth-century. The first of these is Aquinas (1225–1274) and is featured in Stephen Chanderbhan's chapter "'The One Who Does Not Taste Does Not Know': Thomas Aquinas on When Affect Constitutes Knowledge of God." In this chapter, Stephen Chanderbhan shows how although knowledge of God has traditionally been understood as a prerogative of the intellect, there exists evidence in Aquinas' philosophy that allows for the possibility of an affective knowledge of God, that one is called to not only know God intellectually, but to "taste" and to "see" that God is good. The second chapter, on Dante (1265–1321), "Intellectual Ascent and Experience in Dante's *Divine Comedy*" by Antonio Donato shows the limitations of the intellectual approach as recognized at the end of the classical age by philosophers pointing out that reason *alone* cannot be what determines our goals; our spiritual yearnings being regarded as the fundamental guide of our existence. Donato argues that in the *Divine Come-*

dy, Dante identifies a third alternative to the two paths here described—an alternative that aims to find a balance between the intellectual and spiritual tendencies of our nature.

The next chapter focuses on one of the luminaries in existentialist thought and one who might well arguably be called the father of existentialism, Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). "More Than a Feeling: Kierkegaard's Redemption of Love" by Michael Strawser also shows how there exists a redemption of feeling inasmuch as the subjective experience of feeling and emotion is seen to be at the heart of reflections on Christianity. Thus, in his essay, Strawser argues that although Kierkegaard explains that "the issue"—"the total thought"—of his entire authorship is centered on the task of becoming a Christian, the central issue of Kierkegaard's authorship can and should be understood more broadly as the task of becoming a lover, and that Kierkegaard's writings are most fruitfully understood as providing readers with a first phenomenology of love.

The next section of our anthology features a number of lesser-known thinkers from different parts of the world, a striking example as to how existentialism came to sprout in different parts of the world under the Nietzschean and Kierkegaardian impulses. The first chapter, "James and Nishida: A Phenomenology of Mystical Consciousness" by J. Jeremy Wisnewski features the philosophy of William James (1842–1910), an American thinker better known for his involvement in American pragmatism which, incidentally, exhibits a number of common elements with the brand of existentialism we have been describing—an anti-Cartesian thrust and a preoccupation with concrete experience. In this chapter he is compared with Japanese thinker Nishida (1870–1945) in an attempt to criticize Western philosophy's attempt to show that the language of reason (logos) is adequate to reality—that it can accomplish what experience alone cannot. Over and against this strictly rational approach to reality, Wisnewski's essay defends the relevance of *Samādhi* (or meditation) to philosophical questions and utilizes thinkers where appropriate—William James and Nishida Kitaro—in order to show that the above mode of experience cannot simply be ignored by those interested in the core questions of metaphysics. Nicolas Berdyaev (1874–1948) is another lesser-known Russian existentialist who also shows an interest in transcending a mere rationalist approach to reality. In her chapter, "Nikolai Berdyaev: Toward a New Humanism, Based on a New Concept of Being Human," Emiliya Ivanova explores Berdyaev's response to the twentieth-century's crisis of values and its general distrust of the dominant position of reason. Ivanova shows that according to Berdyaev, this crisis is not only an economic and social crisis, nor only a crisis of rationalist values and beliefs, but a global spiritual crisis, which needs a new humanism capable of restoring the disfigured image of the human being and of rendering back to it its true dignity, lost in the course of modern times. This chapter is followed by

one on Max Scheler (1874–1928), another lesser known German existentialist. "Max Scheler's Concept of Shame as a Preconceptual Revelation of the Ontological Status of the Human Person," by Marc Barnes shows how Max Scheler restores the feeling of shame from its current position in popular and evolutionary psychology as an experience of the self that is unattractive, undesirable and worthless. Instead, Barnes argues that Scheler describes shame as a protective feeling that rises into activity upon perceived threats to the ontological unity of the person as a "bridge" between the spiritual and material.

Next, we have two chapters on the thinking of Unamuno (1864–1936), a Spanish existentialist who also explored the centrality of feeling, in this case, negative feeling, in human experience. "The Necessity of Feeling in Unamuno and Kant: For the Tragic as for the Beautiful and Sublime," by José Luis Fernández explores how although Miguel de Unamuno's theory of tragic sentiment is rightly attributed with being influenced by the gestational thought of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, there exists a peculiar kinship between Unamuno and Immanuel Kant. Fernández's aim is to contribute some commentary on Unamuno's philosophy of tragic feeling and Kant's theories of beauty and the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*. "The Redemption of Negative Feeling: Miguel de Unamuno," by Mariana Alessandri constitutes a critique of the last two decades in the field of positive psychology's almost exclusive promotion of positive emotions in light of Unamuno's philosophy of negative feelings. Alessandri goes on to show how Unamuno ties negative emotions to God as the beating heart of the universe, and to Don Quixote, who, contrary to popular thought, was no optimist. As such, this essay is a presentation, celebration, and philosophical defense of Unamuno's religious pessimism.

The following chapters revolve around two of the most important Jewish existentialist thinkers of the twentieth-century, Martin Buber (1878–1965) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). Although not typically grouped under the rubric of existentialism, these two thinkers exhibit the same anti-Cartesian tendencies, the same desire to return to concrete or affective experience versus an abstract/rational approach to reality, and a similar redemption of feeling. In Levinas, this redemption is explicitly described in his ethics of the face where sensibility plays a central role. In Buber, in his passage from the rational and technical I-it relationship to the concrete, embodied experience of the other in the I-thou relationship. Thus, "'Not a 'Feeling' But a Perceived Mystery': Martin Buber and the Redemption of Feeling in *I-Thou* Relationships," by Eugene V. Torisky Jr. is an exploration of how Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue provokes questions concerning the interplay of reason and emotion in I-Thou relations. According to Torisky, such queries are difficult to answer in part because Buber avoids the terminology of both rationality and feelings when discussing the realm of the inter-human,

focusing instead on an existential commitment to openness, mutuality or reciprocity, and meeting or confrontation. The difficulty will then lie in extracting a theory of affect from Buber's often difficult and challenging language. Emmanuel Levinas' redemption of feeling is featured in two chapters. The first, "The Bared Self: Levinas and the Hassidic Tradition," by Catherine Chalier shows how Levinas' conception of the vulnerable and exposed self—ever sensitive and permeable to the suffering of others—mirrors the mystical self described by the Hassidic mystics as a self open or in a state of ecstasy onto the experience of the divine. As such, Chalier gives a renewed understanding of the philosophy of Levinas as having mystical undertones thereby overturning the common conception of Levinas as critic of the mystical experience. The second chapter, "Beyond Reason: Emmanuel Levinas on Sensation, Feeling, and Morality," by Randolph Wheeler argues that one of the fundamental aspects of Emmanuel Levinas' doctrine of alterity is the philosophical rehabilitation of sensation, a realm dismissed as unintelligible on its own in most, if not all, rationalist accounts. Wheeler shows that Levinas uncovers the immediate intelligibility of sensation that allows us to make sense of our encounters with others and to become receptive to their needs. There is thus an ethical sense of sensibility or feeling in Levinas, which profoundly differs from previous moral theories typically distrustful of emotions.

The two chapters that follow, though not part of the conference from which these papers were derived, are fairly recent contributions that were included given the importance of these existentialist thinkers to the early part of the movement—Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969).[23] In "Does Faith Trouble Philosophy? On Franz Rosenzweig's Method and System," Hermon H. J. Heering demonstrates without equivocation how Rosenzweig is a quintessential Jewish existentialist, going as far as calling him "the first existentialist of our age." The chapter illustrates the essential elements of his philosophy showing his anti-hegelianism, his move toward the concrete that brings him to call himself an "absolute empiricist," and as offering "a philosophy of experience." We are shown how Rosenzweig's philosophy grapples with faith and reason and the role of experience in reconciling the two. We see how reason is depicted not as autonomous and absolute, but as dependent upon a revelation beyond itself found within the experience of man, wherein we find the role of faith within philosophy. Rosenzweig appears to offer a kind of rational faith, or at least a reconciliation of faith and reason. He does not object to the importance of reason, he simply denies its sovereignty over all access to truth or reality—arguing ultimately for reason's need of faith. The chapter ends with critical analysis of Rosenzweig personalistic views and its consequences. In a similar vein, Anton Hügli's chapter "The Relevance of Karl Jaspers' Philosophy of Religion Today," explores how Jaspers' notion of philosophical faith can be of use

to contermporary society. The chapter argues that in a post-secular world where religion is left out of our public sphere, religions lack the proper articulation of their specific character in the public sphere, hence creating a void of genuine understanding amongst traditions and a lack of the proper expression and honoring of that which is most valuable to believers. Hugli argues that Jaspers' philosophy offers a unique and genuine answer to some of these pitfalls in our post-modern world. He highlights how the notion of transcendence is vindicated by Jaspers and shown to be more than a subjective fantasy while simultaneously placing limits on our ability to fully grasp it via his notion of the cipher. As a final solution to our post-secular dilemmas, the notion of the cipher allows for a validation of each individual's access to and experience of transcendence without falling into the hubris of thinking itself the totality and absolute authority. We are thus left with the middle ground of a rational faith (or theology) which does not seek to monopolize our relations with and conceptions of transcendence, and grounded enough in our experience as to provide a foundation for the guiding of our life and our ethical encounters.

The next set of chapters feature Christian existentialists, Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) and Pieper (1904–1997). "The Unifying Force of Emotion: Human Nature, Community, and the World," by Nikolaj Zunic shows that although modernity is characterized by radical dualisms—the soul pitted against the body, individual autonomy in opposition to culture and society, and the subject alienated from the world—Gabriel Marcel's philosophy celebrates emotion as having a unifying effect on human existence with hope undergirding the integrity of human nature, love serving as the basis of community, and joy as the supreme expression of worldly existence. "Philosophy, Prophecy, and Existential Hope: Marcel in the Broken World of the Twentfirst-Century" by Jill Hernandez argues that, according to Marcel, all philosophy is essentially a personal response to a call. But given that philosophy of religion draws both skeptical and devout thinkers alike, the question must be posed as to whether Marcel could have meant that philosophy could provide a univocal prophetic voice to the world. This essay answers in the affirmative. Philosophy relies upon a subjective framework of experiences that prescriptively engages with the world through hope but the way philosophers succeed in projecting hope to the world is to facilitate an intersubjective 'communion' with others—especially during times in which secular values of life, dignity, and health are in crisis globally. The prophetic voice of philosophy, then, resides in its ability to ultimately *transmute* suffering through existential hope. Finally, "Love, Leisure and Festivity: Josef Pieper on the Passions of Love and the Contemplation of God," by Margaret I. Hughes suggests that Pieper's emphasis on leisure and festivity is a recasting of Thomas Aquinas' account of the passions of love, such that he adds to Aquinas' technical, objective account of the passions of love a description of

subjective experience. The first passion of love is a suitability or inclination toward the beloved object. It is this suitability for love that Pieper describes in his writings on leisure. The final stage of love is delight in the beloved object. When Pieper writes about festivity, he is describing the experience of delight. In doing so, he begins, as do the existentialists, at subjective experience, but, unlike many of the existentialists, concludes that this experience points to contemplation of God as the meaning and summit of human life.

Our anthology closes with the contribution of a woman who also might be arguably classified in the existentialist movement, Luce Irigaray (1930–). "Feeling Distant, Feeling Divine: The Transformative Import of Difference in Nietzsche and Irigaray," by James Abordo Ong analyses how Nietzsche and Irigaray demonstrate a distinctive other-regarding feeling in their respective writings—in particular, Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* and Irigaray's wisdom of love. Ong shows that these feelings constitute a distinct way of inhabiting encounters with difference, one that engenders a process of deep transformation in those who are receptive precisely to what is unknowable or mysterious in the other. Ong thereby shows how Nietzsche and Irigaray enrich the religious existentialist tradition and its creative rethinking of the possibilities of human feeling.

Interestingly, it is clear from the above outline, that the attempt by our anthology to broaden the canon of existentialist philosophy to include the religious existentialists has done far more than that. What we can witness is first the welcoming of hereto isolated and unclassifiable thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, Irigaray, etc. into a philosophical home, as it were. These also belong to the existentialist movement inasmuch as they have contributed to its impulse, though not explicitly, or knowingly so. What we also may notice in the above outline is a broadening of the existentialist canon to a broader, more international audience of thinkers which includes American, Japanese, and Russian thinkers beyond the typical Danish, French, German connection, thereby showing existentialism to be a much broader and universal endeavor than it might have previously seemed to be. Finally, our anthology broadens the canon to include women who, not unlike Simone de Beauvoir, have developed a uniquely feminine approach to the existentialist endeavor. And although the group of thinkers here presented is by no means exhaustive, it is hoped that in including these existentialists further interest will arise not only in their philosophies but in the research of other lesser known existentialists.[24]

This gathering of thinkers reframes existentialism beautifully as more than a mere isolated moment in history, but rather, as a powerful movement giving coherence and a renewed impulse and relevance to a continental philosophy often regarded as incoherent and fragmented. More than this, it reframes continental philosophy of religion and places it in the context of existential philosophy, thereby giving it a unifying stroke, bringing together

previously isolated and disparate thinkers in a common endeavor and contribution. Religious thinkers like Buber, Marcel, and Levinas, up until now marginalized and declassified—and this because of their religious overtones—now can be heard together in this anthology in a way that gives them renewed coherence and power. These hereto isolated and marginalized thinkers can now be seen as belonging to a larger family of thought, that of an existentialism more broadly construed but likely more authentic than what has been hitherto presented.

NOTES

1. It is important to note that many, if not most, whom we here call "religious" existentialist would resist the term—just as most existentialists resisted the term existentialist—and it should thus be understood in a qualified sense. By "religious" we do not mean a return to obscurantist and ecclesiastical notions of orthodox religion. We mean religious in the more generic and etymological sense of the Latin *religio* (to bond), which comes from the verb *religare* (to bind). As such, what characterizes the religious existentialists in contrast, perhaps, to a Sartean existentialism, is that they understand their subjectivity as profoundly relational, as always and already preceded by another. Whereas the Sartean version of existentialism sees itself as its own origin—in a way not unlike Descartes—the religious existentialists see their selfhood as profoundly *connected* to another, be it Being, the human face, or God. They are not their own ground, or origin, but rather find themselves preceded by, awakened, or inspired by another. Hence, the profound role of feeling (or subjective experience) in the work of the religious existentialists, as that which constitutes the very moment of that awareness of a fundamental connectivity or relation to another. From another perspective, the reader should bear in mind that the reason for its use is that of providing a corrective for the lack of attention historically given to the group of thinkers we are placing under this rubric, with the full awareness that there is an obvious and unfortunate ambiguity with using the term to group some of these thinkers. It is hoped, nevertheless, that the benefits outweigh the negatives, such as bringing greater awareness to their works, allowing for a better understanding of their philosophies and of their value for philosophy as whole.

2. This is pointed out and argued by Maurice Friedman, as we shall see below. It should also be noticed, however, that some of those included under the banner of religious existentialism would not strictly consider themselves religious (for reasons alluded to above), but again, our use of the term here is broadened to include those whose philosophy often explores religious themes, or shows deep religious sympathies, as opposed to being tied to or identifying with a specific religion. We sould be aware that while some existentialist in our list considered themselves religious and belonged to a particular instantiation of religion, others do not, or have a more ambiguous stance. An example of one whose religious status is ambivalent would be Karl Jaspers who in the end might transcend the category of merely being religious (in any usual sense of the word) but who spends a good deal of time exploring questions related to religiosity; it is for this kind of interest, inquiry, and sympathies, that we categorize him, and others, as such.

3. *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century: The Human Condition, Values, and the Search for Identity,* eds. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2004), 9.

4. "And Sartre, rejecting an invitation to define existentialism, says, 'It is in the nature of an intellectual quest to be undefined. To name it and define it is to wrap it up and tie the knot. What is left? A finished, already outdated mode of culture, something like a brand of soap, in other words, an idea.'" See Walter Kaufmann, "In Search for a Method" in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: New American Library, 1975), xviii.

5. Christine Daigle (ed.), *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2006), 10.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 11.
9. Maurice Friedman*, The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Reader* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1998), 12.
10. *Ibid*.
11. He was of course unhappy with the title of Christian Existentialist on both counts: in its narrowing of his philosophy as a type of Christian apologetic—which he clearly did not intend—and in the title as possibly entangling him with philosophy of Sartre—which he also was adamant about avoiding. We might speculate that he might be more comfortable with being called "religious" given that it is less narrow than the term Christian, but would likely object that it also has its ambiguities since he did not intend to speak only to individuals who are religious.
12. Heidegger is known to have done the same thing quite directly for a similar reason.
13. Friedman, *The Worlds of Existentialism,* 3–4.
14. Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, 9.
15. Friedman, *The Worlds of Existentialism,* p. 4.
16. *Ibid.*, 3–4.
17. *Ibid.*, 8–9.
18. *Ibid.*, 9.
19. *Ibid.*, 9.
20. *Ibid.*, 9.
21. A term he used to describe his "ideal" reader, and later he used to describe himself. This expression makes its appearance in many of his texts, such as *Purity of Heart, Works of Love*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, to name a few. The notion of the individual played such a significant role in his philosophy that he asked his tombstone to have this written upon it, "That single Individual."
22. Nietzsche's influence in the movement of existentialism should also not be ignored or forgotten. The dual pillars of twentieth-century existentialism are of course both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, which provide the impetus for many future existentialists. Though, again, they should not be thought of as the sole source, contributors, or founders, but an essential part of the worldwide growth of the movement.
23. It is unfortunate that another early important figure of the movement had to be left out. We had hoped that someone would present a paper on Ferdinand Ebner in the conference, but this did not occur. And when it was decided soon before publishing to add some chapters that were not part of the conference, it was difficult to find a recent writing on Ebner that also fit with the conference theme. We thus ran out of time and also space, and had to move forward without him, regrettably. Ebner is important in that he is likely the first Catholic dialogical existential thinker who influenced many others, including Buber. It is is said that Buber read Ebner before writing his "I and Thou." He publishes his work at the same time as Rosenzweig, (1919).
24. Perhaps a resurgence and proper scholarship in existentialism could occur with this recasting of the existential net that will revive some of the lesser known thinkers of the movement and even stimulate research on Latin American existentialism, or Black or Africana existentialism, which is clearly lacking in the literature. One indication of this possible resurgence of existential scholarship is the work of Lewis Gordon, who has written a recent anthology in black existentialism: Lewis R. Gordon, *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997).

Chapter One

"One Who Does Not Taste Does Not Know"

Thomas Aquinas on When Affect Constitutes Knowledge of God

Stephen Chanderbhan

Commenting on the line, "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord," in Psalm 34, Thomas Aquinas writes, "[W]hen the Psalmist says *taste and see*, . . . he urges an experience . . . he exhorts others . . . to experience friendship with God" further, he writes, "taste senses the inside [of something that is near to us]. Now God is not far from us nor outside us, but rather He is in us. . . . Thus the experience of divine goodness is called tasting . . . [and] in the spiritual world, . . . one who does not taste does not know."[1]

It may seem surprising to see Thomas Aquinas, of all thinkers, commenting affirmatively about such a familiar, sensory way of experiencing—indeed, of coming to know—God. After all, Aquinas is much better known for his intellectually rigorous explanations of matters divine. For example, while his five ways of proving the existence of God start with what we see in the world, such as motion and causation, each goes beyond these sensible things to prove that God exists. For another example, when explaining the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, he claims that understanding that Christ is really present under the appearance of bread and wine needs faith to supplement "where the feeble senses fail."[2]

This commentary is not anomalous, however. What Aquinas says there actually follows directly from the description in his *Summa theologiae* of the "friendship" a person may have with God. This friendship occurs when one

comes to possess the theological virtues—most specifically, charity (or love). As such, by considering some of the effects of that friendship Aquinas describes, we can get a better sense of what this taste might be about.

After considering these sources, it becomes clearer that mere intellectual exercise and thought are far from sufficient to arrive at the kind of knowledge of God that Aquinas thinks is possible—certainly in the next life, but even in this life. In fact, in the appropriate circumstances, it appears that affective experiences, or something like them, are more direct manifestations of God within a person *instead of* the products of intellectual exercise. I claim that these affective experiences—these "tastes"—are manifestations of knowledge of God *as such*, rather than just knowledge of facts *about* God. Granted, Aquinas does not at all downplay the necessity of having valid and sound argumentation about matters divine. Also, affective experiences are not given this primacy in *all* circumstances. Nevertheless, because certain affective experiences in the right contexts do give more insight than the human intellect operating as well as it can on its own, we can say that feeling has a greater significance for Aquinas than it may first appear.

In this chapter, I describe what it means to experience friendship with God on Aquinas' terms, which involves a discussion of the virtue of charity and certain of its effects, and how this is a context for a deeper knowledge of God—namely, knowledge of God *as such*. I then summarize certain of the effects of charity that Aquinas describes to show what this knowledge may look like on his terms. Finally, I highlight where Aquinas' descriptions indicate that affective experiences can be the paradigmatic manifestations of this knowledge.

WHY THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY ENTAILS FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

As noted above, in his commentary on the line "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord," in Psalm 34, Aquinas writes that the psalmist is exhorting us to experience "*friendship* with God." And, again, when explaining why he calls the experience of God a "taste," he writes, "God is not far from us nor outside us, but rather He is *in* us." Aquinas' description of the theological virtue of charity entails just this: *friendship* with God such that God is said to dwell *within* one.

Charity (*caritas*) is regarded by Aquinas as one of three theological *virtues*, along with faith and hope.[3] Drawing on his Aristotelian intellectual heritage, Aquinas regards all virtues as "habits" that are "perfections of a power."[4] That is, virtues are relatively enduring dispositions that are necessary for causal powers to achieve the ends of their definitive functions in an

excellent manner. Further, since achieving "happiness" (*eudaimonia*, for Aristotle) is defined, in part, by performing one's functions excellently, virtues are necessary for this happiness.

Aquinas' ultimate idea of happiness, however, is not exactly identical to Aristotle's, though his explanation of it expands on an Aristotelian theme. Beyond a sort of "natural" happiness, which consists in humans performing human functions as well as *humans* can perform them (i.e., *eudaimonia*), Aquinas thinks there is a *super*natural happiness—namely, union with God, who is pure and perfect goodness itself.[5] This supernatural happiness consists in performing human functions as well as *God can enhance them* to perform for truly Godly ends. So, just as natural virtues (e.g., fortitude, temperance, and justice) are necessary for Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, Aquinas claims the theological virtues are necessary for supernatural happiness—i.e., union with God.[6] This union ultimately occurs in heaven, but also can be had and experienced in some way on earth. He calls what can be had on earth a "certain participation" of union that falls short of "perfect and true happiness," or beatitude in the next life.[7]

Hence, we can characterize the theological virtues, including charity, as relatively enduring dispositions that perfect human causal powers in ways necessary for humans to achieve union with God, including the kind of union possible in this life. Aquinas claims that charity in particular causes perfections in a human's *will*, as opposed to a human's intellect as such. These perfections entail that, by definition, one also thereby possesses a disposition of having true love of friendship of God and acting out of this love.

The will is defined as the intellectual appetite: the power in a human that inclines or desires based on the apprehensions of the intellect.[8] Because the term "love" generally denotes an initial desire for some good(s) apprehended, the will's initial functions are a kind of love. More specifically, some functions assigned to the human will are the following: inclining one toward *things* that are judged to be good by the intellect, and inclining one toward a proper *ultimate aim, or end, of activity*, as well as appropriate *means* of achieving that aim.[9] As noted above, Aquinas thinks that God is, by definition, goodness itself in every respect. He also thinks that union with God is the highest goodness to which a human can attain, even as it requires Divine help. Hence, a human's will is ultimately perfected when it is disposed to love the truest and surest good—that is, God—and act accordingly, all for the sake of the end of union with God.

What is more, since God is seen as perfect goodness in every respect, it follows that God's will would be greater and more perfect than any human will, in so many words. It would be the greatest perfection, then, that the human will would wish for what God Himself wills. Among the things God Himself wills, according to Aquinas, is goodness to and for all creatures, including that all should achieve union with him.[10] So, the perfected human

will desires to be united to God not for its own sake but for the sake of achieving God's own will. That is, the perfected human will desires God's good for God's own sake.

These together are one part of what the *love of friendship* entails, according to Aquinas—willing good to come to a friend for their own sake, not one's own.[11] This criterion, which finds its origins in Aristotle, has some intuitive plausibility. For example, you are likely a better *friend* as such when you wish for them to get a promotion at work for the true good that it would do them, not because of any benefit that may foreseeably accrue to you *per se*. Should you wish them to get a job for *your own* benefit alone, you would rightly be accused of using that friend and not respecting their goodness as such. So, given Aquinas' scale of value with God at the top, perfections of the will must bring about at least this much of what the love of friendship entails—and this friendship would be with God.

Further, by understanding the perfection of the will as a kind of love, certain *effects* of love will follow with respect to one's relationship with God. One effect that Aquinas describes is called *mutual indwelling*. This effect expresses how much a lover and beloved tend to reside in each other's mind and will. One way that the lover is *in* the beloved, Aquinas says, is "insofar as [the lover] reckons what affects his friend as affecting himself;" whereas the beloved is *in* the lover insofar as the lover "wills and acts for his friend's sake as for his own sake, looking on his friend as identified with himself."[12] Where friendship is true, again, this is *mutual*; so each friend takes on the role of lover and beloved. All told, the lover and beloved appear to share a mind and will in a way here, since the one can identify with the other interiorly. There is some sort of interior communication from one to the other of the things that affect each other, as well as a communication of how the two are, in a way, alike.

Aquinas writes that God Himself communicates "His happiness" to a person with charity.[13] Recalling that God's happiness—ultimate and supernatural happiness, that is—consists in union with God, it follows that this communication of "happiness" from God follows directly from the very presence of God Himself, united to the person with charity and, in a way, dwelling *within* them.[14] That is, the kind of union and mutual indwelling said to follow from love suffices for the kind of communication of goodness Aquinas claims that God gives via the virtue of charity.

A second part of Aquinas' Aristotelian account of friendship is that friends communicate goodness to each other—be that in the form of well-wishing or even presence—and receive that communication from each other in some sufficiently deep and honest way. Again, intuitive proof of this perhaps lies in those friendships that are simply lost over time as the lines of communication either go silent or become superficial. In the case of God,

since the beloved's (i.e., God's) true good is communicated to the lover (i.e., the person with charity) via the mutual indwelling described above, this second part of what love of friendship entails is met.

To understand what Aquinas means by an "experience" of friendship with God, we can consider the parallel case of experiencing friendship with other humans. All else equal, people can remain friends even if they are not constantly in each other's physical presence or in the forefront of their consciousness. Typically, in such cases, when friends do meet after some time apart, it is not as if they must start to establish a friendship again. The friendship remains, even if not actively acted upon or manifested at every moment. In that sense, the friendship is a kind of disposition that is occasionally actively realized. Particular moments when and where that disposition is actively realized may be considered *experiences* of one's friendship.

For Aquinas, charity is itself a kind of disposition—again, a virtue.[15] Also, he remarks that the kind of friendship with God charity gives is not only what one will experience in heaven, but also what one can experience in some imperfect way while on earth. One difference between what is to be experienced in heaven and what can be experienced on earth is that the heavenly experience is eternal, whereas our earthly experience cannot help but be temporal. Experiences of God's friendship, then, are best characterized as moments in a human's temporally bound existence when the disposition of charity is activated and God's presence and communication are made consciously available to them.

Since charity is regarded as a virtue and since the perfection toward which this virtue disposes one is supernatural (namely, union with God), it follows that charity ends up consisting in a disposition of love of friendship for God. This love of friendship sets up a context for a certain kind of knowledge that may allow us to see where feeling matters at the highest reaches of our understanding of God.

ON CHARITY AND KNOWLEDGE OF PERSONS

Charity and the other theological virtues cause one to be a friend of God. God is thereby said to dwell within one as when a friend dwells within another friend—in one's mind, will, and desires. To say, then, that God is a true friend implies that one is able to know God *as a friend*. It is here, I claim, that we begin to see an opening for a greater role for states unlike mere intellectual thought when it comes to knowledge of God.

A small example involving a person may help. Suppose I have a friend named Kevin. Suppose that someone comes up to me and asks how Kevin would react to having his political beliefs challenged. There are a couple ways I could arrive at an answer to that person. One way would be to go over

a sort of encyclopedic list of Kevin's personal, political, and psychological attributes and, from them, derive a sort of conclusion. That is, I might *reason* my way to a conclusion, treating Kevin like a test subject of some sort of experiment that I observe at some distance. I might say something like this: "Well, since Kevin is a staunch Libertarian and generally short tempered about what he staunchly believes, and given the political climate of political debate in this country at present, I predict that Kevin would become quite angry were you to challenge his beliefs." Another way, though, would involve me taking on Kevin's mind as my own, as it were, drawing on memories of past experiences and interactions with him to which I was present. Having taken on his mind, I would *enact* (or *re-enact*) the proposed scenario within myself, sense the reaction within myself, and report on it. In this case, I might reply as follows: "I know Kevin. I know how Kevin gets. If you challenge him, I predict that he will become quite angry." I have come to the same conclusion, but not in the same way. One drew a conclusion from principles; the other drew a conclusion from a kind of enacted scenario.

There is a difference between having memorized every fact about a friend, as if one has read an exhaustive encyclopedia entry on them, and having really gotten to know them via experiences to which one was present. The former consists in knowledge of *propositions about* that friend; the objects of knowledge are the *propositions*. The latter consists in knowledge of the *person* as such; the object of knowledge is the *person as such*. It has been termed in some circles *knowledge of persons*.[16] This kind of direct knowledge can go on to serve as justification for propositions one knows.

So long as a person as such does not simply reduce to a sum of propositions, nor can be captured without loss by such a sum, knowledge of a person is going to be *different* in some ways from mere knowledge of facts *about* that person. Further, if knowledge of facts about a person is somehow derivative from, or less fundamental than, knowledge of persons *and* if typical intellectual exercise and thought consists in working only with propositions and logical conclusions from them, it follows that knowledge of persons would go *beyond* typical intellectual exercise and thought. There is room, then, for something unlike mere intellectual exercise and thought here that will be a manifestation of knowledge; there is room, perhaps, for something like feeling.

Just as one might say there is a difference between merely knowing *about* a friend and knowing *that friend as such* in an intimate and inner way, one can say there is a difference between merely knowing *about* God and knowing *God Himself* as a friend. And here again, perhaps, there is room for something like feeling. This is not immediately clear, though. For one, God is no "ordinary" friend according to Aquinas. Further, we have not yet come

upon affirmative evidence that feeling states *are* part of what Aquinas regards as part of knowledge of God. A closer look at the *effects* of charity will help clarify matters here.

EFFECTS OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHARITY: UNION AND INDWELLING

As noted above, union with God and God's dwelling within one are effects of the love of friendship for God that charity causes. Understanding what Aquinas says about these gives some shape to the specific kinds of "tastes" of God may come to the person with charity. We can also get a clearer picture of the specific content of the tastes of God and communications from God by studying more of the specific effects he describes of the friendship with God that charity and the other theological virtues bring.

The union involved in the love of friendship causes several effects for a lover in relation to the beloved (and *vice versa*), according to Aquinas. First, the beloved is said to be *present* in a certain way to the lover. Second, the lover and the beloved *share certain desires* insofar as the lover sees the beloved as *another self*. As Aquinas writes, "this union [of affections] must be considered in relation to the preceding apprehension . . . when a man loves another with the love of friendship, he wills good to him, just as he wills good to himself: wherefore he apprehends him as his other self, in so far, to wit, as he wills good to him as to himself."[17] This second effect implies that the kind of presence the beloved has to the lover must be of a certain kind and sufficiently deep to justify the claim that the beloved is another self.

Part of the way Aquinas describes mutual indwelling, in addition to what was mentioned above, elucidates the kind of presence at issue here. He writes that the beloved is in the lover "inasmuch as the beloved abides in the apprehension of the lover," and the lover is in the beloved "inasmuch as the lover . . . strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved, so as to penetrate into his very soul."[18] Further, he writes, "in so far as he reckons what affects his friend as affecting himself, the lover seems to be in the beloved, as though he were become one with him."[19] Again, insofar as the love of friendship here is mutual, each person has the role of beloved and lover. This implies that each friend is present to the other in such a way that one may openly and honestly penetrate into the mind, will, and desires of the other so deeply that what is found in the *other* is even manifested *within oneself* as if the two had become one.

As such, to see the beloved as another self, as Aquinas describes union, cannot ultimately consist in the lover being able to identify the beloved as another one of one's own kind from a distance—a distance that may better suit dispassionate intellectual analysis. Rather, a presence that allows for a

certain sharing of minds (and, consequently, wills) is requisite. The kind of presence at issue for Aquinas must allow a lover to perceive that the beloved is another self *from inside*, as it were, by perceiving the mind and will of the beloved within oneself as if it were being reenacted there. Indeed, in that way the friend, or the beloved, truly dwells *within* one. The kind of closeness at issue here appears to be just that of knowledge of persons referenced above.

This kind of sharing is possible with God on Aquinas' terms in part because he claims God does have an intellect and a will, at least in some manner of speaking. Insofar as the intellect is where the truth of facts and things is realized and God Himself is Truth (as well as the way and the life), it is appropriate to speak of God having an intellect.[20] Further, there is a will in God; an appetite of some sort is always paired with any power of apprehension, and the intellect is a power of apprehension.[21] Further, at least in some manner of speaking, God has knowledge of the kinds of things of which we can and do have knowledge—including individual particular matters, propositions, and claims that guide action.[22] In accordance with this knowledge, God exercises His will.[23] All told, then, there *is* something to share from God to a person; and there is a basis according to which God Himself can be seen as another self, even if God is ultimately far greater than any person.[24]

It is worth noting that the differences between God's knowledge and will and those of any human do not appear to destroy the possibility of there being sharing from God to a person. For Aquinas, a human's intellectual knowledge and, subsequently, will are limited by things such as time, materiality, and experience. Such limitations do not exist for God. As such, God's knowledge and will are perfect in ways that humans cannot reach for themselves. For example, Aquinas notes, "Whatever is divided and multiplied in creatures exists in God simply and unitedly. . . . God knows all these by one simple act of knowledge."[25] Humans, on the other hand, would require certain discrete steps of thought before arriving at any knowledge of the same conclusion via their intellects. That said, this limitation of *how* humans come to have knowledge does not entail that there is not content in God's mind and will that is shareable.

Further, recall that humans are being perfected *by God Himself* in the theological virtues. The happiness toward which one is disposed by the theological virtues is a *super*natural happiness. Aquinas also accepts the doctrine according to which God's grace is necessary to reach salvation—i.e., supernatural happiness consisting in union with God. Thus, to receive that which human faculties alone and even at their best are not suited to reach, God Himself supplies the perfections. Human faculties are being made suitable to receiving things beyond their ordinary station. So certain of the ordinary limitations of human intellect and will are being transcended in the first

place; it may follow, then, that God's knowledge and will as such can be shared—and perhaps shared in a way quite similar to how God Himself possesses them.

The upshot here is this: for Aquinas, the friendship with God brought by charity appears to imply such a closeness with God so that one is to be able to see within God's mind and will at certain moments as if it were one's own. What may appear to us to be movements of thought or feeling from within ourselves may be movements of the Divine being mirrored in us in supernaturally perfected faculties. Direct insights that follow upon the closeness implied with charity, then, are part of what we may "taste" of God when we "experience friendship" with God.

EFFECTS OF THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHARITY: GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In addition to the direct effects of union, Aquinas claims that one with charity also comes to possess the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the list of which is taken from Scripture.[26] These have a specific purpose, according to Aquinas: "the more exalted the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition whereby the [thing moved] is made proportionate to its mover. . . . These perfections are called Gifts . . . because by them man is disposed to become amenable to the Divine inspiration [and so be moved by God]."[27] The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, then, are subsidiary habits, each related to a particular virtue, that perfect functions within a person's intellect, will, and passions that specifically concern receiving, comprehending, and acting upon communications from God. This is described most fully in terms of coming to have *connaturality* with God—that is, a shared, or second, nature. Thomas Ryan captures this helpfully:

> Because God is the object, . . . there is a shift to a higher level of . . . activity of the intellect, will, and the virtues so that . . . their mode of operation exceeds their natural boundaries, the limits of [human] reason. The graced person is enabled to operate in a suprarational mode, governed by divine instinct rather than by the calculative mode of reason. The person is moved to . . . [a] level of connaturality beyond that of the virtues. . . . It is described as an instinct, a "taste" for the things of God that draws one to perceive, choose, and respond in a manner that is "second nature," namely, as if it is natural and normal for us to know, feel, love, and act as God does.[28]

Studying what Aquinas says about the Gifts that concerning knowledge (i.e., the operation of the intellect) should help us see what he thinks the contents of these communications from God can be. The four of the seven Gifts that are perfections of our intellect and its functions are understanding, knowledge, wisdom, and counsel.

The Gifts of understanding and knowledge are said to relate to the virtue of faith. On account of faith, certain truths about God, which are revealed in and derived from Scripture, are knowable.[29] Since faith itself is a perfection of the human intellect, the Gifts of understanding and knowledge are perfections of specific subsidiary functions within the intellect. Aquinas explains this as follows:

> Two things are requisite in order that the human intellect may perfectly assent to the truth of the faith: one of these is that he should have a *sound grasp* of the things that are proposed to be believed, and this pertains to the Gift of understanding [. . .] while the other is that he should have *a sure and right judgment* on them, so as to discern what is to be believed, from what is not to be believed, and for this the Gift of knowledge is required.[30]

Put briefly, the Gift of understanding allows humans to perceive the essence of God more clearly, especially with respect to the kinds of things that can only be touched by faith in our human state.[31] For Aquinas, the essence of something is grasped in terms of its definition; for example, the essence of "human" is captured by the definition "rational animal." Because of how God Himself is said to transcend all categories of being, His essence cannot be grasped by the unaided human mind, in principle. Further, certain mysteries such as that of the Trinity escape perfect comprehension given the concepts built up from our understanding of the natural world—again, in principle. The supernatural Gift of understanding pierces the veil, as it were, to grant one a glimpse into these kinds of things that are occluded from the human intellect. The Gift of knowledge perfects one's ability to have a sure determination of what is true and part of that grasp of divine things and what is not. One thereby has a clear perception of what is true and what is false about God in such things.

The Gift of wisdom is said to relate to the virtue of charity, since it is said to follow most directly from what charity grants to one—namely, a friend's insight into the mind and will of God. The Gift granted by this insight is profound, according to Aquinas: "He who knows the cause that is simply the highest, which is God, is said to be wise simply, because he is able to judge and set in order all things according to Divine rules."[32] Wisdom gives one insight into the mind and will of God insofar as that is manifested in all things other than God Himself—that is, particular contingent things and events involving such things. After all, again, such things are still held in the mind and will of God.[33] Later, he reiterates that Gift has import for practical

reasoning, since the intellect imbued with the Gift of wisdom "contemplates Divine things in themselves, and . . . consults them, in so far as it judges of human acts by Divine things, and directs human acts according to Divine rules."[34] What one is disposed to perceive via this Gift, then, are insights about what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, as God Himself would see and judge things. One sees the world with God's eyes, as it were.

The Gift of counsel is said to relate to the virtue of prudence, on account of which humans are able to do research well on any matters concerning action. Accordingly, Aquinas describes the effect of this Gift as follows: "through the Gift of counsel, . . . man is directed as though counseled by God, just as, in human affairs, those who are unable to take counsel for themselves, seek counsel from those who are wiser."[35] This definitively indicates that, according to Aquinas, divine insights and judgments on action are among what is communicated from the mind and will of God.

In all, the direct insights we have into the mind and will of God offered via charity consist in both a deeper understanding and sense of God Himself (cf., the Gifts of understanding and knowledge) and an insight to God's knowledge of, and judgments about, particular, contingent circumstances and cases in the concrete world, especially as they relate to action for that person to undertake (cf., the Gifts of wisdom and counsel).

These direct insights may be likened to knowledge *of God Himself* as a friend, as opposed to mere knowledge *about* God. Through the Gifts of understanding and knowledge, a human is better able to grasp who God is as such in a way that the human intellect cannot. Given that God is said to know himself perfectly, what one perceives through such Gifts is, in fact, how God Himself sees and knows Himself as such.[36] Through the Gifts of wisdom and counsel, one comes to see and judge the world the way God does, which goes beyond the way that any human can see and judge it with their intellect alone. This knowledge of God that comes via mutual indwelling of friendship is more like a sharing of God's mind *as it is in itself* than a sharing of content as a human alone, via the typical work of the intellect, can arrive at it. The ordinary processes and manifestations of intellectual thought have been surpassed; as such, there is room for other kinds of manifestations—room, perhaps, for feeling.

WHAT IS THIS "TASTE" LIKE?

Asking whether or not affective phenomena (i.e., feelings) are part of this knowledge beyond the ordinary work of the intellect for Aquinas is asking what he would say such experiences might be *like*, specifically. The problem is that it is relatively difficult to find the answers to phenomenological questions in Aquinas' work. His philosophical method lends him to describe

matters in terms of metaphysics, which tends not to bear directly on questions of how things are experienced—at least, not in so many words. A couple passages on how he describes the metaphysical underpinning of these things give us some clues about what the "taste" of God may be like, however. This gives a more definitive case for the conclusion that feeling states in particular are among the paradigmatic deliverances of God and God's shared mind and will within one with charity.

In one passage, Aquinas describes the movement of the Holy Spirit relevant to the Gifts. As noted above, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are perfections that render one ready to be moved by God in matters important to reaching one's ultimate supernatural goal. Aquinas claims that one is moved by a sort of "Divine instinct," which manifests itself by "inner promptings."[37] According to Servais Pinckaers, the Latin word Aquinas uses here, *instinctus*, is typically used to denote an immediate sort of experience that even non-human animals can and do have. Pinckaers writes, "More than 50 instances [of the word *instinctus* in Aquinas' works] entail man in his moral life, the motion of the will in the discernment of good and evil, and the relationship with law. . . . There are more than 50 that imply animal instinct."[38] This implies that the experience of an *instinctus* is almost passional—immediate and not like a process of deliberate thought of itself.

Second, as noted above, there are vast differences between God and any human in terms of how their minds and wills work; most notably, while human intellect works by reasoning in a stepwise manner from principles to a conclusion, God's knowledge is said to be complete all at once and does not need to proceed in a stepwise manner.[39] Aquinas seems to address how this kind of intellect is shared in his treatment of the Gift of knowledge. He writes, "God's knowledge is not discursive, or argumentative, but absolute and simple, *to which that knowledge is likened which is a Gift of the Holy Ghost*, since it is a participated likeness thereof."[40] That is, it appears that the deliverances of God's own mind and will when shared with the mind of a person will be manifested in a person in a way as similar as possible to how it exists in God.

Affective experiences, or feelings, can be among the kinds of human experiences that fit this bill.[41] Such experiences can be characterized in general as emotions, as they are affective experiences with an intentional object. These may encapsulate and represent certain judgments or perceptions completely within themselves and with the kind of immediacy that can spur action. While it need not be true that *all* deliverances of the Gifts are emotions, I take it that it is true for some of them: specifically, deliverances from understanding and knowledge, which give one insight into God as He is in Himself, or deliverances from wisdom and counsel, which give one insight into the judgments of God on particular states of affairs as they bear on action.

First, consider the deliverances of understanding and knowledge. Aquinas believes that it can be proven *that* God is pure goodness itself, as noted above. To perceive that goodness and to be united to it must result both in the fulfillment and enjoyment of one's desires, given Aquinas' view of human nature. The fulfillment and enjoyment of ordinary, earthly desires is typically associated with the *passion* of delight (or pleasure), which is almost certainly to be regarded as an emotion as described.[42] It is a felt manifestation of the perceived goodness of something that one comes to possess in a way, though it is an intellectual judgment about its actual goodness. That is, it is an awareness of the thing's perceived goodness *itself*. For example, whatever pleasure one receives from, say, eating a delicious dessert or seeing someone beautiful is itself a felt manifestation of the perceived goodness of that thing, relative to the desires of one's sensory appetites.

In the case of the fulfillment and enjoyment of the desire for God via union with Him, Aquinas describes a parallel phenomenon as one of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit—spiritual joy. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit are acts that specifically follow upon the possession of the Gifts. Aquinas describes spiritual joy in terms of a direct perception that follows upon the goodness *of God Himself*, who is goodness itself; it is the first of the two ways mentioned here: "There can be spiritual joy about God in two ways. First, when we rejoice in the Divine good considered in itself; secondly, when we rejoice in the Divine good [because it is] participated by us. The former joy . . . proceeds from charity chiefly."[43] In sum, what we come to know through this perception is *the goodness of God Himself*, as opposed to the knowledge of the fact *that* God is good (and goodness itself). Spiritual joy that is felt is the vehicle of this specific knowledge of the depth and breadth of this goodness. In this way, the quotation of the Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, is substantiated: "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God."

Second, consider the deliverances of wisdom and counsel whereby we gain insight about what ought to be done and what ought not to be done in certain situations. These may be likened to deliverances of conscience. Suppose, say, you are considering stealing a car or lashing out in anger against a co-worker. Then, suppose you feel a sharp pang of unease at your proposed action, or a felt aversion to your plan. There are many possible explanations for this felt experience, in general. One such explanation is that your conscience is crying out against your proposed action. There is a visceral reaction against this proposed action that manifests itself as a sort of strong affect, something that cannot help but come before your attention. It encapsulates the evil of the proposed course of action, so as to imply the judgment, "This action ought not be done." Conscience can work in a positive manner too, of course. In such a case, any corresponding affect could be seen as a manifestation of a judgment of conscience approving the course of action proposed, encapsulating a judgment such as "This action ought to be done."

In a similar way, God's judgments about particular actions could be manifested as emotions for the person who is graced with the virtue of charity. A pang of pain or aversion to a possible course of action could be an indication that this action would not be willed by God, given how God views the world and what will be needed for that person to maintain union with God. Aquinas thinks that, in God, we may find five different "expressions of will," or ways in which God's will manifests itself toward particular things; one such expression is "prohibition," which is said to regard the "evil of sin" insofar as it is "out of harmony with the divine will."[44] Aquinas also mentions "persuasion" as an expression of God's will; he writes, "[God] declares his will by means of another . . . by persuasion, which is a part of [the Gift of] counsel."[45] Such could be associated with positive affects that help to nudge one toward a particular action.

In both these cases, affective phenomena (namely, emotions) appear to be paradigmatic manifestations of the presence and knowledge that God shares with the person with charity. Spiritual joy is the paradigmatic manifestation of the true goodness of God as such. Encouragements or aversions with respect to certain courses of action are promptings of the Divine, felt within, speaking for or against courses of action, much like the voice of our conscience. In such cases, these emotions are *the* ways that this knowledge of God Himself as such is shared from the mind of God itself to the mind of a human prepared by charity. These emotions constitute the "taste" on account of which one can claim to know God.

CONCLUSION

There is a legend that surrounds why Thomas Aquinas stopped working on his *Summa theologiae*. It is said that, late in 1273, he was praying before a Crucifix when he had a vision. Christ was looking down from the Cross upon him and all the philosophical and theological work he had written devoted to the rational exposition of God, the world, and the Christian faith. It is said that, in this vision, Christ said to him, "You have written well of me, Thomas. What reward will you have?" Aquinas answered, "None other than You, Lord." ("*Non nisi Te, Domine*.") After this vision, he simply stopped work on the *Summa theologiae* before it was done. When one of his scribes, Brother Reginald, asked him why he had stopped, Aquinas told him of the vision, saying, "All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me."

Without trying to read too much into this legend, and not relying on its veracity, something about it still speaks favorably to the thesis of this chapter. Aquinas' works are meticulously argued and rationally tight—and, ultimately, regarded as straw. Why? One explanation is that, according to those

very works, the knowledge captured within them could not, for all their rational weight, capture by themselves the knowledge of that toward which they pointed—God Himself. Indeed, through them, Aquinas could claim to know *that* God existed and that many other things *about* God were true (in an analogical sense, of course). But all this work could not amount, of themselves, to a taste *of God Himself*. And, though one could know *about* God without such a taste, one could *not* know *God Himself* without such a taste.

So when Aquinas writes, "the one who does not taste does not know," I claim he is speaking of knowledge of *God Himself* as a friend, or "another self," as opposed to knowledge of just facts *about* God. I claim it is no accident that Aquinas describes this prerequisite of knowledge of God Himself as a "taste," given exactly what he thinks friendship with God entails. This love of friendship entails union and mutual indwelling, so that God is present *as such* to the person graced with charity. This presence entails that God's mind and will are shared *as such* to the person, whose faculties are also perfected by God Himself beyond their natural capacities to take on supernatural kinds of deliverances—as much as possible in this life and certainly in the next. This sharing of God's perfectly simple and unified mind and will is manifested in a human's mind by things like spiritual joy and other "inner promptings" that are actually "Divine instincts"—indeed, emotions, or feelings, which are among the best encapsulations of that simple and unified Divine mind for those things.

Where thought even at its finest turns into mere straw, feeling is far from banished by supernatural virtue. In fact, feeling returns to a place of great prominence. For being a paradigmatic kind of manifestation of some knowledge of God Himself, feeling is "redeemed" for Thomas Aquinas.[46]

NOTES

1. Thomas Aquinas, *In psalmis Davidis expositio: Super Psalmo 33* (34), §9. Trans. Gregory Froelich. Available through Aquinas Translation Project (2012): http://hosted.desales.edu/w4/philtheo/loughlin/ATP/Psalm_33.html.

2. As Aquinas wrote in his hymn on the Eucharist, *Pange lingua* (the last two verses of which stand on their own as the Catholic hymn, *Tantum ergo*), "*Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui*." A popular English translation of this by Edward Caswall (1873) goes as follows: "Faith for all defects supplying, where the feeble senses fail."

3. These three are taken, of course, from the following lines in Scripture, "So faith, hope, and charity [also translated as 'love'] abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Hence, '*ST*'), trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd ed. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), I-II q. 55 a. 1, co. N. B.: In this paper, quotations from Aquinas in English are taken from the translations cited unless otherwise noted.

5. Cf., *ST* I q. 6 a. 1 and 2.

6. Since, for Aquinas, all functions aim at goodness in their true fulfillment and, by being united to God, one comes to reach and possess as much as possible the ultimate and highest goodness, there can be nothing greater than union with God and, for humans, this is possible.

He writes, "Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause [i.e., God]. And thus it will have its perfection through *union with God* as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists." (*ST* I-II q. 3 a. 8, co.)

7. The full quotation is this: "A certain participation of Happiness can be had in this life: but perfect and true Happiness cannot be had in this life." (*ST* I-II q. 5 a. 3, co.)

8. Aquinas writes, "There is [an] appetite following freely from an apprehension in the subject of the appetite. And this is the rational or intellectual appetite, which is called the 'will.' Now in each of these appetites, the name 'love' is given to the principle movement toward the end loved." (*ST* I-II q. 26 a. 1, co.)

9. Cf., *ST* I-II q. 8 a. 1-2 on the various movements assigned to the human will.

10. Cf., *ST* I q. 19 a. 6, ad 1 for the assertion that God desires all to be saved (i.e., to be in union with him) and complications arising from the claim that not all are, in fact, saved.

11. Cf., *ST* I-II q. 23 a. 1, co.

12. *ST* I-II q. 28 a. 2, co.

13. *ST* I-II q. 23 a. 1, co.

14. Aquinas also describes this presence in terms of "the Holy Ghost Himself [the third Person of the Trinity] dwelling in the mind." (*ST* I-II q. 23 a. 2, co.)

15. Cf., *ST* I-II q. 23 a. 3, co. on charity as a *virtue* (i.e., a habit) lending one toward friendship.

16. Regarding knowledge of persons, Eleonore Stump has written, "There is . . . a broad array of knowledge commonly had by human beings that cannot be formulated adequately or at all as knowledge *that*. Such knowledge is provided by some first-person experiences, especially those in which the qualia of the experience are among the salient parts of the knowledge. One important species of such knowledge is the . . . knowledge of persons." From Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80. In the chapter where this quotation appears, Stump has written extensively on knowledge of persons, its difference from knowledge *about* persons, and some substantiation that knowledge of persons as such exists from findings in neuroscience (specifically regarding mirror neurons—cf., Stump (2010), 67–77). Stump specifically references this from a Thomistic perspective.

17. *ST* I-II q. 28 a. 1, co.

18. *ST* I-II q. 28 a. 2, co.

19. *ST* I-II q. 28 a. 2, co.

20. For Aquinas' specific arguments on God having knowledge (and, thus, an intellect), cf., *ST* I q. 14, especially a. 1. For Aquinas' specific arguments on God simply being Truth itself, cf., *ST* I q. 16 a. 5.

21. Cf., *ST* I q. 80 a. 1, co.

22. Cf., *ST* I q. 14 a. 2–16.

23. Cf., *ST* I q. 19.

24. There are several ways in which friendship with God turns out to be friendship between unequals, as Aristotle would have put it. For more on the possibility of friendship between unequals in general, cf., Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics'* (*Sententia libri Ethicorum*), trans. C. I. Litzinger, O. P., (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), Bk. viii, Lec. vii, §1624–38.

25. *ST* I q. 14 a. 1, ad 2.

26. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears." (Isaiah 11:2–3)

27. *ST* I-II q. 68 a. 1, co.

28. Thomas Ryan, "Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (February 2005): 49–68, qt. on 60.

29. On the objects of faith relevant to the Gift of understanding, Aquinas writes, "On the side of faith the distinction to be made is that certain things, of themselves, come directly under faith, such as the mystery to three Persons in one God, and the incarnation of God the Son;

whereas other things come under faith, through being subordinate, in one way or another, to those just mentioned, for instance, all that is contained in the Divine Scriptures." (*ST* II-II q. 8 a. 3, co.)

30. *ST* II-II q. 9 a. 1, co.

31. Aquinas describes this in terms of humans being provided with a "supernatural light" that outshines the light of natural human reason and that allows one to see certain truths more clearly. (*ST* II-II q. 8 a. 1, co.)

32. *ST* II-II q. 45 a. 1, co.

33. Cf., for example, *ST* II-II q. 45 a. 3, ad 2.

34. *ST* II-II q. 45 a. 3, co.

35. *ST* II-II q. 52 a. 1, ad 1.

36. On God's knowledge of Himself, cf., *ST* I q. 14 a. 2–4.

37. *ST* I-II q. 68 a. 1, co.

38. Servais Pinckaers, "Morality and the Movement of the Holy Spirit," trans. Craig Steven Titus, in *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, eds. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005) 385–95, qt. on 387. Cf., also "Appendix 5: *Instinctus* and *Inspiratio*" in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, *Vol. 24: The Gifts of the Spirit*, ed. and trans. Edward O'Connor (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1973),131–41.

39. Cf., *ST* I q. 14 a. 7, co.

40. *ST* I-II q. 9 a.1, ad 1 (*emphasis* added).

41. I have referenced this possibility before in Stephen Chanderbhan, "The Shifting Prominence of Emotions in the Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas," *Diametros*, no. 38 (December 2013): 62–85, especially 76–82.

42. On Aquinas' treatment of delight in itself, cf., *ST* I-II q. 31. There is not a straightforward equivalence between *passiones* (passions) and emotions, though the former are almost certainly instances of the latter. For more, see Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

43. *ST* II-II q. 28 a. 1, ad 3.

44. *ST* I q. 19 a. 12, ad 4.

45. *ST* I q. 19 a. 12, co.

46. I'd like to thank Anthony Malagon, Abi Doukhan, and everyone else whose questions and comments helped shape my thoughts on this paper. I'd also like to thank one anonymous reviewer for their very helpful comments on the initial version of this chapter.

Chapter Two

Intellectual Ascent and Experience in Dante's *Divine Comedy*

Antonio Donato

It is a common *topos* in philosophical and literary texts to juxtapose two basic ways of exploring the meaning of human life. One may be labelled the "intellectual approach" and has its origin in "Socratic intellectualism." On this view, the attainment of a fulfilling life depends entirely on our ability to discover, through reason, what makes life worth living. The process of rational investigation is supposed to take us out of a state of ignorance and identify the fundamental values that should direct our existence. The limitations of the intellectual approach had, however, already been recognized at the end of the classical age by philosophers who pointed out that reason *alone* cannot be what determines our goals; our spiritual yearnings were regarded to be the fundamental guide of our existence. In late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages love for God was regarded as the basic drive of our life; this love, when embraced, was considered to direct our lives toward its natural goal, i.e., to become one with God. On this view, the intellect was seen as a secondary factor the role of which is not to determine the purpose of our lives but only to help us articulate the spiritual yearnings that characterise our souls.

In the *Divine Comedy* Dante identifies a third alternative to the two paths here described—an alternative that aims to find a balance between the intellectual and spiritual tendencies of our nature. However, this different path, Dante implies, can be recognized only when we realize what the fundamental challenge of human life is. The initial two cantos of the *Divine Comedy* are devoted to the exploration of such a challenge.

I

> In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell what that wood was, so savage and harsh and strong that the thought of it renews my fear! [. . .] But when I had reached the foot of a hill [. . .] I looked on high and saw its shoulders clothed already with the rays of the planet that leads us straight on every path.[1]

In these famous initial lines of the *Divine Comedy* we encounter Dante-the-pilgrim who is lost in a strange territory that he does not recognize.[2] The way Dante describes the situation bears remarkable resemblances to Plato's famous allegory of the cave in book seven of the *Republic*.[3] The wood in which Dante-the-pilgrim finds himself seems reminiscent of the dark cave in which the characters of Plato's allegory are imprisoned. On this reading, Dante's wood may be understood as the material world considered by Plato as the place of ignorance and imperfection. The terminology used by Dante appears to confirm this impression. The Italian term for "wood" (*selva*) used in canto one translates the Latin term *silva* which, in turn, translates the Greek *hyle*; *hyle* refers to the matter out of which, according to the Platonists, the Demiurge fashions the material world. The state in which Dante-the-pilgrim finds himself also bears some similarity with that of the prisoner in Plato's cave. In line 11 we are told that Dante-the-pilgrim does not know how he got into the wood since he was "full of sleep."[4] Since Heraclitus, sleep has been a metaphor for the condition of lack of intellectual insight. This seems to be the case also in the allegory of the cave in which the prisoner is similar to a person who is sleeping since he does not have access to real objects but only to their shadows. The sun that Dante-the-pilgrim sees gleaming over a hill in lines 13–18 resembles the sun shining through the entrance of the cave in Plato's story and may be taken to represent the realm of truth. Finally, Dante-the-pilgrim's attempt to climb the hill lit by the sun (lines 19–31) recalls the ascent of the prisoner out Plato's cave. In both cases the ascent can be taken to stand for an intellectual process that promises to lead to us the truth. In this respect, it is telling that in line 25 Dante-the-pilgrim describes his attempted ascent as a "flight of the mind."[5] The Italian word Dante employs for the mind is *animo*—a word that has a decidedly philosophical undertone. In medieval texts *anima* is the word typically used to depict the soul in a theological context; *animo* refers to the center of our intellectual abilities.[6] It is likely that Dante derives the idea of the flight of the *animo* from a passage by St. Ambrose which translates a section of the *Enneads* where Plotinus describes the intellectual ascent of the mind from the material world to the world of ideas.[7]

The journey of Dante-the-pilgrim, however, ends in an unexpected way. Instead of reaching the top of the hill and entering the realm of light, as in the Platonic allegory, he finds himself unable to complete his ascent. His failure appears to suggest that the Platonic ascent done through philosophical pursuits is not going to be what will save Dante-the-pilgrim. Yet, his failure indicates not only the limitations of the flight of the mind; it also shows that the condition of Dante-the-pilgrim (i.e., the meaning of the wood, his state of lethargy, etc.) is, in spite of what we have learned so far, not so similar to the one of the prisoner in Plato's allegory after all. The examination, in the next section, of what prevents the ascent of Dante-the-pilgrim will shed some light onto the nature of his condition.

