

Analecta Husserliana

The Yearbook of
Phenomenological Research

Volume CXI



The Fullness of the Logos in the
Key of Life

Book II. Christo-Logos:
Metaphysical Rhapsodies of Faith
(*Itinerarium mentis in deo*)

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

 Springer

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ANNA - TERESA TYMIENIECKA

*The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning
Hanover, New Hampshire, USA*

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BOOK II. CHRISTO-LOGOS:
METAPHYSICAL RHAPSODIES OF FAITH
(*ITINERARIUM MENTIS IN DEO*)

by

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Published under the auspices of
The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning
A-T. Tymieniecka, President

 Springer

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ISBN 978-94-007-2256-9

e-ISBN 978-94-007-2257-6

DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2257-6

Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008938184

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Printed on acid-free paper

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INTRODUCTION

a. THE ILLUSION OF THE RETURN TO THE SOURCE

Whatever may be the reasons for which science and philosophy attempt to disentangle the net of formal constructions that the evolving human mind has established for his own use and the race's survival, the reason for which, rightly or wrongly, the contemporary artist also seeks the primitive virginal state of man is different. The purpose of the artist is not to satisfy intellectual curiosity as to what is the basic set up of the human being or the original, initial state of human virtualities from which the self-constructing process began. The purpose of the artist is to find the virginal source of human creative endeavor, which is not geared to man's survival and vital progress but to the artistic fulfillment of his nostalgias and higher yearnings. Could our artistic creative endeavor have been launched simultaneously with that human functioning oriented toward mere survival? We will allow that it did not. To the contrary, the artistic quest issues from dissatisfaction with the round of everyday life. The artist is essentially seeking to discover not how empirical reality is but rather something that naturally evolving life does not offer. His creative endeavor does not serve the aims of life or contribute to the world as it is devised for meeting these aims. How then can the source of his creative elevations be found in the primitive setup of the human mind? Is the source of the artistic, creative endeavor that would reach beyond the limitations of the established world that this endeavor is meant to transcend, that would offer the virginal ground of all forms and feelings, to be sought, therefore, in the return to the primitive, undeveloped experience of man and his basic virtualities?

If we consider the nature of our experience of life as such, we discern in it two essential components.

First of all, at every stage of life's development—but what may be inferred principally about the very incipient stage of human reaction such that it rises to the level of experience—there is an *initial spontaneity*. It surges blind and empty as the expression of life itself but ready to perpetuate life according to its demands and being outfitted for this purpose. If this initial spontaneity comes to acquire the status of human experience, that is, if life proceeds from its blind stage to the opening out of a self-conscious dimension, it is because its emergence must have activated the various virtualities of the individual being within which it surges. Experience as basically a spontaneity is obviously strictly individual, unshareable. It cannot be transferred from one being to another, and its origin whatever be its roots, which are not directly inspectable, restrict it to one specific individual. Here is spontaneity only and exclusively the individual's very own, his most intimate spontaneity. This is the spontaneity of an individual amid particular most complex—and in their complexity, ungraspable—conditions within the natural and social universe of man. This unique concreteness shared with an individual life alone is, however, complemented at its

very emergence by a universally human system of functioning. In fact, spontaneity alone would not amount to more than, to use the expression of Dylan Thomas, “the force that through the green fuse drives the flower” had it not simultaneously activated the faculties that account for intelligibility.

The temporal constitution of spontaneity initiates, in fact, the activity of the whole system of informing, forming it in both of its aspects as felt and as signifying and does that as something that takes the form of our oneness and simultaneously establishes the antennae of our expansion beyond it. It acquires “significance” simultaneously as quality of feeling and as meaning and as reflecting the universe with respect to which it is felt as itself and no other.

Indeed at this very level at which the initial spontaneity establishes itself within the constitutive molds and in experience, it confronts immediately the third factor involved in its constitution: the world of other human beings and the world as the prototype of its constitutive orientation.

In fact, already at the incipient stage of human experience, that is, at the instant that opens man to a specific receptivity within towards the without, gathering it within, the whole universally human system of functions—or what phenomenologists call ‘constitution’—is oriented towards a final reference point. Alone in reference to this point can singular concrete instances of experience emerge as qualitatively specified and as informative, as an interwoven experiential set establishing a precedent with reference to which each further incoming experience is formed. We do not establish from our infancy a series or a mosaic of experiences that would stand over against each other within an imposed design, but all our experiences are intimately qualitatively familiar with each other and all of them fuse into the homogenous stream of our inner being, of our own life, of our own universe. Be it noted this felt fusing quality which, against the atomistic psychology of the British Empiricists, accounts for both the unity of our inner being and for the unity of the universe, which otherwise would be a chaos of scattered pieces, follows principally from the fact that the spontaneous flow itself gives a specific qualitative determination—not a random one spurred by impulses—but with reference to a prototype design that each experience enacts in relation to each incoming experience.