II

The intellectual ascent of Dante-the-pilgrim is, first, hindered and, finally, stopped by three obstacles. We encounter the first one in line 28 where Dante-the-pilgrim tells us that he needs to stop for a while since his body is too tired to proceed any further.[8] In other words, his mind is ready for the ascent, but the body is not.[9] The symbolic meaning of this problem seems easy to ascertain. It appears that Dante-the-pilgrim has committed a mistake that, as had been shown by Augustine, is common to many Platonists. That is, the failure to appreciate the magnitude of the challenge of the body.[10] Dante seems to suggest that what makes any ascent of the mind problematic is that to know what we should do is not sufficient since we need to contend with the challenge of acting upon what we know. This idea is further refined a few lines later (29–30) when we are told that Dante-the-pilgrim's ascent is slowed down by one of his feet that he is unable to move properly and has to drag.[11] Freccero has formulated one of the most convincing explanations of these famously difficult lines.[12] He argues that Dante is here referring to a medieval metaphor that is the result of a transformation of a biological view that can be traced back to Aristotle. According to this metaphor, the feet can be taken to refer to the two basic parts of the soul. The right foot represents reason; the left the will. In the case of Dante-the-pilgrim, the foot he drags is the left one which indicates that the difficulty he faces is the so-called problem of the weakness of the will.

The two factors that hinder the ascent of Dante-the-pilgrim seem to capture the fundamental objection to the intellectual approach proposed by Socrates and furthered by the Platonists. The first and most influential philosophical objection to this view came from Aristotle in book seven of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[13] He argued that the fundamental problem with the Socratic-Platonic position is that it is unable to account for the many cases in which an individual knows that a course of action is not good for him, yet he cannot

prevent himself from taking it anyway. To put it differently, Aristotle showed that a purely intellectual understanding of what is good is not sufficient to motivate a person to act accordingly since there is a further factor to consider: the will. The problem with the will is that it can be strong and able to follow through the indications of the intellect or weak and, thus, subject to the influence of a variety of factors (e.g., desires, passions, emotions, etc.) other than reason. Although Dante was certainly influenced by Aristotle, his reference to the problem of the will in canto one of *Inferno* has another source, a theological one. That is, the view, mentioned by Saint Paul in Romans 7:18–19 and refined by Augustine, according to which the will of human beings is significantly weakened by the original sin.[14] In the case of Aristotle, the strength of the will depends, to a large extent, on the way we train it: the more we engage in acts in accordance with our good judgment, the stronger our will becomes. Saint Paul and Augustine do not object that the will can be trained, yet they think that because of the original sin we face a more serious challenge than the one describe by Aristotle. The original sin has corrupted our nature and, thus, makes any attempt to train our will particularly difficult.[15]

The final obstacle Dante-the-pilgrim encounters definitively stops his ascent, and also seems to reveal the theological nature of the difficulty he faces more explicitly. In lines 31–60 he encounters three beasts that prevent him from climbing any further: a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf. Although scholars disagree as to the exact meaning of these three beasts, they seem to concur that they indicate the inclination toward sin that characterizes human beings. On this reading, the ascent of the mind is made impossible by the nature of the human body made weak by the original sin.

The three obstacles Dante-the-pilgrim encounters in his ascent reveal not only the impossibility to reach salvation only through the intellect, but also cast a new light on his initial condition. The indication that Dante-the-pilgrim's body makes his ascent impossible seems to suggest that that wood in which he finds himself is not the Platonic material world, but, rather, the condition of sin in which all human beings are. By the same token, the sleepiness which he feels is not really a state of ignorance; rather, it appears to be a state of moral torpor that is due to his weak will. Dante-the-pilgrim has perfect knowledge of what and where salvation is since he can see the sun clearly, yet his will prevents him from acting upon his knowledge. On this analysis, it appears that Dante-the-pilgrim needs an alternative way out of the wood. The recognition of the limitations of the intellect and of his condition of sinner seems to suggest that he has to follow the path traced before him by thinkers such as Augustine.[16] Dante-the-pilgrim has to rely on faith, abandon the intellectual suggestions of the Platonists, and follow a humble path that will take him to face sin in hell and the need for true contrition in purgatory.[17] Along this new path, intellectual pursuits have a

secondary, though still important, role since what can truly save Dante-the-pilgrim is his love and faith in God. This view seems to be confirmed toward the end of canto one (line 91) in which Dante-the-pilgrim is intimated by his guide Virgil, who he has just met, that in order to get out of the wood he has to "follow another path."[18] Thus, instead of proceeding up the hill Dante-the-pilgrim has just failed to climb, Virgil guides him down into hell.

Canto one seems to end with the powerful idea that the way out for Dante-the-pilgrim, and generally for human beings who like him are lost in a state of sin, is not the way up depicted by Platonists but the *way down* through the sorrows of hell and the repentance of purgatory—a way that is paved by our love for and faith in God. Yet, this account is only partly persuasive for a variety of reasons. From a purely historical perspective, it runs the risk of reducing Dante to an Augustinian. To be sure, Augustine and the *Confessions* loom large over Dante's *Divine Comedy*, yet they are not his only source. From a more theoretical perspective, we may wonder whether Dante contents himself with the juxtaposition of will and intellect. Finally, the reading here considered presents two serious exegetical problems. The first is that it leaves no room for the role of the alter-ego of Dante-the-pilgrim: Aeneas. The Trojan is the classical hero who visited the underworld more thoroughly than any other hero and his example is constantly reminded to Dante-the-pilgrim by the figure of Virgil. The second exegetical difficulty in the interpretation of Dante-the-pilgrim as a new Augustine is that it is at odds with the pivotal point of canto two. In lines 43–48 of canto two we are told that Dante-the-pilgrim feels suddenly unfit to take such an extraordinary journey into the underworld.[19] Although his hesitation may be seen as yet another instance of his weak will, Virgil's diagnosis points to something very different. He says that what stops Dante-the-pilgrim is his "unwillingness to do something great." This excess of modesty, which Dante following Aristotle described in the *Convivio* as a moral failure, suggests that the fundamental challenge faced by Dante-the-pilgrim is neither to overcome ignorance in a Platonic fashion nor to recognize the weakness of his will as Augustine teaches.[20] Rather, he needs to confront something very different: the challenge of recognizing his capacity to make his own, unique contribution to the world. In the next section, we shall learn how the description of the condition of Dante-the-pilgrim has to be refined once more in order to gain a better insight into the real nature of the challenge he faces in the initial lines of canto one.

III

In the previous pages we have examined two ways in which to make sense of the condition of Dante-the-pilgrim at the beginning of the poem, yet both ways have been found wanting. It is, thus, necessary, to go back to the very first line of the poem and considered it from a different perspective. We are told that Dante-the-pilgrim is at a very specific moment in his life, i.e., in the "middle" (*mezzo*). Later in the poem, we come to know that Dante-the-pilgrim is thirty-five years old at the moment of his journey which, according to the commonly held belief in the Middle-Ages, was the mid-point of life. In the *Convivio* Dante points out that the mid-point of life is a crucial moment of transition—we could say a moment of crisis.[21] Curiously, scholars have not explored how this remark in the *Convivio* can offer crucial insight into the first line of canto one, yet it is paramount to understand what it is implied by the fact that Dante-the-pilgrim makes his journey at thirty-five, neither earlier nor later. This detail is not important in the Platonic or Augustinian readings we have examine before. In Plato's cave the prisoners could be freed some point, they could be young or old; in the case of Augustine the path toward God may stretch over several years as it was in his case. On these readings, the first line of the *Divine Comedy* "in the middle of the journey of our life" is taken to mean in the "midst" of life, "at some point" during our existence; the *Convivio* suggests, however, that "middle" is to be taken to have a precise chronological meaning.

The *Convivio* offers a lengthy explanation as to why thirty-five is such a crucial year in our lives. Dante tells us that human life can be divided into four ages (adolescence, maturity, old age, and senility). Maturity begins at twenty-five and ends at forty-five. This age is described as the age of "perfection." What Dante means is that this is the period in our life in which we are supposed to completely express ourselves, to fully bring to the fore our identity. During adolescence, we progressively grow into who we are; in old age and senility, we decline. Maturity is the period in which we are expected to contribute to the world whilst in the other ages we are either dependent on (adolescence and senility) or quite removed from (old age) others. The challenge we face at thirty-five is that of fully moving out of the period of dependency that characterises adolescence, and embrace our own individuality. In adolescence, we were expected to simply follow and accept what we were told—one of the main virtues of adolescence, Dante claims, is obedience. By contrast, in the age of maturity, we should neither simply follow blindly what society dictates nor revolt; we are required to go past what we have been taught and integrate our way of being within society. This transformation is a crucial, necessary development to move to the next stage: old age. During this third age, the virtues that we are supposed to master are, among others, wisdom and justice. They are not intended to be simply the

enforcement of conventional values and laws, but the ability to make personal assessments of what is right and wrong in the light of one's own views developed through life experiences.

In *Convivio*, Dante examines to some length the fundamental qualities of the age of maturity and illustrates all of them with deeds of Aeneas.[22] In other words, Dante indicates that Aeneas is the very example of the mature man who masters all the virtues proper to that age. The depiction of the Aeneas as the ideal "mature man" is very relevant for the sake of our analysis since, as we noted before, Aeneas is one of the constant points of reference for Dante-the-pilgrim during the poem. In the *Inferno*, Aeneas is a role model for Dante-the-pilgrim; he embodies a very different type of hero from Ulysses who in canto 26 is depicted as the ultimate example of a Platonic flight of the mind that ended in tragedy. Ulysses is portrayed as a man driven by an unquenchable desire for knowledge that leads him to overlook danger and, worse, deceive his companions in order to follow him. In the scheme of the *Convivio*, Ulysses is a sort of rebel, a man who in unable to integrate his way being within society. According to the account we find in canto 26, Ulysses is unable to fulfil his roles as father, husband, and son; he abandons all his social and civic duties in order to follow his calling.[23] By contrast, Aeneas is a hero with a refined social and civic sense. He becomes the founder of a new civilization (i.e., Rome), yet he does it by basing it on his traditional Trojan values. To put it differently, he combines old and new values.

The fundamental qualities of maturity, which Aeneas embodies, are, interestingly, the exact opposite of the vices that shape the moral topography of Dante's hell. More specifically, one of the virtues the mature man is supposed to have is the ability to restrain his passions. Aeneas, Dante tells us, was able to overcome his passion for Dido in order to fulfil his destiny. What is crucial about Dante's remark is that he departs from the standard explanation of what motivated Aeneas to leave Dido, i.e., obedience to the gods. Rather, in Dante's account Aeneas leaves since he is capable of recognizing what his purpose in life is and embraces it. Dante's original explanation of what truly motivates Aeneas is crucial for his depiction of the mature man. If Aeneas were simply following a divine order, he would only be an obedient adolescent; what makes him a virtuous mature man is his ability to realize that he has to control his passions in order to make his own contribution to his society by founding Rome. The positive example of Aeneas has a perfect counterpart in canto five of the *Inferno* in the figures of Dido and Francesca. Their sin (i.e., incontinence) was brought about by the inability to control their desires.

The second quality of the mature man is, possibly, even more relevant for our analysis. Dante argues that the mature man must possess the courage to face the most terrible ordeals. The example of such courage is, very aptly, Aeneas' journey to the underworld which he undertook in order to find the

real goal of his life. In Aquinas' ethics, endorsed to some extent by Dante, courage represents the positive side of the irascible appetite: it is the drive to pursue one's goal and overcome the greatest challenges. The other side of this appetite is violence which Dante depicts in the seventh circle of hell as misdirected irascible appetite. The remaining two virtues of the mature man are courtesy and loyalty which both involve proper judgment. Courtesy is illustrated with Aeneas' burial of his friend Misenus. Dante's notion of courtesy is quite complex since it includes and transcends the one celebrated in the Arthurian romances.[24] Yet, the example of Misenus suggests that courtesy is here understood as the ability to act according to the established social order. The last virtue of maturity mentioned by Dante in the *Convivio* is loyalty and is illustrated with Aeneas' decision to award the victors in the funeral games celebrated in honour of his father. It is noteworthy that Dante mentions this example as an instance not of obedience to some long-standing social customs, but, rather, of the ability to put such customs into practice in the proper way. Loyalty is described as the capacity to apply the general values of a society to a specific situation. In other words, loyalty is understood as a particular case of what we may call "good judgment." This view should hardly be surprising in the light of our analysis of the mature man offered thus far. In this stage of life, we are, in fact, required, not to obey or mechanically follow rules, but to develop our own personal insight into them. Interestingly, the last group of sinners Dante mentions in the *Inferno* (i.e., traitors) are those who lack proper judgment.

The examination of the qualities characteristic of the mature man has helped us to identify the nature of the challenge Dante-the-pilgrim faces when he finds himself lost in the wood. We should now turn to the poem itself to see how this challenge is described in canto one.

IV

The analysis carried out in the previous pages has taught us that Dante-the-pilgrim confronts, at the beginning of the poem, the challenge peculiar to every human being who reaches the mid-point of life. That is, the need to learn how to integrate his own individuality within the existing society. In this respect, in the initial lines of the poem we find two remarks that deserve special attention. One is the claim in line 2 where Dante-the-pilgrim says: "I came to myself in a dark wood." What is noteworthy is that he does not say "I found myself (*trovai*)" in the wood, but "I came to myself (*ritrovai*)." The reflective prefix *ri* in *ri-trovai* highlights that this is an inner experience through which Dante-the-pilgrim has become aware of something important. The study of the age of maturity offered in the previous pages indicates that Dante-the-pilgrim has realized that he has reached a crucial stage of life. Yet,

this stage is not peculiar to him alone; it is a common stage for all human beings. In line 1 he refers to the journey of "our" (*nostra*) life since he intends to stress that the experience he is about to embark upon is a universal one. The journey of Dante-the-pilgrim is simply a model of the journey that we all have to take. Interestingly, in the *Convivio* Dante had claimed that one of the few cases in which an author is justified to speak about himself is when his situation illustrates an experience that is common to all human beings.[25]

The depiction of the nature of the journey of Dante-the-pilgrim we have offered calls for a reconsideration of the landscape in which he finds himself. In the previous pages, we have considered two possible, yet unsatisfactory, ways of interpreting the wood in which Dante-the-pilgrim finds himself: the matter out of which the material world is fashioned and the condition of sin. Yet, there is another possible interpretation. It may have been the case that Dante came across the peculiar interpretation of the Platonic notion of "wood" (*silva*) formulated by Bernardus Silvestris. Although Silvestris agrees with the Platonists that *silva* indicates the matter that the Demiurge shapes into the material world, he qualifies such matter in a specific way. He describes it as the "inexhaustible womb of generation," a *restless* matter that "urges" to be shaped.[26] To put it differently, Silvestris highlights an aspect of the *silva* which may be implied by the Platonic notion but is not fully expressed.[27] That is, the *silva* is the basis or foundation of all that can come into existence. In the context of the crisis of the mature man, the *silva* may be taken to indicate that specific moment in man's life in which all possibilities are available to him, but did not take shape yet. The mature man has, in fact, to learn how to successfully operate in the world by developing his own personal qualities. In others words, like the Demiurge fashions matter in a particular way rather than another, so the mature man has to shape himself out of the many possible ways in which he could develop. In this respect, it is telling that when in book six of the *Aeneid* Aeneas ventures into the underworld he too begins his journey in a wood that does not seem to have any clear separation with the underworld. In the underworld Aeneas is granted a vision of the great historical figures that will make Rome into a great empire. This vision gives him the motivation to shape his life in a particular direction: become the founder of a new civilization. To put it differently, Aeneas enters a wood which indicates all the possible life-paths and the trip into the underworld will indicate to him which one he should choose. Dante-the-pilgrim finds himself in a similar wood and his trip through hell, purgatory, and paradise will also guide him to find and choose his own life path.[28] Interestingly, in line 5 the *selva* is described as "savage" (*selvaggia*) which indicates that it is a place "without roads" or, more generally, "uncivil-

ized"—a place that has not yet been fashioned in one way or another. This is, as we have seen, the condition of mature man who has yet to give shape to his life.

In line 10–12 Dante-the-pilgrim tells us that he does not know how he entered the wood since he was "full of sleep when he left the straight road." Although it is possible to understand this claim in Platonic terms as the condition of ignorance of the ordinary man or in Augustinian terms as the condition of sin in which the soul forgets God, there is an alternative reading that appears to be more in line with the challenge Dante-the-pilgrim faces. In the *Convivio* Dante compares human life to a journey from one city to another and claims that there are many roads that a person could take.[29] There is a straight road that brings us to our destination more directly and a mistaken one which takes us in the opposite direction, yet there are also many other roads which lead us to the right place but not as straightforwardly as the straight road. Dante-the-pilgrim seems to have taken one of these less direct roads because he was "full of sleep." This may be taken to indicate the condition of someone who does not pay attention to the world around him and, thus, gets easily derailed. Yet, this mistake is understandable in light of the challenge Dante-the-pilgrim faces at the beginning of the poem. He has to move out of the period of adolescence—when he did not have to find the right road on his own but simply follow the path traced by others—to full maturity when he needs to discover the road by himself. The condition of lethargy in which he is, however, contains the seed of the solution to this challenge. That is, he can find and stay on the right road only if he is in a state of constant awareness. In his journey through hell, purgatory, and paradise Dante-the-pilgrim will learn how to pay attention by observing how lack of awareness may lead to tragedy and alertness may bring salvation.

In section two, we learned that the fundamental impediment to the intellectual ascent of Dante-the-pilgrim is his body. It is, thus, paramount to gain a better sense of the notion of the human body adopted by Dante. Augustine's depiction of the human body has some telling point of contacts with that of Platonists. They all regard the body as an impediment to human flourishing, though for different reasons, and deny that it may contribute to the development of our soul. Moreover, according to Plato and many Platonists, the soul goes through a countless series of reincarnations and the body she inhabits at any given time has relatively little impact on her growth. If we follow the myth of Er in book ten of the *Republic*, we learn that although each reincarnation teaches us a different lesson, the soul retains such lessons only in part.[30] By contrast, Dante adopts a very different view that makes the body and our material life paramount for the development of our soul. He thinks that it is by and through the body that we realize that we are "historical beings." This means that our existence in this life crucially shapes our soul into something that is unique and cannot be repeated. In other words, the life

of the body is not one episode out of many in the life of the soul; it is a crucial moment which profoundly defines the soul. On this view, the body cannot be simply left behind like a useless outer shell to engage in a Platonic flight of the mind since the body contains parts of our identity. Dante's view becomes clearer once we consider its metaphysical and ethical underpinning. From a metaphysical perspective, Dante, following Aquinas, believes that we are not a soul which happens to be temporarily attached to a body; the composition of body and soul is what defines us as human beings. It is for this reason that, at the end of time, human beings will resurrect in both soul and body.[31] In Aquinas' view, the body is the "principle of individuation," i.e., that through which we are a particular individual person and not another. It is through the body that the form of man is individuated into a particular man Paul as opposed to another man John. This metaphysical picture plays a crucial role in the ethical analysis of how an individual develops his soul. Following Aquinas, Dante argues that our soul is the result of the innumerable big and small choices that we make in our lives. In other words, every single time we choose to do or not to do something we shape our soul. On this view, our moral and spiritual identity is the result of our life history. Aquinas conveys this idea with the technical notion of the *habitus* which is

> an acquired attribute, not a substance, but an enduring disposition which enriches and modifies the substance; it is the residuum in man's soul of his soul's history for every action toward its goal leaves behind a trace and the modification of the soul through its actions is the *habitus* [. . .] diversities of *habitus* account for the diversity of human characters; it is the *habitus* which determines how each empirical man will realize his essence.[32]

In canto one Dante-the-pilgrim is prevented by his body from successfully completing the flight of the mind. Yet, the analysis we offered so far suggests that the body stops him not because of its sins, as Augustine would argue, but, rather, since it is an indispensable part of his essence. Dante-the-pilgrim cannot leave the body behind since it would mean to give up a crucial part of who he is. This interpretation seems to fit quite well with our suggestion that the challenge Dante-the-pilgrim faces in the beginning of the poem is the crisis of the mature man. He cannot leave the body and the material world in a Platonic fashion since what is required from him is to engage with the material world by expressing his own individuality. This is not a just a civic or moral duty; it is a spiritual one as well since by engaging with the world we shape our soul for good or bad. This interpretation raises, however, one final question. How is Dante-the-pilgrim supposed to proceed in order to move past his moment of crisis? Although a full answer to this question will require a separate study, it is possible to individuate some crucial factors that hint to a possible answer. One is that Dante-the-pilgrim has to resort to the help not of abstract philosophical figures—for example, the personification

of philosophy in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*—nor to divine beings—such as the angels in Bonaventure's *Journey of the Mind to God*—but to real individuals: Virgil and Beatrice. These guides will teach him how to integrate his knowledge into his essence as a historical being. Beatrice represents feminine power that guides human beings to the divine, yet she was also a real person (Bice Portinari) Dante met in the earlier part of his life. Virgil is a poet who embodies classical culture, yet such knowledge comes to Dante-the-pilgrim in the form of a real man who has mediated his learning through his life experiences. The same is true for Dante-the-pilgrim since his journey through hell, purgatory, and paradise is a journey through the knowledge formulated by the Classical and Christian traditions that he has inherited. Yet, he will not receive such knowledge *only* in abstract, rational terms; he will have a personal experience of the meaning of what he learns. Dante-the-pilgrim will not just study doctrines about sins, repentance, or salvation; he will encounter people and share their suffering and happiness. In other words, Dante-the-pilgrim will combine abstract learning and personal experience. His learning will permit him to give structure and meaning to his experiences, yet his experiences will turn abstract theories into a reality he accesses directly and personally. It is only when Dante-the-pilgrim will have internalized the values and knowledge of his own cultural tradition in terms of his own experience that he will have overcome the crisis of the mature man.

NOTES

1. Dante, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Volume 1: Inferno*, trans. Robert M. Durling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), canto 1, 1–7.
2. In this chapter we shall distinguish Dante the character of the *Divine Comedy* and the author of the poem. We shall call the former "Dante-the-pilgrim" and the latter simply "Dante." To be sure, in the *Divine Comedy* there is, at times, some overlap between the two, but this is not a difficulty that concerns the section of the poem we examine in these pages.
3. Plato, *Republic*, VII, 514a–20a.
4. Dante, *Inferno*, I. 10-12: "Io non so ben ridir com'i' v'intrai, tant'era pien di sonno a quel punto che la verace via abbandonai."
5. Dante, *Inferno*, I. 25: "così l'animo mio, ch'ancor fuggiva."
6. John Freccero, *Dante: the Poetics of Conversion* [*Dante*] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 6–7.
7. *Liber beati Ambrosii De Isaac et anima*, VIII, 79 (*PL* 14, 559).
8. Dante, *Inferno*, I. 28–29: "Poi ch'èi posato un poco il corpo lasso ripresi via per la piaggia diserta."
9. On the transition from the flight of the mind to the impediments of the body see Freccero, *Dante*, 6–8; Charles S. Singleton, *Dante Studies I. Elements of Structure* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 11–12.
10. Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, 8.
11. Dante, *Inferno*, I. 30: "sì che 'l piè fermo sempre era 'l più basso."
12. Freccero, *Dante*, 29–54.
13. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.1–10.
14. Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 17; VIII, 8.

15. Augustine, *Confessions*, V, 20.
16. Augustine, *Confessions*, V. 20.
17. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, XXIV, 11.
18. Dante, *Inferno*, I. 91–93: "A te convien tenere altro viaggio" rispuose poi che lagrimar mi vide, "se vuo' campar d'esto loco selvaggio."
19. Dante, *Inferno*, II. 43–48: "S'i' ho ben la parola tua intesa," rispuose del magnanimo quell'ombra; "l'anima tua è da viltade offesa; la qual molte fiate l'omo ingombra sì che d'onrata impresa lo rivolve, come falso veder bestia quand'ombra."
20. Dante, *Convivio*, I. 11; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.3.
21. *Convivio*, IV, 25–27.
22. *Convivio*, IV, 26.
23. Dante, *Inferno*, XXVI. 94–100: "né dolcezza di figlio, né la pieta del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore lo qual dovea Penelopé far lieta, vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto, e de li vizi umani e del valore; ma misi me per l'alto mare aperto."
24. On this topic see Kristina M. Olson, *Courtesy Lost: Dante, Boccaccio and the Literature of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 3–28; 29–39; 59–64; 39–142.
25. Dante, *Convivio*, I, ii, 12.
26. Bernardus Silvestris, *Cosmographia*, ed. Peter Dronke (Leiden: Brill, 1978), I, ii, 4; II, 1–5.
27. Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 1993), 19-24; 114–31.
28. On this reading, the "wood" of canto 1 bears resemblances to the forest we often encounter in the Arthurian romances, most notably in the *Queste*. In chapter one of the *Queste* we are told that the knights in search for the Holy Grail need to begin their quest by entering the same forest but all from a different spot, the one that appears more difficult for each. See *La Queste del Saint Graal: From the Old French Lancelot of Yale 229, with Essays, Glossaries, and Note to the Text*, gen. ed. Elizabeth Moore Willingham (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).
29. *Convivio*, IV. 13.
30. Plato, *Republic*, X, 621a–b.
31. To be sure, at the end of time human beings will have a body that is ontologically superior to the one they had in their lives. Yet, that body will not be a totally different one, but a more perfect version of the one they had.
32. Erich Auerbach, *Dante, Poet of the Secular World* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2007), 85. For Aquinas' analyses of *habitus*, see *Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae, q. 49, a. 1 and Ia-IIae, q. 51, a. 3.

Chapter Three

More Than a Feeling

Kierkegaard's Redemption of Love

Michael Strawser

In what sense can we understand Søren Kierkegaard's writings as contributing to the redemption of feeling in the philosophical tradition?[1] Here is a straightforward initial response. As the so-called "father of existentialism" (and all the more the patriarch of religious existentialism) Kierkegaard reacts strongly to the Hegelianism of his day with its heightened focus on rationality and objectivity. Throughout his writings, both pseudonymous and veronymous, Kierkegaard centers his concern on edifying the single individual, for whom "truth is subjectivity"[2] and "only the truth that builds up is truth."[3] His writings collectively attempt to probe the heart of inwardness, and the hidden, mysterious source of human edification, which is love. As I have argued at length elsewhere,[4] Kierkegaard is first and foremost a philosopher of love, and insofar as love is a feeling, Kierkegaard may quite rightly be viewed as a redeemer of feeling. Most importantly, Kierkegaard is best understood as redeeming the primacy of love within philosophy.

But what is love? Does it solely belong to the realm of feeling, and in what way, if at all, does Kierkegaard understand love as a feeling or emotion? These are obviously challenging and complicated questions, and we can begin by noting that Kierkegaard has been read as an "anti-romantic romantic," thus suggesting a highly nuanced view that while appreciating the role of passionate feeling in life, nevertheless strives against the way that feeling is championed by the Romantics.[5] This nuanced view also holds some ambiguity regarding the notion of love as it relates to feeling. What we shall find is that for Kierkegaard love is more than a feeling, but I shall suggest that this "more than" does not imply that its character as a form of

feeling is eradicated. Quite the contrary, I shall maintain that it is wrong-headed to think that Kierkegaard's understanding of love is devoid of feeling or an emotional component.

In particular, in this contribution I shall focus on explaining how the experience of love's immediacy—the initial feeling-form that love takes in a person—may be understood as manifesting the substance of love. This analysis will focus on an account of the sensual-erotic in Kierkegaard's pseudonymous *Either/Or* (1842), and the relevance of this analysis to Jean-Luc Marion's contemporary interpretation of the erotic phenomenon, especially his discussion of the flesh (the feeling of feeling), will also be shown. We shall see how Kierkegaard's understanding of the immediacy of love has a clear place in a unified conception of love, and even though a consideration of his most direct analysis of love in *Works of Love* might seemingly suggest a contrary view—since love is here essentially understood as a work or action—the feeling for love is arguably never abandoned by Kierkegaard, and neither is his understanding of love as a feeling. Ultimately, then, for Kierkegaard love is more than a feeling, but it is properly understood as *both* an action *and* a feeling.

LOVE AND FEELING

In order to consider how Kierkegaard can be read as a redeemer of feeling, we need to inquire into what he says, either under his own name or another, about feeling and emotion. At first glance, it seems that he does not say much at all. Jens Himmelstrup's *Terminological Dictionary* to Kierkegaard's Collected Works[6] contains no entry on feeling or emotion, and the same is true of Julia Watkin's *The A to Z of Kierkegaard's Philosophy*.[7] Considering that the lodestone of Kierkegaard's writings is love, we would think that surely the concept of love is significantly related to the concept of feeling, but Kierkegaard's writing on this appears to be problematic.

Kierkegaard's authorship proper, at least as he claimed to understand it, begins with *Either/Or*,[8] an elaborate pseudonymous work with multiple voices (Victor Eremita, "A," Johannes, Judge Vilhelm, and a Jutlandic priest). Although here is not the place to analyze the theory of communication at play in this so-called "Chinese puzzle box,"[9] we can see rather readily that a focal point of this work is on the feelings or passions, which can be understood as an inward movement of the heart (in contrast to reasoning of the mind). Perhaps less readily seen but no less evident is that the central aim of this work is to impel the reader into a feeling for love. At the beginning of Part One of *Either/Or*, readers are greeted by this epigraph: "Is reason then alone baptized, are the passions pagans?"[10] From this point onward Kierkegaard has his authors engage with the passions in order to prompt readers to

make their own choice as to how they will enact their feeling for love. In the present context, the most significant essay in *Either/Or* is "The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic," for it is here that the immediacy of desire is subjected to careful analysis, even though due to the nature of the subject such an analysis can never fully succeed. This is significant because "immediacy" is a frequently used concept within Kierkegaard's writings, and it is the concept whose meaning is closest to the vague term "feeling." Thus, it is arguable that this essay is key for our attempt to understand how Kierkegaard contributes to the redemption of feeling. As we shall see, here Kierkegaard's author discourses on "the unaccountable deep inner emotion"[11] that accounts for the origin of desire, which is of course the origin of love. Kierkegaard wants to provoke readers to feel the stirring of this emotion for themselves, and interestingly the last words of this massive text, which are attributed to the Jutlandic priest and thus suggest a merging of the religious with the aesthetic and a unified view of love, recall this same language, for readers are asked to recognize and embrace "the deep inner movement"—"the indescribable motions of the heart"—that builds one up in love.[12]

Thus, a look at Kierkegaard's first major text bodes well for reading him as a redeemer of feeling, and for understanding love as a feeling. A problem seems to arise, however, when we turn to *Works of Love*, which is arguably "the central work in Kierkegaard's entire authorship."[13] Here Kierkegaard writes directly that love is "*not . . . a matter of feeling*" but instead it is "a matter of conscience" that has to do with duty and will.[14] While perhaps *Elskov* [usually translated as erotic love] may be considered a matter of feeling, *Kjerlighed* [usually understood as spiritual love] is certainly not, at least this is how I think a traditional reading would likely go. While much recent Kierkegaard scholarship has problematized a sharp distinction between *Elskov* and *Kjerlighed*,[15] as we continue to read the passage in which Kierkegaard claims that love is not a matter of feeling, it is interesting to see that he here suggests a fundamentally common view of love:

> The worldly or merely human point of view recognizes a great many kinds of love and is well informed about the dissimilarity of each one and the dissimilarity between each particular one and others. . . . With Christianity the opposite is the case. It recognizes really only one kind of love, the spirit's love, and does not concern itself much with working out in detail the different ways in which this fundamental universal love can manifest itself. Christianly, the entire distinction between the different kinds of love is essentially abolished.[16]

Significantly, Kierkegaard then states that it is the "merely human point of view" that conceives of love as *either* a feeling *or* something else, but this is not a distinction Christianity makes.[17] Now, phenomenologically understood, it is reasonable to understand "the merely human point of view" as "the natural attitude," thus suggesting that Kierkegaard prefigures Marion's

phenomenological analysis of love in *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Here Marion powerfully argues that "a serious concept of love distinguishes itself by its unity, or rather by its power to keep together significations that nonerotic thought cuts apart. . . . Univocal, love is only told in *one way*."[18] Granted, it takes a bit of interpretive work to clarify Kierkegaard's understanding of love, and it may be said that, in contrast to Marion, Kierkegaard's writings are more intent on provoking readers to enact love than to perform conceptual philosophical analysis. So, things are not so simple and unambiguous in Kierkegaard, who in the same text where he says that love is not a feeling [*Følelse*], nevertheless refers directly to love [*Kjerlighed*], as a feeling, an emotion. In section IIA of *Works of Love* Kierkegaard writes:

> So it is with love [*Kjerlighed*]. You do not have the right to become insensitive to this feeling [*Følelse*], because you *shall* love; but neither do you have the right to love despairingly, because you *shall* love; and just as little do you have the right to warp this feeling [*Følelse*], in you, because you *shall* love.[19]

Note that in the Hongs' 1962 translation of the same work, *Følelse* is translated as "emotion" rather than "feeling" in this passage.[20] Consequently, while Kierkegaard clearly emphasizes love as an action or work, it is still the case that he understands love as an emotional force as indicated by his description of love as a feeling or emotion in this passage.[21] Thus, I suggest that it is not off base to consider love as an active emotion, which is to say an action marked by a certain emotional tonality.[22]

Surely, it is difficult to navigate the seas of feeling and emotion,[23] and the ambiguity in Kierkegaard's writings might seemingly suggest that we can consider love to be related to feeling, but ultimately something more than a feeling. In what way is it related? While Kierkegaard does not later provide any detailed account of feeling, he does elaborate on what I take to be the closest related term and that is "immediacy." In what now follows I want to suggest that immediacy is the substance of love, rather than a notion dismissed in a Christian conception of love, and ultimately this can be taken as showing a way to read Kierkegaard as providing a unified conception of love.

THE IMMEDIACY OF LOVE

Early in *Either/Or* Kierkegaard has his anonymous author raise the question "What is love [*Kjærligheden*]?" and he answers directly: "the content of the dream [of youth]."[24] Here the context involves trying to recapture the longing that filled one's youth, the origin of which is like a dream. How does love originate? What sets it in motion? The only answer possible is this: love sets itself in motion; it is itself the prime mover. Can this be understood?

In order to approach these questions, we must look at the immediacy of love, which is what we find Kierkegaard doing at the beginning of the pseudonymous *Either/Or* in the essay "The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic." The importance of this essay in understanding the concept of love has recently been advanced by Pia Søltoft in her paper "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love."[25] Søltoft argues "that for Kierkegaard, love is one,"[26] and provides a strong case for finding within Kierkegaard's philosophy a unified conception of love. "Love is not a Christian concept and a human phenomenon," she writes, and this leads to an analysis of what she terms "the sheer phenomenon of love." There thus appears to be a developing understanding of Kierkegaard's philosophy of love approaching what Marion calls the "univocity of love," as Søltoft provides compelling interpretative evidence leading in this direction.

In addition to the key point that "for Kierkegaard there is only *one* love,"[27] Søltoft demonstrates that love is essentially erotic, which is based on "the fact that there is an intimate connection between love and the body."[28] She rightly points out that what is meant here is not "in the first instance, sexual," and adds that on this point Kierkegaard's view of love "in some sense anticipates the phenomenological insights of Marion, . . . who develop[s] a concept of love that can contain the experience of love as an erotic phenomenon."[29] Kierkegaard, we find, develops such a description of love in A's "The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic," which focuses on the sensual-erotic urge and desire. Let us now consider this fundamental aspect of love's manifestation.

The stated goal of the anonym's essay is "to show the significance of the musical-erotic and to that end in turn to indicate the various stages, which are all characterized by the immediate erotic."[30] Our author then describes the immediacy of the sensual-erotic, which as Søltoft suggests, "is the first and most immediate form love assumes in a person."[31] A's essay develops much in the way one would expect a careful phenomenologist to apply his method, as it moves through different structures of experience that are understood as immediate stages of the erotic. Given that the description here is of love's immediacy and the various ways that it manifests itself, the stages must be understood as ["pre-conscious"] or pre-reflective,[32] and this would also imply that any direct reference to the self or selfhood must be omitted from consideration. Thus it is highly appropriate that the author of this essay is anonymous, which also suggests an important question about whether the basic expression of the feeling of love is ultimately selfless.

A key aspect of the description of the phenomenon of love in its early immediacy is that it is "a motion and an *urge*."[33] Søltoft makes this point in the face of the problematically complicated description found in Kierkegaard's text which states that "desire . . . in this stage . . . is devoid of motion," although it is also said to be "gently rocked by an unaccountable

inner emotion."[34] Kierkegaard's phenomenological description of the origin of the immediate-erotic struggles to capture that which essentially cannot be captured, and this explains at least partly why he turns to a mythical metaphor for assistance:

> Although desire in this stage is not qualified as desire, although this intimated desire is altogether vague about its object, it nevertheless has one qualification—it is infinitely deep. Like Thor, it sucks through a horn, the tip of which rests in the ocean; but the reason that it cannot suck its object to itself is not that the object is infinite, but that this infinity cannot become an object for it. Thus the sucking [*Sugen*] does not indicate a relation to the object but is identical with its sighing [*Suk*], and this is infinitely deep.[35]

It does not seem misguided here to consider desire as an unaccountable infinite depth, which "appears as an undefined surplus of life,"[36] and emerges as an embodied power or force that propels one to action. This is the first stage of the immediate-erotic, and Søltoft follows Kierkegaard here by calling it "the dreaming desire," which she describes as follows:

> The dreaming desire does *not* long for anyone or anything. However, there is a substantial longing, which is not directed towards an object, but develops within itself as an unconscious longing *for longing*. For this reason, the dreaming desire, although undefined, is nonetheless to be understood as a *fullness*, a *surplus*, a passion that cannot be contained within the subject. . . . The dreaming desire expresses itself as a surplus of being, a surplus of life, craving and passion.[37]

What is most significant here is the interpretation of love as appearing as an overabundance, which seemingly would imply that it is not characterized by a lack. However, the next stage of the immediate-erotic is "the searching desire," which "is built upon an element of *lack* within the sensual-erotic."[38] In this way, it is suggested that love contains both "the elements of lack and surplus," which can be seen as following the view put forth in Plato's *Symposium* that "Love is a son of Affluence and Poverty."[39] For Søltoft, this at best paradoxical and at worst contradictory combination can also be read as a combination of Need-Love (lack) and Gift-Love (surplus).[40] The question is whether these distinctions point to ultimately different kinds of love, which is a path of interpretation that Søltoft moves against, thus leaving us to wonder how to understand these seemingly contradictory elements. One way of removing any formal contradiction is to recognize that the lack is not something that comes from within love, but it arises through loves relation to the other, the face of whom reflects the infinite depth that cannot become an object for it. This means, then, that the lack originates through love's motion-

al directedness towards the other, who is needed for love to bestow its gift and spend its surplus. Thus it is possible to see that love as need cohabits with love as overabundance.

Søltoft connects the love-urge with preferential love, and in explaining "what it is to be in love" she claims that "Kierkegaard understands being in love as both a *divine gift* and as *natural*."[41] This dualism is accompanied by another:

> The sensual-erotic urge has, as already mentioned, two sides: it is, in part, a desire that presents itself as a surplus; a desire to love and thereby bestow its love onto another as an overflow of life, desire and passion (the dreaming desire). But it is also a desire in the sense of a longing or a lack; a desire to be loved (the seeking desire).[42]

Love thus expresses itself, according to this reading of Kierkegaard, as "a *double motion*: an urge to love and to be loved,"[43] but while there is certainly evidence to support the case that Kierkegaard views love as having a double motion in both needing to love and to be loved, it is not easy to understand how one unified phenomenon can lead in two opposing directions. As suggested above, a description that maintains a double movement but avoids this problem would be one that identifies the other as the lack. In this way there is movement both within and without, but it can be maintained that the inner surplus which seeks to express itself is not doing so because it *needs to be loved* in return, but rather because it *needs to love*, which in other words means that it loves to love. This is not to suggest that we do not want and need to be loved, but rather to express that this need manifests itself as a phenomenon different from the erotic phenomenon. Different intentional structures are involved in loving another person and wanting to be loved in return, and it is surely possible to love somebody who cannot or does not love in return, such as in the case of unrequited love, loving a severely mentally handicapped person, or loving one who is dead.[44] Kierkegaard demonstrates in *Works of Love* that reciprocity is not required for [a work of] love, and Marion has defended this thesis in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, where he argues that "it is necessary to reject reciprocity in love, . . . because in love reciprocity becomes impossible."[45] Obviously, needing to be loved involves a specific reference to a self, whereas loving does not, and this involves no small difference. Thus, our understanding of love as need refers to love's need to find somebody to love.

So, the question "what is it to be in love?" can be seen as differing from the question "what is it to love?" In being in love, where there are two persons involved, it makes sense to speak of the dialectic between surplus and longing and an attempt at reciprocated love. But this is different from the dialectic involved in loving. There is indeed a surplus, and if we like we may

still speak of a longing, but the longing either involves the unaccountable dreaming desire's non-relation to infinity or the searching desire to find somebody to love, although in the latter case this lack does not come from within by rather from without. But if this lack is conditioned solely upon an additional need to be loved in return, then the door is opened for despair, deception, and seduction, or in general for a falling away from the erotic reduction. Thus, again, while "being in love" may involve "the equilibrium between the two directions,"[46] "loving another" involves a different equilibrium, which is an experience that involves the inner surplus and the outer application of the overabundant power. It is this union of the inner surplus and the outer loving to love that Kierkegaard writes of in *Works of Love*:

> So also with love. What love does, that it is; what it is that it does—and at one and the same moment. At the same moment it goes out of itself (the outward direction), it is in itself (the inward direction) and at the same moment it is in itself, it goes out of itself in such a way that this outward going and this returning, this returning and this outward going are simultaneously one and the same.[47]

Note that Kierkegaard is not here describing a need to be loved, and the "returning" that is described refers to the inner movement, the immediate feeling of overabundance, that empowers love to act. Consequently, we can clearly identify three movements here: the inner movement, the outer movement to love, and then the outer movement wishing to be loved in return, which may or may not follow. The first two movements involve selfless feeling, which is to say that they occur pre-reflectively prior to the positing of a self, while the third movement involves an awakening of the self wanting to feel itself loved in return. With regards to the first two, the inner and the outer are, as Kierkegaard explains, "simultaneously one and the same." However, the third movement involves an outward wishing that is not necessarily in harmony with the inner life of love.[48]

Further, it is important to see that an act of bestowal is involved in the application of the movement of the sensual-erotic. As Søltoft explains, the act of bestowal is "a free action," in which there is "no predetermination, no necessity, no conscious choice,"[49] and it is through this bestowal that the sensual-erotic may become preferential love. How love can be without conscious choice and yet preferential is perhaps difficult to see, so it is helpful here to consider Marion's discussion of the advance, such that there is a choice accessible to consciousness, but it is not based on this or that reason, for instead love itself is its own sufficient reason.[50]

Søltoft then wishes to connect the sheer phenomenon of love with the Christian concept of love understood as non-preferential love. She offers the helpful insight that "the reason why Christianity can demand of us that we *love* every other person as our neighbor is that we have an immediate experi-

ence of what love is."[51] Thus Søltoft significantly shows that Kierkegaard's conception of love may be read as a unified phenomenon. She explains further:

> There is a fundamental difference between preferential love and non-preferential love as neighbor love is. But the difference lies in love's direction, not in the sheer phenomena of love. In preferential love whether it is erotic love or friendship, love's direction is limited to one or a few other persons. In neighbor love it is demanded that the urge to love that is implanted by God in every human person is directed towards every other person. It is the same love, but a new direction.[52]

Here careful readers may wish to call into question both the fundamentality and the difference, and obviously the reference to "sheer *phenomena* of love" may lead to confusion, considering that we have been arguing for a unified understanding of love as a sheer *phenomenon*. Instead, can we not argue that the sheer phenomenon of love is fundamentally non-preferential, and thus find an important agreement between the description of the sensual-erotic in *Either/Or* and non-preferential love in *Works of Love*?

Let us explore the meaning of this further. It seems to me that what can be taken as crucial for an expression of preferential-love is that I expect to receive love in return from the beloved—from my partner, my children, my friends—and this explains why Kierkegaard understands preferential love as an expression of self-love. Non-preferential love, which is of course what Kierkegaard refers to in *Works of Love* as "true love," does not love expecting something in return, and actually the love that loves expecting a return seems hardly worthy to be called love. It is moved by love alone, for the sufficient reason of love alone. Thus we can understand Kierkegaard's discussion of preferential love in *Works of Love* as an attempt to show that loving another should take us beyond the need to be loved in return, and it is interesting to find that A's essay on the sensual-erotic and Søltoft's commentary help us to see this.

We can find another point of connection between the immediacy of love expressed in *Either/Or* and the view of non-preferential (spiritually qualified) love expressed in *Works of Love*. Initially, this involves considering the difficulty found in A's view that sensuous love is essentially faithless. He writes: "Don Juan, however, is a downright seducer. His love is sensuous, not psychical, and, according to its concept, sensuous love is not faithful but totally faithless; it loves not one but all—that is, it seduces all."[53] This is problematic, however, for if the sensuous-erotic is the beginning of the sheer phenomenon of love, and if this phenomenon invokes faithfulness—as Sharon Krishek suggests in her reading of Kierkegaard, the central thesis of

which is that "it takes faith to love"[54] and as Marion explains more generally in "Faithfulness as Erotic Temporality"[55]—then how can we understand this passage in a way that is consistent with these views?

A resolution of this problem depends upon the meaning we attribute to the usage of "faith" in this context. On the one hand, we can state in apparent contradiction to Kierkegaard's anonym that sensuous love does indeed require faith, and that Don Juan (and later Johannes) betrays this love initiated through an erotic reduction when he fails to repeat his loving advance. Faithfulness, according to Marion, serves "a strictly phenomenological function"[56] that requires eternity, but note, it does not require exclusivity, which seems to be the way that our author understands it in "The Immediate Erotic Stages." Thus, during Don Juan's advance as a lover he actually does experience his love as requiring eternity, for "loving provisionally—this is nonsense, a contradiction in terms."[57] His erotic reduction becomes a seduction, however, when he fails to repeat his advance and falls out of love into the natural attitude that removes the value he had previously bestowed upon the other. On the other hand, however, we have to acknowledge that our understanding of love's immediacy as overabundance directed towards finding another person does not imply a limitation to one exclusive other. Therefore, it is not a requirement of love to be faithful in the sense of exclusivity. Undoubtedly, this phenomenological point raises psychological and sociological questions, but it is worth highlighting here that it unites sensuous erotic love with the spirit's non-preferential love. For the view that "sensuous love . . . loves not one but all," leads to a congruence with Kierkegaard's profound exposition of non-preferential neighbor love, which as Søltoft explains, "is directed toward every other person."

LOVE IN THE FLESH

A final phenomenological insight of relevance here that can also help to improve this discussion is the distinction between the body and the flesh. Although Søltoft emphasizes the point that "regarded as a phenomenon, being in love expresses itself *bodily*,"[58] what is at play in this relation pertains to the flesh, which can be phenomenologically distinguished from the body. Although Kierkegaard does not directly draw this distinction, I would suggest that his careful description of what he variously refers to as "sensuality," "sensuousness," and "immediacy" amounts to a recognition of this now common distinction in phenomenology.[59] For, as suggested earlier, Kierkegaard understands that "physical" pleasure is not strictly speaking a phenomenon occasioned by bodies, as "the essence of pleasure does not lie in the thing enjoyed, but in the accompanying consciousness."[60] What this means is that, for example, in the first kiss, it is not the bodily contact between lips—for

bodies do not touch—but rather "the accompanying consciousness" involving the immediate awareness of one feeling oneself feeling that manifests itself as pleasure.

As Marion puts it, the flesh is "a privileged phenomenon"[61] which involves the experience of "feeling itself feeling." Thus it is "opposed to extended bodies of the physical world,"[62] for they lack the capacity of feeling themselves feeling. Marion explains that interiority and exteriority are indistinguishable here, for the flesh cannot be at a distance from itself, and this helps to explain how the inner and outer movements of the sheer phenomenon of love can be "simultaneously one and the same." By way of example, when I place my hand on my beloved, whether intending to comfort or arouse makes no difference here, the outer movement and touching corresponds simultaneously with the inner movement of feeling myself feeling my beloved. And unlike bodies, which resist each other and do not feel themselves feeling, the other, who is also sensuous flesh, is capable of not resisting my touch such that it is the other who gives me my flesh, which is something that she does not herself have.

Moreover, the privileged phenomenon of the face in the immediacy of love witnesses to "the accomplished transcendence of the other,"[63] which we have understood as love's lack cohabiting with love's surplus. Consider now the kiss, a theory of which Kierkegaard's anonym had hoped to develop.[64] In this action "a unique amorous phenomenon" is experienced, which Marion refers to as "the crossing of flesh." This crossed phenomenon is necessary for enjoyment, which is "infinitely more than pleasure."[65] Enjoying the other is quite distinct from using the other for one's own pleasure, for it involves giving the other her flesh, and adhering "firmly to her flesh for her—so that she might receive it. Thus I enjoy her. Put another way, I do not enjoy my pleasure, but hers."[66] As Johannes insightfully writes in his diary included at the end of Part I of *Either/Or*: "'My'—what does this word designate? Not what belongs to me, but what I belong to, what contains my whole being."[67] Thus, we come to realize that "the question of love" as Marion writes is "only correctly taken up from the moment we [recognize] the phenomenological necessity of a radical reduction to the given [to love's immediacy]—of the erotic reduction of the ego to the lover, to the advance, and finally to the flesh in glory."[68]

CONCLUSION

Even though the term "feeling" does not play a central role in Kierkegaard's writings, we have now seen in what sense Kierkegaard can be understood as a redeemer of feeling, insofar as this is understood within the context of the primacy of love and an appreciation of its immediacy. The focus of this work

has been on accounting for love's immediacy, which is to say the actual experience of love in the flesh and in relation to the other, but Kierkegaard's understanding of love as a willful action, an active force, has been consistently maintained, although the emphasis here has not been on explaining this aspect. Nevertheless, I would like to think that an understanding of love's immediacy will enhance our understanding of love as a free act. Consequently, the feeling aspect of love is never lost. Furthermore, while we have seen that the end of love is to love and not necessarily to be loved in return, within the experience of being loved there lies the potential for movement that desires to be actualized freely. Thus it is possible that a passive natural immediacy is transformed into an active higher immediacy that moves the heart of the lover to love the other for the sake of the other and nothing else.

Finally, what is most important, I think, is that we find within Kierkegaard's writings the central emphasis on the redemption of love, the significance of which can hardly be overestimated. According to Kierkegaard love is "*essentially* inexhaustible" and "*essentially indescribable*"[69]—a view which no doubt gives rise to some ambiguity—but it is nevertheless fair to conclude that for Kierkegaard love is understood as an emotion, which is to say that it is an inner movement directed outward[70] that in its fullest expression is a refined feeling enacted freely by the will for the good of the other. Thus, within love there lies a deep inner movement, a need to be expressed, but this need cohabits with the overabundance that allows love to be put into motion towards the other.

NOTES

1. Some parts of this chapter were originally published in: Michael Strawser, *Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Love* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015). Reprinted with permission.

2. See Johannes Climacus' discussion of "Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity" in Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Vol. 1, *Kierkegaard's Writings* XII, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 189–250.

3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part II, Kierkegaard's Writings* IV, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 354.

4. See Michael Strawser, *Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Love* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

5. See Irving Singer's discussion in a chapter titled "Anti-Romantic Romantics: Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Nietzsche" in *The Nature of Love, Volume 3, The Modern World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2009). According to Singer, Kierkegaard "clearly reject[s] all Romantic attempts to explain interpersonal love by reference to emotion, instinct, or erotic response" (46), but as I shall suggest below, such a view is misguided and fails to account for the many nuances of Kierkegaard's writings.

6. This is volume twenty of the third edition of Kierkegaard's *Samlede Værker* [Collected Works] (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag, 1964).

7. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010.

8. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View, Kierkegaard's Writings* XXII, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 29.
9. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 9.
10. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I, Kierkegaard's Writings* III, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 1.
11. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, *Part I*, 76.
12. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part II,* 354. Although love is not directly mentioned in these final words, the key emphasis of the priest's sermon is on the love of the other, such that one sees oneself as always in the wrong. Further, as Kierkegaard will make plain later in *Works of Love*, all edification depends on love and without love there is no edification and no one who edifies. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, *Kierkegaard's Writings* XVI, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 224.
13. George Pattison, "Foreword," in Søren Kierkegaard. *Works of Love*, translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New York: Harper, 2009), ix. Note that this Harper edition includes the 1962 translation by the Hongs, which is not the same as their later translation in the Kierkegaard's Writings series.
14. Here is the complete passage from *Works of Love*: "*Love* [Kjerlighed] *is a matter of conscience and thus is not a matter of impulse and inclination or a matter of feeling* [Følelsens Sag] *or a matter of intellectual calculation*" (143).
15. In my own recent work I attempt to chart a path towards finding a unified view of love within Kierkegaard's writings. See Michael Strawser, *Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Love*, especially the section "Toward the Unity of Love," 116–20.
16. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 143.
17. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 143-44.
18. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3.
19. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 43.
20. "So it is also with love. You have no right to harden yourself against this emotion [*Følelse*], for you ought to love; but neither do you have the right to love despairingly, for you ought to love; just as little do you have the right to misuse this emotion [*Følelse*] in you, for you ought to love" (*Works of Love* [1962], 57).
21. Here's another passage in which love is described as an emotion. In *Works of Love* IIIA in commenting on Romans 13:10 "Love is the fulfilling of the Law" Kierkegaard writes: "Love is a passion of the emotions [Kjerlighed er en Følelses Lidenskab], but in this emotion a person, even before he relates to the object of love, should first relate to God and thereby learn the requirement, that love is the fulfilling of the Law" (112).
22. On this point it is relevant to compare Spinoza and Scheler with Kierkegaard, as I have done elsewhere. For both Spinoza and Scheler reject understanding love as simply a passive feeling. In addition to my *Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Love*, see Michael Strawser, "Why Spinozists and Kierkegaardians Should Love Each Other," in *Irreconcilable Differences? Fostering Dialogue among Philosophy, Theology, and Science*, eds. Jason C. Robinson and David A. Peck (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.
23. Just as the contemporary "debate on the nature of [feelings and] the emotions is complex and difficult to navigate," so too is it difficult to chart a clear conception of feeling in Kierkegaard's writings. Giovanna Colombetti, *The Feeling Body: Affective Science Meets the Enactive Mind* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014), 52.
24. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 42.
25. Pia Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook 2013*, eds. Heiko Schulz, Jon Stewart, and Karl Verstrynge in cooperation with Peter Šajda (Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter, 2013), 289–306. Note that much of this and the following section were originally published in Chapter 3 of my *Kierkegaard and the Philosophy of Love*.
26. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 289.
27. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 292.
28. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 293.

29. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 294.
30. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part I*, 59.
31. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 295.
32. Although Søltoft refers to the sensual-erotic urge as "pre-conscious" at one point (295), she also calls it "unconscious" in several other places, which raises the problem that it is not a structure of consciousness. I think it best to consider this fundamental desire or most basic form of love as pre-reflective, and thus it is still a stage of consciousness and accessible to consciousness upon reflection. Although, of course, reflected consciousness is fundamentally different from the experience of immediacy, and thus there is a fundamental ironic difficulty here.
33. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 295.
34. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 76.
35. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 77.
36. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 296.
37. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 296.
38. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 297.
39. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 293. See Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 175.
40. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1988).
41. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 299.
42. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 299.
43. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 293.
44. See, for example, Kierkegaard's discourse on "The Work of Love in Recollecting One Who Is Dead" in *Works of Love*, 345–58.
45. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 70. In particular, Kierkegaard's discourse on "Loving One Who Is Dead" in *Works of Love* exhibits this characterization of love, so we must thus reason that the need to be loved in return involves a different phenomenon.
46. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 300.
47. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 280.
48. In this way we can understand Kierkegaard's point in *A Literary Review* that "being in love is the culmination of a person's purely human existence," for it is through the back and forth relation of loving others and being loved in return that what we would call the existence of a particular person comes to be known. The experience of love, however, can be lived without necessarily being known, which is to say that loving precedes knowing, as Marion has shown most directly in *The Erotic Phenomenon*, and which is what we mean by calling Kierkegaard's philosophy of love a first phenomenology. Either way, love is the substance of life.
49. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 302.
50. See Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, §17 "The Principle of Insufficient Reason" and §18 "The Advance."
51. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 303.
52. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 304.
53. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 94.
54. See Sharon Krishek, *Kierkegaard on Faith and Love* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 189.
55. This is §36 of Marion's *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 184–89.
56. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 183
57. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 183
58. Søltoft, "Kierkegaard and the Sheer Phenomenon of Love," 301.
59. Which was perhaps made most clearly initially by Max Scheler, and which is elaborated most carefully by Marion within the context of the erotic phenomenon.
60. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 30. See West, *Reason and Sexuality in Western Thought*, 148.
61. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 38.
62. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 38.
63. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 127.
64. See Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 416.

65. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 128.
66. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 128.
67. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Part I, 406.
68. Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, 128.
69. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 4.
70. Here it is significant to note that the word "emotion" is derived from the Latin *e* (out) and *movere* (move), so etymologically an emotion is "a movement outward."

Chapter Four

James and Nishida

A Phenomenology of Mystical Consciousness

J. Jeremy Wisnewski

William James offers us one of the first, and indeed one of the finest, accounts of the phenomenology of mystical experience available in English. In both *Principles of Psychology* and *Varieties of Religious Experience* he presents us with a non-egological theory of consciousness (such as is found in early Husserl), the core of which, he claims, makes mystical experience itself possible: in mystical experience, the self melts away, and one is unified with the world. A great feeling of compassion overtakes one's experience in such moments.