The second principle that forms our constant active modeling and remodeling in a two-way action-reaction referential system that seemingly operates at the fringes of our expansive experience (but which in fact forms and requalifies our qualitative molding at its very own core) is *the system of the actual, existing, ever present human world* within which the human experiencing being emerges and unfolds.

The surging spontaneity extends tentacles through its unqualified dynamism. Its projection does not explode into a void but within a milieu of tightly coalescing elements. Its emergence is certainly as much conditioned by this milieu as the natural response to it. The initial spontaneity of our being emerges within the circumambient milieu of the already constructed world, simultaneously as its new element and as one meant to fuse into it.

It surges always within such a circumambient world. Whether it be in the biological, social and cultural world of the man of the Renaissance with its most refined

forms, themselves already perpetuating a long line of human activity that went into its structure, or in the world of the caveman with its restricted number of survival values and aims, human experience emerges always already structured with reference to the world in which it appears. It represents that world's basic as well as specific forms; it appears not as a strictly personal, unique expression of the individual but as participation in and continuation of the collective effort of the humanity that designed its circumambient world and has acquired at this point a specific structure.

Being at its very core already qualified as experience with reference to the universal design of human world and fused with and within a specific human universe, experience can never be considered otherwise but as representing an already established pattern of forms. It can never be stripped of them in such a way that an "authentic," genuine, uniquely immediate and pure experience of reality would pierce through the veils. We may say, to the contrary, that experience itself is the veil that we project upon the abyssal unknown. The human world has constituted throughout the collective effort of individual experience and is the refinement and extension of this veil into more subtle and transparent forms of the spirit, whereas any return to primitive types of experience brings us before a thick and viscous world expressing the primitive concerns of the flesh for perpetuating physical life and survival. The human universe being circumscribed at its incipient individual stage already by the design of mind does not allow us to pierce its boundaries in experience. Leszek Kolakowski declared, "No matter how deep we dig into human experience, all we find is man himself." I would say, "No matter how deep we dig into human experience, all we find will be the human world."

It is as Edgar Allan Poe and Paul Valéry after him said, "The world is already circumscribed within the human mind." We can specify further that it is not only the world as such, but the specific cultural world of a period that is already circumscribed within the individual experience of man.

*b. THE QUEST FOR "TRUE REALITY" AND THE
IMPASSE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND
COLLECTIVE EFFORT*

We have already attempted to show that every individual experience is inscribed by its quality in the collective effort of humanity. Within the human world the "return to the source" cannot be sought in a supposed "uniquely genuine" experience; if we seek to renew the world, we can never accomplish that by discarding the already established forms directing us toward such an experience, which is but fictitious.

However, the creative endeavor in art does undoubtedly contain a quest that is often understood as a quest for an original and hitherto unknown and unprecedented form or quality. This quest itself determines its objective, which we will attempt to unravel and to describe.

Man's creative effort springs from as many sources as there are within himself to move, to ignite, to awaken him towards transcending the limits of contingency within which he is caught, that is, life, himself, the world.

Unlike the spontaneity of experience, creative impetus or impulse not only has an individual concreteness but also has a most specific personal significance that has been differentiated through its different sources.

In the turmoil of the profound emotions that invade our being, caught irremediably in a struggle within ourselves between the rage of revolt and the mildness of understanding, passing directly from bitter hate to disarming compassion, and after we have fought over and over again the battle between annihilating distress and ardent hope, with each of these in turn deepening the urge to disentangle the hidden motives at their heart but yielding no clues to them and no reconciliation, we feel surging within us an overwhelming propulsion to leave the battlefield. We feel overpowered by the forces that emerge within us against our will, that impose disorienting tensions. We feel an impotent rage against streams of unaccountable emotions, for they lurk behind us each time we attempt to control the situation through reflective evaluation of the forces at play and of the significance of the conflicts. We feel an unquenchable yearning to seek another realm where the profound stream of the subterranean forces agitating our lives, the irreconcilable opposites, the unclarifiable discrepancies, and the conflicts tearing our inner being to pieces could be mediated and woven into one harmonious fabric. We seek a plane above the crudity of irreconcilable feelings, above our personal tragedies, by transposing the struggle, the feeling, the yearnings into an all-embracing point we establish in a poem, a picture, a sonata. In the unity of a creative work our inward strife becomes resolved, transmuted by a higher interpretation of motives than that which this world and life can afford, with all being clarified by being ordered in this vision.