James held that emotions themselves were the result of the brain registering changes in the body (such as heart rate and temperature). Emotions thus disclose our Being-in-the-world—they show us how we are reacting to things around us in a bodily way, as well as how things 'matter' to us in specific situations. The experience of mystical compassion, in this view, expresses a body's fundamental openness to the world around it. This openness *just is* the loss of the self, and it is this we find at the heart of what James calls "pure experience."

The Kyoto school philosopher Kitarō Nishida takes up James' notion of "pure experience" in his attempt to articulate Zen Buddhism in the language of Western Philosophy. His work *Inquiry into the Good* shows how a phenomenology of pure experience as such, from a Jamesian point of view, leads to the notion of what we might call a "non-dual" God—that is, a God that is not essentially other—that is not essentially different from the experience of it. Pure experience, Nishida claims, provides a way of talking about the non-

dual experience of *Zazen* (zen meditation), and hence casts doubt upon the entire ego-centered theory of self and consciousness, as well as the idea of God that is sometimes built upon this.

Nishida sees in pure experience an example of experience *without* duality—where the intentional object of experience completely exhausts the experiential subject. This very notion, of course, is found in James' phenomenology of mystical experience in *Varieties*. In such an experience, the "self" is dissolved (and along with it all the baggage of rationality and the natural attitude). This, on James' and Nishida's view, is a prerequisite to a different mode of accessing the world—"deeper levels" of experience which challenge our notion of self and other, and in particular, which challenge the notion that God is some kind of "other." To experience God is to become aware that one *just is* the instantiation of God, of pure experience itself.

Beneath this discussion is the sense that an experienced self—the feeling of being me—is not a necessary feature of our experience (*pace* D. Zahavi[1]). In non-dual experience, there simply is no "me." Nishida further argues that certain modes of emotional perception (*agape*, love, compassion, *metta*) emerge in such selfless experience, and that they emerge more fully and completely precisely *because* the self disappears.

My aim in this chapter is to show how the phenomenological approach of James and Nishida challenges certain core ideas about the world as constructed by reason. In particular, the approach indicates that mystical experience—an experience characterized by selfless unification with the world and a sense of love for things as they are—may well show us a more fundamental reality than the one we model in the mathematical sciences. Most importantly, it is a world that only shows up in those emotional states that allow us to be free of the self.

THE METHOD

A *radical* empiricism is one that is unconstrained by a pre-commitment to any method or metaphysics. It is pluralist and pragmatic. William James summarizes this approach as follows:

> To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as "real" as anything else in the system.* Elements may indeed be redistributed, the original placing of things getting corrected, but a real place must be found for every kind of thing experienced, whether term or relation, in the final philosophical arrangement.[2]

This kind of empiricism is indeed deserving of the name: it is radical. It is outside of the mainstream in that it does not sort experiences into categories of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" prior to taking them seriously. No experiences are in principle excluded by any theoretical commitments. Indeed, every experience must be included in principle. The term "experience," at its core, involves what presents itself to attention—what presents itself as real.

The connections between this Jamesian view of empiricism and Husserl's phenomenology are as many as they are obvious.

> No conceivable theory could make us err with respect to the principle of principles: that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originally . . . offered to us in intuition is to be accepted simply as what it is being presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.[3]

They are also strikingly similar to various meditative traditions. Indeed, the basic idea—to encounter what is presented in experience *as such,* without immediately subsuming that thing within some explanation—is the very core of many meditative techniques.[4] The radical empiricist, the existential phenomenologist, and the *vipassana* meditator all attempt to confront experience on its own terms—without immediately judging the experience as "illusory," or "irrelevant"; without immediately reacting to the experience or explaining it away. Experience, on the contrary, is *observed.*

The very idea of "observation" has religious underpinnings, and we risk misunderstanding observation when we fail to acknowledge this.[5] The notion of "observing" experience is, I would like to suggest, caught up in delicate ways with the notion of the sacred. Explanation is always a mediated, transactional business—one gives a this for a that, a cause for an effect, a type for a token, an unseen for the seen. But observation can be something else—one does not impugn the event with the principles that define it, or that explain it away. One allows it to be what it is; one pays it respect in its independence. In all such activities, the normal dominance of the ego falls away before *what* one observes. An empiricism is radical when it grants experience its independence—when it values observation of what is present over explanation by what is not. A radical empiricism, then, will not allow our pre-given theories to determine what will count and what will not count as "reality." It will not allow its epistemology to decide the scope of its ontology.

EMOTIONS, BODY, AND WORLD: THE CASE OF NON-DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As early as *The Principles of Psychology,* James was already calling into question the idea that consciousness was always best captured in terms of a knowing ego intentionally directed toward the world. The evidence for this "egological" view, according to James, was simply not present *within* experience.

> But this *condition* of the experience is not one of the things experienced at the moment; this knowing is not immediately known. It is only known in subsequent reflection. Instead, then, of the stream of thought being one of *con*-sciousness . . . it might be better called a stream of *Sciouness* pure and simple, thinking objects of some of which it makes what it calls a "Me," and only aware of its "pure" Self in an abstract, hypothetic or conceptual way.[6]

On James' view in *Principles,* the root of our core idea of the self comes, ultimately, from affective and motor intentionality—from the fact that we move and feel in the world. The idea of a centrally located "agent" is one that we *feel* (mostly "around the eyes," he says in *Principles*), and that forces itself upon us when we reflect on things like the nature of conscious experience. The very idea of a self is an idea found in reflection upon experience rather than in experience itself. This means that any account of experience that invokes a model of a knowing ego set over against a content of awareness will necessarily *depart* from experience as it is immediately given, and will do so precisely *because* of the demands placed upon us by the structure of thought.

As James was well aware, when we come to the idea of a "self" in our reflections, the idea that we consider is necessarily different from the activity of consideration itself. While it is true that a thought-content has no reality apart from the act of thinking that produces it, and that thinking has no reality apart from the particular thought-content it thinks, it is still the case that one cannot simply identify the thought-content with the activity of thinking. This is so for relatively familiar reasons: the activity of consciousness—despite always being tied to an intentional object—acts as a *condition for* being aware of the thought-content in question.

In later writings, the initial notion of "consciousness" comes to play a much more central role in James' thinking. It is bare awareness—*pure experience*—and one that is intimately linked to our bodily experience of the world.

> The stream of thinking . . . is only a careless name for what, when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing. The "I think" which Kant said must be able to accompany all my objects, is the "I breathe"

> which actually does accompany them . . . breath, which was ever the original of spirit, breath moving outwards, between the glottis and the nostrils, is, I am persuaded, the essence out of which philosophers have constructed the entity known to them as consciousness.[7]

In the *Principles*, James held much the same view, though he does not press it, maintaining that such assertions would go beyond the work of the descriptive psychology about which James lectured. Nevertheless, he quite explicitly remarks:

> Whenever my introspective glance succeeds in turning round quickly to catch one of these manifestation of spontaneity [of a "self"] in the act, all it can ever feel distinctly is some bodily process.[8]

The self, among other things, is the set of sensations present to awareness. These sensations are registered by the brain; the recognition of these bodily changes *are* the emotions we feel.

> Our whole cubit capacity is sensibly alive; and each morsel of it contributes its pulsations of feeling, dim or sharp, pleasant, painful, or dubious, to that sense of personality each one of us invariably carries with him.[9]

Emotions themselves can thus be distinguished and categorized in a variety of ways, but all such emotions have their grounding in those bodily changes they register. Even here, James links our sense of existing to bodily activity—in fact, to breathing. "The 'self of selves,' when carefully examined, is found to consist mainly of those peculiar motions in the head or between the head and the throat."[10] When emotions are *strongly* felt, the rest of the body joins in the announcement. While James readily acknowledges that the self is more than just the breathing, or the movements of the body, he insists that *this very movement* is what we are most immediately aware of, and hence is a core piece of our certainty of our existence of selves. This means that, for James, it is likely that "our entire feeling of spiritual activity, or what commonly passes by that name, is really a feeling of bodily activity whose exact nature is by both men overlooked."[11]

This of course hinges on the view—now known as the James-Lange view of emotions—that an emotion *is* a bodily state (a position consistent with the view that the meaning and significance of emotions will require much more than a reference to the body). James offers a simply test for the body view of emotions: "If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind."[12]

The core idea can be expressed thus: the felt-self, whether in a state of positive affect or negative affect, *is* our ever-changing bodily existence. What we feel as our existence *just is* the active, non-distracted awareness of our felt body. One can react *against* what one encounters, or one can accept it, surrender to it. This felt-self can expand and contract in much the way that positive and negative affect can expand or contract. An affirmative affect, cultivated in the appropriate way, can allow one's experience of one's self to extend outward to the whole of reality. Radical empiricism takes this seriously. The felt-self *is* the world; it extends beyond this skin-sack of organs, fluid, and bone.

Notice that James never says that this is *all* the self is. James starts with the *premise* that the self must be understood in its multiple experiential manifestations. He has no metaphysical claim to make about its "ultimate nature," if there be one. His claim is that if we take experience seriously, without the colonizing influence of theoretical ideas, one cannot locate a permanent self. That stands to reason, of course, because any experience occurs within time—any self one finds would *have to be* impermanent. The more interesting thing here is the bracketing of the idea that the feeling that I am me actually says something about the nature of my self. What we can say, at most, is that certain bodily sensations present themselves in particular ways, producing the feelings of sureness, certainty, unity, identity, and so on. There was perhaps a series of thoughts cast into awareness, thoughts about how certain it is that x is the case.

But the radical empiricist, like the phenomenologist and the meditator, is interested in what is *in* the experience, not how to explain it. In the experience we have a set of thoughts and sensations. We desire to explain these by means of things *external* to the experience. I feel certain I exist, we say, because I *do* exist. But this is already a step too far. What presents itself to experience is a state of certainty, *not* the thing that one is certain *of*. Certainty is a *feeling*; no more, no less. We can even describe it in some detail in terms of the bodily sensations that constitute it.

The feeling of acceptance, of non-judgment, is at the heart of equanimity. When resistance to what confronts us does not arise, we are in a sense one with the processes that constitute us. We do not try to distinguish ourselves from them, but greet them as they come. Acceptance, James suggests, determines the limits of our feelings of self—the *less* we accept, the smaller and more isolated we feel, the more rigid our boundaries become. On this view, then, the self is by no means an "I think." It is not even some *bare* consciousness, something not encountered in our normal experience.

Indeed, the idea of *con*-sciousness emerges out of reflection on experience, *not* out of experience. In the act of experience, there is no thing called "consciousness" that is experienced: consciousness is exhausted by its object. In this respect, Sartre is right: consciousness is what it is not, and it is

not what it is. The thought being thought is real enough—present—but there is not a "thing" *to which* it is present. Consciousness, in other words, is nothing other than the simply-being-present-of-the-intentional.[13] Indeed, this is the fundamental truth of intentionality itself: consciousness without an object simply *does not exist*.[14] Consciousness without directedness is unintelligible. It follows that consciousness is, well, *nothing*—at least when we construe it as something other than an event, or a relation, or an occurrence.

To take experience seriously we must take all modes of experience seriously, including mystical ones. Nevertheless, radical empiricism cannot require definitive claims about the nature of any experience, precisely because its guiding premise is one of plurality and multiplicity. As James says:

> The fact is that the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own. It is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional mood.[15]

The conclusions one can draw from the existence of mystical states, then, are rather minimal. Indeed, their foremost point is to counsel humility. The world we speak and live—the world of everyday life and the natural attitude, of reason and passion—may be but a glimmer of the kinds of possible consciousness. This is a conclusion James quite explicitly draws in numerous places. Here, I quote from *Varieties* at some length.

> The existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe . . . they are excitements like the emotions of love or ambition, gifts to our spirit by means of which facts already objectively before us fall into a new expressiveness and make a new connection with our active life.[16]
>
> It must always remain an open question whether mystical states may not possibly be such superior points of view, windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world.[17]
>
> They tell of the supremacy of the ideal, of vastness, of union, of safety, and of rest. They offer us hypotheses, hypotheses which we may voluntarily ignore, but which as thinkers we cannot possibly upset.[18]

Unfalsifiable, perhaps, but for all that, it might still make a difference to the manner in which we approach the world around us, and even to the types of experiences we find worth *cultivating*.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

It is here that Nishida takes the step that James will not: mystical states reveal divinity itself in the dissolution of the border between subject and object. This reading of embodied mystical experience might be called an experience of "subjectivity without selfhood"—the transparent yet luminescent nature of awareness itself, unblemished by the dust trails of ego.[19]

The radical empiricist simply accepts the experiences as they present themselves. A core quality of mystical experiences, as James notes in *Varieties*, is their *ineffability*. In other words, if you could capture the experience in words, you'd be describing *a different experience*. What is specific to the mystical experience itself is that it cannot be translated into the language of part and whole in the way that meets the standards of literal description. The best we can do is gesture: it is a feeling of openness, of boundlessness, of safety—what Otto calls the "numinous," and Freud "the oceanic."

It is equanimous—and on the Jamesian view, this stands to reason. To let go of affect, positive or negative, is to let go of the self. The self is formed at the interface of the regular and the irregular—it is when things change, when we say "no" to them (as James puts it), when we *cannot accept* (either through craving or aversion) what experience shows, that the self *qua individual* emerges. It emerges as that thing which *shrinks away* from what precipitates negative affect. The happiest soul, full of positive affect, emerges as a self when her equanimity is interrupted by a reaction *of any kind*. Once we lose equanimity, we become individuals. As strange as it sounds, then, *no-self* must be lived. The key is the cultivation of equanimity, which prevents selves from emerging in the first place. When our equanimity is broken—when we resist the world, cling to it in one way or another—a little self occurs. In this emergence of self, a being tries to distinguish itself from what it is by reacting to its own state.

James allows for a plurality of characterizations of "self," occasionally reminding us that the unity we attribute to this thing is itself only a feeling that the thing *must be* unified. We all recall being absolutely certain about something, willing to bet our lives on the matter, only to find out we were completely mistaken. We hunt for an explanation then, of course, because we are used to getting things right, more or less. The possibility that our absolute certainty is misplaced—that we do *not* exist across time, cannot be ruled out. Certain forms of experience have been reported which suggest that just such a view could be true. One can be guided to develop such experiences with practice and training. In the light of such experiences, the radical empiricist acknowledges that there may well be a series of selves all falsely thinking they are identical with each other, one right after the other.

Whatever your view of the matter, the fact is that whatever the self is or isn't, it presents itself in innumerable, even incommensurable, ways. When we speak of a unified self, then, we speak in metonymy: we are picking out things associated with some notion of self and using these to stand in for everything else. We do so, of course, because we *feel* such a unity. The question of the *reference* of the metonymy is here unanswered. We can only speculate. Perhaps there is a referent, perhaps not. Sometimes we have experiences that *feel* like there is one, but the epistemic status of these experiences is an open question. Indeed, as James remarks, "If we could say in English 'it thinks,' as we say 'it rains' or 'it blows,' we should be stating the fact most simply and with the minimum of assumption."[20] James tries to capture this immediate, appropriative (unifying) present experience with a capitalized "Thought."[21] James writes:

> Each pulse of cognitive consciousness, each Thought, dies away and is replaced by another. . . . Each later Thought, knowing and including thus the Thoughts which went before, is the final receptacle—and appropriating them is the final owner—of all that they contain and own. Each thought is thus born an owner, and dies owned, transmitting whatever it realized as its self to its own later proprietor.[22]

The mystical state involves giving up, in an experiential way, the metonymy of self: the experience occurring right now is just being itself in its barest form—there are no temporal parts because one loses the idea of distinctions between part and whole. What is this experience like? It quite literally cannot be described. Nevertheless, it has what James calls a "noetic quality"—it is encountered, always in retrospect, as *revelatory.*

Nishida sees in this experience the basis of religiosity: "at the base of all religions must be a relationship between God and humans in which they share the same nature."[23] In non-dual experience, we partake in this nature through the loss of our empirical, idiosyncratic self. As Nishida says, "our taking of refuge in God seems in a certain respect to be a loss of self, but in another respect it is the way we find the self"[24]—namely, the "self" of pure experience as such, unclouded by egoic desire. In this very experience, Nishida further argues, we find that "The universe is not a creation of God but a manifestation of God."[25] Moreover, "the relationship between the universe and God is the relation between our phenomena of consciousness and their unity."[26]

The argument, in brief, is this: since "the self is nothing other than the unifying activity of consciousness. If this unity changes, the self changes as well."[27] When the experiential moment is constituted by the absence of subject/object duality, the self just is the current self-disclosure of the universe in its moment. As Nishida puts it: "each of the unities in the phenomena of the universe are none other than God's self-awareness."[28] God is equated direct-

ly with pure experience—the absence of subject/object duality.[29] At the base of this unity of consciousness we can make direct contact with the face of God."[30]

For Nishida, the notion of God is tied to the notion of the Good—of perfect personality actualized—and this is what happens in states where the distinction between subject and object breaks down. Paradoxically, when the self is everything, there is no self. The result is not a bland indifference to things, Nishida claims, but is instead compassion, love, openness. None of the terms are exactly right. It is *karuna,* it is *agape*.

Indeed, Nishida explicitly claims that love is a kind of knowledge, differing only in its object—both involve the elimination of subjective bias. Nishida claims, in a line that must have irritated his one-time ally Tanabe Hajime: "Subjectivity is self-power and objectivity is other-power. To know and love a thing is to discard self-power and embody the faithful heart that believes in other-power."[31]

In the union of subject and object—the mystical experience of union—the self evaporates amid its own compassion for its fellow beings. This "faith in other-power" is both the acceptance of the world as it is and the lived imperative to address suffering. This form of relation to the world and the other is only available in the felt present of a body that accepts its place in the world. No propositional knowledge can ever lead one to see the significance of this relation in the way that the disclosive emotions in experiences of non-duality occasion. This is not to say that our propositional claims are unimportant—they can and do shape our understanding of our experiences. But the experience itself—the experience of a particular emotional state, a particular embodied realization of one's relation to the world—is what prompts such reflection, not what vindicates it.

For James, as for Heidegger, all emotions are cognitive: they are the way we are tuned into the world, and they reveal that world as well as our place in it. While James anchors this in the body's response to the world, this entails no theoretical commitments. This is what makes mystical states so interesting: in these modes of attunement—attunements that capture the feeling of acceptance, of *agape*, of *karuna*—the very idea of a "self" that individuates one from others (even a changing bodily self) is set aside. Non-dual experience is just that. There are no selves—whether in bodies or experiences or objects—there is being as such; there is a vapor of awareness. James is no more committed to the idea that we are fundamentally bodies than he is to the idea that we are fundamentally minds. We aren't fundamentally *anything*. From the point of view of radical empiricism, such claims one and all go well beyond their appropriate domains.

Nishida's move toward God, I suggest, is his attempt to unite the non-duality of Zen with the insights he sees in the Christian traditions—it is the kernel of truth from which these alternative traditions grow.[32] For his part, I

see no reason James would *object* to Nishida's extension. James did not speculate on such matters in *Principles,* not for lack of interest, but because he wanted to stick to the psychological facts as he understood them—the philosophical issues, he explicitly says, he must leave for other writings. James' eventual interest in religious experience, however, leaves no doubt that he saw such experiences—embodied and emotionally attuned, one and all—as disclosive of realms of reality inaccessible to the rational mind. Even in *Principles* James agrees that "there is no immediate criterion by which to distinguish between spiritual and corporeal feeling."[33] With the right stimulus, James further claims, we can actualize alternative forms of consciousness, and so round out our investigation into the source subject matter: experience itself. Such alternative forms of consciousness, James maintains, "forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality."[34] His experiences of nitrous oxide would only confirm that some of this terrain cannot be traversed with a vehicle so rigid as reason. Indeed, James goes so far as to say:

> I have finally found myself compelled to give up the logic, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality. Reality, life, expedience, concreteness, immediacy, use what words you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it.[35]

Emotions are cognitive: they reveal the modes of reality, and do so in a way that will not necessarily conform to the demands of reason. Indeed, this seems to be the case with our most basic experience of selfhood and consciousness (or, indeed, *Sciousness*). Our most immediate self is this bodily self. In this sense, the bodily self is *itself* cognitive: it reveals the world precisely because its states are themselves responses to and disclosures of the world.

This "self," in certain modes, reveals itself to be co-extensive with everything, and hence, its self-revelation *is* the revelation of the universe itself presenting itself in awareness. The only reason to deny this would be a theoretical commitment outside of the experience of non-duality itself—namely, that a self was itself *having* this experience. But this would be to leave the project of radical empiricism—and, I daresay, existential phenomenology—behind. If experience is given as identity with everything, then the "self" is nothing in particular—not a *thing* at all.

This point is where Nishida sees an opening to a certain idea of the self-expression of God through the experience of being.[36] It is not at all difficult to see how the notion of surrender, or acceptance, or non-attachment might be used to describe this emotional state: where one identifies with all things, accepts all things as somehow *ok*, and feels, as Wittgenstein in one place remarks, "absolutely safe." This is *no-self*. We actualize it by breaking free

of our resistance, because it is our resistance that constitutes egoic response to affect. The self just is this event of a rupture in homeostasis—a Badiouian subject seen clearly by both William James and the philosophers of the Buddhist tradition.

How could a sensation reveal God? Notice that one can ask the very same thing about any object in any sensory modality: how can light waves reveal objects? How can fear reveal danger? James offers a plausible analogy, I think, for understanding the embodied brain that is both naturalistic and non-reductionist. Think of the embodied brain as a *receiver* in much the same way that a radio is a receiver. There are signals in the world regardless of whether or not we are listening. We pick these up when we adjust the controls of the radio to precise frequencies. Our senses deliver the signals—thoughts and sensations—and we occasionally and selectively tune in. When we hit just the right frequencies, we can see things that don't normally reveal themselves. Some people are naturally inclined to such frequencies; others seem constitutionally incapable of having them.

Fine-tuning one's phenomenology can produce those cognitive and bodily states in which certain kinds of disclosures are possible—in which certain modes of experience can be accessed. Experimentation with nitrous oxide convinced James of the contingency of what he called "rational consciousness."

> One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different.[37]

The idea of the embodied brain as a kind of antennae for the world—a way of detecting various signals that are there whether or not we examine them—allows us to remain completely agnostic about the *source* of these signals. James' explanation does not require that we make any pronouncements on the ultimate source and veracity of our experience—we have bracketed such questions. It is completely compatible with theism, atheism, henotheism, pantheism, and so on.

In closing, I would like to suggest that questions of "belief" in one characterization or another of these experiences is possible only when one is not in the experience itself, and when one forgets that ineffability means untranslatability. To ask if one believes a proposition (say, about the existence of God) is never the same as asking about the experience itself, or the layer of reality that it discloses. Indeed, talk of belief in a particular proposition sometimes

suggests the absence of what the belief is about—that is, the actual object of the belief is not immediately the object of one's experience. One is focusing, rather, on one's attitude toward that experience.

The untranslatability of non-conceptual experience into the language of subject and object—indeed, the language of reason itself—explains why reports of the importance of such experiences are so often met with skepticism. Mystical experience is beyond the edge of reason—indeed, it calls into question our average everyday experience—something characterized by what James dubs "rational consciousness" and Husserl "the natural attitude." But skepticism about mystical experience is itself grounded in a kind of faith in rational consciousness—on the natural attitude being correct. A more radical, existential empiricism (such as the one James offers and Nishida develops) allows for a more pluralist, experience-driven ontology—and one that acknowledges the crucial place of our emotional—and indeed perceptual—lives in coming to experience both a self and its absence. As much as any European, James offers us a foundational existential phenomenology of the felt-self. He thereby also makes room for the legitimacy of mystical consciousness.

NOTES

1. See Dan Sahavi, *Subject and Selfhood*, 2005.
2. William James, *Essays on Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 42.
3. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1982).
4. From the Suttas of the Pali cannon: "Here a monk, gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, straightened his body, and established mindfulness in front of him, just mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out, Breathing in long, he understands: 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he understands: 'I breathe out long' (294)."
5. The centrality of observation to both religious experience and meditative practice is worth *emphasizing* in the context of both Jamesian descriptive psychology and European phenomenology. While there are undoubtedly those who would disparage experiences connected with religious practice, such a posture goes against the spirit of radical empiricism. To the extent that we are susceptible to misunderstand or misinterpret our experiences, such susceptibility is by no means correlative to religious experience. Given what observation demands of us, the reductionist who would explain all experiences in terms of brain activity stands on the same ground as the devout believer who would explain their experiences in terms of the actions of a divine being. An openness to experience counsels *humility*—indeed, we should expect to be mistaken on many counts even about our most vivid experiences.
6. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950), 304.
7. James. *Essays on Radical Empiricism*, 37.
8. James. *The Principles of Psychology*, 300.
9. Ibid., 451.
10. Ibid., 301.
11. Ibid., 302.
12. Ibid., 451.

13. For an interesting take on how this relates to some forms of meditation, see Wolfgang Fasching, "Consciousness, Self-consciousness, and Meditation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 4 (December 2008): 463–83.

14. We are misled to the extent that we take talk of an "object" here—one set over against a "subject"—to be referential. It is simply convenient. As T. S. Eliot once remarked: "I have to use language to talk."

15. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982), 425–26.

16. Ibid., 427.

17. Ibid., 428.

18. Ibid., 428.

19. In the Hebrew Bible, of course, Yahweh announces himself as the I AM ("Tell them I AM sent you"). In Vedanta tradition, the purest self, the *atman*, is identified with subjectivity itself, divorced from all of the idiosyncratic elements of our everyday identities. In the Samkya Yogic system, there is *parusa—the witness,* the bare presence of awareness that is in itself nothing, but which makes possible all *prakrti* (any and everything that can be named). In the Rig Veda, we have the fourth. In Socrates, we find the impersonal *logos* replacing the personal self, and true life identified with giving up *all* of one's individuality in the name of becoming the living logos—the word made flesh. These systems all point us beyond the individual self understood as a *thing* and toward a mode of experiencing the world in which this self, as well as its attendant objects, no longer present themselves. This is the world of impermanence, of fundamental unity, of non-duality. This is the world that cannot be spoken because it is beyond any concept, not because our concepts are limited, but because such experience *destroys the borders between things,* borders which are presupposed by any descriptive language. It is indescribable because to describe it is to falsify it—to make of parts something that is whole.

20. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 220.

21. Ibid., 321.

22. Ibid., 322.

23. Kitarō Nishida, *An Inquiry into the Good*, trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven: Yale Univesity Press, 1992), 154.

24. Ibid., 154.

25. Ibid., 158.

26. Ibid., 161.

27. Ibid., 162.

28. Ibid., 162.

29. Ibid., 164.

30. Ibid., 165.

31. Ibid., 175.

32. Nishida even offers an intriguing gloss on the Biblical story of the fall as something that's happening continuously as the movement from unity to disunity, from pure experience to reflection. *An Inquiry into the Good*, 170.

33. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 455.

34. Ibid., 388.

35. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), fn 8.

36. One could go naturalist here without much loss, I think: the emotion of *agape* reveals our unity with the world, to live one's life in *agape* is to become the Christ, the Buddha—it is to die as an individual and be resurrected as agape itself. This, one could argue, is quite literally the bodily resurrection of the Christ, here understood as a mode of being in which one *just is agape*, and does indeed find a heaven on earth.

37. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 388.

Chapter Five

Nikolai Berdyaev

Toward a New Humanism, Based on a New Concept of Being Human

Emiliya Ivanova

The twentieth century can be regarded as the most upheaval-filled century in the entire history of Western Civilization. It appears at the same time as the most exciting and the most contradictory: It is a century marked by the greatest scientific discoveries and the greatest man-made disasters, by bold leaps in human thought and unprecedented failures in their fulfilment, and by predicaments of total despair that enkindle new hopes. In the long history of Western civilization, it must seem that no other century has engendered such a profound loss of meaning that even history itself loses a clear orientation. Man has never felt so alienated from himself, from Being, from the universe conceived as a well-ordered cosmos. In no other century has the future of humanity looked so problematic and unpredictable that man felt compelled to imbue meaning to meaninglessness and embrace the absurd as the destiny of human existence.

The major thinkers of the twentieth century agree in their recognition that the contemporary era is marked by a profound crisis that affects all of culture and human existence in general. For Husserl, for example, this crisis finds expression in the crisis of human knowledge and reflection: it is a crisis of human reason that has lost its claim of universality. For others, such as Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Eric Fromm, it is a crisis in the relationship between man and society. Existentialist philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, and Albert Camus emphasize, for their part, another dimension of this crisis—the feelings of solitude and abandonment in the world that torment modern man, as well as the

profound sense of the meaninglessness of existence owing to questions about man's place in the universe, which now increasingly appears to him as strange and hostile.

These thinkers trace the origins of the existential crisis to the loss of values and to the distrust of rationalist accounts of human nature, society, and history. They point out that the historical events of the twentieth century put in doubt the dominant role of reason in the constitution of the human being,[1] as well as the rationalist belief in the immanent *logos* of human history. So, the evolution of humanity or human progress, which had been regarded by many seventeenth- to nineteenth-century philosophers as both valuable and attainable, turns out to be suspect and uncertain, and human history has been stripped of that intrinsic *telos* to which Hegel ascribes history's ultimate meaning.

According to the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, the crisis from which the contemporary world suffers is not only an economic and social crisis, as Marxist philosophers believe. Nor is it only a crisis of rationalist values and beliefs. It is also a cultural and spiritual crisis,[2] the most disturbing dimension of which is that of the dehumanization of the human being. So he writes: "If the question of humanism has a great importance, that is because the contemporary world is undergoing a crisis of man, much more profound than that of society . . . the world is undergoing an acute crisis of dehumanization."[3] In order to ensure its future, humanity needs *a new humanism* that could restore the disfigured image of the human being and render back to it its true dignity.

Dehumanization in the modern era is evident especially in the rise of totalitarian regimes like Fascism and Nazism. But a more subtle process of dehumanization has taken place in the capitalist system which has begun to deprive man of his dignity by making of him "the weapon for inhuman needs."[4] The entry of technology and of the machine into human life in the course of the development of industrial capitalist society has also contributed to this dehumanization, destroying "the integrity of man," enfeebling his "interior life," and "disfiguring his emotional life," by making of man "the instrument of inhuman procedures."[5] Thus, according to Berdyaev, the image of man in the contemporary era is found to be irrevocably degraded. This is reflected, according to him, both in the latest currents of contemporary art such as Cubism and Futurism,[6] and in new philosophical reflections such as Marxism which show "the crushing of man by the anonymous force of money."[7] But this is especially reflected in the movement of existentialism.

Existentialism elucidates the solitude of man in a world that he now perceives as strange and hostile. The human being now conceives of a cosmos in which his existence is stripped of meaning and thus rendered absurd. The contemporary man therefore lives in anxiety as never before, as though suspended over a terrible abyss in a world that has become foreign to him. He

has lost the feeling of belonging to a well-ordered Cosmos of which he is an integral part. He has also lost his belief, characteristic of modern times, of having in it a privileged place, especially ordained for him by higher forces. He therefore sees himself as deprived, not only of the feeling of mastery over the world that surrounds him, but also of that of mastering himself. The vertigo caused by this void into which man feels himself thrown in the contemporary era constitutes, in Berdyaev's view, his daily experience. So for Berdyaev, man's image of himself is disfigured because he now sees his own human existence as completely devoid of meaning. The optimistic humanism promoted during the Enlightenment—that is, the belief in man's innate capacity to organize the world in a harmonious way toward a future characterized by progress—is now replaced by a humanism with pessimistic undertones that reflect only the tragic side of human life. All of this shows, Berdyaev maintains, that the humanism of modern times has reached its end because it is no longer able to affirm the dignity of man and give orientation to his activities.

The disfiguration of man to which the contemporary era has come had already been sensed in the nineteenth century by the great spirits of the age. Modern humanism, Berdyaev stresses, already transitions over to its opposite in two opposed visions marking the modern era—that of Nietzsche and that of Marx. Seeing man as a disgrace and humiliation, Nietzsche wants to go beyond him and to replace him with the *Overman*. Marx, coming from the humanism of Feuerbach, wants, on the contrary, to save man from being crushed by the capitalist system. But, by considering "human individuality as a quality integral to the old bourgeois world, he demands its overcoming through collectivism."[8] In the last analysis, the two visions destroy the image of man, the first through extreme individualism, the second through strangling collectivism.

This crisis of modern humanism is felt again in the "pro-human cry" of Kierkegaard, who, insisting on the importance of the *concrete* against the *abstract*, asserts the rights of the individual, subjective and unique, against the domination of the general or of the universalistic spirit of Hegel. It is also reflected in the works of Dostoevsky, who describes the drama of a human existence rising out of the framework of a self-sufficient humanism or of a humanism detached from its Christian source.[9]

According to Berdyaev, it is precisely this detachment from its Christian sources that has led modern humanism to its self-negation, to its self-annihilation. With the transformations it underwent from the second half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, modern humanism, the Russian philosopher believes, became the opposite of Renaissance humanism, which gave birth to many of the cultural accomplishments we now associate with Western civilization. Renaissance humanism, in freeing man from the guardianship of the religious order to which he had submitted

during the Middle Ages, thereby affirmed his autonomy, his independence from all forms of authority other than his own. It proclaimed man's creative potential, the immense creative forces he could deploy in mastering all domains of human activity—art, science, commerce, etc. Renaissance humanism therefore paved the way not only for the creation of incredible works of art (in painting, architecture, music, literature, poetry), but also for the remarkable scientific discoveries that would irrevocably change our understanding of the universe in the following centuries. The works of Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Botticelli, Rafael, etc., as well as the scientific discoveries of Bruno, Galileo, Newton, and others are the fruits of this humanism, which had proclaimed man's unique place in the universe and thereby greatly expanded his freedom and his intellectual and creative capacities.

But Renaissance humanism, even as it stimulated man's creative impulse, remains bound to the "spiritual center of being"[10] from which man draws his supreme dignity and his creative powers. By contrast, the humanism of modern times has succeeded in cutting man's ties to this center. Berdyaev sharpens this contrast by delineating a humanism that is distinct even from the Renaissance humanism just described. This humanism culminated in the culture developed in Italy during the early Renaissance. Berdyaev then traces its beginnings to the creative awakening that takes place already in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one that drew inspiration not only from the spirit of Antiquity but also, and above all, from the Christian faith and spurred the intellectual and cultural accomplishments attained in Scholastic philosophy and mysticism, and in Gothic and primitive art. This humanism to which Berdyaev draws attention is a *Christian humanism*. And for Berdyaev, it is notably man's relationship to the spiritual foundation of Being, the source of all creation, that engendered the flourishing of European culture during the whole Renaissance period. To the extent that man's creative impulse during that whole period had been prodigiously fruitful, it was because that creative impulse first developed when man was still connected to the spiritual foundations of Being, and was thus inspired by the divine presence to which he dedicated his creations (for example, paintings of religious subjects, Gothic cathedrals, choral music, and literary and philosophical works that pondered and sought to understand man's relationship to the sacred).

But as man begins to distance himself from the spiritual sources of life, his creative impulse is gradually stifled and becomes more and more superficial: culture is shoved further and further to the periphery of man's concerns and his accomplishments in that domain lack depth. The decadence that follows was the inevitable result of man turning his back to the spiritual center, the source of greater inspirations,[11] of his moving away from "the other world" in order to turn definitively, in modern times, to "the world here below."[12] Disconnected from this spiritual center, man's creative powers will eventually be exhausted, which would ultimately result in man losing faith in

himself. The humanism of modern times is thus shown to be profoundly different from the Christian humanism that produced the Renaissance. Denying the essential relationship of the human being with the spiritual world, modern humanism drains the creative powers of man, thus condemning him to wander over the surface of the earth wondering about the meaning of his existence here below. Denied his spiritual aspects, the natural man into which modern humanism has transformed the human being is also deprived of "the infinite source of his creative forces."[13] As a consequence, he can only "exhaust himself and move to the surface of life."[14]

However, according to Berdyaev, it is Renaissance humanism itself that prompted these developments. In trying to disassociate man from the religious guardianship to which he was subject in the Middle Ages, proclaiming his autonomy and freedom, rejecting all authority other than his own, Renaissance humanism also opened the way to the assertion of the self-sufficiency of man. In the course of the following eras the gulf between the human and the divine increased more and more, culminating in a complete rupture between the two realms and the ensuing self-affirmation of man *without* God. The human principle, which in the Christian humanism of the early Renaissance, remains inseparable from the divine principle,[15] begins to become opposed to the latter, setting up the stage for the modern conception that "God has become the enemy of man, and man of God."[16]

The disfiguration of the human image is the result then of both the inhuman, in fact anti-human, concept of God adopted by modern humanism, and the atheistic or anti-spiritual concept of man on which this type of humanism depends. The humanists who defend these concepts have not realized, Berdyaev states, that when man breaks his bonds with his spiritual foundations he himself loses his own nature. Deprived of his spiritual roots, the human being is transformed into a wholly natural and social being, that is, into a dependent being; human nature is cut into pieces, and man appears subject to false beliefs and different idolatries. That is how he has become in the contemporary era, confronted with nothingness or tossed in a cosmic whirlwind from which he can find no relief. By forgetting his true nature, in other words that of being a *free spirit*, he has also forgotten his true mission of being a free creator that puts his imprint of beauty and truth on the earth. It is in this that the tragedy of modern history consists: a history that began with unconditional faith in man and in his creative forces and that has arrived, at the end, at the disfigured image of a man who has lost the meaning of his own existence.

Capitalist society, dominated by the bourgeois spirit, was a crucial turning point in the process of disfiguration of man's image. Oriented strictly toward material goods and opposed to all that is spiritual, the *bourgeois* constitutes a degradation of the notion of the person erected in the period of the Renaissance. The central characteristic of the *bourgeois* lies in is his

detachment from the sacred beliefs that had previously guided human life. "Destroyer of eternity, the bourgeois spirit is opposed to the Absolute";[17] in fact, it has made an absolute of "business" and has become a slave to the visible world. "Spiritual ardor, creative activity are absent from him" because his own spirit is "frozen," enchained by the external world, "strangled and petrified by the visible," in which he does not see the signs of another reality.[18]

From the metaphysical point of view, the bourgeois is someone who "wishes to appear but shows himself incapable of being,"[19] and this is expressed not only in the classical figure of the bourgeois who only seeks material goods, but also in the figures of more refined bourgeois such as artists, intellectuals, moralizers, or self-styled humanists who know nothing of the soul with its interior life of *intuition* as deep source of creativity. Competition, the struggle of all with all, personal isolation, and the lack of compassion toward others—that is what characterizes industrial capitalist society, which, with its materialism and atheism, with its belief in technological power and its pursuits of domination and of material goods on the earth, has completely erased the notion of man that was developed in the Renaissance. The idea of man as a *person*, drawn up in that era, was replaced by that of the *individual*, first proclaimed as a juridical category and then affirmed as a way of life, resting on the ideology of individualism.

The individualism with which modern humanism has ended up with represents, according to Berdyaev, its greatest weakness.[20] Individualism does not give man the possibility of adhering to a content. It does not reinforce man's image, does not contribute to the development of the world of the *person*. On the contrary, in the civilization dominated by the individualistic attitude, it is the brilliant individual and the strong personalities that are oppressed. Individualism favors "the process of egalitarianism which wipes out all individual differences,"[21] thus weakening man as a *person*. It leads either to the atomization of society, which is what has happened in Western civilization, or to the strangling of the *person* in socialist collectivism, which is what has happened in the totalitarian regimes: a process that is only "the inversion of atomistic decadence."[22] The triumph of individualism in modern humanism represents the failure, the end of the Renaissance humanism which proclaimed the *person* and defended the freedom of man in a very different sense from the formal liberty to which that freedom has been reduced.

The present era, then, needs a new humanism which, just like Renaissance humanism, affirms man as a person, playing a significant role in the cosmic process of creation. This new humanism, Berdyaev thinks, must be constructed on the basis of Christianity, which insists on the supreme dignity of the human being. It (this new humanism) must turn back to the forgotten spiritual sources of human being in order for man to be able to discover his

true nature and the meaning of his existence. But this new humanism, he makes clear, does not imply a return to "the humanism of Erasmus," or to the people of the Renaissance period who remained connected with the Church. It should be a sort of synthesis of the experience accumulated by the human being during the period of modernity and of the anthropological truth expressed in the Christian vision.

Berdyaev's conviction that the concept of man, of his place in the universe and of the *meaning* of his existence must be rethought on the basis of Christianity comes from the fact that only Christian humanism is capable of affirming supreme human dignity. Christian anthropology expresses an undeniable truth which has been lost in the course of the centuries of modernity and forgotten by the intellectuals involved with the problem of the human being. In the Christian vision man is neither a simple natural being, nor a "thinking reed," as certain modern philosophers had imagined, but a creation of God, made in His image and likeness, therefore a free spirit endowed with creative forces and having an exceptional position in the universe.

Modern humanism has reduced man to a mere natural being, subject to necessity like nature, capable of knowing the causes that govern him but not caring to place his creative imprint on them. It has cut off the "creative vocation of man,"[23] stemming from his resemblance to God, and connected with his *divine-human nature.* In fact, what Berdyaev reproaches in modern humanism is not so much the fact that it has proclaimed man without God, in other words that it has pitted man against God, or that it has made of man himself a *God,* but the fact that it has denied the divinity of man, or, to put it another way, that it has not developed a deep understanding of the concept of human divinity, which results from man's resemblance to God. It is especially this negation of man as an image of God that "leads to the negation and destruction of man,"[24] Berdyaev asserts.

The Christian humanism to which the Russian philosopher appeals is founded on the conception of man as a free spirit, reflecting the supreme Being. Created in the image of God, the human being transcends the world of necessity. He is a *free* spirit capable, just like his Creator, of bringing about creative acts, transfiguring the universe. It is particularly the freedom and the creative vocation to which he is summoned by his Creator that must be set at the basis of this new humanism of which Berdyaev dreams: a humanism that rests on the concept of man as a *person*, on the understanding of human freedom as a foundation of his existence, as well as on the affirmation of human creativity as man's calling in the world.

Just like Renaissance humanism, this new humanism proclaims the creative forces of the human being, but at the same time stresses the relation of man to the supreme Being—source of all creation and of all creative inspiration. Creativity is the way in which the divine part in man expresses itself. Man understood as *person*, reflecting the supreme Person, is *unique*; he has

his individual vocation or his mission to accomplish on earth. As a *person*, he is completely opposed to the *individual* to which modern humanism reduced him; he is also opposed to the individualistic way of life to which he is currently habituated. To be a *person* means for man not only to take on his personal vocation and to express his creative potential, but also to live with *others* in relations of charity and solidarity.

This new humanism, based on the concept of man as a *person*, must replace modern humanism, according to Berdyaev. It marks the end of modern times and the beginning of a new era.[25] He calls this era a *New Middle Ages*[26] because he conceives it as a *spiritual era* which denies man's self-suffiency and re-establishes the bonds of the human being with the spiritual sources of Being, with the true foundations of human existence. The *New Middle Ages* will be, according to him, a sacred era in the sense that the Spirit (and with it the Sacred) are going to renew their place in human life and culture after having lost their symbolic function in modern times.[27] He also identifies this new era as a *New Middle Ages* because the humanism on which it rests "is, in a certain sense, contrary to that of the Renaissance,"[28] which opened the way to the self-affirmation of man leading to his self-sufficiency. That humanism proclaimed man as creator but denied the grace that nourishes the creative forces of the human being. It began with the affirmation of creative human individuality, but ended with its negation, with the weakening of the human spirit.

The *New Middle Ages* presupposes the spiritual birth of man, the new awakening of his creative impulse which saw the light of day at the beginning of the Renaissance.

But the term *New Middle Ages* used by Berdyaev to give a name to this era is ambiguous in its meaning: the new light that this era brings is preceded by new darkness through which humanity must pass. Analogically to the still obscure beginnings of the Middle Ages in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, contemporary man is approaching a twilight period that is in danger of being marked by a new form of barbarism. With the failure of the spiritual principles of modern history, spiritual chaos has taken a seat in human life and it is from this that the danger of a new barbarism arises. Deprived of his true image, as well as of the perspectives giving an orientation and a *meaning* to his existence, man finds himself not only trapped in an unsustainable state of outlawry, but also capable of carrying out all sorts of atrocious barbarisms.[29]

Berdyaev compares this historical moment to the night—a night that follows the end of the day (the Renaissance and the *Enlightenment*). But he makes it clear that the "*night*" is not necessarily less beautiful than the day, nor less divine. The night, acclaimed by the poets, often brings new under-

standings to the problems of the day: "In the night [the philosopher asserts] the stars shine brightly, in the night there are revelations of which the day is unaware."[30]

In this nocturnal era, humanity may confront great catastrophes similar to what happened after the end of ancient civilizations. But an inextinguishable light illuminates the march of man toward "the invisible creative day to come, when the sun of the new Christian Renaissance will rise."[31] So the *New Middle Ages* is an era that is at the same time destructive and promising, dark and luminous, rational and spiritual. It is a transitional era, leading to a new understanding of the universe and of man, of human history and society, of the place of the human being in the Cosmos and of the meaning of his existence.

This new era is conceived as transcending the world of modern history with its individualism and its superficial humanism, with its liberalism and its democracy, with its system of capitalist industrial economy and its powerful technology, with its covetousness and its constrained sense of life, with its atheism and its apathy, with its furious class struggle and its totalitarian socialism. But this new era retains its sense of the *freedom* experienced in modern history, together with its positive conquests and its refinements of the soul.

After the era of a humanism, neutral from the religious point of view and wanting to exist "between heaven and earth," comes the time when religion "becomes again . . . a general, universal fact, defining everything."[32] The *New Middle Ages* is the transition from the irreligious era of modern times to a new religious era. This does not necessarily mean that it will be a Christian era or that the religion of the true God will have to be victorious, but that everything—"life, from all its angles"—is going to be placed under the sign of religious polarization, "religious struggle, manifestation of extreme religious principles."[33] Culture itself will be unable to remain humanist and neutral with respect to religion as it was in modern times. It must (will) become *sacred*, ecclesiastical, in order to be able to contribute to the Christian transformation of life. Man, who by his true nature belongs organically to real communities, must rid himself of the individualism in which the rationalist thought of modern times has imprisoned him by making him believe that it is the way to protect oneself. He must open himself up to *others*, realizing that it is only in community that he can find his true development, because "truth is reunification and not disuniting and demarcation."[34] He is also going to discover the true meaning of his freedom, namely, the freedom opposed to the formal freedom praised by modern history. The *New Middle Ages* is also this process of universalization, of awakening to the spirit of universality both among men and among nations.

But this new era is ambiguous; luminous tendencies occur along with dark tendencies; it may well be preceded by a new barbarism. It is an era in which religion will reassume its place in the life of man, and in which man will rediscover his lost connections with transcendence. That is why Berdyaev believes that the new wars will be religious wars: a prediction that we see beginning to take place in our days (the bloody religious barbarism of the Jihadists, the war declared by them, in the name of Islam, against Christians and Jews or, in their terms, Infidels). As barbarism becomes more and more real, the new era proclaimed by Berdyaev is perhaps on its way. What we, the contemporaries of these terrible times, can and must retain, is the main idea upheld by the Russian philosopher: humanity needs a new humanism, that is, a humanism based on another concept of the human being and of his relations with the universe, on a new concept of society and of relations between man and *others*.

This new humanism can be called, in our opinion, *spiritual humanism*, to the extent to which it is based on the re-evaluation of spiritual values that are universal, as well as on a reconceptualization of the human being, understood as a creative *unique person*, whose personal mission is to leave his trace of truth or of beauty on the earth. It can arise within different cultures and civilizations, thus overcoming cultural and personal differences. But what is still more fundamental in Berdyaev's vision, is that by realizing himself as a *person,* man not only gives a meaning to his own life, but also contributes to the continual creation of the universe, asserting himself as God's *co-creator* in the ceaseless process of spiritualization of the universe.

NOTES

1. The questioning of the rationalist idea of human nature is also connected to the development of the psychological sciences and of psychoanalysis in particular. Psychoanalytic theory elucidates not only the power of the subconscious and the unconscious over human behavior, but also the presence in man of destructive impulses such as aggression, the drive to self-destruction (or in Freudian terms, the attraction to *Thanatos*), and similar dispositions that undermine the Enlightenment conception of human beings as rational subjects.

2. Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, *De l'esprit bourgeois* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé S. A., 1949), 73. All citations are taken from the French translations of Berdyaev's works, and all English translations in this paper are mine.

3. Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la Nou velle époque* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé S. A., 1947), 27.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. In the latest movements of contemporary art which demonstrate, according to Berdyaev, the end of the Renaissance, "the image of man perishes definitively." So in movements like cubism and futurism, the human body and its eternal forms are connected to "dismemberment." Already the cubism of a great painter like Picasso "dismembers the human form and dislocates the artistic image of man." But futurism "goes still further in the cutting up of the human

image" and destroys "all natural and human integrity" by seeking its images of perfection not in man or in nature, as was the case once upon a time, but in the machine." Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1985), 34–35.

7. Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la Nouvelle époque*, 27
8. Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge*, 31.
9. Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la Nouvelle époque*, 30.
10. This is an expression that Berdyaev often uses in *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge.*
11. According to Berdyaev the fifteenth century was the epoch *par excellence* of doubling back, the epoch in which "the violent collision of Christian principles and pagan principles" took place. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are already very far from the spirit of the early Renaissance. And it is is not by accident, he thinks, that in the sixteenth-century "'human individuality' began to express itself in horrible crimes." Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge*, 2.
12. Ibid.
13. Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge,* 23.
14. Ibid.
15. The simultaneous action of these two principles is perfectly represented in the figure of Christ.
16. Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la Nouvelle époque*, 30.
17. Ibid., 44.
18. Ibid., 45–48.
19. Ibid., 52.
20. In speaking of the individualism with which modern humanism has ended up, Berdyaev draws an interesting comparison with Russian humanism. Individualism is characteristic of Western civilization; Russian humanism, because of the Russian tradition, "can only be communitarian." See Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la Nouvelle époque*, 27.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge*, 25.
25. The title of one of his books.
26. In his preface to *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge*—a book published in Germany, which attracted attention throughout Europe and brought celebrity to its author—Berdyaev makes it clear that he is attempting "to indicate different paths for getting out of the world crisis."
27. According to Berdyaev there exists in human history, as in nature, rhythms, fluxes and refluxes, periods of ascent and flourishing of culture and periods of descent. The beginning of the last century represents, according to him, the end of the culture of the modern times and the birth of a new culture—a culture which, by analogy to the era of the Middle Ages, will be based on a renewed appreciation of and quest for the spiritual. Berdyaev, *Le Nouveau Moyen Âge*, 51.
28. Berdyaev, *Au seuil de la nouvelle époque*, 37.
29. The historical events of the twentieth century have confirmed this prediction or rather Berdyaev's perspicacity—a perspicacity that can be found in all his works.
30. Ibid., 52.
31. Ibid., 46.
32. Ibid., 59.
33. Ibid. That is why Berdyaev believes that if there are wars in the future they will be spiritual and religious wars rather than territorial wars (*Ibid*., 70)—another prediction by the Russian philosopher that has been vindicated in recent decades.
34. Ibid., 62.

Chapter Six

Max Scheler's Concept of Shame as a Preconceptual Revelation of the Ontological Status of the Human Person

Marc Barnes

How do we redeem feeling? That is, how do we restore the role of the emotions in philosophy from their current status as mere obfuscations of thought, or worse, as mere "evolutionary leftovers," curious stimulus-response patterns of the animal world that have been sublimated, for better or worse, into the human mind? We redeem feeling through the phenomenological reduction, by returning to an original experience of an emotion, and describing what gives itself in experience. If the emotions really *are* valid, non-conceptual grasping of being and states of affairs, as so many philosophers suggest, then this functional value of the emotions will be given in experience. Through the course of this chapter, we will consider the phenomenon of shame, in the hope of practicing a method that could, in theory, redeem any and all of the emotions. We will enter into dialogue with the phenomenology of Max Scheler to reduce shame as it appears in certain theoretical, cultural and "natural attitudes" until we can articulate it as an intuitable essence fitting any and all particular shame-manifestations.

Our first obstacles are the errors of contemporary psychology. The discipline has made incredible progress in the diagnosis and treatment of pathological shame-manifestations, but precisely by way of this progress, it has confused our understanding of what shame *is*. The predominant doctrine of the psychology of shame is expressed as such: "The core concern of shame is a negative focus on one's notion of self."[1] It is "a focus on an intractable and enduring 'bad self,'"[2] one that "forces the individual to contemplate the

possibility of a defective, unworthy, or damaged self."[3] It is "the experience of the self as unattractive, undesirable, worthless, inferior or defective."[4] "Shame, in this view, is counterproductive."[5]

This view has become the dominant view of our popular culture, which sees in shame only a feeling to be eradicated; all "causing shame in another" being seen as morally reprehensible and all "being ashamed" as an injustice, to the point that harnessing the verb "shaming" to a noun, as in slut-shaming, denotes a sin that rings as horribly in modern ears as "pride" and "sloth" rang in antiquity's. In fact, our distaste for the emotion reverses a overwhelmingly positive view of shame held by our philosophical predecessors, for whom shame was, as in Aquinas, "a praiseworthy passion."[6] Explaining the modern turn against shame requires a separate, historical investigation, but allow me to suggest a crucial element.

Contemporary psychology is plagued by an infatuation with itself as an empirical, positivistic science. Even within phenomenological studies which seem to simply describe the emotion as it manifests itself, there is a background desire to root shame, and any other phenomenon, in empirically observable processes, necessary and determined movements from event A to event B, all reducible to the physical order. In short, psychology suffers the loss of the soul, a loss which, in the specific instance of shame, involves the attempt to define the emotion as a quantitatively evolved version of "submissive strategies" already observable in canines and higher primates.

This genealogy, posited as early as 1989 by the psychologist Paul Gilbert as "social rank theory," argues that shame is a defense mechanism, a response of the organism to a threat occasioned by a "stepping out" of the hierarchy or rank of the herd. Shame is a warning signal that an organism is asserting itself, exists negatively in the mind of others, and is thus at risk of being harmed. Shame leads the organism to reaffirm its lower place by "submissive and subordinate displays . . . such as eye gaze avoidance (subordinate non-human primates always avoid eye glaze with dominants), fear grinning, backing down quickly if challenged, and not confidently making claims on resources or advertising oneself."[7] Gilbert applies this empirical fact of primate behavior to human beings, for whom "in the present evolutionary context, social rank is obtained on the basis of talent, charm, prestige, and an ability to win favor with others in the social landscape. . . . In this view, shame permits an assessment of how favorably one is viewed by others."[8]

Subsequent research has made an effort to keep itself within the parameters of this evolutionary genesis account. This, I would suggest, is why shame is usually described as being fundamentally focused on a negative self-value and a "bad self": we need no "warning signal" that we exist *positively* or *neutrally* in the mind of others.

PROBLEMS WITH THE EVOLUTIONARY ACCOUNT

But a threat to my social rank is neither a necessary nor a sufficient reason for shame. I can have my social rank threatened without feeling shame. If I am to be displaced from my academic position by someone younger and better qualified than me, I *may* feel ashamed—but I may also feel gracious, humble and even noble in response to the call to step down. Furthermore, I can feel shame without having my social rank threatened. In fact, shame may well up as the result of an *increase* in social rank and a *positive* evaluation of the self.

Imagine, for instance, that an evolutionary biologist has just made a discovery changing his field of research for the foreseeable future. He goes to work the next day and receives a standing ovation. "It was nothing," he lies. He hopes to retreat to his office but the clapping continues. Having made the perfunctory, ironic bows, having smiled and muttered "thank you" to no one in particular, he no longer knows what to do. He turns to go, but is stayed by his employer, who begins to praise him: "Archibald here is the brightest mind of our generation. He has worked tirelessly, adhering with unparalleled devotion to the rigors of the scientific method." Now our scientist's cheeks begin to burn. He fixes his eyes on the carpet to avoid the various eyes that gaze out on him in affirmation. He longs for escape.

Compliment, praise, and the positive gaze of others can be, and often are, a valid source of shame. This presents an obstacle to "social rank theory." Our scientist is in no danger of losing social rank. That he exists as a hero and even as a god in the mind of others, whether true or false, is of nothing but evolutionary benefit to him. The problem of "social rank theory" is one of method: Evolutionary psychology claims to describe a feeling indubitably given in experience—the feeling of shame—by data *not* given in this intuition, but added on as a merely possible explanation, as an evolutionary genealogy, and thus it ends in a probabilistic and non-essential description of the emotion which cannot account for all its particular instances. This critique may be applied to any psychological account which claims to describe "what a thing is" by a description of "how it came to be."

But we have learned something by stripping away this bad explanation: Shame is not essentially concerned with being seen *favorably*. Shame is concerned with being seen *truthfully*. Both positive and negative self-evaluations submit themselves to this broader category: the question of validity. A man may burn with shame if he is seen as a celebrity, just as he may upon being seen as a criminal, not because he believes the celebrity-gaze to be *unfavorable,* but because the gaze is *false*: he is not just a celebrity, but a particular person, present to himself in all his flaws and contradictions. Our scientist may feel shame over being singled out for praise, not because he believes himself to exist negatively in the mind of others, but because their

positive evaluation is "too much." Shame burns, not as a response to an animal threat, but as a response to a felt lack of correspondence between the gaze and the truth of the person gazed upon. Thus shame is an event only possible of a being who does not exist purely and simply, but as a being who can be taken as other than she really is, and more than this, a being who nevertheless *longs* to be taken in the truth of her person.

By the truth of the person, then, we do not refer to some personal opinion we may have of ourselves, but to the ontological status and subsequent value of the human person. The human person, in Scheler's terms, is a bridge, a transition, and a tension incarnate. She is stretched between two poles: poles non-exhaustively demarcated by the terms subjective and objective, interior and exterior, private and public, observable and hidden, mind and body, spirit and flesh.[9] Shame, then, is a feeling of "an imbalance and disharmony in man"[10] toward either pole of existence, a feeling that urges the person to hide, cover, and retreat to that being-in-between which is the truth of her being. Thus shame is always occasioned by a gaze which sees the person as more spirit than flesh, or more flesh than spirit. The soldier who blushes and squirms at being called a "hero" because he is ashamed at being treated as an spiritual ideal at the expense of his particular, embodied, and historical being. The starving prisoner who burns with shame while guards wave bread in his face: he is ashamed of being treated as an animal reducible to his needs at the expense of his free, rational subjectivity. The wife who wishes to run and hide when her husband praises her as angelic, perfect, pure: she is ashamed of being treated as a spirit at the expense of her real flesh, with all its imperfection, sweat and smell.

Obviously we risk the rigor of the phenomenological reduction by taking Scheler's anthropology as a given and interpreting shame through its lens. But two points can be made here. First, particular shame-manifestations are only possible by virtue of an ontological structure of a being who can be taken for other than she is, as a purely exterior being could no more feel shame than a purely interior being. Secondly, our return to the experience of shame itself gives credence to this anthropology, for the experience of shame is the sudden feeling of being divided between these two poles of existence.

In normal life, we may agree with Gabriel Marcel and Merleau-Ponty's analysis, that "I am my body,"[11] and that, far from disharmony, it is this *I* who sees, smells, touches and moves, *my* spirit which lives in and through these fingertips and toes. But let one become ashamed, let him break a vase or stand caught in a lie, and this phenomenological unity of self and body dissolves. We become aware of our own arms, not as leaping forward toward objects in the world as incarnate spiritual intentions, but as tools, appendages, the limbs of some strange puppet we are suddenly responsible for. We "don't know where to put our hands," they are *things*, extraneous to our interior life. Our legs go wobbly, we must force them to walk, just as we

force our trembling voice to apologize. Shame reveals our flesh as flesh, distinct from its animating spirit. It also distinguishes the private and public, introducing in the subject, who previously shifted with unconscious ease from public roles to private self, the desire to cover up, retreat, hide, dive into a private, interior space. Shame provides us with the felt datum by which we may judge ourselves to always already exist as stretched between two poles. In Jean-Paul Sartre's terms, the person is "an ontological duality of myself and myself in the eyes of the Other,"[12] and shame is a pre-conceptual revelation of this ontological duality, a duality we only feel as duality in its being ripped apart.

Surprisingly, the existential phenomenologists are closer kin to Aquinas than to their psychologistic peers. Aquinas describes shame as a species of fear, in which "the soul, as though contracted in itself, is free to set the vital spirits and heat in movement, so that they spread in the outward parts of the body; the result being that those who are ashamed blush."[13] A contraction and a retreat into one's interior depths, revealing one as *soul*, which is the cause of an outward spread of blood to the face and vital feeling to the entire body, revealing one as *body*: this is a rich, intense description of the thing, even with its reliance on medieval anatomy. This retreat, far from exalting in a resentful repudiation of the outer world, frees the soul to set the body in movement, "sending" blood to the face, heating and highlighting the very area through which our soul is most visible to others and present to ourselves, asserting in the body the secret learned by the contraction into the soul: that I am unity of spirit and flesh, a spirit that can be seen on and in the flesh.[14] Shame reveals me to myself as a bridge and a transition between spiritual and material orders, and more than this, it reveals that being this bridge is an immense value, presenting with an undeniable ought: That I *ought* to hide, *ought* to blush, *ought* to cover, *ought* to protect precisely this value against the gaze that would see me as otherwise. It is in this sense that Scheler thinks that shame can only be related to positive self-values, that only positive self-values require protection.

Obviously this directly contradicts the primary doctrine of shame-psychology, that "the core concern of shame is a negative focus on one's notion of self."[15] Shame is certainly a negative emotion, but it is only by a reference to a positive valuing of the person that shame is experienced as something negative; only by a real contact with the truth of the person subsisting beyond all gaffs, bodily unpleasantries and social ineptitudes, that we may "contemplate the possibility of a defective, unworthy, or damaged self."[16] It is precisely because we have a value that rejects and protests the charge of worthlessness that we feel worthlessness as an injustice, a diminishment—that which ought not be. To simply identify with a negative self-

value without reference to a positive self-value which the negative threatens is not shame, but shamelessness, the brazen taking on of a false-presentation, conformity with a false-gaze.

The person is not sometimes in shame. The person is always in shame, for as long as we exist as projects and transitions, and as long as this truth about ourselves exists under the possibility of being seen otherwise, then shame is present as our sentinel and guard. Shame is, "in its original and pure function, not an emotional reaction to something" but a "pre-feeling of what is coming upon one."[17] Shame is not fundamentally rational, operating on the level of our conscious intellect, cognizing situations of shame, aware of this or that false-gaze, this or that threat to the truth of personal being. Particular feelings of shame are a rising into consciousness of a power that is always already operating, albeit as a private, unconscious valuing of our ontological status as human persons, on the occasion of a threat to our ontological status.

The English language still gives evidence to this fact. We say, approvingly, that "he has a strong sense of shame." We certainly do not mean by this that a man is a constant center for feelings of shame, that he lives his days blushing and hiding. Quite the contrary. We mean something akin to, "He has a strong sense of dignity" or "This one knows what he is about." We are admiring a particular man's unconscious valuing of the truth about himself, his easy, natural protection of this truth from false-gazes, wayward passions and compromising situations, the artful way in which he reveals the immense value of his being by protecting it. Shame is not something that happens to such a man, it is his very self-valuing. Thus it is less proper to speak of a finite number of shame-wellings during the course of a human life as "his shame," and more proper to speak of shame as his very feeling of his nature. An understanding that conflates shame with feelings and wellings of shame cannot realize this fact, that feelings are simply the realization of the very category in which we exist. But shame is our affective response, not to this or that value, but to the fact that we exist as we exist. It may operate consciously, unconsciously, felt to greater or lesser degrees, but this does not make it a temporary, finite power, exercised here and there. Rather, it is always present,[18] our response to our being-in-between.

NOTES

1. Stephanie C. Welten, Marcel Zeelenberg, and Seger M. Breugelmans, "Vicarious Shame," *Cognition and Emotion* 26, no. 5 (January 2012): 836–46.

2. Sangmoon Kim, Ryan Thibodeau, and Randall S. Jorgensen, "Shame, Guilt and Depressive Symptoms: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 137, no. 1 (January 2011): 68–96; quote on 73.

3. Ibid., 70

4. Marcela Matos and José Pinto-Gouveia, "Shamed by a Parent or by Others: The Role of Attachment in Shame Memories Related to Depression," *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy* 14, no. 2 (2014): 217–44; quote on 220.

5. Roger Giner-Sorolla, Jared Piazza, and Pablo Espinosa, "What do the TOSCA guilt and shame scales really measure: Affect or action?," *Personality and Individual Differences* 51, no. 4 (2011): 445–50.

6. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Secunda Secundae 92–189,* trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote (Lander: The Aquinas Institute, 2012), 385–91.

7. Paul Gilbert, "The Relationship of Shame, Social Anxiety and Depression: The Role of the Evaluation of Social Rank," *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 7, no. 3 (2000): 174–89; 175.

8. Kim, Thibodeau, and Jorgensen, "Shame, Guilt and Depressive Symptoms," 72

9. Max Scheler, "Shame and Feelings of Modesty," *Person and Self-value* (Chicago: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 1–85. The diversity of terms is intentional here, for a limitation to any one way of describing these two dimensions could have the effect of associating them with a particular anthropology, which would in turn usher the whole host of metaphysical presuppositions and conclusions associated with that anthropology. Spirit/flesh is the explicit language of Pauline theology, but by using it I do not imply Paul's "war" between the two, just as form/matter and body/soul may be taken as the language of Thomistic thought, but by using it I do not mean to imply everything Thomas implies by it.

10. Ibid., 5

11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 90–97.

12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 89

13. Thomas Aquinas, "On the Effects of Fear" in *Summa Theologiae Prima Secundae, 1–70,* trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote (Lander: The Aquinas Institute, 2012), 395.

14. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Tertia Pars 1–51,* trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote (Lander: The Aquinas Institute, 2012), 73–82.

15. Welten, Zeelenberg, and Breugelmans, "Vicarious Shame," 837

16. Kim, Jorgensen, Thibodeau, "Shame, Guilt and Depressive Symptoms," 70

17. Max Scheler, "Shame and Feelings of Modesty," 53.

18. One might make a comparison to the love a husband feels for his wife. It may well up in this or that moment, but this does not mean it is a temporary, finite number of actions, intersecting at various moments during his existence. Ultimately, it is his affective response to her *being*, and as long as she is, his love is. So shame is an affective response to our own manner of *being*, and as long as we are exist according to our nature as a transition and a project, we exist in shame.

Chapter Seven

The Necessity of Feeling in Unamuno and Kant

For the Tragic as for the Beautiful and Sublime

José Luis Fernández

Miguel de Unamuno's theory of tragic sentiment is central to understanding his unique contributions to religious existential thought, which centers on the production of perhaps the most unavoidable and distinctive kind of human feeling. His writings on the foundational features of tragic feeling are provocative, and his reflective ruminations on the precarious nature of human existence exhort his readers to consider what gives rise to the phenomena and experience of life. Unamuno's existentialism is rightly attributed with being influenced by the gestational development of ideas from several luminous predecessors, *inter alios*, Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche,[1] but within these pages I should like to suggest a peculiar kinship between seemingly strange bedfellows, namely, between the Spanish Unamuno (1864–1936) and a German philosopher whom existentialist writers have historically railed against, namely, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

It would prove rather easy to pore over the many points on which the Lutheran Pietist who extolled the Horacian motto, "Dare to know!"[2] differs from the Roman Catholic "man of flesh and bone" who in essence responded, "No, dare to feel!"[3] So this study instead takes as its point of departure the problems and concerns that have preoccupied both Kant and Unamuno and thus led them to strikingly similar insights about the peculiar significance of feeling for human life. For the Terentian dictum with which Unamuno begins *A Tragic Sense of Life*[4]—which prompts him to reinforce and rearticulate the primacy of concrete existence ("the man of flesh and bones")—betrays a profound appreciation of that common humanity from

which we become alienated insofar as humanity becomes a mere idea. The problem that drives Unamuno's inquiry therefore brings him in close affinity with that predecessor who was arguably the first to have postulated humanity as a ground for morality and duty. And we do Kant an injustice if we were to think that humanity is merely an idea or abstraction in his system. For although transcendental idealism mires him in insuperable difficulties, it was Kant's way of placing the noumenal self beyond the ken of ideation. Appreciation of others' humanity must be of an entirely different order from how we conceive of things through the senses or through concepts. By focusing on the problems and concerns that motivate their inquiry, we can therefore begin to examine how feeling gets redeemed in Kant and Unamuno, specifically as the only way in which that which must transcend our senses and our intellect can move us.

Since Unamuno's reception of Kant's philosophy is often conflicted, ranging from clear indications of influence to expressions of antipathy,[5] it must come as no surprise that there has been relatively little comparative research done on these two thinkers. Moreover, this scant literature has mainly explored connections between Unamuno's existential thought and Kant's first two *critiques*.[6] In these works, however, feelings are regarded as inclinations and thus receive no serious consideration. In what follows I therefore juxtapose Unamuno's analysis of tragic feeling and Kant's discussion of the feeling of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment*.[7]

The chapter proceeds in three sections. First, it will explicate the subjective, rather than objective, grounds that both Unamuno and Kant attribute to peculiar, and revelatory, kinds of feeling. Second, it will draw out a resemblance in how they articulate the *poietic* power of feeling, namely, how the subjective apparatuses that *create* sentiments of beauty, sublimity, and the tragic maintain their constitutive elements in a productive tension that eludes any kind of dialectical overcoming which would cancel out the constant activity that gives rise to such feelings. Finally, the chapter considers how the upshot of feeling that emerges from both Unamuno's and Kant's thought is put into relation with a sense of self which, although diverging in important ways, draws from feeling to gesture toward transcendental ideas of God and the immortality of the Soul. Ultimately, by considering how Unamuno and Kant articulate their complicated notions of feeling, whether it is tied to a ubiquitous tragic condition of life or to a unique capacity to sense beauty and sublimity, both thinkers are united not so much in focusing on the objective correlates of feeling but rather in elucidating the peculiar power of feeling to move the agents who experience it.

FEELING IS SUBJECTIVE, NOT OBJECTIVE

Central to my comparative study of Unamuno and Kant is the view that predicates such as "the tragic" (*el trágico*), "the beautiful" (*das Schöne*) and "the sublime" (*das Erhabene*) are not properties that refer to events and objects, but rather are *felt* by human subjects who are receptive to such feelings via a special kind of non-rational attunement. For example, in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which considers the grounds and possibility for aesthetic and teleological judgment, beauty is tied to feeling insofar as it is the pleasure one receives in forming a judgment of taste.[8] What is interesting and innovative in Kant's theory is that when he uses the term "feeling" (*Gefühl*) to describe the derivation of beauty, he is not referring to any of the body's five sensory modalities: "If a determination of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is called sensation, then this expression means something entirely different" (KdU 5:206). "Feeling" is thus a technical term with a connotation very different than "an objective representation of the senses" (KdU 5:206). Instead, Kant proceeds to argue that "feeling" is the reflective satisfaction that grounds a judgment of taste (KdU 5:209), which is facilitated *a priori* by the constituents of the "*imagination* to combine the manifold of intuition, and *understanding* to provide the unity of the concept uniting the [component] presentations" (KdU 5:217). Kant calls this harmonious interaction between imagination and understanding the "free play of the faculties of cognition" (KdU 5:218) which takes place within a judging subject and provides the grounds for a feeling of beauty.

Subsequently, in Kant's theory of taste a feeling of beauty is not based on either sensuous or rational sources, both of which would draw from either agreeable sensations or determinate concepts. For example, the statements "This rose is red" and "This rose is beautiful" are different judgments: the former draws from determinate concepts; the latter draws from the free-play. A feeling of beauty is thus a *reflective* judgment:[9] one that emerges from, and refers to, the subject (and ranges, *possibly*, over the entire community of judging subjects endowed with similar cognitive attunements).

This very special aesthetic feeling, the subject's capacity to form a judgment of taste, has important ramifications for how we are to understand its objective correlate (e.g., a scene from nature, or perhaps a painting, that is called "beautiful"). A judgment of taste, even though grounded in feeling, is not a free-floating pronouncement without consideration of some object; however, with regard to whether objects actually possess beauty, Kant argues that a judgment of taste functions in an analogical sense, that is, *as if* the quality of beauty were a real, objective property of the object being judged (KdU 5:212). The important result here is that in Kant's aesthetic theory, no

object is beautiful in itself because beauty is not a property of objects; rather, if beauty is to be "found" anywhere, it will be within the judging subject, namely, in her own production of the *feeling* of beauty.

Similarly, while there are important divergences from his theory of beauty, when Kant turns to explicate his theory of sublime feeling, i.e., a sensation of the absolutely great (*schlecthin groβ*) (KdU 5:248), he argues similarly that rather than being a characteristic of objects in the world, the sublime is also constituted by a special sense: "[N]othing that can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime. . . . Hence what is to be called sublime is not an object, but the attunement that the intellect [gets] through a certain presentation that occupies reflective judgment" (KdU 5:250). Here Kant argues that no *sensible* object, neither active volcanoes nor powerful hurricanes (KdU 5:261), is truly sublime. Instead, such objects may be called "sublime" only nominally (or indirectly) insofar as they arouse in us a feeling of a supersensible power. "[T]rue sublimity," Kant writes, "must be sought only in the mind of the judging person and not in the natural object, the judging of which prompts this mental attunement" (KdU 5:256).

Subsequently, to predicate something as "sublime" requires an act of substitution between our feeling of sublimity and the objects eliciting this experience, namely, the act of substituting or replacing a sense of awe (*Achtung*) for an object with respect for our subjective vocation (KdU 5:257), i.e., for our free and unique capacity to form such awesome feelings of the sublime. Therefore, just like we noted in the *as if*, analogical predicate of beauty in an object, it would be incorrect to call some natural object or event sublime, for "we can say no more than that the object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind" (KdU 5:245).

What I find interesting in this brief explication of these two famous elements of Kant's aesthetic theory is that one very significant consequence of Unamuno's *The Tragic Sense of Life* seems to be, just as with the putative pronouncements of beauty and sublimity, that the predicate of "tragic" does not affix itself to an object or event, but rather inheres in *feelings* from which the ultimate intelligibility of tragedy is gleaned. For Unamuno, what is deemed tragic is not a property of objects or events, rather it is also a peculiar kind of feeling (*sentimiento*); namely, a feeling which emerges from a tension that is constituted and maintained by the faculties of sensation and reason, i.e., by the essential faculties of the "heart" and of the "head" (STV, 13–14). Consequently, Unamuno argues that what is to be understood by the term 'tragic' is not an objective predicate with application to things in the world, but instead is a subjective predicate established by nonpropositional contents,[10] namely, by a feeling that is aroused by the constant opposition and struggle of those essential polar faculties—the conflict between the heart and the head. Unamuno's aim is to help clarify the meaning of tragedy, and the main insight that he offers in his understanding of the tragic element of

human existence relies on a felt hermeneutic toward lived experience, that is to say, our feeling of tragedy emerges out of this conflict in the form of a demand of trying to make sense out of another complicated sense; senses which are not equivocal and seem to be at odds with each other.

Broadly speaking, Unamuno's starting point for all forms of philosophical reflection is human subjectivity or consciousness (STV, 13), but a consciousness made intelligible "with all the body and all the soul, with the blood, with the marrow of the bones," i.e., with life (STV, 14).[11] As Unamuno continues to develop the theme of a starting point for his philosophy of tragedy, he expands his thoughts to touch on the fundamental discord between the irrational and rational aspects of lived experience—what he takes to constitute the tension between life and reason. "The senses" Unamuno avers, "are devoted to the service of the instinct of preservation" (STV, 151)—that is, to ongoing life, but, he adds, "reason confronts our longing for personal immortality and contradicts it. And the truth is, in all strictness, that reason is the enemy of life" (STV, 90). This conflict, in which reason brings into sharp relief the limits of life, its fragility and finitude, accounts for the tragic need of having to reconcile the heart and the head, and, moreover, that "the tragic history of human thought is simply the history of a struggle between reason and life" (STV, 115).

Note that while Unamuno wonders why human beings have not been "defined as an affective or feeling animal" (STV, 3), the capacity of reason itself cannot be divorced from his visionary account of tragedy: "The reader who follows me further is now aware that I am about to carry him into the region of the imagination, of imagination not destitute of reason, for without reason nothing subsists, but of imagination founded on feeling" (STV, 131).

Unamuno's series of self-reflections on the inexorable struggle between the heart and the head press his readers to imagine what I call the *necessity of tragic feeling*. As we have briefly touched on, the conflict between life and reason, between the heart and the head, demands some attempt at resolution, even though a harmonious rapprochement is unattainable. Subsequently, the necessity of tragic feeling arises from a painful incongruity. It is "necessary" insofar as it is the inescapable product of existential awareness over our vulnerability to suffering and mortality, which life (the heart) tells us *ought* to be tragic, but, as memorably illustrated by Unamuno in the tearful wisdom of Solon's grief, reason (the head) reveals that it *is not*. In this remarkable sketch, gainfully introduced to the reader just before his thesis presentation to offer "the tragic sense of life, which carries with it a whole conception of life itself and of the universe" (STV, 17), Unamuno presents a powerful contrast, and pointed portrait, of what he means by the tragic sense:

> A pedant who beheld Solon weeping for the death of a son said to him, "Why do you weep thus, if weeping avails nothing?" And the sage answered him, "Precisely for that reason—because it does not avail." It is manifest that weeping avails something, even if only the alleviation of distress; but the deep sense of Solon's reply to the impertinent questioner is plainly seen. . . . Yes, we must learn to weep! Perhaps that is the supreme wisdom. Why? Ask Solon (*Loc. cit.*).

What is plainly seen is precisely the incompatibility between "the *ought* to be" and the "*is* not" that gives birth to the tragic sense, for as much as the heart cries "why?" to all manner of sorrows and agonies, the head responds, "why not?" The untimely death of a loved one ought to be tragic, but suffering and death are part and parcel of human existence (STV, 207): a Silenian insight from which no one is exempt.[12] The profundity of Solon's reply frames the anguished contrast between the "ought" and the "is" because he knew his tears were of no use, and that the real meaning of tragedy is that no object or event, however unbearable, is truly tragic, for tragedy, like the predicates of beauty and sublimity in Kant's philosophy, is a feeling.

Unamuno relates that the subject's feeling of tragedy is thereby constituted in the perpetual contradiction between the heart and head—the intensely felt pain that what her tragic sense presents is the absence of tragedy, conventionally conceived. Life is inherently tragic because no horror, no misfortune, no catastrophe is *eo ipso* tragic. Subsequently, because *the tragic* does not append itself to external events and objects, if it is to be "found" anywhere it will be within the feeling subject as the painful upshot of a fundamental and seemingly incompatible conflict of the heart and the head, of life and reason, which offers no resolution: "For it is on this rock that every philosophy that pretends to resolve the eternal and tragic contradiction, the basis of our existence, breaks to pieces" (STV, 15–16).

THE *POIETIC* CONSTITUTION OF FEELING

We have seen how Unamuno and Kant exhibit similarities in their theories of tragedy, beauty, and the sublime, each of which locates its peculiar predicates in the subject, and not in objects or events. Moreover, Unamuno and Kant share the view that the foundation of feeling in their theories suggests a special human capacity that is actively *constructive* rather than passively receptive. In Kant's aesthetic theory, the subjective apparatuses attached to beauty and sublimity imply freedom from sensuous and rational sources in our making certain kinds of aesthetic judgments, and Unamuno's account of the interminable struggle between life and reason points us to a *poietic* or creative *extrarational*[13] power which is also able to transcend both purely sensuous and rational bases of meaning.

For both Unamuno and Kant, the constitutive elements which produce these feelings are held together in a productive tension that eludes any kind of dialectical overcoming which would annul the constant antagonism that gives rise to such feeling. In Unamuno's philosophy, the tragic sense is both chronic and acute because the conflict between the heart and the head remains locked without any chance for compromise or reconciliation. Similarly, in Kant's theory of the sublime, the nature of sublime feeling is also characterized by its constituent faculties of sensation and reason being held together in conflict, e.g., as simultaneously repulsive and attractive.[14] Subsequently, our understanding of the Kantian sublime recognizes a resemblance with Unamuno's construction of the interminable conflict of the head and the heart insofar as emphasis is placed on recognizing the adjoined *relation* between opposite modes of experience, rather than by focusing on the polarities themselves; and it would be a mistake to privilege one mode above the other.

Sublime feeling shows the form of a necessary conjunction (e.g., sublimity is felt as threatening *and* soothing), rather than as an equivocation of feeling which calls for us to choose between a disjunction, e.g., as either painful *or* pleasurable. Whereas an equivocation of feeling would force a choice between disjuncts, if we view the Kantian sublime as being characterized by its conjuncts being held in constant opposition (e.g., sorrowful *and* joyful), the true character of sublimity is revealed to the human subject.

While the subject finds her experience of the sublime constituted by moments of a first conjunct, say, pain, she ultimately finds herself awash in feelings of the second conjunct, e.g., pleasure. However, the *contradictory* structure of the Kantian sublime is not one that begs for some kind of dialectical resolution; for the two sides of the sublime experience are not cancelled (*Aufgehoben*) and raised to a higher level. This constant antagonism, however, is appreciated by different capacities, i.e., the faculties of sensation and reason, and hence do not cancel each other out. For example, while the sublime object is repulsive to the perceptual part of the mind (in sensation), it is attractive to the contemplative side of the mind (in reason).[15]

Readings of the Kantian sublime that take it as exhibiting equivocation or a dialectical relation[16] can perhaps be attributed to Kant's writing that sublimity is "a pleasure that is possible only by means of a displeasure" (KdU 5:260), or as described by Jean-François Lyotard, "in [the sublime] pleasure proceeds from pain."[17] The pleasure accompanying the sublime is what Kant calls a "negative pleasure" insofar as "the mind is not just attracted by the object but is alternately always repelled as well, the liking for the sublime contains not so much a positive pleasure as rather admiration and respect" (KdU 5:245). Feelings of the sublime, then, are neither equivocal nor in a dialectical relation which is raised toward a sublated third term, but are rather

in the relation of *isotension*, wherein the antagonistic constituents of, e.g., pain and pleasure are kept in constant combination, thereby producing sublimity.

As we have seen, the incessant, uneasy tension between constitutive elements of feeling, e.g., between life and reason, is also at the heart of Unamuno's philosophy, and serves as the agitated fount from which springs the tragic sense: "How, then, shall reason open its portals to the revelation of life? It is a tragic combat—it is the very essence of tragedy—this combat of life with reason" (STV, 90). Like the relation between sensation and reason in the Kantian sublime, the battle between the heart and the head is the *conditio sine qua non* of tragic feeling because of the unremitting and unresolvable way the contradictory drives of life and reason are locked in a "perpetual struggle, without victory or the hope of victory" (STV, 14). Subsequently, just as with the Kantian sublime, the Unamunian tragic sense is neither equivocal nor in a dialectical relation which is raised to a higher level, for life and reason are also in the irreconcilable relation of *isotension*. José Ferrater Mora rightly articulates the error of applying the notion of a reconciling dialectic to Unamuno's philosophy:

> Unamuno's emphasis on opposition, tension, and contradiction is obviously related to that type of thinking which since Hegel has been customarily called "dialectical." . . . But in Unamuno's world, animated by the principle of perpetual civil war and unending strife, there is no place for any final harmony—and still less, any identity—which would be, in his opinion, the equivalent of death.[18]

Ferrater Mora relates how in trying to understand Unamuno's philosophy, it would be a mistake to grant pride of place to one constituent over the other (e.g., to the heart or to the head, to life or to reason); with regard to producing the tragic sense, both are essentially interdependent. For example, when Unamuno turns to consider the association between faith, life, and reason, he states that they have

> mutual need of one another. . . . Reason and faith are two enemies, neither of which can maintain itself without the other. . . . They are compelled to seek mutual support and association. But association in struggle, for struggle is a mode of association. (STV, 111)

Instead of revealing truth as the overcoming of opposites, the perpetual struggle between faith and reason reveals that "truth" is an irremediable contradiction. The idea that our encounter with "truth" (tragic or otherwise) is a product from having to interact with co-existing contradictions can be traced to Unamuno's early, pre-tragic, works. For example, we find this Unamunian caveat to the reader in his 1895 *En torno al casticismo*:

> Truth is often sought in the golden mean . . . by excluding the extremes . . . but in this way one arrives only at a shadow of the truth. Cold and unclear. It is preferable to follow a different method: the method of the affirmation of contraries; it is preferable to make the force of the extremes stand out in the soul of the reader where the mean can come to life, which, itself, is the result of struggle.[19]

The upshot of this struggle is productive, for, like the production of sublimity in Kant's aesthetics, the constant tension between contraries carries with it a creative potency. The tragic sense is neither inert nor a fatal resignation, and, in common with Kant's theory of the sublime, feeling has the power to serve as a signpost which points toward transcendental ideas of God and the immortality of the Soul.

GENERATED BY STRUGGLE: GOD AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Feeling has been shown to be constituted by a peculiar sense of conflict, and we have noted how, respectively, for Unamuno and Kant, the constant agonism between contrasting faculties generates feelings of the tragic, of beauty, and of the sublime. In Kant's theory of taste, a feeling of beauty emerges from a constant, combinatory activity from the free play of the imagination which, although acting harmoniously with the understanding, still *resists* settling on any fixed or determinate concept. In Kant's theory of the sublime, a feeling of the sublime arises from the "vibration" (KdU 5:258) of contradictory modes of sensation and reason, which produces feelings which are simultaneously *attractive* and *repulsive*. And in Unamuno's existential philosophy, life and reason are locked in the irremediable mode of "tragic combat" from which springs the tragic sense. However, although these feelings are regarded as being in opposition, this very opposition is what engenders a phenomenology of transcendence.

In Kant, for example, because what constitutes the sublime is not an external object (which, as we have seen, is merely an *indirect* object of sublimity), "but [rather] the attunement that the intellect [receives]" (KdU 5:250 and 5:264), it is, to employ an expression of Kenley Dove's, an example of minded-ness[20] (which is the *direct* object of sublimity). Using the dynamical sublime as an example, the "minded" nature of the sublime is the subject's *supersensible* experience of pleasure that results from her perceiving extremely large and powerful natural objects. I draw attention to dynamical sublimity because it shares a theme that Unamuno believes continues to preoccupy modern philosophers, *viz*. the transcendence of finitude and the craving for immortality (STV, 13).

We have seen that a feeling of the Kantian sublime consists in the relationship between sensibility and reason. Kant takes this relationship in the dynamical sublime to be excited by experiences of extremely powerful natural objects or nature considered as might (KdU 5:260). Because each of these natural phenomena is capable of harming an individual, e.g., threatening storms, lightening, volcanoes, and hurricanes (KdU 5:261), Kant qualifies the dynamical sublime not only as powerful, but also as provoking fear. Unfortunately, Kant does not make explicit what this fear is, but his subsequent introduction of God in §28 suggest that the possible consequences of having direct contact with the power of might does not preclude the fear of physical harm up to and including death. The sublime operates in the subject when she is on the edge of danger but not in harm's way; indeed, as Kant puts it, she is "seized by *amazement* bordering on terror . . . but, since [the spectator] knows he is safe, this is not actual fear" (KdU 5:269). As a result, the dynamical sublime recalls our finitude as human beings. Before the awesome might of nature, we realize that we are mortal, but this awareness also leads to its transcendence—a kind of immortality.

Subsequently, while one's death is not imminent in sublimity (because one is in a position of physical safety), its ultimate certainty, i.e., one's mortality, is called to mind. The power of nature considered in the dynamical sublime makes us acutely aware of our finitude, but it also, Kant argues, has the capacity to lead us to reflect on "supersensible" ideas "containing a higher purposiveness" (KdU 5:246), e.g., ideas of God and the soul. Moreover, the mere fact that we can formulate these supersensible ideas situates us within a domain that is above mere nature, and it is this aspect of human feeling that defeats finitude.

Both Kant and Unamuno agree that reason alone is incapable of showing us the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, but reason, as a constituent of feeling (tragic and sublime) nevertheless contributes to producing feelings of transcendence. However, as with any parallel analysis, one can only go so far. Subsequently, with regard to how these kinds of feelings generate movement toward transcendence, Unamuno and Kant differ in important ways, and our comparison of these two must end. For example, rather than attribute to reason, as Kant does, a capacity to usher supersensible feelings of a kind of immortality, recall that Unamuno's rendering of the head versus the heart had the former frustrating any notions of transcendence. And yet, as much as the head resists adopting reasons to accept ideas of God, immortality, and the soul, the desire for transcendence by the heart is felt more acutely. Unamuno was especially interested in the problems posed by this yearning, and also recognized it as a challenge that was very much at the heart of Kant's philosophy: "[Kant] was a man much preoccupied with

the problem—I mean the only real vital problem, the problem that strikes at the very root of our being, the problem of our individual and personal destiny, of the immortality of the soul" (STV, 4).

Just as we noted how the head revealed the absence of tragedy in Solon's grief, the revelation did not defeat, but only exacerbated, the feeling of tragedy itself; in other words, reason's refusal to accept ideas of transcendence only served to amplify its need. The story of Solon's tears showed that although nothing and no event is truly tragic, the lack or absence of tragedy brought on a boomerang effect insofar as it returned more acute and intense feelings of the tragic; and we can see the same kind of response in Unamuno's stance toward God and immortality. For example, we note this effect in the analogy Unamuno draws using the notion of ether as merely a "hypothetical entity":

> And in the same way God Himself, not the idea of God, may become a reality that is immediately felt; and even though the idea of Him does not enable us to explain either the existence or the essence of the Universe, we have at times the direct feeling of God, above all in moments of spiritual suffocation. And this feeling—mark it well, for all that is tragic in it and the whole tragic sense of life is founded upon this—this feeling is a feeling of hunger for God, of the lack of God. (STV, 168)

As with tragedy, reason, whether for or against the existence of God, will not have the final say: "I do not submit to reason, and I rebel against it, and I persist in creating by the energy of faith my immortalizing God" (STV, 50). As we have already noted, however, reason, while resisted by Unamuno, is still a necessary constituent insofar as it is locked in that most inimical confrontation with life, rendered here as faith. Just as in Kant's theory, the constant struggle between reason and sensibility produces the feeling of sublimity that ultimately leads to supersensible ideas, the perpetual combat between the head and heart works to simultaneously deny and affirm feelings of God, immortality, and the soul.

Consequently, Unamuno's philosophy depicts the eternal clash between life and reason as manifesting in an act of double defiance: not only must the head defy the heart, but the heart must remain steadfast. The tragic combatants remain unmoved, but theirs is a necessary and productive conflict; one which makes constructive use of our contradictory natures and elicits a fundamental sense that is defiantly unyielding in hope and yearning rather than resigning to despair.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., José Ferrater Mora's influential study *Three Spanish Philosophers: Unamuno, Ortega, and Ferrater Mora*, ed. J.M. Terricabras (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003); Jan Evans, *Miguel de Unamuno's Quest for Faith: A Kierkegaardian Understanding of Unamuno's Struggle to Believe* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013); Michael Gómez, "Unamuno, Nietzsche, and Religious Modernism: Affinities and Complexities Concerning the View of Faith," *Annales de la Literatura Española Contemporáea* 35 n.1 (2010), pp. 223–54; and Michael Candelaria, *The Revolt of Unreason: Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Caso on the Crisis of Modernity* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2012).

2. The phrase *Sapere Aude*! from Horace's *Epodes* (1.2.40) was a famous slogan of the German Enlightenment. See Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 17 (Auf 8:35).

3. See, e.g., Unamuno's conviction that "we should solve many things if we all went out into the streets and uncovered our grief. . . . A *miserere* sung in common by a multitude tormented by destiny has as much value as a philosophy" (STV, 17).

4. The Terentian dictum comes from the play *The Self-Tormenter* and states, "*Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*." [I am a human being; I consider nothing which is human alien to me.] See *Heauton Timorumenos* in Terence: *The Comedies*, trans. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 104. Unamuno modifies the saying to place emphasis on other concrete human beings not being alien to him rather than the abstract quality of being human: "Nullum hominem a me alienum puto: I am a man; no other man do I deem a stranger" (STV, 1).

5. We see this, for example, in Unamuno's criticism of Kant's "significant somersault . . . that leap, that immortal somersault, from one Critique to the other" (STV, 3–4). Whereas Unamuno is sympathetic to Kant's argument in the first *Critique* that knowledge of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are inaccessible to human reason, he takes issue with how Kant nevertheless smuggles in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul as postulates of pure practical reason in his second critique. However, with regard to this "somersault," I should like to point out that in the first *Critique*'s "Canon of Pure Reason" Kant already argued from morality to God insofar as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are necessary postulates of pure practical reason (KrV A809–15/B837–43). See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Henceforth KrV. Note, esp. (KrV A811/B839): "Thus God and a future life are two presuppositions that are not to be separated from the obligation that pure reason imposes on us in accordance with principles of that very same reason."

6. See, e.g., Andrés Lema-Hincapié's rich investigation of Unamuno's and Kant's philosophical anthropology in "Leyendo a Unamuno desde Kant en *Del sentimiento tragico de la vida*: puntos criticos," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 28, no. 3 (Primavera 2004): 583–601.

7. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Henceforth KdU, with parenthetical references using Akademie pagination.

8. Judgments or pronouncements of "beauty" and "taste" are interchangeably accepted and used throughout this section.

9. A reflective judgment seeks to find a universal for a particular, and stands in contrast to a determinate judgment, which works the other way around (KdU 5:179–80). With regard to the search for beauty, Béatrice Longuenesse rightly points out that the "aesthetic judgment [of beauty] *starts* where the search for [determinate] concepts *collapses*." See Béatrice Longuenesse, "Kant's Theory of Judgment, and Judgments of Taste: On Henry Allison's *Kant's Theory of Taste,*" *Inquiry* 46, no. 2 (2003): 143–63; 146.

10. Feelings, faith, imagination, memory, emotions, *etc*., are examples of non-propositional contents. See Robert C. Pinto, *Argument, Inference, and Dialectic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 17.

11. Unamuno's reference to "life" is broadly construed to include notions of self-preservation, the corporeal and emotional senses, the irrational, immortality, and faith.

12. The Wisdom of Silenus states that not to be born is the best thing for human beings, and that death is the next best thing. See Plutarch's fragment from Aristotle's *Eudemus* in the *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, quoted in Anton-Hermann Chroust, *Aristotle: New Light on His Life and Some of His Lost Works, Vol. 2* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973) and also more famously in Section 3 of Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

13. I borrow this term from Quentin Smith to connote feelings which are neither rational nor irrational. See Quentin Smith, *Felt Meanings of the World: A Metaphysics of Feeling* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1986), 18.

14. Kant's theory of sublimity discusses two kinds of sublime feeling. Kant calls "the mathematical sublime," the sublimity of infinite size, and "the dynamical sublime," the sublimity of power.

15. That this is similar (though, of course, not identical) to Aristotle's distinction between the perceptive and thinking faculties in human beings is hard to overlook. In *De Anima*, Aristotle notes the limits of sensitive receptivity as exhibited through its vulnerability to extreme sense objects, which makes one *less able* to sense. The opposite, however, occurs in thinking, as the thinking of intense objects of thought, he argues, makes one *more able* to think. See Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1991), esp., Book II.12: 424a–24b.

16. Suzanne Guerlac argues that there is a dialectical aspect to the Kantian sublime. She describes the inherent tensions of Kant's sublime as follows: "As the terms 'positive' and 'negative' sublime suggest, the negative sublime is dialectically related to the positive one. [The sublime's] internal structure or economy is also dialectical." See Suzanne Guerlac, *The Impersonal Sublime: Hugo, Baudelaire, Lautrémont* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 190.

17. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, trans. Don Barry et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 10.

18. See Ferrater Mora, *Three Spanish Philosophers*, 39.

19. My translation from Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo* (1895) in *Obras Completas* III (Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado, 1958), 171: "Suele buscarse la verdad completa en el *justo medio* por el métido de remoción, *via remotionis*, por exclusion de los extremos, que con su juego y acción mutual engendran el ritmo de la vida, y así solo se llega a una sombra de verdad, fría y nebulosa. Es preferable hacer resaltar la fuerza de los extremos en el alma del lector para que el medio tome en ella vida, que es resultante de lucha."

20. Kenley R. Dove, "Minding our Language," *The Philosophical Forum* 18, no. 2 (November 2018): 449–66. Dove takes aim at "philosophy's reigning monarch, the *hegemonikon* mind," and he examines how language got "minded when it was internalized" by Aristotle, the Stoics, and Kant.

Chapter Eight

The Redemption of Negative Feeling

Miguel de Unamuno

Mariana Alessandri

For the last two decades the field of positive psychology has promoted the positive emotions. Unsurprisingly, given the relentless positivity of popular culture, leaders and followers of this movement have endorsed the idea that positivity, happiness, and well-being go hand in hand. Almost without challenge, they have claimed that positive emotions, not negative ones, keep us healthy, make us more successful in school and work, and generally help us achieve more. Like the ancient Stoics, contemporary positive psychologists tend to overlook the virtues of the negative emotions. Few contemporary writers have had the guts to go against this rising trend—say, speak up for negativity or examine how negativity can get us somewhere.

If he were alive today, Miguel de Unamuno would unambiguously reject the "tyranny of the positive attitude,"[1] a move that would land him, for a second time, in the role of the maverick philosopher he was born to be. One hundred years ago, Unamuno tried to show that we stand the best chance of becoming closer to others by way of the negative emotions (although even the positive emotions would fare well when compared with something like reason). For Unamuno negativity was neither sick nor counterproductive. On the contrary, he believed it was through feelings like sadness, pain, sorrow, anxiety, and loss that we find other people. Instead of advising us to overcome negativity, he argued that negative feelings can be a sign of vitality; such feelings can even give us the courage to act. Following other religious existentialists like Blaise Pascal and Søren Kierkegaard and the religious pragmatist William James, Unamuno connected our negative emotions to God as the beating heart of the universe, and to Don Quixote, who, contrary to popular thought, was no optimist.

This chapter is a presentation, celebration, and philosophical defense of Unamuno's preference for negativity and pessimism over positivity and optimism. I argue that the positive psychologists and the public in general would benefit from Unamuno's redemption of negative feelings. In the first section of this chapter I provide a general overview of the beliefs and goals of the positive psychology movement, that is, their exaltation of positivity and optimism. The second section illustrates Unamuno's redemption of negativity and pessimism, which includes both what will be lost if we minimize negativity and pessimism, and what can be gained by embracing them.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

The problem, as I see it, is not that there are too many negative people in the world; it is that all forms of negativity get drastically misunderstood and misrepresented. The positive psychology movement, whose original (and honorable) mission was to displace the discourse of "mental illness" with a focus on strength and resilience, has ironically shaped a new world in which negativity itself has become an illness.[2]

Popular positivity literature shares the enthusiasm of positive psychology. Consider the many titles you can find today in Barnes and Noble: *14,000 Things to Be Happy About*; *How To Be Happy (Or At Least Less Sad)*; *The Happiness Makeover*; *You Can Be Happy No Matter What*; *Happy is The New Healthy*; *Be Happy Now: 7 Tried and True Secrets to Enjoying Your Life*; *The Happiness Project*; *Happier at Home, How to Do Everything and Be Happy*, etc. Books that deal specifically with optimism include: *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*; *Begin with Yes*; *Optimism: A Working Guide to Creating Confidence and Why a Positive Attitude Can Make You Wealthy*; *The Power of Learned Optimism & Positive Thinking: How to Be Positive, Happy & Successful in Life*; *The Optimism Advantage: 50 Simple Truths to Transform Your Attitudes and Actions into Results*. And these are just samples from much longer lists.[3]

Positive psychology is not supposed to be about being constantly happy, smiling all the time, or faking joy. Positive psychologists believe that faking positivity is harmful because it involves repression and dishonesty, and they realize that there are some benefits to negativity. Their overall message, however, always returns to the idea that positivity is healthier than negativity, optimism more productive than pessimism. Thus, their concessions to negativity sound anywhere from reluctant or forced to disingenuous. For example, Martin Seligman, the founder and fiercest promoter of positive psychology (and former president of the American Psychological Association) comes from a background of clinical work with depression, with extreme negativity. Having witnessed a lot of despair, Seligman, honorably,

wants to keep it far away from us, which could explain why he seems so uncomfortable promoting negativity in anything more than a perfunctory way. When he began the field of positive psychology, Seligman wanted to send the message that positivity and health were connected, but didn't want to be associated with what he calls the "boosterism" of the 1950s (think Normal Vincent Peale or Dale Carnegie). To that effect, Seligman warns his readers against becoming "slave[s] to the tyrannies of optimism,"[4] and he tries to balance positivity with negativity by writing sensible things like "negative emotions are part of the richness of life and they are usually healthy responses that encourage us to understand or change the things that upset us."[5]

Still, Seligman's praise for positivity and optimism often far outweighs his statements about the importance of negativity. The examples, stories, and anecdotes that fill the pages of his books do convey a familiar "don't worry be happy" message. For example, he credits his daughter for his life's mission to overcome "grumpiness." She told him that, if she could stop "whining" at five years old, he could stop being "grumpy." About that moment he writes:

> In a flash I saw three things: first that she was right about me, I really was a nimbus cloud, and probably any success I had in life was probably not due to being a grouch but was in spite of it. [. . .] And finally I realized that my profession was half-baked, that the baked part was about suffering, but the unbaked part was about positive emotion and virtue and positive institutions. In that moment, in a classical religious sense, I acquired a mission. And that mission is still with me, it's what I've been doing full-time since 1998.[6]

Despite his attempt to distance himself from popular positivity-talk, Seligman made it his religious-like mission to stop being grumpy, in other words, to stop being negative. For him and other positive psychologists, acknowledgments that negativity is useful and sometimes helpful must come across as mere qualifications of the overarching claim that negativity is something to be avoided or overcome.[7] Thus, it is the hefty imbalance that I am criticizing; I am not claiming that Seligman or any other of the positive psychologists reject negativity *in toto*.

Another psychologist whose overall promotion of positivity drowns out any importance we might imbue to negativity is Barbara Fredrickson. Like Seligman, Fredrickson also takes great pains to push back against naïve positivity. Consider her positive estimation of negativity: "At times, negative emotions are appropriate and useful. It is proper and helpful, for instance, to mourn after a loss, to resonate on your anger to fight an injustice, or to be frightened by things that could cause harm to you or your children. Appropriate negativity keeps us grounded, real, and honest."[8] She also writes:

> Knowing that positivity is life-giving doesn't mean that negativity needs to be forever banished. It can't be. Life gives us plenty of reasons to be afraid, angry, sad, and then some. Without negativity you can become Pollyanna, with a forced clown smile painted on your face. You lose touch with reality. You're not genuine. In time, you drive others away."[9]

These concessions to negativity are nonetheless drowned out by the exhortations to positivity that fill the pages of her book. Even the subtitle of the book puts into jeopardy her respect for negativity: "Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, *Overcome Negativity*, and Thrive." If she really believes that we must overcome negativity in order to thrive, then negativity can hardly be seen as having its own important role to play in our pursuit of happiness. In short, it is not that Seligman and Fredrickson do not value negativity at all. The issue lies in how they not only connect positivity to many tangible benefits that we Americans already disproportionately value (good health, social acceptance, financial success), but also claim that these connections are validated by scientific research. Moreover, there are often subtle and sometimes blatant blows dealt to negativity and pessimism, which I turn to now.

In *The Optimistic Child*, Seligman defines pessimism as "dwelling on the most catastrophic cause of any setback" and he encourages parents to "prevent your children from absorbing this trendy outlook."[10] He also writes that focusing on a child's feelings over their actions makes children more "vulnerable to depression."[11] Seligman cites three drawbacks of pessimism: 1) pessimistic people are more prone to depression, 2) they achieve less than their optimistic counterparts, and 3) their physical health is worse than optimists. The rest of the book counsels parents to make little optimists out of their children in order to give them the best chance of success in life. He says that the basis of optimism lies in "the way you think about causes,"[12] whether you think they are permanent or temporary, personal or impersonal, all-pervasive or specific to a given time and place. The optimist chooses to think setbacks are temporary, specific, and impersonal whereas the pessimist tends to think they are permanent, pervasive, and personal. According to Seligman, the optimist will persevere in the face of adversity while the pessimist saddled by the belief that setbacks are unchangeable will sink into emotional illness or depression. Though Seligman acknowledges that negative feelings are "part of the richness of life," his overall message is that we ought to get beyond negative feelings because they will inure us to feeling helpless in the face of situations we could have otherwise tackled successfully. Hence they are no good for us and will lead us to inaction.[13]

In his next book, *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman contrasts positive psychology to how psychology generally deals with mental illness. Whereas the orientation toward mental illness must consider patients as sick and in need of healing or fixing, positive psychologists claim to work on building resilience and virtue in their patients:

> Positive psychology takes seriously the bright hope that if you find yourself stuck in the parking lot of life, with few and only ephemeral pleasures, with minimal gratifications, and without meaning, there is a road out. This road takes you through the countryside of pleasure and gratification, up into the high country of strength and virtue, and finally to the peaks of lasting fulfillment: meaning and purpose.[14]

In 2011 Seligman appears to be adapting to new developments in his field. He calls his latest book *Flourish*, distinguishing it from *Authentic Happiness* because too much of the science of happiness relies on subjective testing: to measure how happy people are, you have to rely on what they report on the survey they fill out. Seligman acknowledges that this method inevitably skews the results in favor of the so-called "high-positive affective": those who are having a cheerful day report their lives as happier and more fulfilled than those who are not. This was really measuring mood rather than happiness. Seligman also admits that happiness was not a great word to use since it is loaded and often just connotes a big smiley face. Seligman thus chooses "flourish." On this new framework, an individual is flourishing to the extent that they feel fulfilled on five components of well-being: alongside positive emotion, engagement, and meaning (all of which were already accounted for in how they used to measure happiness), he adds relationships and accomplishment.[15]

Even as the Center for Positive Psychology that Seligman directs has changed how it measures happiness, however, nothing seems to have changed with regard to Seligman's all-things-considered indictment of negativity. Here, one could come to Seligman's defense and complain that he cannot impose values on the science. Indeed as a psychologist who runs a research center at a top-ranking Ivy League research university, Seligman must take pains to distance his work on positive psychology from the more popular variants it has spawned. Unlike these popular variants, Seligman's own continuing research compels him to qualify his endorsement of optimism. In one particular study, he realized that the self-serving bias that comes with optimism could actually be hurting some people's chances of finding success and happiness: "The non-depressed people had benign illusions that they were not helpless when they actually were. These findings disturbed me then and disturb me now [. . .] reality and happiness seem to be in conflict."[16] So what did the proponent of optimism and positivity learn from being thus disturbed? Seligman continues:

> You probably think by now that I am a gushing advocate of optimism. I am not, for I know that optimism is a mixed blessing. Its benefits for your child are clear: It will help him fight depression with the inevitable setbacks and tragedies of life befall him. It will help him achieve more—on the playing field, in school, and later at work—than others expect of him. And optimism carries better physical health with it—a perkier immune system, fewer infectious illnesses, fewer visits to the doctor, lower cardiac risk, and perhaps even a longer life. These benefits are considerable, but they are not unmitigated. For there is one thing that pessimists may do better than optimists. They may see reality more clearly.[17]

After this vague and uncontentious qualification, he then says: "One thing is clear, there is a much greater cost from the inaccuracy of severe depression than there is from the self-serving bias that affects us all when we are not depressed."[18] In both statements, Seligman remains convinced of the validity of his previous findings on learned helplessness as one mechanism that underlies depression and consequently, of the virtues of optimism and positivity as a possible mechanism for preventing depression among children. Hence even though Seligman does show that new research findings can disturb him, he nonetheless shows no willingness to revisit the underlying assumptions behind positive psychology.

Meanwhile criticisms against the positive psychology movement are mounting and they are coming from a diverse array of disciplines. Critics include psychologist Barbara Held, who has published academic articles that examine the negative implications of positive psychology. Gabrielle Oettingen's *Rethinking Positive Thinking* and Julie Norem's *The Positive Power of Negative Thinking* have offered more nuanced perspectives on the nature of thinking and its effects on motivation, emotion, and behavior. Outside of psychology, Barbara Ehrenreich's *Brightsided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* and Oliver Burkeman's *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking* have helped unmask not only the ideological underpinnings of positive psychology but also its broader implications on culture and the economy.

Long before any of these critics came along, however, the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno already understood and extolled the virtues of negativity. If he were alive today, Unamuno would surely lament our society's unwitting and unrelenting attempts to avoid or overcome negativity. In his view, avowing negative feelings can lead to love, compassion, and community, and can spur us on to action. The final section of this chapter is Unamuno's positive estimation of negativity in two forms: openly talking about suffering and pessimism.

SUFFERING AND PESSIMISM

The *Tragic Sense of Life* can be read as Unamuno's tribute to negative feelings. Suffering and love are inextricably connected, for Unamuno, who turned Descartes's *I think therefore I am* into *I suffer therefore I am*. But suffering is not in vain, for Unamuno, who believes that only suffering can make us capable of true love. Indeed, suffering and compassion go hand in hand, for "if bodies are united by pleasure, souls are united by pain."[19] When we suffer, Unamuno believes, we crave compassion, mercy, understanding, empathy; we want our suffering to be known by at least one other person. When we respond to the plea of another, too, we experience compassion, love. To reiterate, for Unamuno spiritual love is born of shared tragedy, and it even leads me back to myself: "suffering is the path of consciousness, and by it living beings arrive at the possession of self-consciousness."[20] Suffering is a way to connect with others and myself, but unfortunately our society's common response to suffering is anything but connection.

In order to connect with others, we sometimes vocalize our suffering, which Unamuno sees as a perfectly healthy and appropriate action. In "My Religion," Unamuno writes:

> When I have felt pain, I have cried out, and I have done it in public. The Psalms which I have included in my book of *Poesías* are nothing more than the cries of my heart, with which I have tried to make the heart-strings of others vibrate.[21]

Unamuno believes that a life worth living consists in communing with others, and that this happens most genuinely through negativity—through sharing it with others, not keeping it locked away. For Unamuno, authentic love is found in suffering with others, thus making negativity necessary for compassion and love. If Unamuno's right, then our attempts to deny, hide or "overcome" the negative from our lives leaves us both unable to receive the gift of compassion from others *and* ill-equipped to extend compassion to our fellow sufferers, to love them well.

Now Unamuno had no experimental laboratory behind him, and we can all think back to a time when suffering closed us to others rather than opened us to them. Nonetheless, I am convinced that when we complain, we want others to know our suffering, so that they might have compassion for us and we for them. If Unamuno is right, then not just having negative feelings but embracing and expressing them can be an effective route to others. So why doesn't it always work? Why are negative feelings shunned instead of embraced? Unamuno suggests this: "If [others] don't have heart-strings, or if they are so rigid that they won't vibrate, my cry will not resonate in them; they will say that this is not poetry and they will try to examine it acoustical-

ly."[22] Unamuno's answer is that people either don't have hearts or have rigid hearts. We probably all know someone who just doesn't want to hear it. Most of the time, though, I think it is based on a misunderstanding by well-meaning individuals. Being inexperienced with negativity, they nervously try to solve our problem or find a way to get us to stop complaining. *At least you don't have cancer*, they fumble; *at least you're not a Syrian refugee*. And these are just our friends or family. The professionals—positive psychologists, for example—perpetuate this pathology by scientifically legitimating the bias against people who are trying to connect with other people. In other words, they blame the person "bidding" for compassion.[23] They happily encourage friends of sufferers to use the poisonous "at least" to put their friends' lives into perspective. Instead of teaching us to have compassion for our suffering friend, positive psychologists and their adherents make things worse by expecting and in many cases telling sufferers to look on the bright side.

This can be vividly illustrated by using an anecdote from *The Optimistic Child*. Seligman recounts a story in which a family is dealing with a stay-at-home-mom, Jody, who is considering going back to work. Over dinner, Jody reveals her anxiety and self-doubt, while her husband and children attempt to "counter her negativity" with talk of how capable and great she is. Seligman praises the husband and children, and interprets Jody as a "brooding pessimist" who is not interpreting her situation correctly. Unamuno would likely blame her family: instead of listening to and responding effectively to Jody's pleas for connection, the family—conditioned by our positive and starkly un-Unamunian society—denies her feelings and effectively puts more distance between them.[24]

Unamuno would certainly say that the family's discomfort with negativity made them miss the opportunity to connect with Jody, which is all too common. By and large, our culture is terrible at handling negativity; we are emotionally illiterate. If my Unamunian read of the Jody anecdote is right: that we ought to criticize the family for missing Jody's bid instead of blaming Jody for misreading her situation, as Seligman does (and making it worse by calling her a "brooding pessimist," then we are in danger of constantly misreading opportunities to get closer to others. We are constantly closing ourselves to others when we tell them to "cheer up" or "don't cry" or "I'm sure you'll be fine," all of which just serve to plunge our fellow sufferers into an even deeper loneliness. An emotionally illiterate society sees negative feelings as a problem; an emotionally literate one recognizes that negative feelings are OK and responds to them compassionately.[25]

PESSIMISM

Unamuno recognizes the power of negative feelings, but he also recognizes the potential of pessimism. In Miguel de Cervantes' fictional character Don Quixote, Unamuno sees a man who was willing to battle windmills even though he knew he could not defeat them. In what remains of this chapter I argue that Quixotic pessimism provides a more compelling reason to act than optimism.

Recall that Seligman called pessimism a "serious obstacle," and told parents their "crucial task" was to "prevent [their] children from absorbing this trendy outlook."[26] He defined the pessimist as a person who, when confronted with a setback, thinks: "It's going to last forever, it's going to undermine everything, and there's nothing I can do about it." The optimist, on the contrary, thinks "It's going away quickly, I can do something about it, it's just this one situation."[27] To test his theory, Seligman inflicted his laboratory subjects with "inescapable noise," to which those who he labeled as pessimists "became helpless readily" as opposed to the optimists, who did not.[28] From experiments like this, Seligman concluded that pessimists don't try because they believe that their efforts will not prove successful. This convinced Seligman that optimism, not pessimism, is a key factor in action and ultimately happiness.[29] I suspect most non-academics would agree, and, if asked, would probably bet that optimists are more willing to try new and difficult things than pessimists. In light of this characterization of the optimist as active and the pessimist as passive, Don Quixote shows up as an enigma, and Seligman would have a hard time reckoning with a person who both believes he is going to fail and makes the effort anyway. What I am now calling "Quixotic pessimism" doesn't find a home in Seligman's story, since the pessimists he studied could find no reason to act in the face of what they considered certain failure.

We can begin to understand Quixotic pessimism by recognizing how optimists and pessimists in our society actually believe the same thing: if you somehow could know you were going to fail, then there would be no sense in trying. What links optimism and pessimism in our society is an orientation toward success, toward winning, toward results. In a world riddled with adages linking success to effort, quitting is the logical response to certain failure; it is not unique to pessimists. The difference, then, is that pessimists hold different beliefs than optimists do. If Seligman is right that optimists try more than pessimists, it is because they believe they can succeed whereas pessimists don't. This gives teeth to Henry Ford's pronouncement: "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right."[30] In other words, those who believe they can, will try, while those who believe they can't, won't. Pessimists refuse to try things more than optimists because think they will fail more often than optimists do.

The most common response to pessimists' failure to try is to attempt to convince them to change their beliefs. Friends might say something like "Well, with that attitude of course you will fail!" the implication being that if they overturn their pessimistic thought they can succeed. Our society has many fables that support this idea, like "the little engine that could," for example, doesn't give up and eventually succeeds. This message links success to beliefs, and it suggests that we will be more successful thinking we can than thinking we can't.

The problem, as we already know from Seligman, is that pessimists are often right that they can't. Disturbing as this finding was, Seligman conceded that pessimists often have a more realistic assessment of their own abilities compared to the situation they face.[31] This finding is enough to give a person a reason to celebrate pessimism. But even still, instead of valuing pessimists for their realism, Seligman (and society, I believe) applauds optimists for their delusions and suggests that we too imagine a fantastical "road through the countryside of pleasure and gratification" instead of staying "stuck in the parking lot of life."[32] In other words, our society's positive-psychology-approved answer to the pessimist is: "Believe in yourself! You can succeed!"

But, I ask, what if the "road" out of the "parking lot" doesn't involve telling ourselves to keep trying because in order to succeed, but rather wholeheartedly accepting that we might fail? What if we unhinged actions from results; what if we stopped trying to win? What if the pessimistic attitude of looking squarely in the face of failure *is* the road to action? This, I suggest, is the insight of Unamuno's Don Quixote.

One might immediately object: isn't Quixote an inveterate optimist who "dreams impossible dreams"? But as Joshua Dienstag points out in his persuasive book *Pessimism*, Quixote is an example *par excellence* not of optimism but pessimism. Dienstag argues that Broadway's "Man of la Mancha," in contrast to Unamuno's Quixote is an optimist, which confuses the matter. Perhaps the Broadway Quixote is a delusional optimist who thinks he can win the heart of Dulcinea, and who fights in order to succeed.[33] In contrast, Unamuno's Quixote does not value success above all else. He fights not to win, but because the fight is worth fighting. It turns out that Unamuno's Quixote is motivated by, rather than quieted by, his pessimism; he knows he won't win *and* he fights anyway.[34] Unamuno worships Quixote in part because his actions are largely independent of their likelihood of success. When Quixote sees an injustice, he fights it; he rarely stops to calculate whether he can actually win the battle. In the scene where Quixote calls a windmill a giant, for example, he is cautioned by Sancho Panza not to fight it. Sancho knows what all we all do: a human cannot defeat a windmill. For Sancho, the logical step is therefore not to attack it. Quixote knows he can't beat it either (this makes him a pessimist), but the difference is that he doesn't care (this makes him Quixotic).[35]

Thus, Quixotic pessimism is action marked by refusal, not the refusal to act but the refusal to let the odds of my success determine the value of my fight. Pessimism thus grounds Quixote's courage: by refusing to base his decision to act on the likelihood of his success, Quixote is also refusing to insulate his life from negative consequences. He is then free to contemplate how things could be, how they should be, and how he wants them to be, even if the world does not cooperate. By anticipating instead of fearing failure, Quixote can freely become who he wants to be. In Unamuno's Quixote, Dienstag finds that adopting a pessimistic ethic—expecting failure instead of success—amounts to not being intimidated by the size of the windmill. Fighting the good fight did not change Quixote's world but it changed Quixote; in fact it made Quixote.

If the pessimists in Seligman's tests gave up, I blame our success-oriented society, which teaches us that losing battles are not worth fighting. Instead it teaches us that if we would only keep our eyes on the prize, shoot for the moon, and "think we can," then we can succeed. Perhaps the most telling adage of a success-oriented society is: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," the implication being that you will eventually succeed if you work hard enough, and that succeeding is the best part. Our society measures worth in terms of outcome, not input; results, not process. We say we value hard work, but that is only on the condition that it "pay off."[36] Don Quixote indeed tries and tries again, but not in order to succeed, and he certainly doesn't wait for the "pay-off" to conclude that his action was indeed worth taking.

If you tell someone that the important thing is to succeed, and that they must believe they can succeed, then of course they will "become helpless readily" if they believe they will fail. But the way to get them to act, I believe, should not involve making them believe (however delusional) they can succeed, but rather asking them to predict their own failure. In other words, instead of asking someone what they would choose to do if they could *not* fail, what if we asked them what would still be worth doing even if they were *sure* to fail? Unamuno's Quixote can help us become comfortable with failure, and he can get us to look for more reasons to act above and beyond worldly success. What if society's message changed from: "You are valuable if and when you succeed" to "You are valuable if you commit to taking on worthy causes, regardless of whether you succeed or fail"?

CONCLUSION

In *Authentic Happiness* Seligman wrote that "there is not a shred of evidence that strength and virtue are derived from negative motivation."[37] If he is right about this, it's because it's a self-perpetuating reality: our society says that

failure is bad and success is good, and success is an exclusive right of positive thinkers, for staying so positive. But if we listen closely to Unamuno, we can stop measuring ourselves in terms of worldly success, and we can learn to be motivated by failure, by negativity. Very recently a new trend has begun within the field of positive psychology to "embrace the dark side of life." In the past few years scholars began to notice that placing too much emphasis on positivity can be detrimental, and that, conversely, there are many hidden benefits of negativity, like the ones I have explored in this essay. But long before this new trend called "second wave positive psychology" or "positivity psychology 2.0," Unamuno wrote about them. Thus, there are at least two concrete lessons we can learn from Unamuno about negativity: 1) negative feelings that come from suffering have the power to connect us to people, while positivity often distances us from them; 2) unwinnable battles are sometimes worth fighting; anticipating failure can motivate us to choose worthwhile projects.

NOTES

1. This phrase is used by psychologist Barbara Held to denote the cultural messages we receive to "look on the bright side" of negative situations. Held is perhaps the most outspoken critic of positive psychology. See Barbara Held, "The Tyranny of the Positive Attitude in America," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 58, no. 9 (August 2002): 965–91.

2. Barbara Held makes this argument in "The Negative Side of Positive Psychology," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 44, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 9–46.

3. Even something as natural and common as grief is now considered an illness, according to the latest DSM-5. In the DSM-4 there was a distinction between grief and depression. But now, without this distinction, grievers are left vulnerable to being labeled as depressives. From the way our society tends to skirt death-talk, you would never guess that talking to people about their deceased loved ones might bring you closer to them. For a recent criticism of the DSM criteria for depression along these lines, see Allan V. Horowitz, Jerome C. Wakefield, and Robert L Spitzer, *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

4. Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 296.

5. Martin E. P. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience*, with Karen Reivich, Lisa Jaycox, and Jane Gillham. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 297.

6. Martin E. P. Seligman, "The Psychology of Real Happiness," interview by Wendy Schuman, *beliefnet Health Section*, January 2003, http://www.beliefnet.com/wellness/health/2003/01/the-psychology-of-real-happiness.aspx. This anecdote also appears in Martin E. P. Seligman, "How Psychology Lost its Way and I Found Mine," *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Atria, 2002), 17–29; story on 28.

7. In this chapter I focus on Martin Seligman and Barbara Fredrickson. For a detailed account of more positive psychologists, see Held, "The Negative Side of Positive Psychology."

8. Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions, Overcome Negativity, and Thrive* (New York: Random House, 2009), 159; see also 114–15.

9. Fredrickson, *Positivity*, 136–37.

10. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 6–7.

11. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 27.
12. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 52
13. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 297.
14. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, xii.
15. Martin E. P. Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (New York: Free Press, 2011). Seligman has a website sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania called *Authentic Happiness*, where you can take surveys that measure your level of flourishing. See https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter
16. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 296–97. Similar acknowledgments already appear in his earlier work—for example, when he says that "we must be able to use pessimism's keen sense of reality when we need it," for, after all, "Optimism may sometimes keep us from seeing reality with the necessary clarity." Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 291–92.
17. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 296–97. Similar acknowledgments already appear in his earlier work—for example, when he says that "we must be able to use pessimism's keen sense of reality when we need it," for, after all, "Optimism may sometimes keep us from seeing reality with the necessary clarity." Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 291–92.
18. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 297.
19. Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 136–37.
20. Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, 135, 140.
21. Miguel de Unamuno, "My Religion," *Essays and Soliloquies* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1925), 154–62.
22. Ibid.
23. The term "bid" comes from psychologist John Gottman, who describes it thus on his website: "A bid is any attempt from one partner to another for attention, affirmation, affection, or any other positive connection." See https://www.gottman.com/blog/turn-toward-instead-of-away/
24. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child*, 100–101.
25. Accepting all feelings as normal and embracing them was one of the defining qualities of Fred Rogers, the minister who became a television producer that created the long-running half-hour educational children's program "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood". Rogers wanted the next generation to know that there is a whole spectrum of feelings, from extremely negative to extremely positive, that are normal for anyone to feel. Like Unamuno, Rogers criticized not the person who experienced negative feelings, but those who cannot bear witness to those feelings. He wrote: "People have said 'Don't cry' to other people for years and years, and all it has ever meant is "I'm too uncomfortable when you show your feelings: Don't cry." I'd rather have them say, "Go ahead and cry. I'm here to be with you." See Fred Rogers, *The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 58.
26. Seligman, *The Optimistic Child* 6–7.
27. Seligman, *Flourish*, 189.
28. Seligman, *Flourish*, 189.
29. Seligman links activity, hope and optimism in *The Optimistic Child*, 34.
30. Henry Ford, *The Reader's Digest*, Vol. 51 (September 1947), 64. For more on the lineage of this quote, see http://quoteinvestigator.com/2015/02/03/you-can/#note-10545-1
31. Seligman wrote: "Optimism that is not accurate is empty and falls apart. Life defeats it" (*The Optimistic Child*, 298), but he also warns us of the greater costs involved in failing to cultivate it: "And one thing is clear: there is a much greater cost from the inaccuracy of severe depression than there is from the self-serving bias that affects us all when we are not depressed." As a compromise, Seligman suggests that we become accurate optimists, who believe "when there is opportunity to be grasped and there is hope, then things get better. When there is no hope, things do not," and who ask "what can I do to help the cause of providing opportunity and hope?" (*The Optimistic Child*, 297, 299).
32. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, xii.
33. Joshua Foa Dienstag, *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 202.
34. Dienstag, *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit*, 221.

35. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), I:8.

36. Even Angela Duckworth, the most vehement promoter of "grit" unintentionally reinforces the worldly success narrative by highlighting cases of success through grit. The overall message of the book is "genius is not everything; if you try hard enough, you too can . . . (win a gold medal, work on Wall Street, become a CEO, etc.)." In some sense, this narrative challenges the idea that geniuses are born and not made. Duckworth's subjects are all highly successful people who made their success through grit. But it is telling that most of their anecdotes end with some version of "and then I heard the applause, and it made it all worth it," or "the hard work paid off when I won the gold medal." It is precisely this results-oriented mode of interpretation that I want to challenge. See Angela Duckworth, *Grit*: *The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (New York: Scribner, 2016).

37. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*, xi.

Chapter Nine

"Not a 'Feeling' But a Perceived Mystery"

Martin Buber and the Redemption of Feeling in I-Thou *Relationships*

Eugene V. Torisky Jr.

> Nothing else is present but this one,
> and this one cosmically. . . . if you say
> "soul of my soul" you have not said too
> much.[1]

In his philosophical works, Martin Buber wrote little concerning feelings or the emotions, and when he did mention them, he was often critical of them. Instead he describes the human situation as involving decision and a resulting fundamental orientation by addressing someone as *Thou* or *It*. Much depends on the choice; my own self amounts to a different I depending on whether I treat myself as the I of the *I-It* primary word or of the *I-Thou* word. And just as *I-Thou* and *I-It* are for Buber the primary or basic words of human existence, so "the basic movement of the life of dialogue is the turning toward the other."[2] In his emphasis on the turning, Buber shows his existential bent: "I do not experience the man to whom I say *I.* But I take my stand in relation to him."[3] When we make such a choice, we either turn toward or away from the fullness of the other. In fact, human life can be described as one long effort to turn (or turn back, or return) more decisively in one or the other direction.

In contrast to the direct or unmediated existential relation of one to another, a relation based on one's feelings may "get in the way" of meeting the *Thou*. Buber himself warns, "The notion of modern man that this turning to the other is sentimental and does not correspond to the compression of life

today is a grotesque error."[4] Even worse than turning away from the other is a sterile turning inward, a mere "reflexion" which subsumes the other into the self and its own experiences. And so we come to a seeming paradox in Buber's thought: may our feelings ever be redeemed in the realm of the in-between if they constitute a sleight of hand, a slighting of the other by an over-handling of my emotional self? If responding via feelings commonly substitutes indirectness for directness, and if indirectness amounts to misdirection, how can we avoid going wrong when we respond emotionally to a person we address as *Thou?*

This chapter seeks to illuminate these questions by examining the role of feeling and emotion in three episodes in Buber's philosophical works where mutuality and reciprocity supposedly fail, at least partly—where we become aware of what Buber calls "the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every *Thou* in our world must become an *It.*"[5] Buber also writes that when I am addressed, confronted, by a work of art, a text, or someone I call *Thou,* I hear something that is "not a 'feeling' but a perceived mystery."[6] The chapter argues that what I hear then, even if not constituting feeling or emotion itself, nevertheless may assist in the redemption of feeling.

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

As a necessary preliminary, we should define some important senses of the terms "feeling" and "emotion." (Another crucial term, "mystery," will be analyzed at the end of this article.) At a bare minimum, for an organism *to be feeling* is to be sentient, to be able to receive and process stimuli in order to escape potential harms and preserve one's existence. By this standard most animals are feeling—certainly everything possessing nociception, a very early development in animals that explains automatically jerking one's hand away from a hot stove, for example. Perhaps those plants which track the movement of the sun with their leaves in order to maximize photosynthesis, or which more rarely may possess sensory "hairs" to trap foods, as in the Venus flytrap, might barely qualify at this first level. To *have feelings* adds minimal internal monitoring to the above process, so that while an organism tracks an object in its environment, it may also keep track of its own tracking. This second level of feeling approaches what is generally called self-awareness, and likely is present in more animals than most people are aware of.[7]

A third level constitutes monitoring the orientation and strength of feeling, wherein one implicitly or explicitly is aware of alternative possibilities of one's feeling response to events. Organisms at this third level clearly are more obviously and meaningfully self-aware, although such a "self" still may be very limited in the quality and diversity of its feelings, such that many people would say no one in particular "is home there." But at least in theory

such an individual need not be aware that there are others in the same situation, dealing with the same possibilities; solipsism might be true as far as that organism is concerned, whether or not it may consider that possibility explicitly.[8] The fourth level of feeling, in contrast, adds an explicit awareness of oneself, still understood as having perhaps minimal depth or complexity, as one among some number of others. Thus one would be self-conscious. At this fourth level of feeling, for Buber and thinkers he influenced, to be self-conscious as opposed to self-aware would require awareness of at least the possibility of another—of an Other. In this view, self-consciousness demands selves-consciousness.

Finally there is the capacity for language use as opposed to mere signaling, which is rather common among animals as diverse as birds, meerkats, and even honeybees.[9] An ability to represent symbolically or contentfully one's outer and inner world to oneself and then communicate this to others seems a requirement for reporting on and evaluating the quality of relationships, and thus is critical for the kind of interaction studied by Buber and other existentialist philosophers. But for our purposes this capacity need not constitute a separate level of feeling.

Given our analysis, emotions may be usefully characterized as patterns or types of feelings at levels 3 and 4. Hence emotions would require a level of feeling and a repertoire of stimulus-response higher than bare sentience. It would misuse the term "emotion" to say that cockroaches or earthworms have them, but it need not stretch the common meaning too much to say that emotions do not require more than minimal self- (or perhaps minimal self- and other-) awareness, and so the question of animal emotions would remain open. Thus the popular media follow stories of a dog standing by the grave of its recently deceased master, or occasionally even a songbird refusing to leave its injured mate by the side of a highway, to the point that new internet memes are created that garner thousands of hits in a few days. Does the hound stand by *mournfully?* Does the sparrow show *faithfulness* or *steadfastness* in its behavior? Or are beings that clearly *are* at level 4 just feeling sentimental about beings at lower levels? We may remain agnostic on such questions while still recognizing a number of senses of the terms "feeling" and "emotion," some of the less complex of which might account for such behaviors.

BUBER AND THE HORSE: THE THRESHOLD OF *I-THOU*

Although the human *I-Thou* relation is paradigmatic for Buber,[10] occasionally he makes vital interpretive points by means of non-human or even inhuman others: for instance a tree,[11] a cat,[12] or Napoleon Bonaparte.[13] Buber's recollection of a horse from his boyhood, described in the extended essay

"Dialogue," is one such limit case[14] reprinted without alteration in Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments."[15] Buber's "darling, a broad dapple-gray horse," awaited his coming each day when the boy would feed and stroke him. Two of the older man's memories are especially telling: that (1) "what I experienced in touch with the animal was the Other, the immense otherness of the Other"[16]; and that (2) typically the horse "very gently raised his massive head, ears flicking, then snorted quietly, as a conspirator gives a signal meant to be recognizable only by his fellow-conspirator; and I was approved." Then, a small tragedy: for a moment young Buber comes to an intense and intrusive awareness of self—"it struck me about the stroking, what fun it gave me, and suddenly I became conscious of my hand. The game went on as before, but something had changed, it was no longer the same thing." Interestingly, the young Buber "considered myself judged," although in later years he "no longer supposed that the animal had noticed my defection."[17]

A defection? Yes—a turning-inward that was also a turning-away; a feeling of self-awareness interfering with other-awareness; a defect in dialogue (*Zwiesprache*, dual-speech) caused by a deficiency in attending-to or attentiveness (*Aufmerksamkeit,* or even *Achtung*) that constitutes a kind of betrayal. Buber's description of the horse as a fellow-conspirator is eloquent; prior to Buber's distracting self-awareness, it was just the two of them conspiring, breathing the same air and sharing their mutual presence. We may note that even if the elder Buber was correct, that the animal did not and could not notice the change, the young Buber did, and "ruined the experience" for himself if not for the horse. But the main defection was *the experiencing itself*, which amounts to a departure from the conditions for understanding, for real fellowship as opposed to a mere sensation of fellow-feeling. Buber argues that reflexion "lets the other exist only as [my] own experience, only as 'a part of myself.'"[18] Reflexion as defection is a kind of imperialism of the soul—severing the partnership, the reciprocal taking-part in favor of a unilateral partition. What had been part and parcel of my self is taken over, submerged or subsumed into me, and yet simultaneously alienated from me. For my experiencing the other as *It* amounts to a forgetting, or even more strongly a denial, of the otherness of my partner. As part of me, he is no longer present to me; I am no longer confronted and cannot meet or be met.

Of course the horse was never capable of a fully mutual or reciprocal *I-Thou* relation in any case. As Buber once said about encountering his cat, "There the glance of the animal, the language of anxiety, had risen hugely—and set almost at once."[19] The possibility of full mutuality is barely conceivable with an animal, even if one lives with it for a long time. And yet the elder Buber mourns a palpable loss; when his relationship with the horse changed, an entire world was permanently changed, for the world of *I-Thou, even in its barest possibility,* is a different world from that of *I-It*—a world of

relation rather than one of experience.[20] It also seems important that on the side of the horse (or the cat), the crucial possibility in question can only exist by means of a rudimentary emotion! Perhaps a feeling at level 2, as we put it in the first section of the paper, felt often enough by the horse toward the younger Buber, could give rise to an emotion of fellow-feeling, in the horse as well as Buber, and thus give rise to this possibility of reciprocity or mutuality.

Clearly the problem is *not* that young Buber childishly viewed the interaction as a game, that he lacked maturity or seriousness. As long as the fun was essentially shared, what the boy felt could be exclusive without excluding the other. The *I* encountering its *Thou* indeed is "seized by the power of exclusiveness,"[21] by "an essential twofoldness."[22] But when what was shared becomes privatized, the *I* moves back to treating its *Thou* as *It,* and deprives itself of the reality of something shared which is "not a 'feeling' but a perceived mystery." The question is, are human feelings typically or even essentially private in this way? And if so, what should we do about that fact?

THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATION: SELECTING THE EFFECTIVE WORLD

In a 1926 address to an education convention in Heidelberg, Buber said, "The relation in education is one of pure dialogue."[23] Note that he says the relationship *in* education, not educational relationships between actual individuals. But Buber then argues that the teacher-student relation is necessarily incomplete, non-reciprocal, less than fully ideal. In fact, Buber's own description of a young teacher entering his first classroom is that she encounters "a mirror of mankind, so multiform, so full of contradictions, so inaccessible."[24] Surely this describes a relationship that fails to be *I-Thou.*

The problem arises because human beings need not only to be recognized but also to be affirmed, and then confirmed, in their essential uniqueness—elsewhere Buber uses the phrase "wholeness, unity and uniqueness" ("*Ganzheit, Einheit, und Einzigkeit*").[25] To be known and to know is to meet in full, to live in dialogue.[26] If education is to have any influence on the learner at all, Buber says it must be the influence of what has been selected by the educator as significant—but even more important is the recognition by the student of the significance of the educator him- or herself. "What we term education, conscious and willed, means a selection by man of the effective world: it means to give decisive effective power to a selection of the world that is concentrated and manifested in the educator."[27] There is only one way to the student's inwardness, Buber says: confidence. And "confidence, of

course, is not won by the strenuous endeavour to win it, but by direct and ingenuous participation in the life of the pupils one is dealing with . . . and by assuming the responsibility which arises from such participation."[28]

How does the educator accomplish participation and responsibility? Using a pointed biblical metaphor, Buber claims that the effective teacher "must have gathered the child's own presence into his own store,"[29] allowing the teacher to share from that storehouse from the teacher's own fullness using the student's own self-understanding or -possession. In other words, effective teaching demands inclusion. "Inclusion . . . is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfillment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates." Inclusion may be partial or total depending on whether and to what degree each participant can perform this act of imagination, and Buber says that relationships characterized by one degree or another of inclusion are, to that extent, dialogical.[30]

Effective teaching does demand inclusion, but Buber insists that its necessary mode of inclusion is "concrete but one-sided."[31] The teacher is able to experience things from both poles of the relation—from her own and that of the student—but the student still has not learned enough to inhabit the other pole. Precisely because students need such lessons, Buber claims that reciprocal or mutual inclusion is impossible. The way he makes it sound, the relation is radically imperfect since it is not *fully* and reciprocally *I-Thou.*

Buber's judgment here seems very implausible. After all, in the first paragraph of "The Education of Character," Buber insists that the educator's concern "is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives now before you and in his possibilities, what he can become."[32] That is the language of *Thou,* yet somehow the educational situation is nonetheless defined by Buber as one where no one may be encountered, no other be fully met; where ideally the presence of the teacher confronts the student, but she is not confronted in turn. It is suggestive, if a little *ad hominem,* to recall that Buber himself never "taught school" except at the university level, that until the age of ten he was home-schooled by a succession of tutors who gave him near total autonomy,[33] and that he did not enjoy attending the Polish-language *gymnasium* of his pre-undergraduate years.[34] More fundamentally, the educational ideal is not mere instruction on the one side and passive receptivity but something much less easily summarized. Some picture education as pouring a bucket of facts into students' flip-top heads. The silliness of the image shows how quickly that function, even if apposite in early childhood, is transcended when humans begin "learning for keeps." Learning for keeps can and does exist in the *I-Thou* sphere—in fact, in some ways all that dialogue, the interhuman, and the process of recognition, affirmation, and confirmation *are* is a particularly poignant manner of learning for keeps. Yet Buber has problems making room for it except in the case of self-education.[35]

When we know what learning for keeps means—something Buber stresses throughout his essays on dialogue and meeting, even if imperfectly in his works specifically on education—then it seems clear that even if such events are rare, teachers can meet students at least partly as fellow learners rather than solely as fragile beings to be protected and informed.[36] No doubt a teacher's feelings can get in the way of such a meeting of individuals. So can students' feelings. But just as clearly, *some* sort of feeling, something beyond a bare-bones intellectual appreciation of potentiality or actuality, can allow her to see her students as the complex realities confronting her that they are, and thence meet them more fully as individuals. Buber contrasts a genuine educational relationship—"one of pure dialogue"[37]—with one based more on will-to-power or Eros. In effect these lesser relations bow themselves to something other than mutuality, either something too objective to involve the individuals as whole persons or something so subjective that feelings of connectedness take over the relationship.[38] The teacher and student do not employ pure reason to deduce the presence of the other, but neither do they emote their way to a content-less instinctive co-existence. The educational relation suggests that feeling may be redeemed in Buber's *I-Thou* relationship—but not just any feeling or emotion. It requires something sensed over and above any of the four levels of feeling analyzed in our first section.

THE PATIENT-PROFESSIONAL RELATION: IS MY THERAPIST *THOU?*

Many of Buber's readers seem to believe that the *I-Thou* relationship constitutes an ideal for all interaction; they would be shocked to hear that some of the most common and altruistic relationships *cannot possibly* be fully *I-Thou*. Yet as we saw in the case of education, Buber does say that. In a 1957 postscript to the revised edition of Ronald Gregor Smith's translation of *I and Thou,* he repeats his concerns: "Yet there are some *I-Thou* relationships which in their nature cannot unfold to full mutuality if they are to persist in that nature."[39] In addition to teacher-student and clergy-congregant, Buber identifies the patient-therapist relation as among them.

Buber has his reasons for this. As indicated in the preceding section on education, in the dialogical presence of the *Thou* I recognize and accept the other, but beyond that, I also affirm and confirm that person's being. Buber's keen insight leads him to say that this is so even when my *Thou* and I disagree, when I struggle with him or her[40] as Jacob struggled with his God. We perceive, we receive, we confirm the other as other[41] when regarding him or her as *Thou*. Buber describes the process of dialogue with one's *Thou* as "a bold swinging—demanding the most intensive stirring of one's own

being—into the life of the other."[42] Seized as I am by the *Thou*, inclusion makes of exclusiveness a community rather than isolation, going far beyond mere empathy,[43] or sympathy,[44] or fellow-feeling.[45]

In his 1957 postscript, Buber compares a genuine psychotherapeutic relation with one that is simply "successful in some repair work." In the less than fully genuine relation, "the real matter, the regeneration of an atrophied personal centre, will not be achieved. This is only done by one who grasps the buried latent unity of the suffering soul with the great glance of the doctor." As was the case in the teacher-student relation, the great glance involves inclusion, but only on one side: "the specific 'healing' relation would come to an end the moment the patient thought of, and succeeded in, practicing 'inclusion' and experiencing the event from the doctor's pole as well."[46] The very phrase "great glance" implies the rarity of full inclusion—partly because in *this* relation, the therapist's role must be objective, yet without simultaneously objectifying the other: "Healing . . . is only possible to the one who lives over against the other, *and yet is detached.*"[47] Hence Buber concludes that by its very nature the patient-therapist relation cannot be not fully *I-Thou.*

Again, Buber's position seems not fully compelling. Must the therapist be unfeeling, or at least not give full expression to what he or she feels as part of a healing relationship? It is conceivable that from time to time a therapist will feel toward a patient as toward a *Thou*, precisely because of what sometimes occurs in the therapeutic relation: moments of struggle and occasional victory, moments of courage in the face of difficult odds, moments of congruency and honesty. The therapist may feel that such are among the most intensive stirrings of one's own feelings. Are such emotions *automatically* to be placed beyond the pale of the therapeutic relation because they are not of the essence of that relation? In short, is the redemption of the therapist's feeling possible?[48]

In the massively retrospective volume *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, psychiatrist Leslie H. Farber pays close attention to Buber's emphasis on the *I-Thou* world, writes approvingly of most of Buber's insights, and roundly criticizes Freudian psychoanalysis for both its implicit atheism and methodological reductionism.[49] Farber also observes that Buber relegates what we normally call feeling to the world of *It*. Pairing the diversions of "laughter, tears, physical pain, anger, outrage, sleep, sex" with "the chemist's contributions" of alcohol and medications, Farber rejects them all as "the pursuit of presentness as an end in itself" instead of one's reflectively recognizing and taking one's stand with the *Thou.*[50]

Farber adds however that this negative description is true primarily of feeling and emotion seen from a stylized and dramatic standpoint: "The romantic regards feeling as a spontaneous impulse arising either from above or from below; either as divine or poetic inspiration, or else as some daemon-

ic force or instinct."[51] Of course Buber challenges both the patient and the therapist to a more encompassing goal than the pursuit of presentness: to be whole, well-integrated people who are fully present to each other. And of course the romantic view of feelings is common in our society. Still, if one pole of therapy might involve finding the world's foremost specialist to treat a given malady—Farber himself discusses schizophrenia—the other might be to ask, "What manner of human being will deal with our friend's distress? To what extent will [the helper] be able to know that friend, without relinquishing his own actuality or identity in the knowing?" For Farber two things are necessary for that second pole: "Something like mutuality or trust must be accompanied by something like truthfulness or appropriateness."[52] The relationship goes far beyond the culturally romantic emphasis on subjective impassionedness, but it also transcends professional and intellectual objectivity. In that kind of relation, Farber implies, real meeting can occur—the *I-Thou* world can be kindled.

In his "Replies to My Critics" in the same volume, Buber refers to "opponents" and "adversaries" who misunderstand or misinterpret his work; in particular he takes other existentialist thinkers like Gabriel Marcel and Emanuel Levinas to task. The tone of the replies is sometimes jarring. But Buber does not reply to Farber's essay at all. Is that because Farber made no errors, because his interpretation of the patient-therapist relation is fully in harmony with Buber's own? And yet Farber places more distance between himself and Buber than the latter may be aware of, observing that "at present, mutuality between patient and doctor is too often regarded as a distant goal, perhaps signaling the end of treatment.[53] Instead, Farber insists, at least occasionally there can be moments featuring "a mystery usually associated only with poetry or religion."[54]

Buber's famous dialogue with psychotherapist Carl Rogers likewise mentions feelings several times. (A little surprisingly, the transcript shows that Buber was the first to bring up the topic.) But the closest he comes to analyzing their place in his thought is a brief coda to a long discussion on his life up to age 40: "From now on, I had to give something more than just my inclination to exchange thoughts and feelings, and so on." When Rogers suggests, "You felt their wounds," Buber replies, "Yes. But feeling is not sufficiently strong—the word 'feeling.'"[55] This exchange need not mean that feelings have no place in Buberian dialogue, just that *as feelings* they could be helpful or not, depending on the degree of privateness or sharedness. Similarly, when discussing clinical detachment and hearing Rogers say about in very healthy helping relationships, "And I do feel there's a real sense of equality between us," Buber replies, "No doubt. But I am not speaking now about your feelings but about a real situation."[56] Now Buber is the one doing the misinterpreting; both Rogers and he are referring to the open and mutual accepting situation of *I-Thou* relationships.

Buber's late essay "Guilt and Guilt Feelings" also amplifies but does not conflict with the interpretation suggested here. He again emphasizes the inadvisability of too impersonal or abstract a contact with the patient; he also mentions the need for some professional distance or objectivity, in order to assess not only what the patient wants but what she needs; and he distinguishes the healing of existential guilt, which involves faith, from more earthly concerns with behavior and complexes.[57] As with the Rogers dialogue, though, a familiar pivot point remains: although Buber officially insists that feeling and emotion have little to do with dialogue, to the point that the therapeutic relation cannot even be *I-Thou,* a *kind* of emotion grounded in the stance of mutuality seems crucial. We generally believe that a good helping relationship must be based, at least in part, on compassion, especially compassion of the therapist for the client. The mere feeling or emotion of compassion—feeling with and for—surely qualifies as a slender reed to support any relation. Buber also seems to believe that while the client may deal one-on-one with the therapist as his Thou, in effect dealing with her exclusively, the helper's relation her clients cannot be similarly exclusive. And yet the patient-professional relation absent *any* such feelings on the part of the therapist seems somehow sterile, too hands-off—a near analogue to the mistake of too much objectivity rather than subjectivity in the educational relation. While she must be *professional*, surely the therapist should not take a stance of *superiority* or pure directiveness. That would amount to a relation based on will-to-power.

The question is, then, *what* kind of feeling should Buber countenance in a healthy *I-Thou* relation?

AN APPROACH TO FEELING / EMOTION AND THE *THOU*

In all three of Buber's key examples, one party allegedly fails to achieve the fullness of an *I-Thou* relationship due to some incapacity for fully mutual relation in one of the parties. This incapacity gives rise to a characteristic inappropriate feeling, one that Buber says reduces the mutuality and reciprocity possible in the relation, as well as causing some related negative effects of the feeling. Upon outlining each case, Buber most significantly suggests a structural problem in the relationship which, he concludes, renders it impossible for the any instance of that relation to be truly *I-Thou.* But the various reasons we have advanced to doubt Buber's pessimistic conclusion should lead us to consider whether there are possible solutions, however partial, that may redeem feeling and emotion in *I-Thou* relations.

In each of the three cases, one party (the horse, the student, the client) causes Buber to doubt the nature of the relation with the Other. Buber's negative judgment is touched off by his younger incarnation's sudden self-

awareness of pleasure, the student's boredom and lack of motivation, or the patient's illness and suffering in turn. But we should note that the human-animal relation constitutes a special challenge, since not only is the young Buber immature and excitable (although those are not the primary difficulties), but the horse is not an existential chooser in any way. In the first case, therefore, actually both parties in the relation contribute to the resulting difficulty. A solution to each problematic relation, something that might overmatch the structural challenge Buber sees to an *I-Thou* relation, is in each case *Umkehr,* translated into English as "the turning"[58] or "return / returning."[59] The turning is the essence of the *I-Thou* relation, because it is the only way to redeem that relation from "the eternal melancholy of our fate," previewed in the introduction to this article.

Of course, Buber likely would claim that *Umkehr* is simply a decision based on, but also eventually constituting, a fundamental orientation, and thus cannot be analyzed or understood as philosophy might wish. For the same reason he tends to shy away from the language of feeling or emotion in characterizing it. But if the character of the *I-Thou* relation may be redeemed by simply seeing the other as *Thou* again rather than *It,* perhaps a redemption of the value of human feeling in Buber's work likewise may occur. Probably it can only be incompletely understood, although at a minimum its significance may be suggested. What sort of feeling or emotion might assist with, or follow readily upon, someone's decision to turn back to one's *Thou?*

Buber never directly answers that question. For all three key relationships, he insisted in effect that the turning, the *sine qua non* of mature *I-Thou* relations, was impossible. Whether this was because he was conflicted about human emotion altogether, or simply aware of its dangers as well as its potential beauty, we cannot say. But there is a famous passage in Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* which suggests something more positive. Kant believes that only pure practical reason can ground a moral action, so how can an agent be permitted to *feel* for a suffering individual, or *feel* potential regret if she neglects her duty to act?

Kant writes, "Now, an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will; hence there is left for the will nothing that could determine it except objectively the *law* and subjectively *pure respect* [*subjektiv reine Achtung*] for this practical law."[60] In a footnote, Kant anticipates the complaint that he is smuggling emotion into morals after already denying any moral value to what is heteronymous. His response to the charge is intriguing, if not entirely clear, especially due to his contrasting reference to autonomy and heteronomy:

> But though respect is a feeling, it is not one *received* by means of influence; it is, instead, a feeling *self-wrought* by means of a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can be reduced

> to inclination or fear. . . . Respect is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love. Hence there is something regarded as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, though it has something analogous to both.[61]

Some might hold that that in this passage Kant was trying to have his cake out of duty and enjoy it from inclination too. But perhaps he was trying to say something, or could be interpreted as trying to say something, that he lacked the philosophical vocabulary to voice—that even more than in abstract rational contemplation of human dignity, when we *recognize* the other, we *feel* in a manner very different from our usual inclinations. We feel the presentness of a challenging otherness, not complacent familiarity. We feel a presence that demands not maximal objectivity but subjective receptivity and activity in one, for "relation is mutual. My *Thou* affects me, as I affect it."[62] It is a feeling of being addressed by the very face[63] of the other,[64] a feeling that responds to mystery.

If Buber's notion of the turning cannot be defined or understood, then surely the term "mystery" cannot be. But mystery may be characterized in a way that illuminates Buber's turning and Kant's sense of reverence. Consider the journalist and self-proclaimed "adrenalin junkie" Dennis Covington, who began reporting on snake-handling Pentecostals in Appalachia in the 1980s. Covington was fascinated with and also a little repelled by people who believed that the "signs following" belief in Christ (Mark 16:17–18) must include dancing with rattlesnakes and copperheads, drinking strychnine-laced water, and briefly lighting portions of their extremities on fire. But he was also moved by what he witnessed, and one day Covington was shocked to see his own wife, like himself not a believer, get "caught up in the Spirit" and dance with a serpent. Reflecting on such events, Covington wrote the following: "Mystery, I'd read somewhere, is not the absence of meaning, but the presence of more meaning than we can understand"[65]

Poet and essayist Kathleen Norris described the meaning of her marriage with the late David Dwyer in a similar fashion. Dwyer was a poet and philosopher, firmly committed to Norris even as he struggled with chronic depression. Pondering the nature of their commitment, Norris remembers the apostle Paul's discussion of marriage in the Letter to the Ephesians:

> "The two will become one flesh," [Paul] says, but only after sputtering on for a good long while. . . . Finally, he gives up; I hear exasperation as well as wonder in his voice when he says, "This is a great mystery." I read the end of Ephesians 5 as an example of what happens when you discover a metaphor so elusive you know it must be true. As you elaborate, and try to explain, you begin to stumble over words and their meanings. The literal takes hold, the unity and the beauty flee. Finally you have to say, I don't know what it means; here it is.[66]

Significantly, though probably accidentally, Norris happens on the very word Aristotle used (*Metaphysics* 982b13) to characterize the philosophical quest: wonder, where the search for understanding begins in childhood, but certainly does not end.

Buber told the teachers' convention in Heidelberg (section 3 above) that in real education, one involving an effective selection of the world, the student's heart "is drawn to reverence for the form [of a discipline, of learning itself] and educated."[67] The German word translated as "reverence" there is the same word translated by Mary Gregor as "respect" in Kant's *Groundwork: Achtung.* This interpretation of Buber via Kant suggests we may partly understand this elevated feeling or emotion not as fear or inclination, but as something analogous to both. Something that regards the other not as an object of fear or inclination, precisely because as Buber recognized it does not *experience* him as an object at all, but meets him as *Thou.* Something that is not privatized sensation, but an integral response of the whole person, a response that embraces the Other as a perceived mystery.

NOTES

1. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter A. Kaufmann (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 83–84. Henceforth this translation will be designated with "[K]."
2. Martin Buber, "Dialogue." *Between Man and Man*, 98–122.
3. Buber, *I and Thou Second Edition*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Scribner's, 1958), 9. Henceforth this translation will be designated with "[S]."
4. Buber."Dialogue." *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1947), 26.
5. Buber. *I and Thou* [S], 16–17.
6. Buber. "Dialogue." *Between Man and Man*, 30.
7. For an accessible general account of nociception and (self-)awareness in animals, see Victoria Braithwaite, *Do Fish Feel Pain*? (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
8. For an extensive and controversial explication of what it means to say "something is there" or "someone is home" in this very minimal sense, see Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" reprinted in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 165–80. Possibly Nagel would find there is a subjective fact of the matter of what it is like to be a bat as soon as level 2, but certainly at level 3 he would.
9. *Pace* Aristotle, who took this property to be definitive of rationality and thus uniquely to be found in humans.
10. Everyone's relation with the divine pales in comparison. While every I-Thou relation includes the eternal Thou as a third member ([K] 123), Buber insists that it is in meeting others that we meet God, not the other way around, for instance in his failed encounter with a student asking advice about an important decision ("Dialogue," 16–17).
11. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* [K], 57–59.
12. Ibid., 144–46.
13. Ibid., 117–20.
14. Martin Buber, "Dialogue." *Between Man and Man*, 26–27.
15. Buber. "Autobiographical Fragments," *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle: Open Court, 1967), 3–40; quote on 10.
16. Buber. "Dialogue." *Between Man and Man,* 26.
17. Ibid., 27.
18. Ibid., 27–28.

19. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* [K] 145, S 97.
20. Buber, *I and Thou* [S] 6, [K] 56.
21. Buber, *I and Thou* [S], 7.
22. Buber, *I and Thou* [K], 64.
23. Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man*, 116.
24. Buber, "The Education of Character." *Between Man and Man*, 133.
25. Buber, "Elements of the Interhuman," *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1988), 70, 71.
26. Ibid., 65.
27. Martin Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man*, 106.
28. Buber, "The Education of Character." *Between Man and Man*, 126.
29. Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man,* 116.
30. Ibid., 115.
31. Ibid., 118.
32. Ibid., 123, emphasis added.
33. Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 11.
34. Martin Buber, "Autobiographical Fragments," xx.
35. Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man,* 120.
36. Or, as the conclusion of the chapter will suggest, in-formed.
37. Martin Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man,* 116.
38. Ibid., 110–12.
39. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* [S], 131.
40. Buber. "Elements of the Interhuman," 69.
41. Ibid., 75.
42. Ibid., 71.
43. Martin Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man*, 114–15.
44. Buber. "Elements of the Interhuman," 64.
45. Buber. "Distance and Relation," *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1988), 60.
46. Buber. *I and Thou* [S], 133.
47. Ibid.,133, emphasis added.
48. Everything said from the therapist's point of view in this passage could be stated from the patient's pole also. During the course of intense therapy, though, Buber is likely correct that the patient's suffering will more easily give rise to illusory or perhaps even harmful emotions than the therapist's emotions, and so poses a much greater challenge to the relation approaching I-Though levels of mutuality. Then, too, some people enter into therapeutic or other helping professions without adequate maturity themselves, and end up subverting that relationship and its attendant professional commitments because of the flash of personal attraction posing as the deeper reciprocity characteristic of true I-Thou relationships.
49. Leslie H. Farber, "Martin Buber and Psychotherapy," *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman (La Salle: Open Court, 1967), 577–602; quote on 577–78.
50. Ibid., 584.
51. Ibid., 585.
52. Ibid., 589.
53. Ibid., 589.
54. Ibid., 592–93.
55. Carl R. Rogers and Martin Buber. "Appendix: Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl R. Rogers," *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1988), 158–59.
56. Ibid., 163.
57. Martin Buber, "Guilt and Guilt Feelings," *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1988), 112–13, 120–22.
58. Buber. *I and Thou* [S] 57, 61, 70, 78, 100, 105, 116, 119–20, 128.

59. Buber. *I and Thou* [K] 106, 110, 120, 126, 149, 154, 168. Translation choice discussed at length at [K] 35–37.
60. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13–14. Akademie IV 400–401.
61. Ibid., 14n. Akademi IV 401.
62. Martin Buber, *I and Thou* [S], 15.
63. Buber. *I and Thou* [K], 92.
64. The German term is *Angesicht*—Walter Kaufmann translates it as "countenance," and indicates that it is "much more elevated" than the usual word *Gesichct* (Kaufmann 92n).
65. Dennis Covington, *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia* (New York: Addison-Wessley, 1995), 203.
66. Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 110.
67. Martin Buber, "Education." *Between Man and Man*, 105.

Chapter Ten

The Bared Self

Levinas and the Hassidic Tradition

Catherine Chalier

Levinas is very suspicious of the mystical tradition—in particular, that it tries to find a direct way to God without due consideration for the other. The mystic, as he/she sees him/herself, is full of nostalgia for the Infinite, he/she is anxious to get close to God and enjoy His love and His consolation, albeit without paying the price of sharing His responsibility for the world and for its creatures. Levinas shares Rosenzweig's distrust of mysticism. In *The Star of Redemption,* Rosenzweig writes: "Loved only by God, man is closed off to all the world and closes himself off. What is uncanny for every natural feeling about all mysticism, as well as objectively disastrous is this: that it becomes such a clock of invisibility for the mystic. His soul opens for God, but because it opens only for God, it is invisible to all the world and shut off from it." And he adds that this is a "thoroughly immoral relationship to the world." "Instead of coming up to life as a discoursing figure [he] is swallowed back into seclusion."[1]

According to Levinas, putting the mystic on trial, as Rosenzweig does, is justified since this mystic organizes the love of God and the love of the neighbor into a hierarchy, the latter being of lesser value than the former and separable from it, which Levinas condemns. To allow the love of God to detract us from the ethical circumstances which found it, is but an abstraction which leads to isolation. The idea that one can detach the idea of God and the love for Him from the ethical context which makes it possible, going so far as to make such an attitude into a religious and mystical experience, is a dangerous one, according to Levinas: "religions and theologies live from that abstraction, as do mystics from that isolation. But so do religious wars."[2]

In Levinas' view, the sincere response of the soul to God's love does not consist in feeling satiated with this love, but rather in the acute feeling of a never-ending command to love their neighbor. As such, Levinas disapproves of Pascal's saying: "If there is a God, we must love Him only and not the creatures of a day."[3] From such a view point, the love of the neighbor would, at best, be a second commandment after the first one, the love of God. Now if the word "God" only becomes meaningful when we perceive the other person's face—as Levinas' philosophy teaches us—this cannot be the case. Yet this is not something that we do naturally; we would much prefer to be loved by God and not have to care for our neighbor. This is why love of the neighbor is a commandment and not a spontaneous attitude. The goodness of God—the Desirable—does not consist in filling us with goods. God is good in a precise and eminent sense: He "commands me to what is the non-desirable, to the undesirable par excellence; to another." He "compels me to goodness, which is better than receiving goods."[4] This is precisely what the mystic does not want to take into account.

Levinas was raised in Lithuania where so many Mitnagdim (opponents of Hassidim) used to live, including of course the renowned Gaon of Vilna (1720–1797). This might explain Levinas' positive attitude toward the Mitnagdim's traditional and rational way of studying and his distrust of the Hassidim for their emphasis on the importance of sensibility and emotions within the religious framework of life. In 1986 he even wrote a preface to the French translation of *Nefesh haHaym* (*The soul of life*), the work of a famous Mitnaged, R. Haïm of Volozin. As the successor of the Gaon of Vilna and founder of the famous Yeshiva of Volozin, R. Haïm of Volozin was an adversary of Hassidism. Levinas situates himself in this line of thought in his own disapproval of the Hassidim, condemning them for what he called their "excesses"—their emotional excesses and mainly their "enthusiasm" that could lead them to falsely believe they were experiencing a mystical union (*devequt*) with God. He quotes Rachi (the famous medieval French commentator) on *Leviticus* 10, 2: "they may not enter my sanctuary while being drunk." This watchword remains for him a requirement for an adult interpretation of religion: an interpretation that would do away with pathos and consolation, with the illusion of union and with mysticism.

Now such an illusion is based on the desire to reach a mystical union that would allow the ego to depart from itself while experiencing ecstasy. In Levinas' view this is not only an illusion, but goes hand in hand with the forgetting of our concrete task in this world: our responsibility for it. Yet, I would like to analyse this criticism of mystical ecstasy more deeply. In what follows, I will argue that, although Levinas shows a pretty consistent distrust of mysticism throughout his writings, he does not do away completely with the notion of ecstasy, especially when it comes to describing ethical awakening of the self within the ego. This chapter will thus proceed in three stages:

a. The meaning of ecstasy in Hassidism: the difference between the ego and the self and the role of sensibility and emotions.
b. The proximity between Levinas and Hassidism from such a point of view especially as the philosopher does not hesitate to use this word: ecstasy.
c. Some conclusions about the mystical ecstasy and the ethical ecstasy.

THE HASSIDIC ECSTASY

As so many mystics do, the Hassidim experience the distance which separates them from God with sorrow and suffering. There is a Hassidic story which describes a dark cloud preventing the Hebrews from going forward in the desert. This cloud would often get darker and darker, thicker and thicker. The only way to penetrate it and access the brightness hidden within it was to wear the right clothing. The story goes on to explain that this right clothing symbolizes the proper preparation of the intelligence and sensibility for the spiritual dimension present in the dark cloud. To not drape oneself with this right clothing would leave one feeling only the darkness of the cloud, without ever penetrating to its inner light. In time, this darkness might become normal and one may fail to take notice of it, especially when one has already lost all sense of clarity in one's life. One may even think it an opportunity to behave as one pleases without paying any attention to one's fellow creatures. If we remember Plato's description of the Cave, some people may even feel satisfied and be the recipients of honors and privileges in a dark world. And so, if darkness can be so rewarding, why even look for brightness? Why even begin to think that we have to get rid of our present clothing—honor, status, and pleasures—and look for new clothes? We would certainly feel naked and lost.

R. Schneour Zalman of Liady[5] develops further the metaphor of the clothing (*levoushim*) and explains that the human ego is arguing thus because it thinks that it is a separate being by itself (*davar nifrad bepenei atsmo*) and is unaware that there is a light hidden within the darkness of night. When their ego is strong human beings do not suspect that there is an invisible light behind the clouds. And if they happen to open a *sefer Torah,* a Bible, the "black fire" as the mystics call the ink of the letters, and its obvious meaning—so they think—is enough for them. They feel no desire to look for a "white fire" hidden within the "black fire." Their only worry lies in mundane affairs. Yet, as R. Schneour Zalman argues, their carnal clothing, their feeling of being a separate and autonomous being, able to lead their life according to their own taste, without receiving any vitality (*hiout*) from God, darkens their lives more and more. In order for them to sense that they live within

a terrible night and to start looking deeply for some clarity, they would have to get rid of this clothing. Until then, they remain imprisoned in a vicious circle.

Most Hassidim masters are conscious of this circle. They explain that human beings usually think that they are separate beings because God has to hide Himself from them so that they can live without being immediately annihilated by His brightness. God has to cover Himself up so that both creation and revelation could (and can) occur. Human beings have to get rid of their usual clothing—their perception of themselves in a world where God is hidden or has disappeared so it seems, their sensibility and their opinions—so as to become able to perceive, to feel and to know, as Moses did, that God is indeed hidden within the dark cloud and to listen to Him. Meaning: if one wants to discover God, one has to uncover oneself.

Now most human beings remain stuck in the dark cloud because their thought, their imagination, and their sensibility—the usual clothing of their soul—are unable to perceive God in His glory. In R. Schneour's view, it is only when the soul wears the new clothing of Torah and *mitzvot* (religious commandments) that it begins to perceive otherwise, for God and Torah are one reality.[6] The soul must get rid of its usual clothing, of its own feelings and pretentions of being a separate entity, it should renounce its central position and surrender to a greater reality which is indeed the only reality. Then it would discover little by little that God is the only life force of and in every creature.

Thus, according to R. Schneour:

> Every intelligent person will understand clearly that each creature and being is actually considered naught and absolute nothingness in relation to the Activing Force and the "Breath of His mouth" which is in the created thing, continuously calling it into existence and bringing it from absolute non-being into being. The reason that all things created and activated appear to us as existing and tangible, is that we do not comprehend nor see with our physical eyes the power of G-d and the "Breath of His mouth" which is in the created thing.[7]

The Hassidic master refers here to the famous kabbalistic myth of the *Tsimtsum* imagined by R. Itshak Luria (sixteenth century) who maintainted that the creation of the world was preceded by pure light—a pure and brilliant light, from which nothing different from it could be perceived. According to R. Luria, the Infinite, or *Ein Sof*, concentrated Himself within a central point in His light so that finite creatures could appear without being immediately destroyed by its powerful intensity. Then He sent one ray of His brightness to His creation so as to connect the higher world to the lower world. Yet it must be remembered that both of these "stages"—hiding Himself, revealing Himself, hiding Himself so that creation and revelation should be possible—do not describe an event that happened in past times, but rather an event occur-

ring here and now. God covers Himself with darkness so that we may live, yet He also sends a ray of His brightness so that we may know that life is not a pure natural phenomenon but His creation.

This *Tsimtsum,* however, constitutes a dangerous step toward the complete forgetting of God. Because of the darkness that seems to prevail—in spite of the beam of light—many human creatures think they are indeed independent and autonomous beings. They either praise this situation with joy and pride, or feel sorrow and anxiety about it. In any case, they are not the only ones to suffer from it. Whether they are conscious of it or not, says R. Schneour, the presence of God (the *Shekhina*) is living within them, within their "point of interiority" (*nequdat haPenimiout*) as R.Yehuda Arié Lieb of Gur used to say,[8] and is also suffering, remaining forgotten and forsaken in the dark night.

This night is also an exile (*galut*) and a captivity. It is said in the Talmud (*Meguilla* 29a): "They (The Hebrews) were exiled in Babylonia and the Shekhina went with them." R. Schneour writes: human beings have vested "the aspect of the innermost point of (their) heart in the corresponding opposite, namely in the soiled garments of mundane matters and worldly desires, which are referred to as Babylon and is the aspect of the prepuce that covers the covenant and the innermost point of the heart. Of this it was said: 'And you shall excise the prepuce of your heart" (Dt 10, 16).[9] Yet many human beings forget that they are in exile, they don't feel they are enduring a dark night; they enjoy their lives, or struggle for a better one without any nostalgia for another reality. They fasten on their usual clothing—their pride in their independence and their comfortable sense of being at home in the world, free to behave according to their own will (even when they fiercely fight against one another)—and they do not look for any divine light. Indeed, human beings may also achieve great things while not paying attention to the dark night that so often prevails. They may have excellent ideas, feel generous emotions and produce great actions while not experiencing any anxiety or nostalgia for a better light. They may even be astonished when faced with those who, like the mystic, feel they are in exile and might even despise them. But for the mystic, the general indifference of mankind to the darkness that surrounds it is a terrible fate and he would rather suffer from it than ignore it.

But if one were to choose the mystic's path, how then might one get rid of one's old clothes, especially when they fit one's desires? How might one begin to see the dawn of another light? How might one become aware that one's own soul is in the stern custody and control of the Ego, even when this Ego is a generous one? How might one reach the bared self, hidden and smothered under the peels (*kelipot*) of the Ego? This is a difficult task inas-

much the self cannot withstand the extreme brightness of the supreme light—the light of the Infinite—without protection. "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain" (Ps 104, 2).

As many other mystics do, R. Schneour Zalman is looking for a deeper presence to oneself (*présence à soi*) than the one we are satisfied with when achieving our usual tasks. But the disclosing within the self of a soul inhabited by the presence of God (*Shekhina*) requires from us to wear new clothes while letting go our habitual way of thinking and feeling. On the one hand our sensibility, our imagination, our language and our thoughts all aim for a world without God and are devoted to it. On the other hand, a sudden and bare exposition to the brightness of the Infinite would destroy us. This means that, as we go down deep into ourselves, looking for our bared self, we also must wear new clothing so as to protect us. This clothing consists in the wisdom (*Ḥokhmah*) one acquires while studying Torah and while paying obedience to the commandments (*mitzvot*). Such clothing leads us to a "perfect unification" with God's word till we reach a union (*devequt*) with the Infinite. That's why the sage is always studying: he is trying to reach the "white fire" hidden within (not above) the "dark fire" of the letters and he hopes to become able to enter the "dark cloud" so as to encounter the divine presence as Moses did on Mount Sinai. Then he will discover why this "dark cloud" was a light for the Hebrew in the desert while remaining a terrible darkness for the Egyptians (Ex 14, 20).

Yet the difference of perception that separated the Hebrews and the Egyptians facing the dark cloud, the former perceiving it as a wonderful light and the latter as a terrible blackness, this difference also separates human beings as such, and we experience it within us. Sometimes we feel like the Hebrews and sometimes like the Egyptians. Indeed no one may always remain in a mystical ecstasy. One always falls back into the darkness and fails to discover the white fire hidden within the ink of the letters. Darkness even seems to increase after a moment of ecstasy, of joy and full light. The mystic has begun to get rid of those clothes that are fit for common life and he feels all the more lonely and naked in the world that he must go back to after having enjoyed the light. Although the memory of his mystical experience might also give him/her strength and hope, he/she now perceives the immensity of the night that prevents most human beings from looking for their bared self since they can't even fathom that there is such a self hidden deep into themselves, behind their Ego.

Many Hassidic masters sense that the world we live in looks like a deep night even when it's beautiful. According to them only he/she who feels confident (*emouna*) in God's word becomes able to perceive some light[10] shining deeply from it and into it. Yet feeling confident is not a spontaneous and easy feeling, we need to wear the right clothing so as to get through the prevailing darkness. As we have already said this right clothing—praying,

studying, paying respect to the *mitzvot*—prevents us from pretending that we are an independent and lonely creature. It helps us discover our bared self hidden and suffocating under our ambition to be but an Ego proud of itself. Of course, such an Ego can achieve great things during its life without any nostalgia of the hidden light since it does not even *feel* the absence of it. But such a life remains an illusion in spite of all the good things it may achieve. As for the mystic, since no one may remain in ecstasy for a long time, he/she goes back to this world. On the one hand, he/she experiences anxiety and disarray and on the other joy and hope. But in any case, he/she must take care not to cover up anew his/her bared self.

THE ETHICAL ECSTASY

Although he is not a mystic but a philosopher, Levinas' main intention in his great book *Otherwise than being* or *Beyond essence* is to discover the self beyond the ego and to describe this bared self in very extreme words. The infinite responsibility of human subjectivity—a responsibility that is not my choice but my election by the other—does not rely on an ego that would be endowed with some moral qualities, but rather, it is the passivity or the passion of the self: "It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out, and if it can be put thus, the fact of otherwise than being."[11] When we discover the profound signification of human subjectivity—the self or the soul—we also realize that, from now on, we must be on the alert while enduring an infinite responsibility facing the other. Now when Levinas describes the life of this subjectivity which is most of the time hidden under the ego, he also uses terrible words: persecution, trauma, obsession and wound that will never be healed over. He even uses the word "sacrifice" while arguing that it is the *trace* within the self of what he calls "the original goodness of creation."[12] The trace is not an ordinary sign and it is not a natural phenomenon. Levinas underlines this word so that we may not assimilate our responsibility to a spontaneous generosity or a natural compassion. It is in fact quite the reverse, meaning that it is "in spite of my ego" (malgré moi), and to the point of sacrificing this ego—in "a passivity inconvertible into an act"—that I have to bear the other's fate. "In this sense the self is goodness, or under the exigency for an abandon of all having, of all *one's own* and all *for oneself*, to the point of substitution."[13]

The *trace* is a key concept in Levinas' philosophy. One must not confuse it with a lethargic sign in our memory of past events, past places or past teachings that would be suddenly renewed facing the other. The *trace qua trace* does not simply lead to the past, in the common sense of the term, be it my past or the one of the other. It is the trace of a transcendence, the trace of an absolute and immemorial past that suddenly commands and even perse-

cutes us when we encounter the other's face. According to Levinas, the neighbor bears the trace of a withdrawal that orders it as a face. This withdrawal implies that any attempt to thematize such a relation would immediately mean "to lose it, to leave the absolute passivity of the self."[14] Facing the other's face, the ego is divested of its imperialism and "the self is denuded in persecution."[15] The self is accused beyond freedom since it has to be responsible for what it has not done, which does not signify that it is guilty from time immemorial as it is the case according to the theological concept of original sin. On the contrary, it points to the trace as "the original goodness of creation" that precedes such a sin. In spite of both the probability of egoism and the seduction of irresponsibility, facing the other's face, "the anarchical bond between the subject and the Good" is *perhaps* never abrogated.[16]

Any face is vulnerable, mortal, without protection and given over to violence. This is precisely why it bears a resemblance to the Infinite, to a God that cannot be shown in a form. It is neither God's icon nor the image of a hidden model, but it forces us to discover what lies in the trace of an enigmatic God. This both absent and revealed God, according to Levinas, is the God of "our Judeo-Christian spirituality" who "shows himself only by its trace, as is said in Exodus 33. To go toward Him is not to follow this trace which is not a sign; it is to go toward the others in the trace of illeity."[17] "The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed."[18]

Consequently, whereas the mystic is impatient to flee "life toward life, as in the famous text by Ibn Gabirol, in which man takes shelter from God in God,"[19] Levinas is anxious to explain how God only becomes meaningful to us when, dwelling in this world, without fleeing anywhere else, we listen to the silent calling of a face. At that very moment, we discover that we are responsible for it, without any possible discussion, without any possible protection within ourselves. Now, and this is a key point, such an infinite responsibility would be impossible without the sacrifice, or at least, the "contracting" of our ego, of our own perseverance in our own being and of our enjoyment of being a separate and very often proud being: "The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone. Responsibility for the others has not been a return to oneself, but an exasperated contracting, which the limits of identity cannot retain."[20] We do not have to flee and take shelter from God in God as the mystic argues, but rather, we ought to encounter Him as a commanding God, as opposed to a protective and comforting One.

Now, although Levinas opposes the bared self to the ego in a way similar to the Hassidim, he criticizes them for trying to experience a mystical ecstasy that would allow them to flee from this world, be it only for a short while. When it achieves a mystical ecstasy, the bared self, or the soul, disappears in

God and this is precisely what it is always looking for with nostalgia, as is the case in Solomon's song: "My soul failed when he spake" (Sg 5, 6). On the contrary Levinas wants the bared self to remain in this world and to act in it with an infinite responsibility. Yet when describing this self does the philosopher not also describe an ecstasy, an ethical ecstasy? Indeed, inasmuch as ethics demands of us that we contract our enjoyment to be alive, our egoism and our pleasures (our habitual wearing as the Hassidim would say) so as to become a bared and responsible self, are we not experiencing a new kind of ecstasy? And what about our sensibility within the framework of such an "experience" if we may call it thus, inasmuch as ecstasy causes us to lose touch with our ego and its own sensations and experiences.

First, we have to stress that it is because our own sensibility is vulnerable to the suffering of another person—rather than to their desirability as an object of love—that we feel unease. Levinas speaks of ethical love, a love that has nothing to do with erotic love or with a spontaneous inclination. Such a paradoxical love—the responsibility for the other's suffering—imposes itself on the ego like an exposure to the other and even like a persecution and not at all like an enjoyment. It prevents the ego from feeling that it has a legitimate right to being. Levinas uses a very extreme vocabulary when describing this paradoxical ethical love that affects our sensibility and our flesh, stripping them bare: "The passivity of the exposure responds to an assignation that identifies me as the unique one, not by reducing me to myself, but by stripping me of every identical quiddity." Suddenly the ego is put into "question before any interrogation, any problem, *without clothing,* without a shell to protect oneself." "It is a denuding beyond the skin [. . .] It is a fission of the nucleus opening the bottom of its punctual nuclearity, like to a lung at the core of oneself." This is "a nudity more naked than all destitution."[21]

No one deliberately searches for such terrible suffering and Levinas is not praising here self-destruction or self-hatred. Masochism presupposes the existence of a "self" that would choose to behave in that way. But Levinas is precisely calling this into question since he emphasises the *passivity* of such an exposure. A person *is exposed*, defenceless to the other, it does not choose to expose itself to him or to her. My vulnerability is prior to any choice that I could have made. In a pre-original manner, I am destined to respond for the other, without having wanted or chosen to do so, I am destined to moral ecstasy. As the above quotation corroborates, from a formal point of view at least, such an ecstasy resembles the mystical ecstasy as described by the Hassidim. Thus, both the Hassidim and Levinas are depicting a bared self hidden under the ego. And this moral ecstasy has nothing to do with the phenomenological one because consciousness loses its first place and it does not allow one to enjoy any happiness. On the contrary, it is a destitution that seems without end. I lose my own identity and my pride, my being is altered,

it is "a sacrifice without reserve," "the sacrifice of a hostage designated who has not chosen himself to be hostage, *but possibly elected by the good,* in an involuntary election not assumed by the elected one."[22]

I discover my unicity beyond my identity, or my bared self beyond my ego, when I answer the other person's call. But what does this unicity, discovered hidden deep into myself thanks to such an exorbitant responsibility, signify? A responsibility that I have not chosen to take freely upon myself but a responsibility that falls to me. Levinas explains that my unicity lies in my election *by the good*. This is not a privilege. It is because one responds to this responsibility, without any reflexivity, that one discovers one's own unicity (and not the other way around). Obviously, it does not mean that the other person is a good person that deserves my help,[23] but rather it implies that his or her face is in God's trace. This is perhaps Levinas' way of understanding the famous saying of the Hebrew people in Exodus (24, 7)—*Naase venishmah*—we will do (what is required from us) and we will listen to it. In one of his *Talmudic Readings*, à propos this answer by the Jewish people, he writes: "The question is not to transform action into a mode of understanding but to praise a mode of knowing which reveals the deep structure of subjectivity."[24] This answer reveals a pre-original pact with goodness that precedes the alternative between good and evil as well as between praxis and theory, a pact that is unveiled when we accept obligation toward our neighbor unreservedly. It is a pact that we are faithful to without having made a commitment to it in past times. In this reading Levinas writes that "evil can undermine this unconditional adherence to the good without destroying it,"[25] although in other texts he seems not to be so sure about that, as we have already seen.

Let's take here one concrete example. During the Second World War those few just individuals who saved Jews in Europe did so without any reflexivity, meaning, without taking into account the consequences of their behaviour for their own lives and for the life of their families, without having the time to think about it and to weigh the pros and cons, that is to say, without yielding to the temptation of knowledge. It had to be done urgently, people had to be saved. "Many of them had to decide what to do straight away [. . .] they had to be ready to change or to alter their own program, especially when the three days of safety became three weeks or three months."[26] After the war when these just individuals were asked *why* they acted as they did, they rarely could give any precise reason or explanation. They usually said that it was a natural reaction when faced with someone in distress. Yet, we know that this is not a natural reaction inasmuch as nature wants us to protect ourselves and to persevere in our own being. This unnatural behavior may yet perhaps be explained, according to Levinas' view, as an unveiling of this pact with goodness. There are many other examples of this nowadays.

Thus, just like the mystics do, yet in a very different way, Levinas strongly criticizes the excessive importance in our lives of the ego, of self-consciousness and of our so-called own identity all of which prevent us from encountering the unicity of our bared self. Nonetheless he stresses the priority of the "here I am" (*Hineni*), of an ethical ecstasy over a mystical ecstasy, because he fears the latter will prevent us from taking care of creation and especially of our neighbor's suffering. God does not *come to mind*[27] during a mystical ecstasy so as to comfort a person who desires to get close to Him, to be loved by him as a unique person and to forget the undesirable suffering of creation. He comes to mind when He compels us to goodness while revealing our ethical unicity to us. This is precisely the way He loves us.

What Levinas calls *l'à-Dieu* describes such a discovery. It is more important to look after our neighbor's suffering than to be anxious about our own happiness and our own salvation. God comes to a person's mind when he/she is ready to postpone his/her eagerness for happiness or for salvation, or rather when he/she discovers it might lead him/her to consent to the injustice the other is suffering, or even usurp the other's place. Levinas does not say that such an eagerness contradicts moral law, he asserts that it rejects the immemorial debt of election, even in the case of a wise happiness that apparently does not harm anybody: "Saints, monks, and intellectuals in their ivory tower are the righteous subject to punishment. [. . .] The righteous subject to punishment may also be the Jewish people when it closes itself off in its community life and contents itself with its synagogue, like the Church, satisfied with the order and harmony which reign within its precincts."[28] Even the serenity of meditation or of a quiet retreat, even the joy that the Hassidim are looking for, cannot make one's own rights take precedence in the face of the other person's suffering. Such a prohibition does not point out to masochism but to "an austere happiness without self-satisfaction." This happiness is also the highest nobility of a human being, the nobility of election.[29]

In Levinas' opinion mystical ecstasy is full of nostalgia, it is eager for a spiritual salvation that returns the bared self to the God it belongs to rather than incites that self to serve Him by taking care of His creatures. This for Levinas is unacceptable. Yet when he describes the ethical ecstasy he uses a very similar vocabulary: in both cases the ego has to get rid of its own "clothing," of its own identity and of its own pleasures and enjoyments in life. Its sensibility is turned over and Levinas even speaks in terms of a persecution. The bared self might thus be found in this dual manner: facing God, or facing the other person, and presumably both.

CONCLUSION: THE MYSTICAL ECSTASY AND THE ETHICAL ECSTASY

The Hassidim argue that one's desire to unite to God is indeed the true desire of the self, although most of the time one is not aware of it beause of all the worldy distractions that are so dear to us. Actually one's clothes—our sensibility, our opinions and our usual scale of values—prevent us from being on the alert: we forget our true desire so involved we are in the enjoyment of life and/or our worries and sadness. Yet, from time to time, we feel uneasy, we sense our "clothes" are weighing heavy on us preventing us from breathing deeply and we almost suffocate. This is how nostalgia comes to us. But one only begins to overcome such a crisis when one gets rid of one's usual "clothes" and puts on new ones: prayer, study (*limoud)* and the practice of the *mitzvot*. Then, one's own sensibility, one's way of thinking and behaving are slowly modified and, one may even enjoy occasionally an elusive feeling of union (*devequt*) with God. Even if one remains unable to describe it in clear terms, it both accentuates one's nostalgia and gives strength to one's faith. As the Hassidim argue, they want to give God a home in this world (*haolam hazeh*) and not fly from it, but they also want to experience a union with God so as not to forget that, even though our sensibility remains unable to perceive Him directly, He gives life to every reality in this world. They stress His presence within the sensible world: not a powerful one, but a deeply discrete one that one often fails to notice.

In Levinas' opinion such is, however, not the way to go. A human being does not spontaneously feel any nostalgia of God. In fact, he may live happily without looking for God. He even writes that "to be I, atheist, at home with oneself, separated, happy, created—these are synonyms."[30] Egoism, enjoyment and sensibility are necessary for the relation with the Other in a completely different manner than the Hassidim claim. In Levinas' view one does not open oneself to God because of an intimate and irrepressible nostalgia. But rather, one is violently torn apart when a human face enters our world and makes us responsible for it, as we have already explained. The responsible person does not enjoy any union with God or any feeling of His presence and of His light. It might happen that the one who is being taken care of feels such a presence but the bared self does not feel it.[31] The light that blinks in the night which Levinas describes as the trace of the Infinite awakens the self to its responsibility. But it does not mean that this self perceives this responsibility as the light of a hidden God. Otherwise that would console the self and open "the dangerous way in which a pious thought, or one concerned with order, hastily deduces the existence of God."[32] A spirituality that remains on the alert must not deduce this existence, it must not be founded on a

so called knowledge. "Against the denials inflicted by failure, the simplicity of an extreme complexity, a singularly mature infancy is needed. That also is the sense of the death of God. *Or of his life*."[33]

In Levinas' view an awakened and mature spirituality can never turn into a consolation for its own trouble and misery. It is awakened in us, in spite of ourselves, when the transcendence of the sensible face of a person suddenly summons us to honour our responsibility for him/her. Feeling some nostalgia for the Infinite would mean to look for consolation instead of taking our human task upon ourselves in this broken world. Nonetheless I wonder whether Levinas is right when criticizing what he calls mysticism—and especially Hassidism—so severely: most mystics do not abandon the world on the pretence of their nostalgia, even when they pray for an elusive union with God. They are looking for this union, not as a way to be indifferent to the suffering of other people but in order to find strength to help them. They are also well aware that most of the time God seems not to pay any attention to our tragic and unsaved world because it is up to us to take care of it. Whenever they pray and study they don't forget the suffering world, they look for a God hidden within their bared self even though He seems to have left us completely alone. But is that the case?

Let me quote some words by Etty Hillesum as a possible answer. Etty Hillesum who may be looked at as a mystic who discovered God late in her young life is also well known for the love she felt for people surrounding her. In a letter that she wrote while she was imprisoned in the camp of Westerbork just before being deported to Auschwitz where she died at the age of twenty-nine in 1943, she tells a friend that although people are miserable she loves them: "I keep discovering that there is no causal connection between people's behaviour and the love you feel for them. Love for one's fellow man is like an elemental glow that sustains you. The fellow man himself has hardly anything to do with it." Yet, how does one find such a "glow" in one's self? Her answer might be as follows: "Things come and go in a deeper rhythm, and people must be taught to listen; it's the most important thing we have to learn in this life. I am not challenging You, oh God, my life is one great dialogue with You [. . .] the beat of my heart has grown deeper, more active, and yet more peaceful, and it is as if I were all the time storing up inner riches."[34]

NOTES

1. Franz Rosenzweig, *The star of redemption,* trans. William W. Hallo (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Part II, Book 3, 207–8.
2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the subject,* trans. Michael B. Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 95.
3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and transcendence,* trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 95.

4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God who comes to mind,* trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 68 and 69.

5. R. Schneour Zalman of Liady, *Liqqoutei Amarim (Sefer Tanya)* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1981), 23/24 (Bilingual edition). R. Schneour Zalman of Liady was the founder of the Habad movement. His *Sefer Tanya* presents the Hassidic doctrine in a very precise and exhaustive mode.

6. See *Sefer Tanya*, 13/14

7. *Shaar haYichud,* chapter 3, in *Sefer Tanya*, 293. Note 3: "In Time to Come, however, even man's corporeal eyes will see G-dliness and the Divine force in every created thing."

8. (1847–1905). See his *Sfat Emet,* 7 books, Jerusalem, HaMakhon haTorani Yeshiva Oretzion, 1997–1999.

9. *Igeret haKodesh, in Sefer Tanya, op.cit.,* 403.

10. See *Netivot Shalom, op.cit.,* t.1, 259 and 58. The Rabbi of Slonim comments on a well known verse of the Psalm (92, 2): "To shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning and thy faithfulness every night." He explains: "One has to express one's faithfulness especially when it is covered up by a cloud." Meaning that ours words or our singing in such circumstances have a certain power to lead us nearer the light that is hidden within the cloud. Why? Because in spite of the darkness we continue speaking or singing to God, even if He remains a hidden God.

11. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), 117.

12. Ibid., 118.

13. Ibid., 118.

14. Ibid., 121.

15. Ibid., 121.

16. Emmanuel Levinas, "Humanism and anarchy" in *Collected philosophical papers,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 137. Emphasis on "perhaps" is mine.

17. Emmanuel Levinas, "Meaning and sense" in *Collected philosophical papers, op. cit.,* 107. See *Exodus* 33, 18–23. Moses may not face God's face, he stands in the cleft of a rock while God's glory passes. God covers him with His hand while He passes by. "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my Face shall not be seen" (v.23).*Illeity* means Il, He (*ille* = third person in Latin) within the You: when Levinas argues that a human face speaks to us, he means the *ille* within this face speaks to us enjoining us not to kill it.

18. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An essay on exteriority,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 79.

19. Emmanuel Levinas, "On Maurice Blanchot" in *Proper names,* trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 130

20. Levinas, *Otherwise than being, op.cit.,* 114.

21. Levinas, *Otherwise than being, op.cit.,* 49. Emphasis is mine.

22. Ibid., 15.

23. We have to take this question into account when thinking of the behaviour of one person toward a third person. The fact that my neighbor is also a "third person" in relation to another person, invites me to justice and to thought.

24. Emmanuel Levinas, "The temptation of temptation" in *Nine Talmudic readings,* trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990),

25. Ibid., 42 and 43. (See also note 14).

26. Raul Hilberg, *Exécuteurs, victimes, témoins, La catastrophe juive, 1933–1945,* trans. Marie France de Paloméra (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 240. See *Perpetrators, victims, bystanders: the Jewish catastrophe, 1933–1945* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1992).

27. I am here alluding to an important Levinasian expression which is also the title of his well known book *Of God Who Comes to Mind.*

28. Emmanuel Levinas, "Damages Due to Fire" in *Nine Talmudic readings*, *op.cit*., 188.

29. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Liberté et commandement* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1994), 67.

30. See *Totality and infinity, op.cit.,* 148.

31. See Mère Teresa, *Viens, sois ma lumière: Les écrits intimes de "la sainte de Calcutta"* (Paris: Lethielleux, 2008). She describes the terrible night she endured while helping other people. These people enjoyed a certain kind of light thanks to her but she remained in darkness.
32. *Otherwise than being, op.cit.,* 93.
33. Ibid., 95. Emphases are mine.
34. Etty Hillesum, *Letters from Westerbork,* trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), letter to Maria Tuinzing, August 8, 1943, 107; letter to Tide (Henny Tidemann), August 18, 1943, 116.

Chapter Eleven

Beyond Reason

Emmanuel Levinas on Sensation, Feeling, and Morality

Randolph Wheeler

An often-overlooked aspect of Emmanuel Levinas' doctrine of exteriority is his philosophical rehabilitation of sensibility in sensation, a realm dismissed as unintelligible in most, if not all, rationalist accounts. Levinas uncovers the immediate intelligibility of sensation and shows how we can understand our encounters with others and their needs without reducing them to rational objects. In short, Levinas shows us the original orienting sense in sensation and the immediate sensibility in sensation. Before the perception of any object (whether rationally constructed or phenomenologically described), there is first sensation, which brings its own orienting commands and sustaining directives for our sensibility prior to any cognitive representation.

Simultaneously with his rehabilitation of sensation is his better-known (although not thoroughly understood) ethical dimension of alterity, which resists rational reductions to the self-same. Fundamental to Levinas' doctrines of alterity and sensation is feeling. Our "relation" to sensation is feeling or affectivity, and our receptivity is directed in sensation. The intensification of feeling Alphonso Lingis calls passion.[1] Instead of bringing chaos and delusion, as rationalists like Immanuel Kant have claimed, passion can focus our sensibility (e.g., rage snuffs out fear and cowardice). Instead of pulling us in different directions at once, passion concentrates and even singularizes our subjectivity. This view enhances the distinctness of Levinas' ethical subject who is singled out more deeply than Kant's generic rational agent. With this

response motivated more deeply by ethical feeling than by reason comes greater responsibility, greater than in any other philosophical account of ethics.

THE PRIMACY OF SENSATION

Sensation accompanies every perception and is, in fact, prior to perception. There can be no perception without sensation. There must first be immersion in the medium of sensation which enables any perception to take place: in order to see, there must first be light. Plato implied this order when he stated "there is a third thing in perception so plain that it is easily overlooked: light."[2] He did not, however, examine the medium of sensation that makes perception possible. For that, we would have to wait two millennia for Levinas to phenomenologically describe the medium of sensation and its sustaining elements.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty has done more than any other thinker to advance our understanding of perception, going so far as to challenge the still-dominant Cartesian paradigm of epistemology and even shifting the ontological paradigm from disembodied Cartesian self-reflexive consciousness to corporeal reflexivity in contact with "the flesh of the world."[3] Merleau-Ponty, of course, advocates the primacy of perception, but does assign a fundamental role to sensation in *Phenomenology of Perception*. In the first section of his Introduction to that work ("The 'Sensation' as a Unit of Experience"), he relegates sensation to empiricism and reductionism. In his last work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, however, he elaborates on "levels" as invisible support for the visible and elaborates perception's very ground of sensation. With his life cut short, we can only wonder how Merleau-Ponty might have developed a phenomenology of sensation from there.

Levinas, however, begins directly with a phenomenology of sensation and its "elements" (light, warmth, air, night) and ties perception directly into sensation. As Lingis observes in his introduction to Levinas' *Existence and Existents*: "Is not every perception of things a perception of the *sense* of things?"[4] Levinas pushes this view even further in that same work: "Reality is made up of elements."[5] Although not perceived in the same way as things or objects, the elements of sensation supply the medium that sustains perception. Levinas provides a new perspective in his philosophical analysis, previously overlooked. Instead of analyzing the *distance* that characterizes our perception of objects, Levinas addresses our *immersion* in the elements of sensation that make perception possible.

Here we can see Levinas' fundamental shift in phenomenological perception itself—closing up the distance necessary to perception to our being sustained in immersion. The distance necessary for the perception of objects

is Merleau-Ponty's inheritance of the distance between consciousness and its objects in Edmund Husserl's intentionality. Likewise, the distance of intentionality characterizes Jean-Paul Sartre's consciousness as always in the world as "consciousness *of* something" necessitates distance at the foundation of perception and of thought. Levinas fills this distance with immersion in sensation and marks a radically new beginning for phenomenology, epistemology, and especially ethics. Similar to the shift in perspective from perceptual distance to elemental immersion and contact, Levinas finds the origin of subjectivity not in the Cartesian subject's own original self-awareness but begins in contact with alterity. Levinas discovers that the self actually begins with the other and establishes a thorough philosophical paradigm shift.

SENSIBILITY IN SENSATION: ENJOYMENT

Elucidating what has been overlooked in perception, Levinas articulates the elements of sensation that underlie and support any perception. In our relation to the elements as immersion, our eyes adjust to the level of the light, water buoys up the long-distance swimmer, air currents sustain the tight circle of the hawk overhead; the rhythmic gait keeps the runner or power walker going; the rhythm of hammering sustains the nailing of shingles to the roof; the weight of the earth supports the weight of all material objects. Although we may not always be conscious of them, they sustain our activities. The elements are something that we cannot help but feel in our constant contact with them.

Furthermore, the elements come with their own teleology: sensation begins with the elements and returns to them. Levinas characterizes the mode of sensibility as *enjoyment*, which results in the closed elemental sphere of contentment and satiety. In enjoyment, perceived things revert into elements; things end with the given, which envisions no future or possibility. To find sustenance in the elements runs counter to the traditional view of the elements of nature as harsh, forbidding, and having to be battled against. Breaking with the tradition, Levinas finds that instead of having to eke out an existence against the elements, they support and sustain our activities and supply their own a telos of enjoyment. This elemental medium itself is boundless, characterized by an *apeiron* that is neither infinite nor ethical.

SENSATION IN ETHICS

But for Levinas there is also an infinite realm of sensation—the realm of ethical alterity. Here, the other places an infinite obligation on me and "contests our contentment" in our enjoyment of the elements. With alterity, Levinas breaks with a merely descriptive phenomenology of sensation when he

describes the encounter with the other as an "ethical epiphany," as a break with everything, including the elemental. Nonetheless, sensation can be seen at work even more deeply into our sensibility here.

There is an even deeper level of feeling involved in our encounters with the others than with things, one that elicits our immediate response which constitutes our ethical responsibility. I must drop everything (including Martin Heidegger's tools) and respond to the other's needs. This truly categorical command takes priority over any hypothetical imperative of personal desire or even Kant's categorical imperative of universal reason. Here, ethical sensation precedes any empirical or phenomenological perception of the particular person. In fact, Levinas claims we are always predisposed to these encounters with the other even before they occur, as the other's face carries the trace of God's infinite and preexistent alterity. In terms of sensation, I am first affected by the other's commands, and only afterward do I place the other in some empirical schema as to gender, ethnicity, eye color, physical stature, socio-economic status, etc. In this way, the face of the other is not one perception among others: empirically, to note the color of someone's eyes in these cases of urgency would be "unethical" (or at least a secondary observation). Again, the proper medium of ethics is sensation or feeling, not perception, whether empirical or phenomenological. Levinas formulates the primacy of ethics succinctly when he declares that "ethics precedes ontology."

Our encounters with alterity show the intelligibility of feeling and sensation without resorting to rationalist constructs in two ways: first through contact with the other (again, closing the distance in perception) and then with the affective orientation guiding our response. We first sense the other's pain and are called out by it, and then our response is directed by the immediacy of feeling (not a formula or principle) commanding us to respond. In our response comes our ethical responsibility.

It is often said that we cannot understand others' feelings or that we cannot read their minds. Levinas, however, claims that all of us carry our feelings on our faces, displaying them for all to see (as in such common phrases as "if looks could kill" and "his eyes bored into the back of my skull"). Our feelings are not interior but exterior, not closed off but in plain sight. Lingis argues: "how visible is the sense of being vulnerable."[6] As every newspaper editor and local television news producer knows, "if it bleeds, it leads." Pain and feeling are wincingly visible and compel our responses. Hollywood's tear-jerkers play on this perceptibility of feeling (although often on a shallow level): cue the violins and our hearts melt.

But can we really feel others' pain? In a sense, Ludwig Wittgenstein is right to argue we do not feel the other's pain directly: we do not say "I have a pain" the same way that we say "I have a hat." We cannot pass the pain around to one another the same way we would pass around a hat.[7] And it is

true that your toothache is not my own. I cannot feel the agony of your aching tooth in my own mouth. But your pain does affect me; it *afflicts* me (dentists are well aware of this contact with others' pain; they suffer from the highest rates of depression and suicide among medical professionals). Every parent with a sick child knows this receptivity for the other's pain; we even feel it for children we do not even know, even if we have no children ourselves. Their distress is distressing, contesting our contentment.

In Fells Point, on the other side of Baltimore's corporate Inner Harbor, the small shop and tavern owners request that patrons refrain from giving money to the local "panhandlers." The encounter with the other takes only a few seconds; one stops and gives money, or one moves along without doing so. Either way it is a disturbing event. Even if I give money, I can never give enough. The ethical disruption lasts beyond the moment of the encounter. The other in his absolute alterity has contested our contentment in looking forward to dinner or drinks. Thus, the shop owners are not only more ethical than we ever suspected: they are Levinasian, well aware of the ethical primacy that disturbs us in our relations with others. Here there is clearly a conflict between business and ethics, and perhaps even in ethical accounts of fairness as in John Rawls' often compelling sense of justice or in the Kantian reciprocity of equal and rational alter-egos. For Levinas, the other is not an alter-ego, someone equal to me. The other, in fact, always stands above me.

This example supplies a meaningful contrast in what is fundamentally human in the history of existential thought—ethics or ontology. For Heidegger, the network of equipment (*Zeug*) discloses Dasein's fundamental ontological connection to the world and to Being. Levinas' battle cry "ethics precedes ontology" challenges the primacy of Heidegger's of interconnection of *Zeug* to Being. Both thinkers would agree that in the encounter with the other's destitution, the network of smoothly running relations and expectations is disrupted and reveals a deeper, a priori relation. But for Levinas, what is revealed is not simply Being but an infinite ethical relation beyond any ontological totality. The encounter with alterity brings an inescapable ethical dimension of the human, a dimension that Dasein's ontological relation to Being cannot convey so fundamentally. For Levinas, our first relation with the world is not through Heidegger's equipment or tools that I or any other can use (again, a self-same approach that overlooks alterity as the source of ethics). Although Heidegger begins with an analysis of tools themselves, Levinas argues that tools are first found in an elemental medium: "They take form within a medium (*milieu*) in which we take hold of them. They are found in space, in the air, on the earth, in the street, along the road. The medium remains essential to things. . . . This medium is not reducible to a system of operational references and is not equivalent to the totality of such a system."[8] For Levinas, the totality of Being is outstripped by the infinity of ethical alterity.

We are always vulnerable to the other's vulnerability. We are predisposed to this feeling; it runs deep in us. As every military drill instructor knows, recruits have to be deprogrammed in order to become killers.[9] According to a retired lieutenant colonel who has studied the psychology of killing, only two percent of the population has a propensity for killing; they are the ones who go into commando units.[10] Far more of us share the solicitous sensibility of the Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr. than the heartlessness of the mercenary. The other approaches me unarmed, and this approach disarms me. My response, not merely demanded but commanded by the other, constitutes my responsibility. I can turn my back on the other, but I cannot do so with any ethical justification. If I turn away from the other, I turn away from ethics. I also lose the possibility of becoming an ethical subject myself by refusing my responsibility. To not respond to the Other is to be irresponsible and to relinquish the possibility of my ethical humanity, which can only emerge in the light of accusation in the other's needs, not in the *sui generic* nominative. Left to myself, I would have no ethical responsibilities, but I would have no ethical life. Like Wittgenstein's private language, private ethics is simply impossible.

The face of the other is irreducibly other and resists reduction to my consciousness as self-same. For instance, it is impossible for me to see my face as another's face. It would be quite a startling experience to look into the mirror and see a face that is completely other than my own. Gazing into the mirror, I can see how my face has changed over time, but what I see is never really foreign to me. The face in the mirror does not look back at me; it can cast no commanding gaze upon me. My reflection cannot disturb me. It is a simple self-reflection, the visual analog of rational thought originating in the self-reflection Cartesian thought. But the face of another carries the trace of God's infinite ethicality and alterity, which is in no way reducible to myself. In this way, ethics is not a ledger sheet of equivalencies. The other always stands above me; it is not a question of fairness or reciprocity. My ethical obligations are infinite; I can never do enough.[11]

The look from another human face immediately commands me, burdens me with its exposure, vulnerability, and nakedness before I can make any judgment about the other's worthiness of my attention or respect. Although the directives of alterity do not work on my rational faculties, they are felt, even understood, pre-rationally. These commands take place on the immediate level of sensation and feeling. The approach by the other in naked vulnerability disarms me.[12] Imagine unexpectedly encountering someone who is naked. Our first reaction to this nudity is not how to exploit it, but to offer protection and support, to offer them some cover.[13] Despite the obvious amount of continuing, if not developing, empirical exploitation in the world, again our first response is ethical, not exploitive or predatory.

ACCUSATIVE ETHICAL AGENCY

In his new approach to subjectivity, Levinas finds that it is the other that distinguishes me instead of the Cartesian self-consciousness of the nominative. In Levinas' view, we are not, and cannot be, the source of our own subjectivity. But how is it possible for subjectivity to begin in the accusative? On a very basic level, like it or not, we come from others. Freud's compelling reading of the Oedipus myth grapples with this impossible desire to be the source of our own creation. Further, language itself, the medium through which so much of life and possibly all thought occurs, is never only mine alone, in the nominative. Language itself is for the other. I come to language as "another," as "any other" must do. I can gain proficiency in language or even "master" it, but the medium is never mine alone. As Wittgenstein correctly noted, there is no private language. And not only is language public, it is itself an accusative medium in which all of us participate as others, as another. A strictly nominative language for myself alone is unthinkable. Although the nominative takes place through language, language itself is accusative, originally for the other.

Despite being called out in the accusative, Levinas still speaks of sovereignty in subjectivity. He, however, continues to emphasize the primacy of exteriority over interiority; sovereignty is not a position but as a "deposition":

> It is I who support the Other and am responsible for him. One thus sees that in the human subject, at the same time as a total subjection, my primogeniture manifests itself. My responsibility is untransferable, no one could replace me. In fact, it is a matter of saying the very identity of the human I starting from responsibility, that is, starting from this position of deposition of the sovereign I is self-consciousness, a deposition which is precisely its responsibility for the Other. Responsibility is what is incumbent on me exclusively, and what, *humanly*, I cannot refuse. This charge is a supreme dignity of the unique. I am I in the sole measure that I am responsible, a non-interchangeable I. I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me. Such is my inalienable identity of subject. It is in this precise sense that Dostoevsky said: "*We are responsible for all men before all, and I more than all the others.*"[14]

Protagoras' proclamation that "man is the measure of all things" can take on yet another meaning. The human is still the existential locus of meaning but not in the free initiatives of Sartrean subjectivity or because of Kantian autonomy. This human measure originates with others, not myself. The other usurps my freedom and autonomy, but not my subjectivity, which is now seen to originate in subjection to alterity's commands. It is only through being called out that I become subjected, that I become a subject. In our

contact with the others' pain or joy, the other's exposure exposes me. My vulnerability to the other's vulnerability lays bare my susceptibility to the responsibilities placed on me. This responsibility commands me even more deeply than Kantian duty or the categorical imperative. My own responsibility for alterity is not the same as it would be for any other person (nor are the others responsible for me; I am not another for them). I am the only one responsible here; no one else can stand in for me. I stand alone in Levinas' uniquely rigorous account of our singular subjectivity.

Developing the theme of the accusative agency in *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas speaks of a radical passivity in his ethical agent, "a passivity of passivity."[15] Although alterity seems to forfeit the possibility, Levinas' radical passivity retains sovereignty. Perhaps this should not be so surprising, as there is often a degree of restraint or subjection in previous historical doctrines of sovereignty. For instance, in later accounts of sovereignty beyond Hobbes' initial "sovereign exception," Kant and Nietzsche both find sovereignty to be a self-imposed "devotion." For Kant, this self-mastery is in devotion to the autonomous law that the subject places on itself to thwart its selfish desires. And Kant's rational will comes full circle in the third formulation of the categorical imperative in which it "is commanded to be in command."[16] Nietzsche sees sovereignty in our devotion to what is great and eternal, often outside of oneself (although it is difficult to claim a thorough development of alterity in Nietzsche's doctrine of self-overcoming, it is nonetheless a *self*-overcoming). What Levinas argues for is a paradoxical sovereignty in passivity that can never escape the other. This subjectivity begins in complete subjection to exteriority. I am always there for the others; this is my inescapable, unending ethical responsibility. I am never done with others or with my responsibilities to them. In a reversal of Sartrean freedom, we could say that for Levinas we are "condemned to sovereignty."

My contact with others produces a compelling feeling or force of what is required for their needs, but not an idea or principle, as for Kant. Levinas is able to retain the commanding force of the ethical imperative while separating this force from Kant's rational form. For Levinas, the ethical stands before, above, and beyond the rational. It is easy to see that in many cases, the rational does not equate with what is ethically required. Without thinking about it, caregivers respect persons with Alzheimer's disease who cannot accede to reason. The force of the ethical imperative outstrips the formal limits of reason. Levinas claims that he shares an imperative architecture with Kant. Yet all the details are changed, which changes everything. Instead of beginning with an interior rational principle (*archē*), Levinas begins with the *an-archē* of exteriority, which brings its own imperative directives that direct our appropriate responses, whether to things ("As material or gear the objects of everyday use are subordinated to enjoyment—the lighter to the cigarette one smokes, the fork to the food, the cup to the lips. Things refer to

my enjoyment."[17]) or to other persons ("The other alters me" and "I am another"). This infinite "anarchy" goes beyond Kant's singular "monarchy" of a reason and its subsequent kingdom of ends.

Although Levinas goes beyond reason and its directives, he does not leave us rudderless. He discovers the immediate directives for ethical sensibility in feeling: our affectivity receives alterity's imperative commands, which guide our responses. Before any rational deliberation on what we *can* do to help, we first "understand" that we *must* help—better: we "feel" that we must help, with immediacy and urgency. We drop everything; we empty our hands to aid the empty-handed. First, our feeling is commanded, which carries a strong original orientation; only secondarily is our rational capacity engaged. What I *can* do follows from what I first *must* do . . . this understanding occurs immediately, before any reasons can be formulated.[18]

To bring Levinas' ethical subject into sharper relief, the responses called for in my responsibility to alterity specify my subjectivity; they single me out. Only I can be responsible for the others; no one else can replace me here or relieve me of this responsibility.[19] For Kant, my duties are largely the same as anyone else's. Kant's rational agent is a generic one that is not called out specifically but does what anyone else should. It was Max Scheler who pointed out the problem in Kant's generic ethical agency: the moral imperative for someone who is an expert swimmer or someone in a wheelchair is exactly the same when someone calls to them for help in the water. Levinas, however, singularizes my response to the other. As the other calls me out, it is I *alone*, above all the others, who must respond. My relation for others is one of substitution, Levinas explains, but no one can substitute herself for my responsibility.[20]

Further, it is feeling, which is so often claimed to be vague or distorting, that shows me to be singled out. Although Wittgenstein and others may question whether we can feel others' pain, it is safe to say that there is no question of my feeling being distinctly my own (after all, I can say with certainty that the beetle is in my own box). Although they arise in contact with exteriority, my feelings are wholly my own. Concepts can be exchanged from one person to another, but feelings are my own and affected immediately. In this way, we discern their meaning or directives straight away.[21]

Through the medium of feeling, Levinas extends the territory of the ethical imperative. It is part and parcel of our responsibility to respond not only to the rational but to the irrational imperatives that press upon us. What is at the heart of Levinasian exteriority and alterity that calls for our response is feeling, which is beyond and the very foundation of reason. Far from distorting our ethical directives, feeling concentrates and unifies our forces so that we can become singular, responsive, and responsible ethical subjects called

out beyond all the others, beyond reason, and even beyond Being. Instead of a self-generating subject, there is a surprising distinctness to this subject whose ethical existence is dependent on others.

Just as there is no possibility of a private language, there is no possibility of a private ethics. Alterity supplies the antidote for ethical egoism in Hobbes and goes beyond the ethical alter-egoism of Kantian reciprocity. Instead of leaving us with a moral subject bereft of individuality as we might expect in the radical passivity of alterity, we find the most radical responsibility, a most unique sovereign subjectivity in which no one else can take on my responsibility. This subjectivity originates in the accusative of the other, whom I must support. Only in my response, in this responsibility, can I become who I am.

NOTES

1. Alphonso Lingis, "Aconcagua." In *Passion in Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Alphonso Lingis,* ed. Randolph Wheeler (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2017).
2. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 507d-e; 181.
3. See Martin C. Dillon. *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1997), xii.
4. Emmanuel Levinas. *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 8; italics added for emphasis.
5. *Ibid*., 47.
6. Alphonso Lingis, *Dangerous Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 159.
7. Terry Eagleton gives this useful encapsulation on Wittgenstein's approach in *The Meaning of Life: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.
8. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 130–31.
9. Catherine Chalier notes that unlike in Kant's moral doctrine in which human nature has a predisposition to evil, for Levinas "evil is formidable . . . but it is not absolute. Good is anterior to it." *What Ought I to Do? Morality in Kant and Levinas*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 6.
10. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1996).
11. Somewhat like how for Kant we cannot fully complete our duties, never fully overcome our amoral side of self-interest and inclination.
12. So much of philosophical work and even ethical thought is closed off to alterity, "well-armored" in the self-justification of rational argumentation. To build thought that stands on its own is to miss the ethical dimension, the primary dimension, of thought for Levinas. It also misses the spirit of Kant's central meaning of autonomy, with its humane dimensions of respect and dignity.
13. Alphonso Lingis, personal communication, July 2015.
14. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 100–101 (italics in original).
15. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence,* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998),143.
16. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed., trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 38.
17. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 133.
18. Kant implies as much on the moral primacy of reason, that "ought" implies "can."

19. This is the spirit of Lingis' collection of essays *The First Person Singular* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

20. With Levinas' sense of subjectivity, there are possibilities for a re-examination of Husserlian ownness and Heideggerian authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*).

21. Kant himself gave a foreshadowing indication of the singularizing responsibility of feeling when speaking of respect, one of his central themes of moral reason in the second *Critique*: "Respect is a tribute that we cannot refuse to pay to merit, whether we want to or not; we may indeed withhold it outwardly but we still cannot help *feeling* it inwardly." Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 66, 5:76. In keeping with the interiority of reason, Kant places feeling inside the subject. But if we look more deeply, we can find a role for feeling in Kant's moral imperative. Lingis attributes to Kant the uncited quotation that "respect is a *feeling* something like fear." And Kant seemed well aware that some feeling had to motivate our practical moral responses, as he discusses *Triebfeder* or drive at some length. *Triebfeder* is the force of feeling that makes Kant's moral form possible and practical. Kant's imperative is obeyed (i.e., "felt") before being understood. For more on *Triebfeder*, see Randolph. C. Wheeler, *Kantian Imperatives and Phenomenology's Original Forces* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008).

Chapter Twelve

Does Faith Trouble Philosophy?

On Franz Rosenzweig's Method and System

Herman J. Heering

Twentieth-century philosophy was originated by Jewish thinkers—or rather, by thinkers of Jewish descent: Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Edmund Husserl, Ludwig Wittgenstein and most members of the Vienna Circle, Jürgen Habermas and other members of the Frankfurt School, Karl Popper, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber.[1] All of them bore Christian names, and were hardly disturbed by that, for they were all Jews of assimilation. Rosenzweig (and to a lesser degree Buber) was an exception among them, but for several years[2] even he was undecided whether his book *The Star of Redemption* was "a Jewish book" or a general system of philosophy.[3] The non-Jewish world, for its part, was not troubled by similar doubts, and *The Star* is not mentioned in any history of modern philosophy. Only Jewish scholars, Christian theologians and some specialists have taken it seriously. Is that because Rosenzweig's philosophy is troubled by faith, and the solemn halls of philosophical truth can be entered only by pronouncing the shibboleth of non-faith? But what does truth then mean? Rosenzweig later accepted that this was indeed a Jewish book, but insisted that it had also to do with general philosophy; nevertheless, he became less interested in its theories, for the "Jewish way of life" had become more important to him.

The fundamental reason for Rosenzweig's hesitation lies in the fact that, until those nightly discussions in 1913 with Eugen Rosenstock, who made clear to him the insufficiency of "general" philosophy for understanding life—the insufficiency but not the superfluity—Rosenzweig was just a philosopher. *The Star* is only an intense attack on Hegel (subject of Rosenzweig's doctoral dissertation); the exorcism of his philosophy, however, is not complete, and it is performed with the help of Hegel's brother in philosophy,

Schelling. Rosenzweig never disavowed philosophy. How did Rosenzweig relate philosophy to religion—or rather, to faith (for he abhorred the term religion, and therefore also shunned the term "philosophy of religion"), or still better: how did he relate God to philosophy? Is philosophy just the handmaid of theology? Does the philosophy of *The Star* fall into the pit of pure apologetics? Is its underlying structure nothing but *fides quaerens intellectum*? Buber may have been right when he said that "*Der Stern der Erlösung* ist ein säkulares System—nicht ein 'System der Philosophie' wie Rosenzweig selbst später meinte, aber das System einer—der gegenwärtigen—Begegnung von Philosophie und Theologie."[4]

Although Buber is not very consistent in this characterization, he means that Rosenzweig's philosophy is not an ontology in which the essence or essences of being are stated, but a phenomenology of the relations of reality, and especially an inquiry into the relation between two general views of reality, philosophy and theology—or, epistemologically speaking, between reason and faith. It is no easy job to clarify this relation. Six different lines of relation—or, should we say, six layers of thought, can be distinguished in Rosenzweig's oeuvre:

1. The *speculative line* of absolute idealism (Hegel, more specifically Schelling) is never completely eradicated.[5] A dialectical ontology forms the texture of *The Star of Redemption.* This dialectical ontology is not essentially one unfolding principle but the triadic interplay of irreducible elements. And its epistemology is not based upon cosmic reason but upon revelation. Nevertheless, revelation and "sound reason" do not seem to diverge very much.[6] Here Rosenzweig can make use of formal logic and of calculi of the infinite. That he altered the dual structure of dialectics into the triadic structure of God, world and man—a *trialogia entis*—is not essential. Conspicuously, history—which had captivated Rosenzweig in his student years—receives little space and attention in this ontological structure. In the theological interpretation of this ontological dialectic, creation, revelation and redemption so definitely have the upper hand that the specific events of human history lose real importance.[7] This is confirmed by the small role played by the war and even by the fate of his fellow soldiers in Franz's letters from the Balkan front.[8] It is history which separates Christianity from Judaism.[9] The philosophical scheme of *The Star* might be understood as a Jewish interpretation of the Hegelian scheme. There seems to be little conflict between the two.
2. The second line of relation is that of *empiricism.* Rosenzweig claims to be a "pure" and absolute empiricist,[10] but in this claim he appeals to Schelling and not to British empiricists. He ignores, therefore, all the philosophical and theological troubles of empiricism. He even ignores

Kant's refutation of it. The *intellektuelle Anschauung,* the possibility of which Kant explicitly denied, is accepted by Rosenzweig without hesitation. "Die Erfahrung entdeckt im Menschen, so tief sie eindringen mag, immer wieder nur Menschliches, in der Welt nur Weltliches, in Gott nur Gottliches."[11] This experience is dependable. In all its extension experience touches upon reality. God also is *Tatsache,* fact (the German term contains some additional nuances).[12]

The remarkable thing is that these facts of God, man and world can, according to Rosenzweig, be known before (or without) specific revelation. They are dealt with already in Part I of *The Star* as elements or elementary facts of common existence and general knowledge. There must, therefore, be a natural knowledge of God (e.g., among the Greeks), or "a revelation before the revelation." I do not believe that Rosenzweig's view of the Greeks is right, nor that his conception of Islam is fair. Historically these chapters in Part I are forced and unconsidered, more essayistic than philosophical, their function seeming to be to undergird the necessity of specific revelation, which is the theme of Part II. Nevertheless, there is a point in Part II which is as right as it is fascinating: that in the history of philosophy one of these elements has always dominated the other two—the *physis* or world among the ancient Greeks, God in medieval thought, and man in modern thinking. Revelation relates these elements and thereby gives them life.

Is this still empiricism? Every philosophy and theology has to be built upon experience, and, I think, the English empiricists use a much too narrow concept of *empeiria.* There is such a thing as experience of death, experience of hope, of the holy, moral experience, etc. But distinctions should be made, e.g., between apperception, perception, experience. The empiricist line of Rosenzweig's thought is promising, but has not been handled critically. This line is also at odds with the speculative line. Experiences can be described, not argued and constructed as speculative truths can. Rosenzweig, following in the footsteps of Schelling, was therefore looking for a "narrative philosophy" and indeed, there is a narrative trend in the whole book. But he forgets Schelling's warning that only the past can be narrated, therefore as long as history is not completed philosophy can not be wholly narrative.[13] I doubt whether philosophy can live in pure narration. Its criteria are arguments—and arguments are not narrative; nor are they experiential.

3. Jewish thinking always insisted upon *rationality,* and Rosenzweig eagerly follows that line. Observe, however, that for him *ratio* is *Verstand,* not *Vernunft.* Queer enough, what he granted to experience, namely metaphysical knowledge, he refuses to reason. He does his best to steer clear of absolute idealism. Still, reason can rationalize

experience. Any man can experience God. Reason cannot prove Him—but since His revelation is experience this is not necessary. Reason cannot go beyond experience—it is experience of revelation[14] which supplies the ground which can be built upon. Reason can *nachdenken,* not *bedenken* or *ausdenken.*

Besides, we have to consider that for Rosenzweig reason is both theoretical and practical reason. Understanding always implies insight into how to live one's life. Though philosophy is more than ethics, as faith is more than morals, it is never without ethics; ethics may even be the touchstone of philosophical truth. "Gottes Herniedersteigen zur Welt ist Gebot und Verheissung, aber nicht Nachricht und Beschreibung. Gott orientiert die Welt."[15] Reason, though dependent on revelation,[16] has its own, natural function. Rosenzweig knows of the cleavage between natural reason and reason enlightened by revelation. The "no" he writes in reference to Muhammed—"Er wusste nicht, dass alle Offenbarung mit einem grossen Nein beginnt"[17]—is also spoken to natural man and natural reason. Enlightenment by revelation also seems to have negative effects upon reason, and it may be asked whether enlightened reason is more or less rational than natural reason. How is it continuous with natural reason?—In any case, Rosenzweig does not advocate an irrational faith; nor does he resign himself to an atheistic reason. Faith's arguments are rational.

4. The fourth line is what Rosenzweig does in the exposition of what he calls the new thinking, *das neue Denken.* What does he actually mean by this term?[18] It is anti-hegelianism, anti-idealism, certainly. It embodies the horror of objective, impersonal, therefore inhuman thought, which considers or even constructs ideas and rationality over the heads of humanity. It refutes thinking without responsibility. It reminds us that the subject who philosophizes is not apersonal, superpersonal, objective or even absolute reason, but man, mortal, fallible, creaturely man.[19] Philosophy is the way man tries to understand his world and orientate his existence within it. Objective idealism could even claim to comprehend war and death; twentieth-century man knows too much—and too little—to make such a claim. Rosenzweig was the first existential thinker of our age.[20] Although he was never an existentialist in the Sartrean sense, his existential point of departure was strong enough to enable him, a few months before his death, to salute Heidegger as his spiritual companion.[21]

But the category of existence had not yet been explored at that time, and the inventory of Heidegger or Sartre would not have satisfied Rosenzweig. He never could explore existence in its solitude—that was for him the old petrified Greek standpoint. For him correlation was the central category.

Thus "the new thinking" could be deemed "absolute empiricism,"[22] making use of common sense,[23] it could be called "the philosophy of experience"[24] or narrative philosophy.[25] The world, one's fellowmen (the nation especially), God, are always present in one's heart, life and blood. Responsibility is thus the fundamental category of existence.

Great stress is laid here upon the function of language.[26] Rosenzweig shared with Rosenstock his great interest in language; language is intercourse, as against the monologic structure of pure thinking. And as Rosenzweig always spoke or wrote to a specific adressee or audience, language or speech is essentially responsibility. Language, in its turn, is fed by hope. Tragic man is silent; hope not only makes man live but also makes him speak. In return the word of God and of man gives hope. Thus "das neue Denken," Rosenzweig's philosophy of language, becomes "the messianic method of knowledge."[27]

By including in his philosophy not only the speech of man but also the word of God, Rosenzweig stamps revelation into a philosophical category. Or rather, *das neue Denken* brings philosophy to the point where it realizes the necessity of revelation, or, in other words, to the point where philosophy needs the help of theology. We may ask: Isn't this new thinking the abdication of philosophy? Does not faith cause reason to resign? This transition needs closer investigation.

5. The fifth line of relation between faith and philosophy is a further specification of what has been said just now—and is in strong contrast with the speculative and rationalistic line. It is the conception that *reason (or philosophy) itself arrives at the understanding of its own limits,* where it is compelled to halt and pass the torch of thinking's *estafette* to faith (or theology). I know of only one non-Jewish philosopher whose work is in the same vein and of the same structure: Blaise Pascal. His *Pensée* 272: "There is nothing so conformable to reason as this abdication of reason," and its counterpoint, *Pensée* 277: "The heart has its reasons, which reason doesn't know," could, in all its complex paradox, have been written by Rosenzweig. It marks the dead end of reason, revelation's great "no," and reason's urge to continue.

   Reason's dead end, for theoretical reason cannot make true its claim that it covers the whole of existence. In modern terms, philosophy too is "truncated action."[28] Faith rightly troubles philosophy. Every philosophy which claims to be able to go beyond these limits is itself built upon some other form of belief—e.g., the belief in the omni-validity of reason. Revelation's "no" is definitive.

   Nevertheless, theology is no rival of philosophy. Both are structured by the Logos, which is a Dialogos. It is only the sovereign pretension of reason which is rebuked. Thinking goes on where this self-absolutizing reason falls short. Heidegger admitted "dass die Wissens-

chaft nicht denkt,"[29] or even "dass die seit Jahrhunderten verherrlichte Vernunft die hartnäckigste Widersacherin des Denkens ist."[30] In a more positive way Levinas admonishes us to think beyond our thinking.[31] And he reminds us that metaphysics in principle always did this. Rosenzweig himself did not put all his cards on practical reason. He did not totally disavow theoretical reason, and thus comes near to Anselmus' (and Karl Barth's) program *fides quaerens intellectum.* But is this philosophy or theology? Rosenzweig himself generally refuses the middle term "philosophy of religion."[32]

Before the Enlightenment the dichotomy "philosophy or theology" would not have been a serious problem. Since the "age of reason" it has been one. Since then, reason has been confined strictly to the general cognitive function, the insights of which can be shared and controlled by common experience and logic. A further step was taken when Kant denied to "sound reason" the capacity of metaphysical insight. In that sense, Rosenzweig returned to the pre-Kantian philosophy of Leibniz and Mendelssohn but also followed the post-Kantian Schelling; his decision not to publish his booklet *Vom Kranken und gesunden Menschenverstand* must have had something to do with his doubts in this respect. Rational and religious knowledge are of a different nature. Therefore philosophy and theology are different, even though both strive for an interpretation of reality which "holds true" in logic and in actual life, and both use arguments to this purpose—and arguments by nature must appeal to common sense, even if these arguments do not originate in it. But reason can, at most, give reasons for *how* things are; *that* things are and *why* things are goes beyond its ability to explain—it is up to revelation and faith to argue that. Hence, the thrust of Rosenzweig's thought is exactly what he himself indicates: philosophy should seek the aid of theology (see especially Part II of *The Star of Redemption).* Similarly, theology needs to be firmly rooted in common human experience. Rosenzweig puts this most clearly in 1925, in his postscript to *The Star* (entitled "Das Neue Denken"): "Die theologische Probleme wollen ins Menschliche übersetzt werden und die menschlichen bis ins Theologische vorgetrieben. . . . Gott hat eben nicht die Religion, sondern die Welt geschaffen."[33]

To me this statement formulates the real relation between faith and philosophy. *Vorgetrieben* (pushed forward into) suggests that it is all man's activity. Revelation, however, means that we strike a reality and a truth which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, what never entered the mind of a man, all that God has prepared for those that

love him (1 Corinthians 2:9). Revelation is not a top-experience, but a shock-experience, which makes man reconsider everything and reorient himself; it asks for *teshuva* [repentance].

Nevertheless, revelation does not fall upon man as a stone. It is an appeal, which man has to answer. But how can man distinguish the false and the true appeals? Man has to be convinced. So we argue with ourselves and with everybody around. Arguments are always intersubjective. Rosenzweig means exactly that when he writes that "the theological problems have to be translated into human ones." Only in that way can philosophy and theology compete in giving the best interpretation of reality and the best orientation to man. In other words, theology is not only *fides quaerens intellectum,* it is also *intellectus interrogans fidem.*

6. Up to now we have no more than hinted at the sixth line in Rosenzweig's thought: his *dialogical philosophy*.[34] This term covers more or less everything that has been said about the other five lines. On the other hand, the term "dialogical philosophy" can only be understood in the light of the problems raised under those other headings. The common denominator of all these problems is the central issue of dialogical philosophy. For its claim is that thinking happens "on speaking terms," that is to say, it is always interpersonal and dialogical, as against idealism, Husserl's transcendentalism and Heidegger's and Sartre's existentialism. The question remains, however, whether "dialogical philosophy" is not a *contradictio in adjecto,* since after all it is still the philosopher who accounts for all his relations and dialogues in his personal philosophy.

   It must be acknowledged that Rosenzweig himself rarely speaks of dialogue.[35] But nobody can deny that dialogue is the central category both of his philosophy and theology and of his educational theory and practice (the Lehrhaus). There is no less I-Thou-relation in *The Star* than in Buber's *Ich und Du,*[36] although Rosenzweig refused to let everything depend upon that relation.[37] Theunissen considers this dialogical relation to be the transcendental foundation of knowledge, as in the transcendental ego in Husserlian phenomenology. But he admits that its philosophical status is weaker than transcendental egology. Personally, I follow Theunissen in his statement of both the necessity and vulnerability of dialogical philosophy. This position implies the conception of reason as reasoning man, reasoning with somebody else, whether another individual or God.

We might have arrived at the end of our investigation about faith possibly troubling philosophy. The question behind all we have said has nevertheless remained unstated and thus yet unanswered: does this conception of philoso-

phy hold for general man and common reason, or only for Jewish thought and the Jewish heart? Does the introduction of theology, where philosophy reaches its limits, not limit this thinking to those who live in the light of biblical revelation—just as Pascal and others (whose philosophy was *formally* similar to that of Rosenzweig) advocated a revelation which, in its *contents,* was Christian? We return to Rosenzweig's hesitation, mentioned at the beginning of our article, whether his *Star* was a Jewish book or just a system of philosophy. In Heidegger's view, the two conceptions are mutually exclusive: "a Christian philosophy" to him is like "a wooden iron."[38] We will consider later whether he is right in saying so. But Rosenzweig recurrently mentions that the Jewish heart *of itself* understands revelation; "die Bibel und das Herz sagen das Gleiche,"[39] he wrote, and in context this must mean the Jewish heart. Or is that too narrow an interpretation? Elsewhere Rosenzweig writes: where Christians found their faith on feeling or experience, Jews find it in their blood.[40] Where Christians have to *bezeugen* (to witness), Jews have to *zeugen* (to procreate).[41] Thus, what Jesus is to Christians, the nation is to Jews;[42] the Jewish nation to him is his *Glaubensgrund.*[43]

To non-Jewish believers this is not acceptable. They will maintain that the foundation of faith can never be the Jewish nation but God's revelation to the Jews and the world. The Jews are God's elected people, but wherever election is not answered, it is not realized and it is no reality. And then: The Jews are elected to proclaim God's love to the world. The election is not exclusive but inclusive. It is confirmed not by birth but by repentance, *teshuva.* This does not imply that election is an individualistic affair: the visible and invisible community of God's children cuts across all nations and races, however much they are indebted to the nation first elected. On the other hand, Christians only too often have succumbed to the temptation of letting God make an absolute new start in Jesus Christ, forgetting or even denying that Jesus cannot be understood except as wandering in, and renewing, the tradition of the Jewish nation and its Torah. And does not Christian thinking make the same mistake: ultimately limiting truth in space to the church, in time to the history of Jesus? Indeed it did. It often even betrayed its Jewish ancestry. In that respect my difficulties with Christian orthodoxy are infinitely heavier than those with Jewish orthodoxy.

Now Rosenzweig did not leave it at that. In the third part of his *Star of Redemption* he divides the tasks between Judaism and Christianity—the former to preserve the truth and live in the light of the *Star,* the latter to go out in its light to pave the way for God's Kingship in the world. He mentions the dangers which befall both—introvert quietism in Judaism, extravert imperialistic worldliness in Christianity—and he is right in his characterisation. Still this division of labour does not satisfy me. Even Adam in Eden's garden was not permitted to labour the soil without also guarding it, so how could we, Jews and Christians, be content in performing only one of our religious

duties? Rosenzweig himself formulates this as follows: "Meine Ansicht ist kurz gesagt die von vielen anderen ja geteilte, dass die europäische Kultur heute zusammenzustürzen droht und dass sie nur gerettet werden kann, wenn ihre Hilfe kommt von den übereuropäischen, übermenschlichen Mächten. Dass diese Mächte, von denen das Judentum eine ist, dabei sich, gerade wenn ihnen die Hilfe gelingen wird, aufs neue europäisieren und säkularisieren werden, . . . darüber täusche ich mich wahrlich nicht."[44] Rosenzweig introduces here, in 1922, the term *Säkularisierung,* which was to resound so urgently in Bonhoeffer's letters from prison, twenty-two years later, when Rosenzweig's anxiety about Europe's civilization had become reality. The discussion about the meaning and implication of this secularization has been going on ever since. Generally speaking, it implies that the Torah is not just an inner-Jewish cultic affair, but that life itself is charged with responsibility for man and creation. In Christianity, secularization will stress the humanity of Jesus as the personification of God's command and forgiveness. For both Jews and Christians life may focus in what, in the light of Isaiah 53, could be called *messianic existence.*

Does faith trouble philosophy? Or does it save philosophy from human pride and pallid theory? Or does it just put philosophy in its place? We followed Rosenzweig's lead and do not regret it. If philosophy is what the word says: love of wisdom, and of wisdom only, it is a good thing that faith disturbs it with love and justice.

NOTES

1. This chapter was originally published as: H. J. Heering, "Does Faith Trouble Philosophy? On Franz Rosenzweig's Method and System," Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, 45ste Jaarg., Nr. 4 (December 1983), pp. 589–601. Reprinted with permission.

2. *Letter* 4/2-23 sq. The letters are quoted according to their dates; they are published in Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe und Tagebiicher. 1. Abteilung der Gesammelten Schriften*, 2 Bde (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1979).

3. Franz Rosenzweig, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin: Schocken, 1937), 374 (1925). Hereafter *K.S.* A complete edition of these essays will be published as *3. Abteilung der Gesammelten Schriften.*

4. Martin Buber, *Kampf um Israel: Reden und Schriften (1921-32)* (Berlin: Schocken, 1923), 190, cf. sqq.

5. Stephane Moses, *Systeme et Revelation. La philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), stresses the continuity between Rosenzweig's book on Hegel and *The Star*.

6. Elsa Freund, *Franz Rosenzweig's Philosophy of Existence: An Analysis of 'The Star of Redemption'* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1979), rightly distinguishes two levels of revelation in Rosenzweig's oeuvre.

7. See his "Geist und Epochen der jüdischen Geschichte" (1919) in *K.S.*, 12–25.

8. It is therefore not true that it was specifically war that made death the starting point of *The Star.* I agree here with Reinhold Mayer's *Franz Rosenzweig. Eine Philosophie der dialektischen Erfahrung* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1973), 9 sq., 116 sq.

9. See Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung. 2. Abteilung der Gesammelten Schriften* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1976), Part III. Hereafter *Stern.* All quotations referring to *The Star of Redemption* are taken from this German edition.

10. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 7/12-25 and *K.S.*, 398.

11. Rosenzweig, *K.S.,* 378 sq.

12. Rosenzweig, *Stern*, 328. In Letter 2/8-17 Rosenzweig frankly writes about "das Faktum Gott."

13. The introduction of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's *Die Weltalter* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1913) starts: "Das Vergangene wird gewusst, das Gegenwärtige wird erkannt, das Zukünftige wird geahndet. Das Gewusste wird erzählt, das Erkannte wird dargestellt, das Geahndete wird geweissagt."

14. See Freund, *Franz Rosenzweig's Philosophy of Existence,* 108 sqq.

15. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 2/8-17. Rosenzweig borrowed this term from Rosenstock—see *K. S.,* 358. See also Moshe Schwarcz, "Rosenzweig's Stellung in der jüdischen Philosophie" in *Freiburger Rundbrief* 1972, 128–44; 135 (translated from the Hebrew).

16. Rosenzweig, *Stern,* 118: "Der Mensch als Empfanger der Offenbarung . . . ist . . . der Gegebene, ja wissenschaftlich der einzig mogliche Philosophierende der neuen Philosophie." See the penetrating book of Stephanie Moses (note 4).

17. Rosenzweig, *Stern* 193

18. See especially the article "Das neue Denken" (1925) in *K.S.,* 373–98.

19. "Der Philosoph ist die Form der Philosophie," *Letter* 1/12-17. "Es gibt da keine andere Möglichkeit, als dass man ehrlich von seiner Subjektivität ausgeht," *Letter* 1/16-27. But ten years earlier already he agrees with Schelling that philosophy has to be narrative and therefore autobiographical *Letter* 28/5-17.

20. "Rosenzweig is the father of Jewish existentialism"—Louis Weiwow, "Rosenzweig: A new study," in *Quest 1,* ed. Paul Hamlyn (September 1965), 90. Also Kornelis Heiko Miskotte, "Existentiefilosofie" in *Het wezen der joodse religie* (Haarlem: U. M. Holland, 1932), 298. It was this Protestant theologian who with this book introduced Rosenzweig in the Netherlands as early as 1932 and who stressed his importance also in later writings.

21. Rosenzweig, *K.S.*, 355—while for Husserl he could only find the epithets "Papa" *(Letter* 18/11-18) and 'Esel' *(Letter* 18/8-24).

22. Rosenzweig, *K. S.*, 398 (1925).

23. Rosenzweig, *K. S.*, 384.

24. "die erfahrende Philosophie"—*K.S.*, 379

25. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 28/5-17, cf. *K.S.*, 383

26. See Herman J. Heering, *Rosenzweig: joods denker in de twintigste eeuw* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1974); Herman J. Heering, *Die alten jüdischen Worte,* in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 38, no. 4 (Dec. 1976), 535–58.

27. Rosenzweig, *K. S.*, 396.

28. C. A. van Peursen uses this term for science—see his *Wetenschappen en werkelijkheid*, (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1969).

29. Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 133

30. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1957), 247.

31. "penser plus qu'on ne pense," Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalite et Infini,* passim.

32. Rosenzweig, *K.S.*, 347. Exception: *Letter 13/6-18.* In my opinion Schwarcz is right in calling *The Star* "a philosophy of revelation" (p. 134, see note 14), if that is not a *contradictio in adjecto*.

33. Rosenzweig, *K.S.* (1925), 373–98.

34. See Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1965); Bernhard Casper, *Das dialogische Denken. Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners und Martin Bubers* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1967), a. o.

35. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 5/2-17, 15/3-27; *Stern* 193 sqq.

36. See e.g., *Stern* 172, 194 sq; cf *Letter* 19/20-17.

37. See the criticisms in Rosenzweig's letter to Buber, N• 812 (not in the first edition).

38. "ein holzernes Eisen oder ein Missverständnis"—Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966), 6.
39. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 27/5-21.
40. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 26/2-19.
41. Rosenzweig, *Stern* 331.
42. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 18/3-21.
43. Rosenzweig, *Tagebuch* 23/6-14; cf. *Stern* Book III, *passim*.
44. Rosenzweig, *Letter* 4/2-23.

Chapter Thirteen

The Relevance Of Karl Jaspers' Philosophy Of Religion Today[1]

Anton Hügli

For a long period, as he himself admits, the topic of religion and theology did not interest Karl Jaspers.[2] It was only in 1931, in *Philosophie*, that he publicly pointed out the importance of faith—philosophical faith—for the "philosophical doctrine."[3] After the Second World War, the question of faith became a topic that decisively shaped his teaching activity in Basel.[4] It was with a lecture on philosophical faith that Jaspers, at that time a guest lecturer, presented himself in Basel in 1947.[5] The position he took on the question of faith led him in 1953, on the occasion of the Swiss Theological Meeting, to a public confrontation with Rudolf Bultmann and his program of a demythologization of the New Testament.[6] Four months before his eightieth birthday, Jaspers summed up his long-standing struggle with the question of faith, in the great late work on the philosophy of religion, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung* (1962).[7]

To what extent is Jaspers' philosophy of religion still relevant today? I do not speak here of "relevance" as this is understood in opinion polls. I do not wish to investigate how many of Jaspers' books are still being bought today, nor the extent to which Jaspers is quoted and his ideas received in comparison to other philosophers. Instead, the question is: Are there good reasons today for reading Jaspers' philosophy of religion anew, and perhaps more thoroughly than in the past? In order to answer this question, I must begin with ourselves, with our intellectual situation today.

We are told (or at least, we have been told up to now) that we live in a secular world. The times are over in which the whole of societal life, both private and public, was oriented unquestioningly to God and the churches. Science has bidden farewell to all metaphysical presuppositions; the state

derives its legitimacy exclusively from the will of its citizens; church and state have separated; religious arguments are now out of place in public debate. Belief in God has become a private matter, one option among others. The basic right to freedom of religion does indeed still allow one to profess one's faith publicly and to orient one's life to this faith—but only on the presupposition that one observes the laws and does not disturb other persons too much.[8] One who wishes to talk about religious matters can do this in a private dwelling, in a group of like-minded people, or in one's church.[9] The secular world's Enlightenment hope in progress affirms that ultimately, belief in God will no longer be an option that anyone finds worth pursuing. In the meantime, however, we are regrettably compelled to live with the fact that we exist in a pluralistic world that is split into a multiplicity of religious orientations and worldviews. And the best path to a modus vivendi in this situation is to restrict oneself in public life, and above all in political life, to the lowest common denominator, namely, to the question how we can live together, rationally and justly, in the sphere of the basic reasons that are shared by everyone. This program is called political liberalism.

The awkward—some go so far as to say the disastrous—feature of the secular world is that its alleged autonomy has feet of clay: the religious question, which it tries with all available means to fight off, keeps on breaking out afresh. This happens in very various ways. Sometimes, it is spectacular, as when fundamentalists who are willing to carry out acts of terrorism strike again, or are on the point of erecting a new theocracy even more abominable than the last one; sometimes, it is soft-footed, as when sociologists claim to observe that despite a massive exodus from the churches and despite the empty church buildings, a need for religion is growing once more in broad sectors of the population. Intellectual claims are also being made on behalf of religion, on several levels at once: in constitutional theory, when constitutional lawyers hold that the secular state is based on presuppositions that it itself cannot provide, or when adherents of communitarianism demand a state that is based on a view of the good life that is shared by all the citizens; in moral philosophy, when ethicists express doubts about whether an autonomous morality possesses enough motivating power, if its religious roots are cut off; in philosophy, when spokesmen of the zeitgeist like the prominent Jürgen Habermas seek a dialogue with the Pope "in consciousness of what is lacking," and when there is no end to the publication of philosophical writings on the topics of knowledge and faith, or philosophy and religion. In other words, the delusion of progress has now been followed by a post-secular sobering up, and with a rehabilitation of the religion that the secular world proclaimed dead, or that it passed over in silence.

However, all the attempts to make the voice of religion audible once again suffer from a fundamental dilemma: If we do not want to follow the terrifying example of many countries of today's non-Western world and

relapse into a society lacerated by clashes about faith and wars of religion, the positive achievements of secularization must not be undone. The state must remain religiously neutral. It cannot derive its legitimation from an appeal to the voice of religious authorities; this can come only from the common will of its citizens. The religious authorities may and should speak out in civil society, but in the case of deliberations in the political institutions "that take legally binding decisions, their contributions can play a part only after undergoing a transformation."[10] In keeping with the demand made by political liberalism, "transformation" here means that the religious messages must be translated into the language that is spoken and understood by everyone, for only thus translated can they be heard in the political arenas. A political liberal would argue that one who appeals to the truth that God has revealed to him, or that his church teaches, would not find acceptance among those whose God is indifferent or even hostile to his God. Even if someone publicly proclaims that his God commands us that we must all love each other, because we are all children of God, he will not bring about a more peaceful attitude in those who do not want to be the child of this God. Accordingly, one who wishes to gain a hearing among those who believe differently, or who do not believe, must make use of the language of the public sphere. For example, he must speak of human dignity when what he means is that we are God's children; and he must speak of "that higher being whom we venerate"[11] when what he has in mind is the Christian God. But are we not well aware, at least from the sphere of literature, of the axiom traduttore traditore, "the translator is a betrayer"? And does this axiom not apply equally well to the sphere of religion? Do not such considerations compel the believer to betray precisely what is most important to him, namely, to make known his God to all the world—as this God appears to him? What is the point of all the talk about human dignity, if it entails the disappearance of what is truly important to him?

It is precisely here that the dilemma of our time lies, a dilemma that political liberalism has only served to intensify: one bows down reverently before religion, but wherever it shows itself, it ought to do so not as what it is, but in a secular disguise—as what it is not. The individual is guaranteed the right to choose his religion freely, and this freedom is protected as a high good. But when he wants to talk about what he has chosen, he is told that he must spare other people for such words and remain among those who share his views. We do indeed tolerate the fact that people have different faiths, but we cannot really stand these differences. It is hard for us to stomach what is different. And we are stuck on the horns of this dilemma in our post-secular world. The spokesmen of the *zeitgeist* note this dilemma with consternation and are content to hope that this reservation, which leads to an act of translation, could initiate a "learning process" that might even be successful, provided that both sides—the secular and the religious—know how to bear the

burdens of translating and being translated that they impose on each other,[12] and provided that they meet each other on the level of mutual acknowledgment.[13]

But why should they do this? The conscientious secular person might perhaps do so out of fear that he had overlooked an argument that could be won only in this way; but what does the religious citizen gain? At best, the feeling that he is acknowledged by other citizens as a citizen with equal rights. But how much does this mean to him, if being acknowledged by his God is much more important to him than being acknowledged by the totality of human beings? And if the former is in fact more important to him, does this not make him a representative of the religious fundamentalism that, according to Habermas, the liberal state cannot allow, and with which one can have dealings only on the political and juridical levels?[14] If that were true, we would be confronted by an enormous problem: every affirmation that one must obey God rather than human beings has its provenance in the Abrahamitic religions of revelation, and the Jewish and Islamic thinkers of the Middle Ages, with their either/or of "law and philosophy," recognized what this affirmation means with regard to the relationship between religion and politics. So did the Christian church father Tertullian, who located the fundamental decision in the alternative between Athens and Jerusalem—the political society in which the philosophers and human wisdom are in charge, and the religious society that follows the divine law. As long as faith in revelation lasts, this antithesis too will last. All that an attempt at harmonization can do is to conceal it.[15]

This insight brings us to point in the contemporary debate at which there could also be an increased readiness to listen anew to the voice of Karl Jaspers. His philosophy of religion—more precisely, his theory of ciphers—is more than half a century old, but it is a credible answer to the liberal dilemma. Jaspers follows the principle that there must not be any limits to communication and dialogue, and no interruption of communication. He looks for the "ground on which people from every background of belief could encounter each other to talk meaningfully about the world, to acquire their own historical tradition anew, to purify it and to transform it, but not to abandon it."[16] He shows that religious faith still has existential significance for us, and demonstrates that it can be understood and adapted philosophically even in a post-metaphysical age. His absolute will to communicate makes him all the more profoundly affected by the insuperable barrier that he encounters in the form of belief in revelation. My thesis is that the contemporary relevance of his philosophy of religion lies in the fact that he has tackled with complete consistency this double challenge: namely, to open himself philosophically to religious faith, and to wage the struggle with belief in revelation. This, however, will convince the reader only when we look at the main features of the great philosophical work of Jaspers' old age.

IN SEARCH OF COMMON GROUND

Jaspers saw the fundamental condition of the modern age with perfect clarity: the modern world, which is shaped by modern science, is unthinkable without the clear-cut distinction between knowing and believing, between scientific knowledge and religious or metaphysical faith. If we wish to know about the facts of this world, the only path is that of modern, methodologically disciplined science. Although this leads in every case only to particular answers, these can in principle be grasped by everyone and communicated universally. We can all agree on what science proposes, as well as on questions concerning the security of our existence, in the sphere of politics, morality, and economics. But we are more than subjects who engage in science or participate in science; and we are more than beings who are driven by existential interests.

We see that such matters do not exhaust the totality of our being as soon as we are caught up by the question of what we actually are: Where do we come from, where are we going, and what ought we to be in the totality of this world? With these questions, our consciousness changes, since they are of such a kind that no science is able to answer them. Science always concerns objects in this world, never the world as a whole. If we stand in the world and attempt to define what this totality is, it dissolves into a plurality of totalities that encompass us: I find that I am an existence (*Dasein*), a biological being, and I pursue what I take to be my interest and my happiness. As a thinking person, I am impersonal consciousness, I participate in that which is common to all those who think, and I differ from them only through the degree and extent of my share in universal knowledge. Ultimately, however, I am only one point here, and anyone else could take my place. I am an individual only as a member of a social fellowship that is held together by ideas. But neither these totalities that encompass me, nor the world as that which encompasses all these totalities, can ever become an object of the act of knowing,[17] because even in such an act of knowing an unknown remnant would still be left over—namely, the "I" that performs this act of knowing. This is why the world, as it presents itself to the knowing "I," cannot be the ultimate reality. We are, so to speak, the eye that sees the world but does not see its own self. And this is why the world, as it appears to the knowing "I," cannot be the ultimate reality. The true totality would be a totality that encompassed both myself and the world, and that did not have a knowing "I" outside itself. It would be both that which is known and that which knows. Jaspers gives the name "transcendence" to this comprehensive "one."[18]

Transcendence enters into our consciousness as soon as we begin—thanks to the comprehensive selfhood that Jaspers calls a "possible existence,"[19] which alone (beyond all other modes of being) makes us an "irreplaceable" being "for which there is no substitute"—to ask where we come

from and where we are going, since it is ultimately only on the basis of transcendence that these questions can be answered. According to Jaspers, this explains the undeniable need human beings have to make for themselves images and ideas of transcendence and to lead their lives in view of transcendence. There is no human existence without transcendence. Jaspers is fundamentally convinced that the idea that someone has of transcendence determines who that person will become.

What is the source of this knowledge that Jaspers has? And where does this knowledge itself stand in the distinction between believing and knowing? He calls it a basic knowledge, which he describes as follows. It is no longer science; it is not already philosophy, but it lies on philosophy's border.[20] With this knowledge, we light up the "sphere that is common to us human beings, in which we communicate to each other what we think and want, and that which exists for us."[21] Hitherto, certain "matters of faith that were taken for granted" and were defined by their contents formed this common sphere, but this has collapsed and we live on the basis of origins that are infinitely various and are separate from each other. When a matter of faith that once was taken for granted disappears, it cannot be restored. Nor can we sit at a drawing board and produce new matters of faith of this kind. This means that we must discover a new framework of communication that is no longer defined by its contents and is not based (like earlier frameworks) on presuppositions of metaphysics, ontology, or revelation, "which either tolerated each other without in the least understanding each other, or else fought passionately against each other as a result of their lack of understanding."[22] "The presupposition for understanding" today can only be "a formal basic knowledge that is generally obligatory in its communication," and that stretches out the framework so widely that "no historical origin of faith would be lost or would have to surrender itself."[23] This basic knowledge "elaborates the forms in which we ourselves are for ourselves in the world, in a manner comparable to the forms or categories in which absolutely everything that the consciousness can conceive appears."[24] It can never be finished once and for all, but must always be tested anew; on this point, it is comparable to science. It will however, never possess the character of a "compelling science," since it moves on the borders of what can be known objectively. It is a draft, a schema. This draft "brings our consciousness closer to that which we truly want but are not able to put precisely into words."[25] Since the draft is always general, no decision in favor of this or that content can be deduced from it—every decision is absolutely historical.

For Jaspers, it is clear that the basic knowledge is itself no faith, but there is a faith at work in it, albeit a faith without contents, which does not exclude any faith with a different content.[26] "It is only faith in the possibility of unrestricted mutual understanding. It is the faith that says: Truth[27] is that which connects us."[28] This is why the basic knowledge is more like "the

stretching out of one's hands. The longing is to unfold this basic knowledge (which is the precondition of a general connecting) oneself, in the connection."[29] We are impelled to do so by the reason (Vernunft), which is the "power present" in everyone who thinks, the power that will give the thinking person no rest and that wants everything to be understood.[30]

JASPERS' DOCTRINE OF CIPHERS

Now that we have clarified the character of the basic knowledge that Jaspers outlines, let us return to his principal distinction between the world and transcendence and to the absolute need for human existence to establish a relationship to transcendence. In phenomenological terms, there is an infinite wealth of notions, images, and concepts of transcendence, in which people have expressed their "origins of faith" in the course of history. The myths of the people are the first stage of these notions of transcendence, followed by the ideas of the one and only God, the personal God, the incarnate God. Originally, people not only believed in these notions and ideas; they also believed that this faith itself was a knowledge and that what was thought of in these notions was physical reality in the world. Thanks to the purer concept of knowledge that has been acquired through the modern sciences, we realize today that there cannot be a knowledge in this field in the sense of a science. Indeed, when we honestly acknowledge the basic philosophical idea (most clearly developed by Kant) that it is in principle impossible to grasp transcendence, we are compelled to admit that there will never be an answer to the question of what transcendence "really" is, and that it is impossible to take too seriously the second commandment in the Bible: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

But how can we live with this not-knowing? And what are we to do with the images of God that we have inherited, if all of them are incorrect?

It is precisely here that Jaspers' doctrine of ciphers takes its starting point. It is undeniable that the religions' myths and ideas of God, just like the metaphysical speculations of the philosophers about the primal one, the absolute, and the totality of the world, belong to the facts of the world that we experience. Hence they can be investigated—historically, sociologically, psychologically, or in some other way—just like other facts. If, however, we see them from the perspective of the impartial observer only as these facts, we learn nothing about transcendence. All that we learn is what human beings have believed and how they have conceived of transcendence. We begin to understand only when we are awake and the "basic question" is triggered in us: Where does the world come from? Who are we?[31] This may happen when we are confronted with a situation from which we see no escape, a situation in which our being or our non-being is at stake,[32] for

example, in view of immeasurable suffering or of a guilt that cannot be made good.[33] When we are seized with despair in such situations (which Jaspers calls "borderline situations"), and we no longer see any meaning in what we are doing, we can suddenly realize, when we search for help or consolation in these images and ideas, that they open what we might call a window onto transcendence, and that the light that falls on us from this window guides us on our path.[34] We can experience this new brightness as a calm that enters into us, a calm in which we become certain of what we must do here and now. It is as if these images and ideas had a further, deeper meaning that lies beyond every meaning that can be explained, a significance that transcends our subjective opinion and our will, something that addresses us in the depth of our soul and transforms us.[35]

Where this takes place, according to Jaspers, a cipher is involved. Everything that appears in the world (including my empirical inner world) can be a cipher—an event, a flower, a stone, a picture. Jaspers writes in his autobiography that the sea, with its infinite horizons, became a cipher of transcendence for him when he was a little boy, the cipher of a reality that lies behind the infinite breadth of the horizons that keep on opening up.[36] Where this happens to us, as thinking beings, we have a deep need to understand and fathom what that which we experience as a cipher means for us.[37] But we can do this only by attempting to formulate and communicate our interpretations of its meaning, and to make certain of them in the dialogue with the other.

The ideas and images of God that have come down to us are attempts of this kind, by human beings of the past, to make the transcendence communicable they had experienced in ciphers. The contents of these ciphers were the ultimate authority for people at that time. But "now they need an authority over them that decides whether truth speaks through them at this moment and within these boundaries." This authority is "philosophizing and the life praxis of existence."[38] When we attempt to reread anew the traditional images and ideas, filtered through this superior authority, and to make them our own by philosophizing (in the awareness of their character as ciphers), they in turn can become new ciphers that affect us profoundly.[39]

Jaspers gives us examples of how ciphers are read, by allowing us to share in his own struggle with the great European and non-European ciphers of the divinity. One particularly memorable example is his interpretation of the biblical story of Job.[40] The Jews unquestioningly believed in a personal God. For Job, he becomes the great "Thou" against whom he can level accusations because of all the terrible things that have happened to him—to a man who is truly righteous. This provokes the opposition of his theologian friends, to whom it seems impossible that God could be unjust. At the close of the story, God himself gets involved in this debate. He turns on the theologians, but he does not agree with Job either. He asks him a question of his own: Where were you, Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth? For

Jaspers, this speech is a new cipher of transcendence, the cipher of a God who transcends all accusations and all human ideas about a personal God, a God whose unknowability and unfathomability must be accepted. This story appears prima facie to be about a debate between Job and his theological friends, in which each side endeavors to prove its case and to have its case accepted by the other side. In reality, however, as Jaspers interprets it, it is a battle about the true understanding of God, where one cipher stands against another: the cipher of the personal God who can be accused, on the one hand, against the cipher of a God who transcends the human category of personality, on the other. We could call this a purer image of transcendence.[41] For Jaspers, it is the ciphers themselves that do battle with each other, and Job's real fight is his inner struggle to determine on which side he himself wants to stand, and can stand.

But what is the point of the ciphers, if the truth transcends every cipher, and no cipher can be the ultimate cipher? Would not a simple silence be the most appropriate way to draw near to transcendence? Or to take the Buddhist path of a thinking beyond all ciphers, a thinking that destroys itself in order to make space for a 'truth' that is attainable only through life-long, consciousness-altering exercises in meditation and contemplation?"[42] This question confronts us with a basic decision. The question whether or not I wish to go beyond the ciphers means ultimately: Do I want the world, or do I not want it? Here, according to Jaspers, one must make a fully clear decision about "where one stands and lives." For Jaspers, it is clear where "we Westerners" stand:[43] we do not want to deny the world, but to live in it. We want this world, while at the same time wanting to get beyond the ciphers—"we love those speculations that make us free and, as it were, allow us for one second to feel the place, where the ciphers cease to exist."[44] But we are finite beings tied to meaning, and we can experience the meaning of what we do and think in this world only through ciphers that make known to us (in an ambiguous manner) what ought to be important to us.[45] It is only by means of them that we can assure ourselves of transcendence.[46] Each cipher is like a transparent stone through which a gleam of the light of transcendence shines on us, and this means that each cipher is equally precious. However, not everyone is capable of seeing the light that is hidden in a cipher, and this means that ciphers always exist only for each individual. Where one person sees a very bright light, another finds everything opaque and dark. And we never know whether a cipher may perhaps be a deceptive will-o'-the-wisp. A cipher is completely dead when someone believes that he already possesses transcendence by possessing the objectivity of the cipher, when an object of this world is already thought to be transcendence. This is the deeper reason why Jaspers holds that the doctrine of ciphers is incompatible with faith in revelation, and that there is an unbridgeable antithesis between faith in the God who becomes incarnate and philosophical faith.

Since no cipher satisfies us fully, our yearning for the true light leads us to search continuously for other ciphers as yet unknown to us, which might perhaps help us to attain an even greater brightness, an even purer image of transcendence. But we learn about these other ciphers only when we enter into dialogue with other people and ask them about the ciphers in which transcendence has manifested itself to them, across all the boundaries of time and cultures. Our task is to understand these ciphers ourselves and to examine whether we can make them our own, or must reject them.[47]

Our lot in life means that the ground on which we stand a priori, and from which we undertake this examination, is the historical ground of our own culture. Jaspers believes that for us Westerners, this common ground is the Bible as "the literary expression of the unique religious experience of a millennium."[48] Alongside Greek antiquity, the Bible remains the indispensable source of our world of ciphers, the precious good that must be salvaged for the future, since it is only in one single historicity that we can live existentially.[49] This is not because we possess superior knowledge, but because we know that "the unique common absolute truth" cannot exist for us human beings, and that even when we "take inner existential paths that are essentially different," we can achieve greater clarity about our own path only in the confrontation and struggle with these alternative paths.[50]

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS THAT ALLOW US TO READ CIPHERS

In order to take the first step toward understanding ciphers and realizing their intellectually comprehensible meaning and its consequences, we need the philosophical method of reading ciphers that Jaspers exemplifies in his writings. But each one must take the decisive second step for himself—it is here that Jaspers the philosopher of existence speaks. One must keep on asking which cipher one wants to wage one's life on.[51] This testing requires reason and truthfulness. Reason prescribes the method, in view of the decisive goal: we must leave nothing out and forget nothing, and so continue to stay ahead with the One. If we do this honestly, no cipher can satisfy us on its own.

Let us take as our example Jaspers' discussion of our attitude to the misery and the evil in the world. Rage at the creator of the world is one of the ciphers in response to this; the idea of a world harmony is another cipher. Each of these claims to be the only true cipher. "But is not rage linked to dishonesty, when it absolutizes itself? And is not the rejection of rage dishonest, when it fails to hear the truth that lies in the language of rage? Is not the idea of harmony dishonest, when it covers things up? And is not the rejection of harmony dishonest, when it treats the harmony in the world as null and void?" The result of this examination is that there is no response to the

question of the misery and the evil in the world that is free of contradictions and takes account of all the facts. "Every construction of being in a cipher of the totality breaks down if it claims to comprehend this totality. All that remains is the comprehending of the incomprehensibility."[52]

This example illustrates how ciphers are read on the basis of reason and with a sound methodology. The aim is liberation, by enabling us to become masters of the ciphers. Instead of letting ourselves too quickly be taken captive by a cipher, we bring into play the factors that argue against this cipher: In our example, we play off rage at the unjust God against praise of the world's harmony. We can rely only on reason, which shows us that both answers are wrong because they lead us to make a judgment that transcends our knowledge, and that we therefore cannot ever make.[53] False generalizations will no longer lead us astray, once we have realized that whenever we attempt to think of transcendence, we are held fast in the categories of our understanding, which is directed to the realities of this world; we are held fast in our ability to draw distinctions, and are consequently not in the place we were attempting to reach by means of thought—that is to say, the transcendence that supersedes all divisions.[54] Where we thought we had the truth, all that we have is a cipher.

But how are ciphers to guide us, if our methodical examination invariably ends with seeing through ciphers as ciphers, and playing them off against each other? We are left dangling in the air, unless—beyond logic—the second step too is taken: the "ethical decision," the "reality of the existence on which the eloquence of these ciphers has an effect."[55] Reading accepted ciphers is no substitute for the decision; it is only a preparation for our decisions, or a remembrance of them. But how can a cipher guide us in our decisions—and this is what Jaspers maintains—if we ourselves must decide by which cipher we want to let ourselves be led? Jaspers' answer is a further cipher: ciphers speak to us, and there are ciphers "that we find attractive, and others that we find repulsive; ciphers that help us to recognize ourselves, and others where we feel: it is not I who excogitate such ciphers."[56] Listening to ciphers thus means reflecting on "what we truly are and want to be," on whether or not we can accept the ciphers on the basis of our "being." This is why the decision in favor of a cipher is always a decision in favor of something that has already been decided for us. Jaspers often repeats that it is as if I were given to myself as a present or (in the opposite experience) as if I lacked myself.[57]

The meaning of ciphers and speculations about being lies exclusively in their existential significance, and this means that the criteria of truth, which go beyond logic, are also existential. According to Jaspers, ciphers "can be true only in connection with the truth of the thinking person. Their truth is manifested in the way in which this person loves, is affected, chooses, acts, behaves."[58] Ultimately, therefore, criticism of the ciphers is always "self-

criticism, because it is only in one's own self that there is the experience of what happens with the thoughts in me. In my reflection, I assess their effect, I acknowledge or reject the states of mind and feelings that rise up in me with these thoughts. I shed light on them, I make them my own, or I give them admittance or fight against them."[59]

BACK TO OUR INITIAL QUESTION

I have postulated that Jaspers' doctrine of ciphers is relevant today. Wherein does this relevance lie? Let me recall the dilemma of our post-secular world, sketched out above: we have made our home in the merely rational thinking of the sciences, reduced reality to the investigable world of facts, and emptied the public sphere of all contents with a religious significance. We have thereby cut ourselves off from transcendence and expelled the existential questions that move us into the communicationless subjective inner sphere, in which it is up to each one to determine how he gets on with his God. With his doctrine of ciphers, Jaspers opens the window again onto that which is other. He shows that the idea of transcendence is not a subjective fantasy, a cranky eccentricity, but is rather an intellectual necessity—which, however, manifests itself to the individual only if he gets involved with the inherited myths, images, and metaphysical ideas in their full concreteness, not in a translated form that is empty of content, but in that form in which they have spoken to people of the past.[60]

Jaspers thus gave to philosophy in the post-metaphysical age its object back, and with his new way of reading the old texts, he found the language that makes it once again possible to speak of transcendence while still respecting its distance and unattainability. He has made us more aware of the valid meaning of ciphers, and of what we are doing when we read them. He thus offers the religions an instrument whereby they can understand themselves better.[61] He frees us from untested speculations, from the dictatorial thinking that lays claim to power, from the fetters of language, and from subjection to one's own ideas. The question of the true nature of transcendence is the common point of reference that unites all who enter into this dialogue;[62] it is the One—for all. What separates them is the fact that ultimately, each individual must find for himself the cipher in which transcendence shows itself to him. This is the war of the ciphers that—to speak in ciphers—must be waged in human beings.[63] As long as we live, this war of the ciphers cannot be brought to an end. But no matter how fundamental the differences between what individuals believe in may be, they can be counted as rational differences, as differences within the boundaries of reason.

This has decisive political consequences. Since there are only ciphers for the individual human being in the sphere of faith, and no objective truths for everyone, no one can claim a privilege, a preferential position, or even an interpretative monopoly in questions of transcendence: transcendence is equally distant from everyone.[64] There are no teachers of transcendence, only pupils—and everyone can be a pupil. Peace between the religions seems possible on the basis of this insight, but not the rotten peace of a misunderstood tolerance that merely puts up with the existence of the other. This is a peace that demands struggle and intellectual debate, a peace in which everyone depends on the other, because it is only in the debate with the other that we can achieve greater clarity about our own path. Those who share this faith form a worldwide invisible community. They are united by this faith alone, not by specific contents of faith. It would be fatal to seek unity via contents, even within one single church. That would mean politicization; it would mean regarding this invisible community as a state, since it is only in the state "that one must come together as a totality." It is only in the state that "Everyone is a citizen, no one is excluded. No one can exclude himself."[65]

We must, however, not fail to mention the demands that this task makes of the individual. It demands the will to find one's own path to transcendence anew, over and over again. It demands the honesty that holds fast to the strict distinction between that which one can know and that which one cannot know, but can only believe; and it demands the courage and the strength to endure the objective uncertainty that is linked with all the questions of faith. We must resist the inherent urge to seek objectivity and stable places that one can hold fast in this world. We must refuse to yield to our desire to identify a phenomenon of empirical reality—a text, an authority, or a person—with transcendence itself, or with the voice of transcendence. This intensifies to the uttermost the seriousness of one's own decision.[66] Are not such demands too lofty to be the foundation of a new worldwide thinking. Does Jaspers' philosophy make excessive demands of the human being?

Jaspers would say: It is not I who make the demands, it is human existence itself that makes these demands of us, or more precisely, it is the intellectual and real situation into which the human being's own thinking and acting "have brought him, although he neither wanted this nor suspected it."[67] And truthfulness demands that we admit this, no matter how hard it may be for us.[68] We may be crushed by the excessive demand, but it can also cause all the powers of existence and of reason to put forth their shoots from us.[69]

NOTES

1. This chapter was originally published as Anton Hügli, "The Relevance of Karl Jaspers' Philosophy of Religion," Argumenta Philosophica 2/2016, pp. 35–50. Reprinted with permission.
2. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophische Autobiographie* (München: Piper, 1977), 112–19.
3. Like philosophy, theology is concerned, not with the knowledge of the objects in the world, but with "jenem Ursprung, aus dem wir leben." This is why its object is faith, although a fundamentally different faith. Karl Jaspers and Heinz Zahrnt, *Philosophie und Offenbarungsglaube* (Hamburg: Furche, 1953), 36f.
4. On this, see Anton Hügli, "Jaspers in Basel – Philosophischer Glaube und Offenbarungsglaube," in *Philosophie in Basel. Prominente Denker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts,* eds. Emil Angehrn and Wolfgang Rother (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2011), 104–38.
5. This lecture is the basis of the book published by Piper Verlag: Karl Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube* (München: Piper, 1948).
6. The controversy with Bultmann is documented in the book that they jointly wrote: *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung* (München: Piper, 1954).
7. This book was preceded by Jaspers' essay "Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der christlichen Offenbarung" in the Festschrift for Heinrich Barth, *Philosophie und christliche Existenz* (Basel and Stuttgart: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1960), 1–92. These two writings, together with the informative dialogue between Karl Jaspers and Heinz Zahrnt—*Philosophie und Offenbarungsglaube* (Hamburg: Furche, 1963)—are included in Vol. I/3 of the *Karl Jaspers Gesamtausgabe*, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, (*Basle*: Schwabe 2016). This volume contains a detailed account of the genesis of these works and of their significance in the overall context of Jaspers' œuvre.
8. Of course the extent to which religion matters varies significantly from country to country (Cf. *Politik und Religion. Zur Diagnose der Gegenwart*, eds. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Heinrich Meier (München: Beck, 2013).
9. According to Jaspers, this is praying with one another, rather than a talking with one another (*Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 110).
10. See Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* II, Berlin, Suhrkamp 2012, 155.
11. An allusion to Heinrich Böll's short story "Doktor Murkes gesammeltes Schweigen."
12. See Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* II, 155ff.
13. Ibid., 318.
14. Jürgen Habermas, "Politik und Religion," in *Politik und Religion: Zur Diagnose der Gegenwart*, eds. Graf and Meier, 291.
15. In the contemporary debate about religion and politics, there are few who have seen this as clearly as Heinrich Meier. See his epilogue in Graf and Meier, 311–13.
16. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 7.
17. The world is that which encompasses the three encompassing dimensions in which we exist: existence (*Dasein*), consciousness as such, and spirit (*Geist*). The world never exists as my vis-à-vis. It is not an object of knowledge, "but only an idea, as a task for research" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 122).
18. Transcendence in the strict sense applies only to existence (*Existenz*), not to the knowing subject in the modes of that which encompasses (see Ibid., 138).
19. It is a "possible existence" because existence (*Existenz*) is never a defined "being thus," but always an "ability to be." It is that which I can become through my decisions (on the definition of existence, see Ibid., 118–21).
20. Ibid., 149.
21. Ibid., 147.
22. Ibid., 147, 148.
23. Ibid., 148.
24. Ibid., 149. What Jaspers here now calls a basic knowledge is a more concise version of his periechontology, his doctrine of that which encompasses, which he sets out extensively in *Von der Wahrheit* (München: Piper, 1947).
25. Ibid., 149f.

26. In the years immediately following 1945, Jaspers was still attempting to define the philosophical faith itself in terms of contents, in the form of the three principles of faith that are first formulated in *Der philosophische Glaube* (München: Piper, 1948), 32: "Gott ist"; "Es gibt die unbedingte Forderung"; "Die Welt hat ein verschwindendes Dasein zwischen Gott und Existenz." In his *Einführung in die Philosophie* (München: Piper, 1954), 83: he adds two further principles: "der Mensch ist endlich und unvollendbar; der Mensch kann in Führung durch Gott leben." As the concept of the cipher moves again into the center for Jaspers (he had first made use of it in the third volume of his *Philosophie*, 1932), he bids farewell to all definitions in terms of contents, even where these contents are very general. This means that the philosophical faith itself changes in his eyes into a knowledge that is raised far above the clash of the powers of faith.

27. Commentary by Anton Hügli: "Truth" here means the search for truth.

28. Ibid., 150.

29. Ibid., 151.

30. Ibid., 151.

31. Karl Jaspers, *Die Chiffern der Transzendenz*, ed. A. Hügli, H. Saner (Basel: Schwabe, 2011), 12. Hereafter *Chiffern*.

32. Ibid., 41.

33. Borderline situations do not suddenly crop up. As basic situations, they are always already present, although we are not conscious of this.

34. See Ibid., 80: ciphers become ideas when they "sprechen in der Not, in den großen Entscheidungen unseres Daseins." "Nur in den je *geschichtlich einmaligen* Augenblicken ursprünglichen Vergewisserns und Entscheidens der Existenz können die Chiffern ihre wirklich erhellende Kraft haben" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 430). Die Wahrheit der Chiffern bezeugt sich durch keine Erkenntnis, keine Einsicht, sondern allein durch ihre erhellende Kraft in der existentiellen Geschichte des je Einzelnen" (Ibid., 173).

35. "Die Wahrheit der Chiffer, die die Entscheidung der Existenz im Augenblick erhellt, aber nicht erzwingt, hat ihr Maß daran, ob dieser Augenblick mit seinem Entschluss als die eigene Entscheidung für mich immer anerkannt und übernommen wird." Instead of the "Identität meiner mit mir selbst," however, it is also possible for "eine Trennung von mir" to occur, when I no longer want to be what I was. I must indeed take on this task, "aber ich vollziehe die Trennung in einer Umkehr meiner selbst" (Ibid., 173).

36. Karl Jaspers, *Schicksal und Wille*, *Autobiographische Schriften*, ed. Hans Saner, (München: Piper, 1967), 15f.

37. Natural phenomena do not refer directly to transcendence; they can also be experienced as demonic powers. They become ciphers only when "das so Erfahrene aus unserer Freiheit ergriffen, dadurch mit uns identisch werden kann," when they through "die Helle der Vernunft in das Gesetz des Tages hineingenommen werden" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 162).

38. Ibid., 154.

39. "Die Einsicht in das Wesen der Chiffern ist eine Voraussetzung für die Chance, dass die Chiffern ihre existentielle Kraft und den Reichtum ihrer Sprache wiedergewinnen" (Ibid., 169).

40. Ibid., 331–51.

41. "Pure" here means being free of all sensuous components, free of all admixtures and limitations that are generated by the attempt to absolutize contents that are drawn from experience, and to make these contents the totality (Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 39). The task today is "die Verwandlung aller leibhaftigen Mythen in Chiffern als Sprache der Transzendenz. Die Reinheit der Transzendenz, unbefleckt von ihrer falschen Realisierung in der Endlichkeit von Raum und Zeit." (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 431).

42. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 97.

43. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 421; *Chiffern*, 97.

44. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 98

45. Ibid., 98.

46. See Ibid., 45—The metaphor of a light that falls in from outside expresses an idea that Jaspers repeatedly emphasizes: ciphers are not projections of the human being. There is always something else, something objective, that speaks out of them (see Ibid., 46). They are both something produced by us and something that has an effect on us, but only "im konkreten Augenblick, wo der Mensch Entschlüsse fasst, liebt, festhält, mit sich selbst identisch wird." We can no longer breathe, if we have nothing more—no idea, no concept (53). "Der Wille zur Verwirklichung in der Welt ist der Wille zum Hören der Chiffern" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, ct., 426). The experience of the ciphers "involves everything, the shedding of light on the meaning and goal of our life" (432). "Das Objektive und das Subjektive sind untrennbar. Das Objektive der Chiffer ist wesentlich nur, wenn es existentielles Gewicht hat; als bloßer Sachverhalt wird es leere Begrifflichkeit. Das Subjektive geht den existentiellen Ursprung an, der im Objektiven der Chiffern sich selber hell wird; als bloß subjektiv wird es Gegenstand eines Psychologisierens" (309).

47. This is not an arbitrary choice. Instead, it is something that the ciphers do with us: "unser eigenes existentielles Schicksal ist es, welche Chiffern in welchen Augenblicken plötzlich uns ansprechen" (Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 86).

48. Jaspers and Zahrnt, *Philosophie und Offenbarungsglaube*, 102

49. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 421; *Chiffern*, 97. In his eyes, as we have seen above, the fact that we are Westerners could also be an argument for rejecting the path of Buddhist mysticism.

50. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 99.

51. One must make ciphers of one's own, but each one can do this only for himself (ibid., 52). "Wir sind mit verantwortlich für uns selbst durch die Weise, in der wir die Chiffern denken" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 373).

52. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 383.

53. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 37, 40.

54. One cipher for this necessary illusion is Peter Damian's speculation about the omnipotence of God, who is able to do things that appear absurd to us—for example, to bring it about that Rome has never existed (see Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 81–84).

55. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 374. "Die Prüfung vollzieht sich nicht durch Logik allein, sondern mit der eigenen Existenz, die aus unserem Grunde den Wahrheitsanspruch stellt." (ibid., 380). This "other," which, "selber nicht rational, uns im Verhältnis zu uns bestimmt," is what Kant calls honesty (ibid.).

56. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 41.

57. Ibid.

58. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 396.

59. Ibid., 397.

60. Objection: If God is only a cipher, is he just as powerful as in his bodily form? Jaspers replies: much more powerful, since he is accepted without illusion or false motives (Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 67).

61. This is how Jaspers would have replied to Habermas' demand that religion must be enlightened about its own self.

62. Cf.: "Wer den einen Gott oder das Eine der Transzendenz hört, kann in der Welt dem Einen sich nur dadurch nähern, dass in der Welt Einheit entsteht, vorhin Einheit mit mir selber, Identität mir mir, jetzt Einheit unter Menschen, Kommunikation. Was verbindet, das führt zum Einen" (Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 55).

63. Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 103, 47.

64. Cf.: I cease to lay claim to possess God and "meine Kämpfe in der Welt in das Kleid eines Kampfes Gottes gegen das Gottlose und Widergöttliche zu kleiden" (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 428).

65. Jaspers and Zahrnt, *Philosophie und Offenbarungsglaube*, 71.

66. The ciphers allow us no escape and no rest, because they intensify the seriousness so strongly (Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 375).

67. Ibid., 473.

68. On this, cf. Jaspers' emphasis on the difficulty of the demand that we renounce physicality and understand everything existentially, as a possibility from ourselves and in ourselves (e.g., the image of hell) (Jaspers, *Chiffern*, 67f.).

69. Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, 473. [English translation: Brian McNeil.]

Chapter Fourteen

Philosophy, Prophecy, and Existential Hope

Marcel in the Broken World of the Twenty-First Century

Jill Hernandez

Imagine a country run by an egomaniac; someone who is nepotistic, xenophobic, often irrational, yet persuasive, adored by a core group of citizens, and lauded and funded by the elite right. Imagine the role of philosophers in that country—how they use their abilities to highlight, engage, and provoke deep discussion about moral and political issues in that same country in which free speech is under threat, and a free press is called the "enemy." The image you have in mind might be that of Nazi Germany, and you might have been thinking about how Gabriel Marcel called philosophers to be gate-keepers between humanity and truth, to facilitate a commitment to preserving the dignity of humanity while under attack, and to ensure that concrete philosophy was truly engaged with the issues that threaten existential well-being.

Although there are obvious political and social differences, certainly, between the time in which Marcel wrote and today, the political tensions between the pursuit of truth and party expediency that subsist in today's social environment bear striking similarities. Philosophers in this modern age face similar obstacles—not only for their roles in the university and higher learning, but in society and the public sphere. This chapter uses the work of Marcel to argue that philosophy's main function in this challenging time for the free exchange of ideas is to be a gate-keeper by fulfilling what he deemed the prophetic call of philosophy: to call out action that denigrates, to concern itself with concrete moral action that fights against the ameliorative devastation of suffering in the world, and to clearly highlight, communicate, and

exemplify hopeful action. (Marcel thinks of this call as "prophetic" because it requires historical knowledge, but also an ability to project future possibilities to others.)

This chapter will discuss the gate-keeping function of the philosopher for Marcel, will demonstrate why Marcel thought the philosopher's call is (at root) prophetic in a secular sense, and will argue that the prophetic gate-keeping required of philosophers is always a project for ethics, with an ultimate end to confer dignity back to those who suffer. If the prophetic call is a call to moral action, that action will orient the self toward humanity. Moral action oriented outward, when married to authentic, meaningful selfhood, can provide an existential, ethical indubitable—that connected lives in a community can find and create meaning (even in the face of suffering) by being cooperatively conjoined, adapted, and oriented toward something other than itself.[1] In short, philosophy's gate-keeping means it provides engaged, sustaining hope to the world.

PHILOSOPHERS AS GATE-KEEPERS; GATE-KEEPERS AS PROPHETS

While it is impossible here to give a comprehensive assessment of the existential ground of human dignity (and so, of morality) in Marcel's work, if I can sketch out an outline of how philosophy can respond to Marcel's call to concretely respond to that dignity by mitigating the impact of atrocities today, I will have succeeded in providing fodder for future conversation about engaged philosophy in the twenty-first century. Philosophers, as gate-keepers, should want morality to function to guide and explain behavior that relates for and about others, and so to develop an ethics that evidences the relation between participants of human action. The gate-keeping function of philosophers centers on their commitment to truth, at least truth of a particular sort. Whereas most thinking in the world relies upon primary reflection (for Marcel, means/ends reasoning that is necessary to solve problems), the world itself is not a problem to be solved but is centered upon relationships (which require secondary reflection, which is about meaning rather than function). Philosophers are uniquely situated to remind the world that meaningful life is a mystery upon which to reflect, and so they are obligated to demonstrate what has true existential value. The words of the philosophers in this present age, then, will stand in constant juxtaposition against the ever-growing fetish of materialist technological advancement that seeks power at all costs.

The fetish fails to capture that there is nothing within power which can truly dominate or even grasp reality.[2] This is reflected today in the fact that people are so fascinated by the power of human technology that they make it

an end in itself and are unwilling to subject it to any values, even the value of truth. But to reject the value of truth logically undermines the alleged truth of every world view, even that of Nietzsche, in which reality is nothing but the will to power. (The irreconcilability of the will to power and the will to truth is itself one manifestation of our broken world, on Marcel's view.)[3]

Truth for philosophers, in a climate of competing, alternative facts, must transcend the commodification of whomever is attempting to get their candidate elected, whomever is putting themselves at the apex of control, and whomever is selling the next best gadget to ostensibly bring people together. Although a notorious luddite and curmudgeon about technology in general (Marcel refused for years to use a typewriter, even, though before his death, he finally acquiesced to allowing one in his apartment for his transcriber), his warnings seem prescient even decades after he died—a sort of prophecy for the gatekeepers. He writes, "Technical progress seems to many to be the necessary and infallible way to obtain human wellbeing and happiness, and the latter is identified with pleasure and satisfaction on a material level" The result of all this progress is what Marcel calls a "broken world," a "world divided" and "at war with itself."[4]

By "broken," "divided," and "at war with itself" Marcel is referring to existential states of being in which we treat others (and are treated by others) as mere objects, functions, and problems to be solved. But, he also means that our brokenness leads to literal schisms and war. Marcel's generation lived through the rise and ultimate deployment of nuclear weapons, and our generation (like his) constantly faces the threat of their use. The possibility of world war, Marcel understood, is a state of being in which humanity can actually eradicate itself. "The fruits of our amazing technological progress are weapons of mass destruction possessed by many states whose relationships with each other are primarily in terms of power, often blatantly manifest in the desire of conquest."[5]

The contemporary despair, the existential groaning of the age, seems to be a stage past the "widely diffused pessimism" that Marcel identified as rampant in his time, and is the natural consequence of the continued devolution of the broken world. This modern age differs from Marcel's at least in that technologically-enhanced weapons (chemical, biological, nuclear, and digital) are proliferated among state and non-state actors. Ours uses atrocities and the threat of atrocities to subject others into submission. And this age uses the fear of acute suffering to commodify whatever is being sold to the mass public.[6] Philosophers today have the benefit of recent history and a knowledge of power structures, however, as tools with which to stand in the gap, between those who would perpetuate atrocity and those who would suffer from it. On a smaller scale, philosophers are able to name the inevitable despair that comes to those who put their faith in material things, since there is no material thing which is capable of helping the powerless contend

with the fundamental loss of meaning in the world. Techniques to solve all problems lead to devaluing or even ignoring the urgent human demand which prompts a person to be a philosopher—to seek truth about meaning of existence and reality as a whole.

But philosophers must do more today than seek truth. Philosophers are those, for Marcel, who respond to a *call* about truth—a call which incorporates the vocation of naming evil, fostering meaning, and providing hope to the world. Herein lies the prophetic nature of philosophy's gate-keeping. In *Creative Fidelity,* Marcel writes, "Hope consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all inventories and all calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me. . . . I assert that a given order shall be reestablished, that reality is on my side in willing it to be so. I do not wish: I assert; such is the prophetic tone of true hope."[7]

One reason why philosophy is, among other callings, best suited to communicate hope, is that (for Marcel), philosophy's focus is fundamentally concrete, about the world outside of the thinker. Marcel writes that "strange as it may seem, in this matter it is true to say that it [vocation] comes both from me and from outside me at one and the same time; or rather, in it we become aware of that most intimate connection between what comes from me and what comes from outside, a connection which is nourishing or constructive and cannot be relinquished without the ego wasting away and tending towards death."[8] Let us remember that for the philosopher, everything is in some way a trial, "How could the philosopher fail to be almost overwhelmed by the disconcerting multiplicity of the empirical data which has to be taken into account, for the fear of falling into arbitrary implications? Nevertheless, [the philosopher must] overcome such fears; there is such a thing as philosophical courage."[9]

The courage of philosophers requires the ability to communicate effectively to those who are not philosophers, which also, in part, requires philosophers in this century to examine how we do philosophy. Framing hope, for example, around the formal constraints of a self-imposed reason inverts the way we relate to others. Rather, for Marcel, the situatedness of the other produces a normative encompassing tie between persons, the result of which is a conceptual and pragmatic connection between my act and those it impacts. Since hope requires a community, philosophy that is distinct from the concrete suffering of, and loss of meaning for, others has a value akin to intelligent navel-gazing. If the philosopher is committed to truth, and gate-keeping is a consequence of this commitment, the philosopher must also act to foster ties between others, "The other, in so far as he is other, only exists for me in so far as I am open to him, in so far as he is a Thou. But I am only open to him in so far as I cease to form a circle with myself, inside which I somehow place the other, or rather his idea; for inside this circle, the other becomes the idea of the other, and the idea of the other is no longer the other

qua other, but the other *qua* related to me."[10] Being open to the other and fostering ties between others is a distinctive leadership quality that the philosopher today can embrace, and, it seems *should* embrace if philosophy is able to effectuate meaningful change in response to the world's problems today.

Philosophical leadership might demand the philosopher to ask, in the words of the legal scholar in Scripture, "Who, then, is my neighbor?" For Marcel, the question is slightly altered, "Who, then, is the other?" Marcel would argue that the other is the one to whom I can relate in such a way as to be present—and this presence is unbound to the situation of the other—indeed, my presence is even more important for the person who is not able to reciprocate because of her situatedness. Marcel writes,

> I should be more inclined to say that circumstances may, and even must, inevitably arise in which I shall become aware of an anxiety which appears, upon reflection, to extend infinitely beyond these circumstances themselves, for it possesses a permanent nature, in that it is not bound to this or that *present.* Furthermore, as soon as it is formulated, it extends to all the beings whom I may consider to be participating in the same experience that I am. It is anxiety for all of us; and this is tantamount to saying that it is not at all a question of man in general—a mere fiction invented by a certain rationalism—but rather of my brothers and myself.[11]

Marcel isn't merely rejecting general, unspecific obligations to others. Rather, he rejects abstractions which create distance between the self and others. Moral difficulties ensue when I abstract away my obligations to others on the basis that I am not related to the other. Circumstances do not dictate who is related to me; rather, my ability to participate in the situation of the other connects me to the other such that I am obligated.

But, to what extent are philosophers called to participate, and to whom are philosophers obligated? Philosophy, Marcel observed, is a vocation which relies upon a subjective framework of experiences that ought to prescriptively engage with the world through hope. Existential hope, then, is the message that philosophers uniformly project to the world, but the way that they succeed is by facilitating an intersubjective "communion" with others—especially in a time in which secular values of life, dignity, and health are in crisis globally.[12] Poetry, art, and music all are subjectively experienced but share the power to transcend such "structural matters" to be present to non-aesthetes. Marcel contends philosophy similarly requires that a wide range of experts communicate goods to others, so that the voice of the philosopher is about and entwined with the end goal of providing fresh hope for the world.[13] The prophetic voice of philosophy, then, resides in its ability to ultimately *transmute* suffering through existential hope. If hope is a transmuted good, philosophy can help override atrocious harm.

The path to transmuting suffering through hope is difficult, since hope for Marcel involves the ability to provide opportunities for flourishing. The implication is that hope is contrasted with mere wishing, mere desire. Desire seeks assurance and finds the "facts" it needs by seeing what it wants to see. Hope, communicated properly in truth to the sufferer, is not optimistic. Hope tells the sufferer what is, and tells the sufferer if meaning is possible given the possibilities at hand. Desire is always narrowly focused and is not open to other options. Desire seeks one goal, and nothing else will do. Hope may assert itself and even be prophetic: it is essentially open to what may come, and recognizes that even though reality is fundamentally on its side, the way in which this fact may eventually show itself is uncertain.[14] Desire expresses what it thinks will provide fleeting satisfaction. The prophetic nature of hope, however, resides in its ability to see past the here and now, and to provide existential sustenance, "If time is in its essence a separation and as it were a perpetual splitting up of the self in relation to itself, hope on the contrary aims at reunion, at recollection, at reconciliation; in that way, and in that way alone, it might be called a memory of the future."[15]

Philosophers are uniquely positioned to communicate hope to those who suffer, because philosophers are called to face their own contingency, and protest against problematizing human existence. Our broken world, Marcel contends, rests on our immense refusal to reflect (for example, on the purpose and impact of all our techniques) and imagine (for example, the horrendous consequences of a nuclear holocaust or the abysmal poverty of most of humanity). When we refuse to reflect and imagine, the vanity of humanity allows us to become entangled in the grip of desire and fear.[16] To succeed in communicating hope to this broken, entangled world, the philosopher must set hope up as a way through-which we can protest against our self-induced fear, and the global silencing of human dignity. Hope communicated, in the face of dignity silenced, makes a demand on the community to reestablish an image of humanity as beings with "essential dignity" through integrity, availability, and freedom.[17] His basic claim is that humans long for "fullness," for a rich individual and communal existence that is affirmed through such universal values as love, peace, beauty, justice, and truth—they are the counterpoints to the broken world, typified by selfishness, alienation, and atomization. In an academic examination there are clearly formulated rules and the stage has been set in advance (for example, when we alter an argument to ensure its validity), whereas in the real world there is nothing of the kind despite the real world being the domain in which philosophers should have the most impact. In reality, the stage always remains to be set; in a sense everything always starts with zero, and the philosopher is not worthy of the name unless she not only accepts but wills this harsh necessity, and uses her considerable gifts to provide hope to those who can no longer engage in meaning-making.[18]

Ethics, then, as the pursuit of truth of value and being, resides in the concrete, rather than in transcendent principles. What this means for philosophy's prophetic call is that it too cannot be formalized objectively. Truth cannot be anonymous; it cannot be separated from the inner struggle and the spiritual development of the individual philosopher. In such an ontology, our responses in terms of anxiety, concern, guilt, and decision will not be excluded from the field of philosophical research by limiting the latter to a dispassionate, intellectual apparatus forged into conformity with phenomena.[19] Rather, the philosopher's reciprocity with a broken world, armed with the prophetic voice of hope, is not grounded in an *a priori* conception of moral reasons nor without an understanding of power relations in the world. A philosopher deals with realities that are "present" to his or her self and "not really separable from it," and so there is an organic connection between presence and mystery.[20] For Marcel, every human presence is mysterious when it is joined to the self in some way. For an image of this mysterious presence, Marcel utilizes the feeling and character of "the presence near one of a sleeping person, especially a sleeping child," and more generally of the proximity of any vulnerable unprotected person.[21] On one hand, (problematically), the person is simply an object completely in our power. But, as a mystery (as a Thou with whom we have ultimate union, we see him or her as "sacred,"[22] who must be related to on the basis of their dignity).

Morality, then, is fruitless if the self seeks only to foresee tangible happiness without the orientation of the self toward humanity.[23] Those who are suffering, however, are often unable to create individual existential meaning and sustaining it can be impossible—let alone being able to form substantive relationships with others toward community. Those who are in boundary situations instead must rely on those who have the privilege of being able to create meaning for themselves. Authentic presence that is required of those who have such privilege depends upon their ability to connect and identify with the vulnerable—a reciprocity, a *being with* others who may not be in a position to give anything. The terms of reciprocity mandate, for Marcel, that when others are reduced, so am I:

> On the other hand, the anxiety I feel is all the more metaphysical inasmuch as its object cannot be separated from me without I myself being annihilated. It is doubtless true to state that except for the problem of "what am I?" there are no other metaphysical problems, since in one way or another, they all lead back to it. And in the last analysis, even the problem of the existence of other conscious beings is reduced to it. Indeed, a secret voice I am unable to silence assures me that if others are not, then neither am I. I cannot grant myself an existence, while accepting that others be deprived of it; and here "I cannot" does not mean "I have not the right," but rather, "it is impossible for me." If others elude me, then I elude myself.[24]

Existential ethics flips ideal moral theory on its head: what is morally possible comes from what is lived (rather than from principles) and what is morally obligatory is grounded in the plight of others who are hopeless and their plight is directly tied to my own, as a philosopher. I am directly obligated despite proximity. If those who are able to act only rationalize about whether they should, the only likely results are indifference or dejection.

There is one potential danger in a philosophical gate-keeping model of discourse about atrocities. Philosophers, as gate-keepers, are solitary in their action. They are solitary in their resoluteness, and strive for consistency in their own journey while they act to build up the other. Marcel condemned abstract, solipsistic philosophy in the strongest terms, "A gravely erroneous conception of philosophy . . . has helped to strike it with barrenness; this erroneous conception consists in imagining that the philosopher as such ought not concern himself with passing events, that his job on the contrary is to give laws in a timeless realm, and to consider contemporary occurrences with the same indifference with which a stroller through a wood considers the bustling of an ant hill."[25] The philosopher's call particularly is focused outward (although, understood only after the philosopher has processed her call inwardly). Terence Sweeney explains that for Marcel, "To be called is not a solitary event but an unfolding drama of self-creation in response to interior exigencies and exterior summonses."[26]

The relational model of ethics imagined by Marcel is threatened by a politically pluralistic model, in which trust and friendship are undermined by scaling his view to include all differences among all people that we could interact with on a global scale. This can create a paralysis of action similar to abstraction, in which we distance ourselves from personal responsibility for suffering in the world by claiming distance from it. Similarly, multiple actors in political situations could argue that scaling a relational-model is pragmatically impossible, but such a view misses what Marcel wants for philosophy. Rather, philosophers ought not be daunted by the threat, since they are able to speak to collectives while attending to the needs of individuals. We do not ignore the needs of the global other by claiming solidarity with those who are proximate to us, just as we resist conforming to those who remain unaffected by the other. The focus instead should be about the facticity of those to whom the philosopher testifies, "The proper audience for philosophers are those who experience a deep metaphysical uneasiness or anxiety about the fundamental questions of their existence. . . . Philosophers are those who are driven by a deep inner demand for more open and receptive kinds of experience filled more with the light of truth and containing some answer to those ultimate questions and therefore some satisfaction of their metaphysical uneasiness."[27] Philosophy invites discord and difference, but insists on truth. The gate of truth opens to advocate for those who cannot do so for themselves, through a resoluteness of the will to unity.

The prophetic voice of philosophers that Marcel sets up stands in contrast to the gate-keeping of the powerful, in which ideas of the weak and powerless are suppressed. When Marcel writes that, "The responsibility of the philosopher is much less to prove than to show . . . where to show is to make ripen and thus to promote and transform,"[28] he demands that philosophy's showing result in active, receptive, present help to the suffering. But, whereas the gate-keeping of the powerful aims toward benefitting the powerful, the practice of philosophy comes at a cost to the philosopher. The spirit of truth is, simply, the philosopher's willingness to face the truth[29] in order to see the true value of things. Giving of oneself to advocate for others—even when, as Marcel thinks, we are obligated to do so despite our self-interest[30] —isn't kenotic self-sacrifice. Rather, it is the recognition that we are each contingent, in need of the other, so we can live with and for the other. To be a responsible philosopher one must never "be dissociated from his responsibility towards other men . . . a philosopher worthy of the name can develop and be properly defined only under the sign of fraternity."[31] To bear witness to justice or peace or any other ideal seems "possible only insofar as the idea is embodied in a historical situation."[32] No one would sacrifice themselves for an abstraction; peace or justice must be embodied in human persons or communities of persons to be worthy of our fidelity.[33]

Marcel knew the challenges of the philosopher-prophet. Philosophers then "tended ultimately to exclude . . . the idea that the mind can, as it were, objectively define the structures of reality and then regard itself as qualified to legislate for it. My own idea was, on the contrary, that the undertaking had to be pursued within reality itself, to which the philosopher can never stand in the relationship of an onlooker to a picture."[34] Rather than stand silent, gaping at the aesthetic dissonance of the suffering occurring today, philosophers instead are called to be gate-keepers, prophets of hope, to speak truth and confer meaning to those witnesses of concrete atrocity today, who are choked in the maw of collective helplessness.

NOTES

1. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I: Reflection and Mystery,* translated by G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company), 1950, 201–202, and Gabriel Marcel, *Problematic Man,* trans. B. Thompson (New York: Herder and Herder), 1967, 55.
2. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 27.
3. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 27.
4. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 22–23.
5. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 23–24.
6. One need not go farther than European washrooms to see this, in which basic supplies for refugees are being offered, under the banner of charity, at dozens of times retail price.
7. Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity,* trans. R. Rosthal (New York: Fordham University Press), 2002, 28.

8. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawfurd and Paul Seaton (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press), 2010, 123.
9. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume II: Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press), 2001, 143.
10. Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (Westminster, UK: Dacre Press), 1949, 107.
11. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 163–64.
12. Marcel, *Man against Mass Society*, 176–79.
13. Gabriel Marcel, "A Letter of Personal Reassurance." In *Fresh Hope for the World,* ed. Gabriel Marcel (London: Longmans), 1960.
14. Rosa Sleger, "Reflections on a Broken World." In *Hope against Hope: Philosophies, Cultures, and Politics of Possibility and Doubt,* eds. Janet Horrigan and Ed Wiltse (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Rodopi), 2010, 69.
15. Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 52.
16. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 36–37.
17. Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1963, 117 and 135.
18. See, for example, Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence,* trans. Manya Harari (London: Harvill Press), 1948, 93.
19. Bernard G. Murchland, "The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel." *The Review of Politics* 21, no. 2 (1959): 349–53.
20. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 216.
21. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 216.
22. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 217.
23. Marcel, *Problematic Man*, 105.
24. Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*, 16.
25. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 36.
26. Terence Sweeney, "Against Ideology: Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Vocation." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 16: no. 4, (Fall 2013): 179–203.
27. Thomas C. Anderson, "Notions of Being." *Philosophy Today*, 19: no. 1, (Spring 1975), 99.
28. Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom & Beyond*, 31.
29. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume I*, 61. Elsewhere he describes the "spirit of truth" as the willingness to dispose one's self to the light, which is (of course) open to all people.
30. Marcel, *Homo Viator,* 106.
31. Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom & Beyond*, 32.
32. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Volume II,* 131.
33. See Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Marcel's* Mystery of Being (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press), 2006, 160.
34. Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence,* 95–96.

Chapter Fifteen

The Unifying Force of Emotion

Human Nature, Community, and the World

Nikolaj Zunic

The thesis of my chapter is quite simple. I wish to argue that feeling is the source of unity in human life, whereas a certain kind of rational comportment has the tendency to divide and separate, even to alienate. The nature of this unity is multiform, being given expression in three pivotal areas: human nature, human community and the human being's relation to the world. The main inspiration behind this thesis is the thought of Gabriel Marcel. The best way, however, to begin my reflection on this topic is to present three concrete, not uncommon situations that will serve us well pedagogically.

In the first scenario, imagine a man named Karl who is an ambitious and successful lawyer for a large law firm. He handles very important cases and influential clients and works extremely hard, putting in long hours, including evenings and weekends. Karl is paid handsomely and has garnered a remarkable reputation in the law and business worlds for his outstanding accomplishments, a standing which puts him at the top of his game. However, over time all the stress and worry start to take their toll on Karl. He eventually experiences strange things happening to his body and mind: extreme exhaustion, insomnia, panic attacks, depression and anxiety. His perfect world starts to crumble and fall apart. He loses control of his life and believes that all is lost. Despair starts to take root in his person.

Now picture a second scenario. Trevor and Lisa have been married for a couple of years. They are former high school sweethearts. At that time, in high school, when they first started dating, Trevor was the captain of the football team and Lisa was president of the student council. They were both very popular at school. Years later they married, presumably because they loved each other. However, as time went on their relationship started to

deteriorate. Trevor was very critical and judgmental of Lisa, always pointing out her flaws and imperfections. He was never satisfied with anything that she did. Nonetheless, Trevor still desired Lisa sexually and because he was an imposing figure he usually got his way in the bedroom, even if Lisa was not in the mood. Although their sexual appetites were regularly satisfied, virtually always at Trevor's instigation, there were no children in this marriage because of their regular use of contraception. Lisa was terribly sad and lonely in this marriage; Trevor, by contrast, was irritable, angry and self-righteous. It was inevitable that Trevor and Lisa would get a divorce and go their separate ways.

Finally, I propose a third scenario. Samantha is a bright and sophisticated young woman, a recent graduate of a prestigious college. She is very well educated and has by all accounts a promising future ahead of her. The problem is that she is deeply disturbed by existential questions about the meaning of life. She feels lost and aimless and doesn't have a sense of the direction of her life. Furthermore, because she studied the natural sciences, she knows that the universe has no intrinsic meaning; we are simply products of The Big Bang and evolution. Since she was not raised in a religious household and has no faith in God or the spiritual realm, she believes that death is really the end of life, that there is no afterlife or heaven, certainly no immortality. Samantha earnestly believes that we are simply biological entities and nothing more and once our bodies cease to function we go out of existence. All of these thoughts brewing in her mind instill in her a profound uneasiness, a ceaseless agitation, that could be described as a state of not feeling at home in the world.

These three fictitious, hypothetical situations illustrate a common underlying problem: each of the persons featured here experiences a feeling of radical detachment, estrangement, and alienation. In the first case, Karl the lawyer is so preoccupied with his career aspirations that he ignores the impact that his workaholic lifestyle is exerting on his body. Eventually his body rebels and manifests physical illness, which shocks and scares Karl who is not used to these kinds of abnormal sensations and symptoms. In the second case, Trevor and Lisa, although married and living with the impression that they love each other, demonstrate conflict and a disharmony between themselves. There appears to be a disconnect between their ideas of what their relationship is all about and how the relationship exists in reality. There is an incongruence between thought and reality, speech and truth. It is not surprising that this false understanding of their marriage union ultimately succumbs to its disruption. And in the final example, that of the intelligent and savvy Samantha, there exists a feeling of alienation from the world. Samantha, despite and perhaps *because of* all her intellectual learning, cannot discern this life as meaningful and valuable. It all seems so pointless and absurd. She is truly detached from the context of her life in the world.

These experiences of division and separation have two elements in common: (a) they are caused by a certain intellectual disposition adopted by the persons in question; and (b) they exhibit or reveal themselves in negative feelings. One could argue that it is precisely the peculiar role which the intellect plays in directing and controlling these individuals' lives that occasions the negative emotions of fear, anxiety, betrayal, loss, anger, alienation, and despair. Expressed differently, the experiences of separation are feelings, albeit painful ones. The feelings underlie the divisions that arise between Karl and his body, between Trevor and Lisa, and between Samantha and the world. However, the only way that these feelings could be judged to be negative—that is, painful, hurtful, empty—is because they have a positive correlate. That is to say, feelings are negative only in contradistinction to positive feelings. Aside from the self-evident truth that positive feelings are positive because they make us feel good, we can recognize that if negative feelings are negative because they inhere in various experiences of fragmentation and disassociation, then the opposite must be true for positive feelings, that is, positive feelings are positive precisely in so far as they inhere in experiences of unity. A positive feeling is one which evinces some kind of human unity. This phenomenological analysis shows us that feelings seem to be quite fundamental human experiences. They seem to have something to do, in a quite basic way, to how human beings relate to their own bodies, to other human beings, and to the world. But what exactly is a feeling? How do we make sense of the nature of feelings?

We can learn much about the nature of feelings and how they are intrinsically unifying forces in human life from the thought of Gabriel Marcel who focused on feelings as paramount human realities. It first needs to be said that feelings are something felt or experienced, rather than things that are thought. The most important way to elucidate the essence of feelings is to contrast it with that which it is not. Feelings are not thoughts or ideas; feelings and thoughts are two different things. When I feel sad, for example, I am not thinking that I am sad. The thought that I am sad is something distinct and different from my actually feeling sad. Numerous other real world examples can be cited to illustrate this distinction. Teachers try to inculcate excitement, passion and interest in their students for the subjects which they teach but usually only impress upon their students the *notion* that they should be excited, passionate and interested.[1] Being interested or excited is a feeling, not a thought. Similarly, many religiously devout persons are taught to behave and live in certain ways congenial to their religious traditions, but often only have an intellectual comportment toward these teachings. For instance, it is a basic tenet in Christianity that one should *love* one's enemy, yet most Christians have difficulty moving beyond the *doctrine* that they should love and embrace warmly the person who has harmed them. It is another thing entirely to actually love one's enemy, which is so much more than the thought or duty to

act in this way. In other words, I could know that I should love my enemy without actually loving my enemy; the love is not to be equated with the thought. If this distinction between feeling and thought is correct, then we can situate the reality of feelings in the body rather than in the mind. It is my body which feels, whereas my mind thinks or reflects. Marcel is adamant that feeling has something fundamentally to do with my body, as this passage from his *Metaphysical Journal* tells us: "I am inclined to think that there can only be a body where there is the act of feeling."[2] Not only does feeling inhere in the body, but feeling reveals my body to me. I am a body only insofar as I feel.

The Western philosophical tradition shares this view that feelings are associated with the body. However, although intrinsically bodily, emotions are also regarded as produced or accompanied by some mental operation. The ancient Stoics taught that emotions were judgments which moved the body in certain ways;[3] medieval philosophers argued that emotions were produced from the inner sense called the cogitative sense (also called "particular reason") which alters the body in response to certain external stimuli;[4] and in modernity, Descartes defines emotions as modifications of the body caused by judgments.[5] It is interesting to observe the role that judgment plays in these traditional theories of feelings. On the one hand, it is considered obvious that we experience emotions, such as fear or jealousy, because of situations that we judge to be fear-inducing or jealousy-inducing. That is to say, emotions do not just arise spontaneously and for no good reason; they are prompted by our judgments about the nature of the objects and circumstances we encounter in life. One way of putting this is that there is always a *reason* why one experiences feelings. On the other hand, judgments aid the philosopher to categorize and classify emotions. Words and concepts are attached to feelings; descriptions are given about what emotions are. For example, Aristotle provides an entire taxonomy of emotions in his *Rhetoric*. Anger, Aristotle writes, is a desire, accompanied by pain, for what appears to be revenge for what appears to be an unmerited slight upon oneself or one's friends.[6] Aristotle also provides definitions and discussions of a slew of other emotions, such as friendliness, hatred, fear, shame, kindness, pity, envy, and emulation. It is not startling to discover that philosophers have a penchant for understanding and categorizing emotions, giving them labels and descriptions and defining their objects and nature.

Marcel is much more circumspect in his reflection on feelings. The twofold division of feelings into the idea or definition of the feeling and the feeling itself gives rise to two distinct but interrelated problems. When we contrast the mind and the body like this, suggesting that the judgment inheres in the mind and the feeling in the body, then it appears that we are relying on a dualistic model of human nature. We stated earlier that feelings, for Marcel, are not thoughts, an assertion that suggests that feelings are at odds with or

separated from thoughts, that the body is distinct from the mind. But this division only exists if we assume a peculiar attitude toward our emotions, an intellectual posture which seeks to cognize their essence. When we endeavour to turn our emotions into ideas, then we distort the emotion itself and create an unfortunate dualism in the process, that being between the idea of the emotion and the emotion itself. This first problem leads naturally to the second dilemma. When Marcel analyzes the domain of feeling, he is loathe to give us a classification of emotions, the way that other philosophers have done so. He does not ascribe names to particular feelings in order to help us to understand what they are and how to identify them. Why does he not do this? For two reasons. First, a feeling, strictly speaking, cannot be spoken of abstractly. A feeling is rooted in a person's body and as long as it is a feeling it is bodily. However, the moment that we start to talk about it, we are no longer treating the feeling as a feeling—that is, *feeling qua feeling*—but have removed it from its proper setting in the body and are now treating it as a universal concept which anybody can come to understand.[7] Marcel is adamant that feelings are specific to the bodies of individual persons. To use Marcel's language, feelings are concrete, not abstract. Second, it is a common human experience to be in error with respect to one's feelings. We often have mistaken ideas about what exactly we are feeling. Am I really hungry right now or am I simply telling myself that I am hungry? Do I really love my wife or am I deceiving myself? Am I truly a patriot of my country if I am not prepared to sacrifice my life in the line of battle against the foe? One of Marcel's fundamental principles is this human tendency to deceive oneself or to be mistaken about what precisely one is feeling. We may think we know how to categorize and describe our feelings, but all too often we reveal in different ways that our ideas are not in harmony with our real feelings or that our ideas may not accurately reflect what our feelings happen to be. Feelings seem to give rise to errors in their interpretation as ideas. On this point Marcel asserts: "Yet we all admit that we may be misled about what we experience."[8]

Given these considerations, then, Marcel's conclusion is that feelings are not meant to be cognized or turned into ideas or mastered by intellectual thought. Whenever we attempt to capture our feelings in thoughts we distort the feelings and as a consequence lose the feeling itself. For example, when I love a person, I should not attempt to intellectualize this feeling, to try to conceptualize and define it, for to do so would result in the evaporation of the feeling of love itself. This explains why the answer to the question, "What is a feeling?" is not straightforward for Marcel. Does this mean that we cannot understand feelings at all, that we should never try to comprehend feelings or attempt to communicate them? Not at all. In this context Marcel writes about two different kinds of reflection: a primary and secondary reflection.[9] These are two different ways or modes of understanding. Primary reflection is an

intellectual comportment which analyzes reality and in so doing dissects and splits it apart. It is through primary reflection that the bifurcation between the mind and the body—this being the crux of Cartesian dualism—comes about. However, secondary reflection produces a synthesis and unity. It brings things together and harmonizes them, rather than pulling them apart. Marcel tells us that secondary reflection inheres in a certain unity that is achieved with respect to me and my body. When I recognize that my body is not something foreign to me, something that I have or possess, as an object, but that *I am my body*, then secondary reflection emerges from this datum of my unified human nature. One could argue that secondary reflection is nothing other than my recognition that I am my body. I need to see this, to acknowledge this, to feel this truth. Marcel is clear on this point when he writes: "My body is *my* body just in so far as I do *not* consider it in this detached fashion, do not put a gap between myself and it. To put this point in another way, my body is mine in so far as for me my body is not an object but, rather, I *am* my body."[10] When I cease to regard my body as something other than me, then I begin to understand what I am.

The unique nature of this kind of understanding that emerges from secondary reflection, from the unity of the body and the soul, is nothing other than feeling. I feel that I am my body, not that I intellectually cognize this datum. Yet this feeling is a form of understanding, what Marcel also calls an "illumination." This feeling, furthermore, is so fundamental to me that I am absolutely certain of its truth. Marcel refers to this feeling of my being my body as an "existential indubitable," the certitude or assurance that I am my body. Certitude, of course, is a *feeling* of being certain. To a Cartesian thinker, this kind of certitude, anchored in feeling, is most perplexing. But the insight that Marcel is trying to convey with this doctrine is that when I am a properly unified being, that is, when my mind and body are one, which is to say that "I am my body," then this *feeling* is one that I cannot contradict or doubt at all. Not only can I not doubt it from some intellectual position, since I am unified with my body and am not at variance with it, but most importantly I exist as a unified whole without any internal opposition to this reality. This feeling of absolute assurance or certitude is hope. Is Marcel contradicting himself by attempting to name a feeling? Could he possibly be mistaken about categorizing this feeling as hope? Well, no, because this feeling of the "existential indubitable" is the most rudimentary reality in my being and is the basis of all positive feelings. If this feeling is truly one of assurance and certitude, then it is self-evident that one could not be mistaken about it. Hope is precisely this feeling of assurance and its locus is in the unified body.

There are many things that could be said about hope in this Marcelian context. However, I would like to point out only three main ideas that are relevant for our reflection. First, Marcel emphasizes that hope has to do basically with the very substance or being of the human person. Hope is truly

embedded in the unified human being; one could say that hope has an anthropological meaning. Marcel writes: "The soul has existence through hope alone; perhaps hope is the stuff of which the soul is made."[11] Second, hope is the overcoming of despair and dejection. Hope is the feeling that life is worth living, that my existence is good, that there is a positive impulse at the basis of my being, despite all the negativity and evil and darkness of the world. Marcel asserts that hope does not calculate and take into account facts. When one hopes one does so in the face of and despite all the bleakness of empirical realities. Hope resides in the domain of what Marcel calls "the unverifiable," which is to say that we do not check or verify or test whether this hope is justified or whether it is acceptable or reasonable to hold. Another way of expressing this point is to say that hope cannot be measured. Lastly, hope has a temporal dimension. It is not static, but is embedded in a movement. This movement is one of time, for hope is future-oriented, but it is also a movement of human life itself as on a journey toward a destination. When I am grounded in hope I am aware that my life is not under my control and that there is a force in the world which is pushing me along certain paths and leading me in certain directions. My life, in other words, has purpose and a destiny. This aspect of hope, namely, that hope is directional, is its indissoluble link with love.

A very important doctrine in Marcel's philosophy is that hope cannot be severed from love, that hope and love are one. But what exactly is love? For Marcel, love is intersubjectivity, the union of persons. Love is the mutual openness and presence of persons. When I love someone I feel that my very being is linked to my beloved's being, that we are one. Naturally, intersubjectivity is a mystery, meaning that we cannot comprehend this relation epistemically, but can only come to understand it by means of participating in it. If hope is ensconced in the unity of my own existence, that is, that "I am my body," then love is the revelation that my existence is not localized in me, but that it is found in the other, as a kind of decentered identity. Love, like hope, is a feeling, which, to repeat, is bodily. This feeling is not passive, but active as a form of receptivity. When I feel love I am receiving the other into myself. Marcel argues that the best metaphor for describing the nature of feeling is as a welcome for somebody into one's home. The French expression "*chez soi*" captures this sense perfectly, for it means "to receive in one's own prepared place of reception."[12] One welcomes the other in the place where one resides, where one feels at home. And to welcome somebody is an act, not a passive state of suffering or undergoing. To love one must be open, or to use Marcel's term, "available" to the other, allowing the other's presence to enter the confines of one's existence. This intermingling of personal existence between lovers is the highest form of participation, in contrast to detached existence. What all of this suggests it that the purposiveness inherent in hope, as a directional movement, pushing me along at the foundation

of my being toward certain ends, finds its terminus in love, in the union of persons. Hope, in other words, is intrinsically intersubjective, which means that the goodness and meaning of my existence is nothing other than to be one with others, to recognize that I am bonded with others in the deepest recesses of my being.

At this juncture of our reflection we can better see what precisely the problem was in the first two imaginary scenarios I presented at the start of my chapter. In the first case, Karl, the busybody lawyer, projected certain ambitions and goals in his life, but did so at the expense of ignoring the imperatives of his body. He detached himself from his body while pursuing abstract ideals of wealth, influence, and success. In his heart lay an inveterate fear that if he did not achieve certain ends then he would amount to nothing. Unfortunately, his world came crashing down with his nervous breakdown, plunging him into despair. If only he could have opened himself up to the hope that resided in himself, in his very bodily existence, this tragic outcome could have been avoided. In the second case we had the married couple Trevor and Lisa who thought they loved each other, but in reality they were not really in love. Love is not a mental concept, an epistemic belief, but a feeling that the lover and the beloved are one. It was precisely this feeling that was missing in their relationship. If only they had opened themselves up to each other and welcomed each other into the space of their intimate souls.

What should we say about the third case, the scenario involving Samantha who feels alienated from the world and who cannot discover the meaning of her existence in the world? Samantha suffers from a spiritual lethargy which has evolved from her refusal to receive the being of the world into her own person. Her life is empty, listless, shallow. All the while she thinks a great deal, using her intellect and all her learning to reason out the logical conclusions from her scientific premises. She feels that there must be a meaning, a purpose, a value to her life, but she refuses to acknowledge the validity of this feeling and thus is trapped in a vicious circle of desiring meaning, but being unwilling to embrace it. The feeling that is at the root of all aspirations for meaning in life is nothing other than a movement from a self-enclosed posture to a life-giving unity with being itself. It is this movement from the closed to the open self that marks the advancement to the acknowledgment of the full value of one's existence. The word that Marcel gives to this overcoming of existential emptiness is joy.

Joy is a plenitude or fullness of being, that is, an overflowing superabundance of positive feeling. One feels alive, connected to the source of one's existence and buoyed by a sea of peace and relaxation. To elucidate what joy is Marcel contrasts it with satisfaction or enjoyment. A satisfaction, such as taking pride in one's accomplishments in life, is a self-centred or ego-centered experience. One is focused on oneself and imprisoned in one's own petty desires and velleities. The etymological root of the word "satisfaction"

is the Latin *satis* meaning "enough or adequate." When one is satisfied one has had enough, or to put it differently, one's lived experience has been sated, absorbed, consumed. One can now rest contentedly or complacently in one's satisfactions because one does not feel the need to do more, to seek more, to live more. But joy never attains to a perfected end, as if joy could ever fill us up to the brim of our existence. Joy is inexhaustible and constantly giving because it ushers from the very source of our being. To be joyful is to exalt, to celebrate, to dance and sing. Exaltation knows no bounds, which is why joy cannot be a mere satisfaction or enjoyment, a retiring into oneself. Joy gives expression to the gift which is our very being. The path to joy is to receive life as a gift and blessing, to shake off the pride which deems one to be in control of one's life, and to pay homage to the source which put one in this world.

In a world such as ours in which the masses are trapped in an iron cage of bureaucratization, economic globalization, and abstract intellectualization, all of which leave people with empty hearts and confused minds, this feeling of joy must be the most elusive and mysterious experience there is. Do people today know what joy is? Do *we* know what joy truly is? If there is one thing that we can say with certainty is that joy is not a thought, but a feeling; not a concept, but an emotion. The joy of existing, the *gaudium essendi*, is, in its very essence, the reality of being *all together*.[13] What this means is that one feels unified with all of creation. One feels that one belongs to the entire world, including the people with whom one lives. A profound feeling of togetherness pulses through one's body. This joy is simultaneously an illumination of one's existence in truth. One has finally discovered the truth of one's place in the world when one feels to be together with all things. The feeling of joy evinces the highest and most complete kind of unity and in so doing overcomes the dread and anxiety which plagues so many people in our world. In this sad and broken world, we are desperately in search of light and illumination to dispel the darkness all around us. Marcel's words speak for themselves: "The spirit of truth is nothing if it is not a light which is seeking for the light; intelligibility is nothing if it is not at once a coming together and a nuptial joy which is inseparable from this coming together."[14]

NOTES

1. The classical view of philosophy as originating in a feeling of wonder or awe is one that is usually not emphasized in university philosophy courses today and is one that is even tougher to inculcate in students who generally seem to approach their studies in rationally calculating ways, instead of from a spirit of enthusiasm and deep personal interest.

2. Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Rockliff, 1952), 270.

3. See Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

4. Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89*, trans. Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), Q. 78, a. 4.
5. René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989).
6. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, volume 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Book 2, Chapter 2, p. 2195: "Anger may be defined as a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one's friends. If this is a proper definition of anger, it must always be felt towards some particular individual, e.g., Cleon, and not man in general. It must be felt because the other has done or intended to do something to him or one of his friends. It must always be attended by a certain pleasure—that which arises from the expectation of revenge."
7. Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 306–11.
8. Ibid., 305.
9. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being. Volume 1: Reflection and Mystery*, translated by G. S. Fraser (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 77–102.
10. Ibid., 00.
11. Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 192.
12. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being. Volume 1: Reflection and Mystery*, 118.
13. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being. Volume 2: Faith and Reality*, translated by G. S. Fraser (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 119.
14. Ibid., pp. 177–78.

Chapter Sixteen

Love, Leisure, and Festivity

Josef Pieper on the Passions of Love and the Contemplation of God

Margaret I. Hughes

The thought of Thomas Aquinas is rarely considered a fruitful source for Existentialism. As William Barrett writes, "present-day Thomists have on the whole remained singularly unconvincing to their contemporaries."[1] This is, in part, because interpreters of Thomas' philosophy often give the appearance of claiming to have a closed system which encompasses all of reality clearly and distinctly, and Thomas' writing appears to confirm such an assertion by its apparently dry technicality. Josef Pieper, a twentieth-century German philosopher, however, does much to correct this misconception, and so offers the possibility of a fruitful conversation between Thomists and Existentialists. Pieper, without disregarding the consistent and coherent metaphysics of Thomas, emphasizes the way in which his philosophy opens us up ever more deeply into the mystery of being and the goodness of that mystery. Pieper does this, I would like to suggest, through his explication of Thomas' account of the passions of love, which allows for a deeper understanding of the goodness of being and contemplation, and so of man's relation with reality.

For Thomas, the human is oriented to reality and is fulfilled by his relation to all that is, which we see in the characteristic powers and desires of a human being: the intellect and will. The intellect is the relation of the subject to the truth; the will is the relation of the subject to the good, so that his fulfillment comes in knowing what is true and being united with what is good. "True" and "good" are transcendental attributes of being, such that all that is, is true and good. So through the intellect and will the human is

ordered toward all of reality. But the human being is a corporeal as well as spiritual being, and so cannot be understood apart from his passions. The passions are movements of the sensible appetite that the subject undergoes in response to the objects that he encounters through his intellect and will. The passions shape and are shaped by the activity of the intellect and will, such that the human relation to reality cannot be understood without also understanding the passions, especially love. Love is the primary passion; it precedes all other passions and is the terminus of all other passions.

"The name 'love,'" Thomas writes, "is given to the principle movement towards the end loved."[2] That is, love is the motion toward an end, and the end is the apparent good. So, love is a motion toward what is good. Since all action has an end, all that a human does is first and foremost out of love. Thomas identifies three passions that are all species, or perhaps, stages of love: love, desire, and delight. The first is "is nothing else than complacency in that object;" which leads to desire for that object, and finally, "there is rest which is 'joy.'"[3] Thus, the passions of love, which are the experiential, felt response to the good, consist of a complacency in the apparent good, a desire for that good, and a final resting in the good.

The final good for human beings, ultimately, is knowledge of all of reality through knowing the essence of God for its own sake, which is contemplation. As Thomas writes, "If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than 'that He is'; the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. . . . Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man's happiness consists."[4]

While this account of love and contemplation is profoundly important for Thomas' understanding of the human being and his relation to reality, it tells us very little about what it is *like* to be a human being—it describes neither love nor contemplation. As Nicholas Lombardo writes, "[Thomas] does not describe the subjective experience of emotion: his primary interest is the *metaphysics* of affectivity, and not the *experience* of affectivity."[5] Furthermore, if complacency and rest, the beginning and end of the passions of love, are taken in their contemporary, everyday meaning, then it seems as though even love is part of a closed system, since complacency and rest both seem to connote simply a lack of activity and a sort of stupor that closes off the subject from the world. With complacency on one end of love, and rest on the other, it sounds as though the experience of love is to be closed off from the world, to move from inactivity to activity to inactivity again. And, such an understanding of love and the pursuit of the human good makes contemplation seem mechanical and robotic, as if all of reality could be grasped clearly and distinctly.

Josef Pieper, however, offers an experiential description of the passions of love that Thomas identifies, and does so in a way that illuminates the meaning of complacency and rest, such that, if Pieper's description is correct, it points to the mysterious goodness of being, which we encounter in contemplation. Those experiences are the experiences of leisure and festivity. Leisure, which is an open and attentive stillness, is complacency in the good; festivity, which is the joyous reception of the good, is resting in the good. Both are intensely active, but that activity is deeply internal because it is outward looking, so that to experience leisure and festivity is to experience a love that opens oneself to all of reality, which is the contemplation of the mystery of being.

In what follows, I would like to examine Pieper's account of leisure and festivity to suggest that they correspond to Thomas' account of complacency and rest as love, and then to show how this description of love points to the goodness of being, such that contemplation is, in fact, a loving gaze on all that is, which makes contemplation an experience of openness and rejoicing in the mystery of being. My hope is that looking at Pieper in this way will show that Pieper offers a fruitful account of Thomas' philosophy for Existentialist reflection.

LEISURE

Pieper rediscovers the proper meaning of complacency in his investigation of leisure because, he argues, leisure is something more than simply a break from work, which suggests that complacency could also be something other than not being active. He contends that leisure is an active stillness, a holding oneself poised for an encounter with and receiving of reality.

Pieper's notion of leisure is illustrated by an account he gives of a boat trip across the Atlantic: "At table I had mentioned those magnificent fluorescent sea creatures whirled up to the surface by the hundreds in our ship's bow wake. The next day it was casually mentioned that 'last night there was nothing to be seen.' Indeed, for nobody had the patience to let the eyes adapt to the darkness."[6] Because the impatient passengers did not have a disposition of leisure, they were not able to be still and quiet for long enough to see the fish, and so could not be moved to the other passions of love, to desire and delight. They were not complacent.

In leisure, the subject regards the world with a "'relaxed' looking."[7] The leisurely man has his eyes open and ready to receive whatever reality should bring to him, and so he is attentive. He does not, however, try to force this bringing. Instead, he remains still, allowing himself to undergo whatever comes his way. Leisure is this combination of attentiveness and stillness. In his desire to receive reality as it is, he removes his own deliberate activity,

other than the deliberate effort to remain still and open to the world. Before he can be moved and so receive reality, he must be quiet, otherwise it may be that he is the one causing the motion rather than being caused to move by the world.

Complacency, then, as the first passion of love, is not what it sounds like to our ears: it is not mere self-satisfaction nor is it a sort of comfortable warmness that ignores the world with all of its suffering and horrors. Complacency is not cutting oneself off from reality; it is quite the opposite. Instead, it is the disposition of leisure, of quieting oneself so as to be open to reality. It is a willingness to receive what comes, as it is, without interference on the part of the receiver.

FESTIVITY

Leisure, which allows for the perception of reality, when joined with an experience of something good, leads to festivity. For genuine festivity, Pieper writes, "The celebrant himself must have shared in a real experience."[8] While the festive subject must be receptive to reality, he also must experience that reality in a way that leads to joy. Indeed, this is what Pieper means when he quotes John Chrysostom: "Festivity is joy and nothing else."[9] For a subject to be festive, something must meet him in his receptivity and move him so that he experiences joy.

But, Pieper writes, "There can be neither joy nor festivity" without "the feeling of receiving something beloved."[10] Festivity is receiving what is good and rejoicing in it; it is the culmination of the disposition of receptivity in leisure. When the subject with a leisurely disposition open to reality encounters an object that attracts him so that he attains it and is united with it, then he is festive. Festivity is reveling in the experience of the attainment of what is loved, which is good. In this way, festivity is much like the third passion of love, delight, which is the resting in the desired good.

While festivity does have external trappings as an outgrowth and expression of joy, it is first and foremost an interior occurrence. Food and music and dancing and other outward "doings" mark the feast, but these alone do not make the feast. Contra Rousseau's exclamation, "Plant a flower-decked pole in the middle of an open place, call the people together—and you have a fête!"[11] Pieper insists that there must be a reason for the feast. That is, we do not desire to feel joy. We desire the reason for the joy.[12] The reason for the joy is the reception of the good.

Festivity, then, like leisure, is not "doing." Rather, it is the consummation of the active stillness of leisure in the joyful reception of the good. In that way, it is rest. It is rest, not because activity ceases, but because it intensifies. "Rest" is the cessation of searching for the good and is, instead, the intensification of the reception of the good. It is enjoying the good that is present.

COMPLACENCY, REST, AND THE ACTIVE OPENNESS TO BEING

This intense inner activity of being open to and receiving reality is possible because it is good to be. The experience of authentic leisure and festivity points to the goodness of being.

Pieper's description of leisure and festivity, of complacency and rest, have in common an active openness to all of reality that requires seeing the world as good. "Leisure," Pieper writes, "lives on affirmation."[13] A person can be at leisure, can be open to the world, only because he sees it as good; if reality were bad or a threat to him, he would close himself off from it so as to protect himself. The affirmation that feeds leisure is not necessarily directed toward any one object, or rather, it can be directed to all types of objects. It is the affirmation of the good of existence in general. Only because he recognizes this good is he able to hold himself still in the anticipation of encountering that good.

This affirmation of the good of being is consummated and lived out in festivity. While the immediate cause of festivity is one event or object, the delight that comes from the possession of the object extends beyond that particular object. Pieper writes:

> Whenever we happen to feel heartfelt assent, to find that something specific is good, wonderful, glorious, rapturous—a drink of fresh water, the precise functioning of a tool, the colors of a landscape, the charm of a loving gesture, a poem—our praise always reaches beyond the given object, if matters take their natural course. Our tribute always contains at least a smattering of affirmation of the world, as a whole.[14]

At the heart of love is the affirmation of the goodness of a being. When a subject delights in a true good, he must, of necessity, delight in its being. He affirms that it is good that it exists. Underlying that delight is the affirmation that it is good to exist; that being is good.

The experience of complacency and rest, of leisure and festivity, of love, then, implies that goods can and do exist apart from the subject's own existence. Leisure and festivity, as Pieper has described them, are not compatible with a conception of the world in which the subject's choices alone establish what is good. A world in which all good is constructed does not allow for

awaiting and receiving what is good and so excludes the possibility of leisure and festivity. Pieper's descriptions of leisure and festivity require a recognition that it is good to be.

CONTEMPLATION AS RECEPTION OF THE GOODNESS OF BEING

This acceptance and reception of the good through intense inner activity is contemplation, which, Thomas writes is the end and highest activity of human beings. Contemplation is knowing the truth, which is knowing reality, for its own sake, and so contemplation is knowing the good as good. Contemplation, Pieper adds, is "a loving gaze." In making this observation, he points out that while contemplation involves both the intellect and the will, it also, and very importantly, involves the passions.

Contemplation is a kind of knowing that is simply for the sake of knowing. The subject allows that object to enter into him through his intellect, and he savors it in his intellect without toiling or straining to do something else with it. Because there is no further purpose for the knowing, contemplation is the intellect's end.

But, it is only experienced as the end of the intellect because the will desires the possession of reality, such that the intellect's rest and intensification is also that of the will. Only then does the subject experience the delight or festivity that is the joy in the reception of what is good. As Pieper writes, "Happy is he who sees *what he loves*."[15]

Because contemplation is rest, this contemplative kind of loving is a particular kind of loving that involves a particular manner of regarding the good. In contemplation, the object is seen as "meaningful in itself." It has a meaning on which the intellect may dwell. Something that is meaningful in itself is not viewed as something meaningful *for* something. It is not even meaningful for contemplation. As soon as the meaning is subordinated to some other purpose, it is no longer meaningful in itself. Once a thing is seen as "good for something," it is no longer seen simply as good in itself—its goodness is referred to and derived from some other good. Something that is meaningful in itself "does not, of course, signify [something as] meaningful *apart from man*" but rather something that "in a unique way has relevance to man and his existence."[16] What is most relevant to a man and his existence is the object of contemplation through which he achieves his existence most fully.

But the joy in the contemplation of one object leads to a wider view of the good of all of reality. Reality, that upon which man gazes as his end, according to Pieper, is an "infinite object." It has an "illimitable horizon" because it is a creation of God, who is without limits. All of reality is like a light that

dazzles. It is hard to see, not because it is too dim, but because it is too bright.[17] Of course, a human being is active in pursuing that light, in being receptive to the light of reality and taking actions to discover it, but the actions and understanding of a man will never fully illuminate reality at its very source, because that source is God. As a spiritual being, man is suited for transcending reality, but he is also a finite spirit.[18] His finitude does not allow him to encompass all of being immediately and exhaustively. Instead, he is continually discovering it. Reality appears to him as "an unfathomable abyss, but it is an abyss of light."[19]

Thus, man's end, the contemplation of all of reality through the contemplation of God, in fact is not static nor is it ever complete. Instead, the contemplation of God is to be drawn into the mystery of God. A mystery is a mystery precisely because there is something about it that is knowable, even though, no matter how much of it is known, there will always be more to discover. This definition of a mystery applies to Being and reality: "the world and Being itself are a mystery and for that reason inexhaustible."[20] But, because the contemplation of God never reaches bottom, it requires both an ever attentive openness—leisure—and which, at the same time—is ever receiving what is good—festivity. Thus, Pieper's descriptions of leisure and festivity help us to see that Thomas Aquinas' account of love as the center of the human passions, points, not to a closed and complete philosophical system, but rather to an understanding of reality as a wonderful mystery, which humans may contemplate joyfully.

NOTES

1. William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 27.
2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* IaIIae, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: R. & T. Washbourne, 1914), q. 26, a. 1.
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* IaIIae, q. 26, a. 2.
4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* IaIIae, q. 3, a. 8.
5. Nicholas Lombardo O. P., *Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 247.
6. Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 32.
7. Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture,* trans. Gerald Malsbary (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1998), 9.
8. Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999), 24.
9. Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 22.
10. Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 25.
11. Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 23; quoting Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Letter à M. d'Alembert" *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. II, 86.
12. Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 22.
13. Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 33.
14. Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 26–27.

15. Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 70.
16. "A Plea for Philosophy," *For the Love of Wisdom: Essays on the Nature of Philosophy*, trans. Roger Wassermann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 113.
17. Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, 109; "Philosophy and the Sense for Mystery," *For the Love of Wisdom*, 308.
18. "What Does It Mean to Philosophize?," *For the Love of Wisdom*, 50.
19. *The Silence of St. Thomas*, trans. John Murray S. J. and Daniel O'Connor (New York: Pantheon, 1957), 96.
20. "Philosophy and the Sense for Mystery," *For the Love of Wisdom*, 307.

Chapter Seventeen

Feeling Distant, Feeling Divine

The Transformative Import of Difference in Nietzsche and Irigaray

James Abordo Ong

Insofar as religious existentialism redeems feelings from their being perpetually cast as either subordinate or inimical to reason and knowledge, it does so in a fairly distinct and decisive way. Existentialism as a broad intellectual movement began from thinkers who realized that even as Descartes' *scientia* or Hegel's world spirit purports to comprehend and explain the whole of reality, it must fail to explain that of which we are most certain—namely, our concrete existence as living individuals (or more precisely, each person's immediate lived experience of their own existence). To bring existence in this sense to the forefront of philosophical inquiry, existentialists have had to turn their attention to feelings. Anguish, anxiety, hope, and guilt, for example, become focal points for philosophical reflection because they are what typically comes over us when we find ourselves in those lived experiences or situations that illuminate what is so peculiar about human existence—for example, the arbitrariness of birth, the loneliness of death, the ubiquity of chance, and the inevitability of fraught or failed endeavors. When we try to make sense of these situations as and when they unfold in our own lives, we are not casting for general explanations for how or why these events occur, which is all that reason or knowledge affords us.

This points to why feeling becomes a rich source of illumination among religious existentialists in particular. Unlike their secular counterparts, religious existentialists still have deep (even if at times ambivalent) regard for those dimensions and interpretations of human experience that involve matters of faith. They are therefore well poised to ruminate on those feelings that

play a distinctive significance in our lives precisely insofar as they are inchoate, ambiguous, fluid, or opaque. Such feelings do not engender knowledge by providing facts or evidence pertaining to human nature or human behavior, but rather by triggering or unraveling those questions of meaning and meaningfulness to which our ancestors have typically turned to religious Scriptures and traditions for answers, or solace when no answers could be had. So within religious existentialism, the redemption of feeling is a precondition for spiritual renewal: insofar as shared frameworks of meaning and interpretation are now more likely to arouse anxiety, suspicion, bitterness, or despair than to foster faith, fortitude, friendship, or peace of mind, religious existentialists have had to probe the feelings that mark our inner lives to examine and understand how we can begin to reconnect ourselves to our own and one another's humanity as concrete existents.

In this chapter, I examine two distinctive feelings that I find in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Luce Irigaray—specifically Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* and Irigaray's wisdom of love. I show that on Nietzsche's and Irigaray's analyses, the *pathos of distance* and the way of love (respectively) signify feelings which are triggered by specific encounters with persons who embody and express their difference in a way that must often transcend our understanding. Both Nietzsche and Irigaray lean on the metaphor of *distance* to capture the relationship engendered between two subjects in such encounters. It is by virtue of this exceptional manner in which a person embodies or expresses their difference, I argue, that they can wield a deeply transformative impact on others, albeit such that the latter (the people they affect or transform) awaken to the powers and possibilities within their own lives and thus become what they are rather than merely becoming like others. Both Nietzsche and Irigaray elucidate this process of transformation by reinterpreting and reimagining it as being akin to it. This facet of their thought is what emboldens me to endorse them here as having made meaningful contributions to religious existentialism.

As a crucial preliminary, it is worth clarifying what kind of difference triggers the *pathos of distance* and the way of love. Difference refers to what each person embodies or expresses insofar as they are constantly in the process of becoming (whatever they might become). Nietzsche describes this process as taking place beneath the surface of consciousness, and thus as something that often remains either unknown or misunderstood, even by the very person in whose life this process is always and ever unfolding. Irigaray offers a similar point in describing the difference engendered in love as "unthinkable": "Such a difference resists every thematization and a representative thinking can only misjudge it, forget it."[1]

Although this conception of difference obviously raises difficulties not only for self-knowledge, but also for the prospects of being understood by others, Nietzsche has also shown that what we often take ourselves to know

of this process must be merely a narrow selection of what actually happens. Once we grant this possibility, we also begin to appreciate the stakes involved—to wit, insofar as we nevertheless continue to rely on what we take ourselves to know about ourselves and other people, we are essentially settling on interpretations that generally distil what is common among the multifarious experiences and situations we encounter; for Nietzsche this amounts to affirming what appears necessary and intelligible by the lights of prevailing words, concepts, categories, and ways of thinking and feeling, albeit at the cost of denying or diluting life. Moreover, within this scheme of interpretation, the only difference we perceive are those mediated by those abstractions and oversimplifications through which we make sense of ourselves and one another.

How might encounters with difference unfold under such schemes of interpretation? According to Nietzsche, what engenders the most desperate bitterness against existence among modern men is their powerlessness against other men. Among those whose lives turn out badly, for example, encounters with difference must trigger envy, vanity, revenge, or *ressentiment*. Under the grip of these feelings, the powerless fall back on their protective and healing instincts: they strive to deflect or countermand whatever is causing us distress. To the extent that they do not have the physiological power to do this, they must avail themselves of other remedies—in particular, the remedies that logic, language, and consciousness provide. Through logic, language, and conscious thinking, feeling, or willing, they can relieve themselves of distressing feelings and move on to other feelings that make them feel better about themselves—e.g., by framing their experiences in a way that puts them in a good light vis-à-vis others. This is what Nietzsche thinks the feelings of pity and vanity do for us, just to take two examples: we use conceptual schemes that allow us to frame difference in terms of oppositions, like bad versus good, ugly versus beautiful, and frame our experiences in terms of whichever concept redounds to that drive that happens to be most developed in us—be it our drive for knowledge, for pleasure, for social power, or for security or comfort.

Let us now consider how difference, as Nietzsche and Irigaray conceive of it, engenders feelings that are different from the ones I just described. In my own reading, the *pathos of distance* is the feeling that exceptional individuals have of the incommensurable qualitative difference between themselves and others by virtue of the high degree of spirituality that they embody and express. I would now like to characterize what it is like to experience this pathos within the dynamic of a relationship between two concrete individuals. In keeping with terms that Nietzsche is rather fond of, I will call the noble individual who bears the pathos of distance the "tempter." I will call the individual who is receptive to the noble individual's difference or singularity "the attempter."

With regard to the tempter, the defining features of the pathos of distance derive from the fact that "in the end one experiences only oneself."[2] Two things are worth noting from this passage in relation to the existentialist tradition. First is the concept of being in our experience. Religious existentialists stress the importance of concrete lived experience by way of contrast to the reductions, abstractions, and generalizations through which we make sense of those lived experiences, say, when we must describe them to others or when we distill them into just those facets that fit into what we believe about ourselves, or into how we would like to stand relative to other individuals.[3] In line with this contrast, Nietzsche compares what it is like to be *in our experience* to how an expectant mother relates to the child in her womb: she must "know nothing of what is taking place, wait, and try to be *ready*"[4] while "the spontaneous, attacking, infringing, reinterpreting, reordering and shaping forces" within her develop and bring forth what is new. Under such conditions, the tempter exemplifies what Nietzsche refers to as a "perpetually creative person, a 'mother' type in the grand sense of the term, someone who doesn't hear or know anything but the pregnancies and child-beds of [her] spirit anymore, who simply has no time to reflect on [herself] and on [her] work and to make comparisons."[5]

The second thing worth noting is the idea of experiencing *only oneself*. This means that the tempter makes an even more modest claim on the extent to which she knows what others have experienced. "What we most deeply and most personally suffer from," Nietzsche points out, "is incomprehensible and inaccessible to nearly everyone else." No act of bearing witness or cry for help would suffice as conditions for one to understand another person's suffering because one "simply knows nothing of the whole inner sequence and interconnection that spells misfortune for *me* or for *you*!"[6] Bearing the pathos of distance therefore involves a fair degree of innocence or ignorance not only with regard to who one is, but also with regard to who other individuals are. The tempter would be navigating her relations with others more from a guess or a gamble than from a claim to know them. "In guessing and keeping silent," Zarathustra says, "the friend shall be a master: you must not want to see everything."[7] Guessing "the hidden and forgotten treasure" in others, the tempter's concern for them "is a kind different from that of the sociable and anxious to please: it is a gentle, reflective, relaxed friendliness," as though "to gaze into *what is different* does [her] so much good."[8]

A similar sort of indeterminacy (i.e., knowing neither ourselves nor the other) attends how the pathos of distance strikes the attempter. Here, we must suppose with Nietzsche "that every act ever performed was done in an altogether unique and unrepeatable way, and that this will be equally true of every future act."[9] As the attempter "stands in the midst of *his own* noise, in the midst of his own surf of projects and plans," he is also likely to encounter individuals whose singularity touches him in an exceptional way: it neither

merely pleases him nor makes him feel weak and insecure, but rather makes him yearn for his better self.[10] Such singularity can wield an almost magical influence on the attempter: he feels richer in himself, newer than before because the tempter's singularity, instead of drawing further attention to itself, awakens the spirit that the attempter harbours within him—i.e., "the life that itself cuts into life."[11] The attempter now longs to lie still, like a mirror, so that he may simply reflect, or embody and express, who he is becoming, and "so that [his] fruitfulness shall *come to a happy fulfilment*!"[12] What comes over the attempter is not a clear vision of some goal or purpose, but rather "hopes that still remain nameless," albeit ones with enough force to channel his desires and wills into new directions. This is how the attempter experiences the tempter's concrete presence—i.e., as a singularity that can neither be reduced to binaries and categories nor compared with other subjects on those terms because of the plenitude of life or power that the tempter embodies and expresses.

With the foregoing illustration, we see how becoming what one is, particularly as it proceeds from the pathos of distance, contrasts with the more mundane kinds of change that one undergoes either in emulating a person on account of some of her qualities or achievements or in pursuing an ambition with a fairly determinate end or goal. In either of these cases, the aspiration for change is driven by a set of representations about oneself and the other (i.e., the person being emulated or the future self one is aiming to become) that one could compare according to some criterion or fit into some category that opposes or excludes others. The force and significance of the pathos of distance, on the other hand, lies precisely in how it precludes such comparisons, oppositions, and exclusions. If one can compare, oppose, or privilege oneself vis-à-vis another individual, this already implies or presumes proximity—i.e., more certainty or determinateness regarding oneself and the other than distance allows. Importantly, inasmuch as the tempter's singularity precludes comparisons, oppositions, and exclusions, it facilitates a dynamic relationship wherein the attempter neither compares nor diminishes himself vis-à-vis the tempter but rather affirms whatever powers he has *on his own terms*, or with respect to his own tasks, challenges, sufferings, and misfortunes.

Luce Irigaray transposes Nietzsche's trope of distance as a marker of difference into her own account of religious or divine experience in terms of how the other awakens us, "by their very alterity, their mystery, by the infinite that they still represent for us." Like Nietzsche, Irigaray emphasizes the significance of not knowing the other in engendering such awakening:

> It is when we do not know the other, or when we accept that the other remains unknowable to us, that the other illuminates us in some way, but with a light that enlightens us without our being able to comprehend it, to analyse it, to

> make it ours. The totality of the other, like that of springtime, like that of the surrounding world sometimes, touches us beyond all knowledge, all judgment, all reduction to ourselves, to our own, to what is in some manner proper to us.[13]

In elaborating on this account of religious experience, Irigaray nevertheless charts a course that deviates from that of religious existentialists. Whereas religious existentialists tend to dwell on the kind of subjective experiences wrought by the fact that we all die alone, Irigaray redirects our attention to the fact that we all awaken to life in our mother's womb—and in the case of males in particular, in the body of an other that is different from them. Being human, on this picture, involves being related to a living other to whom one owes one's physical and spiritual growth. So although Irigaray retains the experience of transcendence that figures in the writings of religious existentialists, she situates this experience squarely within the context of a subject's relation not only to themselves but also another of a different sex. She calls the feeling or attitude that mediates the relation between the subject and the other the "the wisdom of love." The wisdom of love consists in a drawing near the other that nonetheless preserves the distance that separates any two individual subjects. Irigaray calls this mode of engaging the other "approach." Approaching the other contrasts with appropriating the other—i.e., treating the other as the object of our love instead of another subject who is different from yet equivalent to ourselves. To approach, she writes, involves "becoming aware of the diversity of our worlds, and creating paths which, with respect for this diversity, allow holding dialogues."[14]

Like Nietzsche's pathos of distance, Irigaray's "wisdom of love" engenders a distinct process of transformation. Part of what facilitates this transformation is the fluid spontaneous dialogue through which two interacting subjects realize their respective singularities. She describes this transformation as "being on the way," a process of becoming that never reaches its end. She then goes on to suggest that compared with the dialogue that a subject holds with the speech [or language] of a people, of a culture:

> Being on the way is more dark, more subtle, which is not to say that it will not provide beacons for other paths. But these paths will not exist without a descent of each one into oneself, there where body and spirit are still mingled, where the materiality of a breath, of an energy, of a living being is still virgin. . . . There where it is so difficult to reach, and even more difficult to save something to safeguard oneself in order to preserve a return, an exchange, not submitted to external imperatives again closing the opening [of one's interiority], not subjected to an already coded speech that has not made its way into clearings of proximity to oneself, to the other.[15]

Here, the possibility of touching, illuminating, or transforming one another through dialogue hinges on each person's ability to reach inside themselves for that spark of life that must animate two subjects' going near one another. To render this point more concrete, consider the difference between these two types of conversations. On the one hand, a conversation where you report what you did that day (as you might have once done for your parents) or where you play the role of what you've been told is being a nice or responsible friend or partner (say the nice things you've learned from parents or friends, from watching movies, or from what's made your partner happy in the past). On the other hand, a conversation where you come up with what to say of yourself or of the other in the moment, where your words are minted fresh from your mind and breath because you were paying attention, actively listening, being fully present to the other. You are neither aiming to please nor making sure that you make sense; you are just expressing yourself such that the feelings and emotions sparked by your unfolding interactions are what draw the words you say, rather than the other way around. You are drawing or reaching inside yourself to express and share part of that inner world that must remain invisible to the other, and you must occasionally lapse into silence to give the other the opportunity to do the same.

Parallel to Nietzsche's distinction between two ways of inhabiting encounters with difference, Irigaray contrasts the fluid spontaneous dialogue I just described with the reifying and regimented speech that often prevails in our interactions with others. As a mode of expression and communication, regimented speech transmits ideas, meanings, and feelings, albeit in codes that can often take the life out of an exchange. Coded exchanges often turn on meanings, and thus pre-empt the blossoming or unfolding of what is new in the becoming of two subjects and their relationships. Fluid spontaneous dialogue, by contrast, makes an *immediate* claim on our attention and response such that it pre-empts our falling back on those old scripts, patterns, and repertoires that assure us of being understood. "In an exchange between two," Irigaray writes, "meaning quivers and always remains unstable, incomplete, unsettled, irreducible to the word."[16] These elliptic meanings flow out of, but also fuel, the life of the dialogue and the process of becoming that it facilitates for two subjects. Meaning, then, is "that which attracts us to one another—an attraction, a desire, a wanting to do or to say for which we still have to invent the words while continuing to listen to those of the other."[17] On this picture, speech does not derive from some idiolect, or interior thought process, that supposedly informs what each subject is going to say; it is rather *invented* in direct and dynamic response to the other.

Love in this case becomes "a living intermediary" in contrast to the abstract intermediaries we often carry around in our heads. So Irigaray writes:

> In fact every speaking should always remain unique. Man is "a speaking animal" if he creates speech in order to say himself, to say the world, to speak to the other. The obligation to speak "like everyone else" or according to what has been taught does not awaken, or quench, human consciousness. If the subject does not have, in himself, the source of his movement, he loses his quality as subject. He is a mechanism started up by an energy already fabricated, not free.[18]

This once again points up the contrast between existing as a subject *qua* living experience and being caught up in the rules and routines to which society habituates us. At this point, it would be helpful to go back to Nietzsche's distinction between base and noble souls. How do noble souls differ from base souls? I've suggested that the difference lies in the plenitude of life or power that the noble soul embodies and expresses. In the present context, this means that noble souls do not need the security that shared language or meanings, common rules or customs, provide. They are comfortable with uncertainty, or with not knowing the kinds of things that ordinary people must know in order to cope with reality, or in order to navigate their relations with others—e.g., answers to questions like "Did she understand me?"; "Did I give the right response?"; "What information is required in this-or-that situation?"; "How much of what I feel can I share without looking foolish?"; "What exactly does she want me to say?"; "How must I present myself so that others would like me?"

I do not mean to suggest that we can once and for all forgo asking these kinds of questions, because we cannot do that even if we wanted to. Insofar as we do not get entangled in such questions, it is not because we choose not to, but because we are deeply entangled in life, its movements and rhythms not only within ourselves, but also within the dynamic of our relations with other people. I have also already suggested that what makes this mode of engaging others redemptive is that it engenders self-overcoming: we develop "ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states"[19] by virtue of our deep immersion in our lived experiences and interactions.

Irigaray has a similar conception of how the wisdom of love, and the dialogue it facilitates between two subjects, are redemptive. For her, "the human as such is characterized by a specific way of entering into relation with a human different from oneself, a specific way of transforming instinctive attraction into a desire attentive to the Being of the other."[20] This desire keeps alive the relational dimensions of human life and opens out to a journey of self-discovery and self-transformation mediated not by language, reason, or consciousness, but rather by an ongoing dialogue and co-presence with the other. Importantly, for Irigaray, this is a mode of being and becoming human that we have yet to realize and sustain, particularly in men's relationship with women, and in women's relationship with one another. I

can only hope that should life circumstances afford us the opportunity to undertake this journey, we shall be bold and foolish enough to forgo the comforts of the familiar and venture into what we do not know that may yet become.

NOTES

1. Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček (London: Continuum, 2004), 99.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. Graham Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Third Part—The Wanderer. Hereafter *TSZ*.
3. Religious existentialists emphasize the immediate living experiences of concrete existing individuals in their situatedness in life. So Miguel de Unamuno calls our attention to "the man of flesh and bones;" Paul Tillich enjoins us to investigate "Reality as men experience it immediately in their actual living;" and Gabriel Marcel proposes the concept of exigence, a deep-seated interior urge to bring our full presence to the situations we encounter. This emphasis on lived experience acknowledges that there is always more to our subjective experiences than what we are ever able to press into the principles of logic, the concepts and categories of language, or the operations of conscious thought.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), § 552—*Ideal selfishness*. Hereafter *D.*
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams and trans. Josephine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), § 369 – *Our coexistence.* Hereafter *GS.*
6. Nietzsche, *GS* 338 – *The will to suffer and those who feel compassion*
7. Nietzsche, *TSZ* First Part – On the Friend
8. Nietzsche, *D* 471 – *A different kind of neighbour-love*
9. Nietzsche, *GS* 60 – *Women and their action at a distance*
10. Nietzsche, *GS* 335 – *Long live physics!*
11. Nietzsche, *TSZ* Fourth Part – The Leech
12. Nietzsche, *D* 552 – *Ideal selfishness*
13. Luce Irigaray, "Approaching the Other as Other" in *Luce Irigaray: Key Writings*, ed. Luce Irigaray (London: Continuum, 2004), 24
14. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, 68
15. Ibid., 53
16. Ibid., 28
17. Ibid., 53
18. Ibid., 62
19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil; On the Genealogy of Morality (The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Volume 8)*, eds. Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large and trans. Adrian del Caro (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), § 257 in Book IX of *Beyond Good and Evil* – What is noble?
20. Ibid., 89

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