We dart towards this point that transcends our natural life even though this makes us pursue the unattainable. In the consuming fire of a violent passion when our whole being is thrown out of its complacent round into an irresistible course urging onward, a course of hope alternating with one of anguish, of burning desire alternating with one of doubt, now of enchantment and now of suspicion, moving towards a glimmering light that like a firefly evades our reach. We pursue a light that springs forth in a sudden flash in the midst of darkness and draws us, but the minute we extend a hand to seize it, it vanishes to flash again in a place out of reach. We follow our vision trembling, running from flash to flash, perpetually misled, errant amid the darkness of life. Either we drive ourselves to inner destruction by becoming vainly lost in an empirical pursuit of love, of happiness, of glory, of fame, of grandeur, or we turn our search for unattainable earthly goals into our very longing for them. We elevate ourselves above the limits of the world as well as of our own nature and attempt to grasp the meaning, the content of this pursuit by transposing our nostalgias, our yearnings, our plight into the vision of a work of art. We mold them in accord with this design, projecting it over against ourselves as the ideal expression of the abyssal strivings that drove us in our foolish course. This objective, unattainable within the constituted world, this futile, perpetually evasive, and ultimately elusive dream is at the last made immobile and is presented in its purest, spiritual form.

Even in the midst of the current of everyday existence, within a well-defined and tangible course seeking modest and determined aims, we become impatient,

exasperated by the monotony of the trivial drudgery involved. We feel worn out by the necessity of perpetually inventing new strategies to accomplish these aims never definitively accomplished but always to be taken up again and of counteracting circumstances and influences hostile to our delineated line of conduct. We feel abused by the instability and lack of finality of our victories, which with a new turn of events may even be derided, by the futility of our particular achievements, which shine only as long as they are not surpassed by those of others. A dissatisfaction surges within us with the perpetual vanishing of everything that we strive to establish, with the incompleteness of everything we struggle to make whole and perfect, and finally with the lack of validity, with the meaninglessness of all our worldly pursuits, which are relevant merely for an instant, whereas we long for perdurance.

We are overwhelmed by an urge to give to the dynamic chaos of life's ever mercurial current coherence and articulation, to salvage from the fleetingness of life some precious fragments by devising for them a point of reference, a framework of cohesion, so that something may endure above the flux of life.

We are carried away by our own momentum above the viscous stuff of our everyday emotions, feelings, ambitions. Instead of sinking within ourselves we lift ourselves above the array of confusion. Picking up mutilated odds and ends, we fashion a reflection. Instead of remaining submerged in the flux of the world, we raise the bits of it we care for to the level of our inner work wherein with the rising of fresh sap, the emotional core of a work originates within us so that these bits are restored to wholeness, and for a unity, an order, so that the justification of our existence for which we starve is discerned, meaning and purpose being found within a work of creation.

Do not our ceaseless efforts to provide life's necessities for ourselves release within us a poignant yearning to rise higher than the level of survival? Do we not like Sisyphus have to pick up same stone every morning and roll it uphill only to see it roll down the hill every night? Don't we with very such reversal have to conjure up new strength, courage, endurance to take up the task again and carry that stone without being crushed under it never to rise again? Where do we find such a spring of ever fresh water to refill our reservoir? Is life itself nothing but a chain of tasks to be carried out, so that once our hands droop we fall lifeless? Do we not in order to lift our hands again have to wring out of ourselves a delirious faith in a task higher than the ever to be repeated work of survival? A Promethean task towards which we may rise despite having our feet chained to the ground? The hope of shouldering such a task lifts our heart, revives and mobilizes our feelings, emotions, yearning. All the virtualities that remained stultified within the dreariness of life, harnessed to the common round now unfold their wings. Is not a creative undertaking such a task that carries us beyond ourselves breaking the chains of our slavery to the world and life?

Can we, closed within the framework of the established world and life as we are, satisfy our higher strivings, yearnings for the absolute eternal beauty, our thirst for immortality, all to be actualized within a higher type of beingness than that our trivial preoccupations, our everyday actions, thoughts, reactions, and stimuli allow us to become?

Do not we feel wasted and lost unless we can rise towards a higher level of existence? And what is it that then adequately satisfies this longing for a higher form of being than projecting it towards a transcendent telos? In following this projected path our deepest strivings revive, our hitherto atrophied potentialities revive, and virtualities hitherto unknown sprout and unfold. Transposing them all into the weaving of a web of a superior reality, assigning them a superior role, place, and value, we make them in turn forge our own being so that we are more delicate, sensitive, responsive to beauty and the sublime than we were before. By rising towards the creative task as a telos, the individual being is transposed to a higher level of existence and fulfillment. How otherwise could we forge our spiritual existence?

That said, turning to the other pole of our life involvements, do not the rapture, the exultant joy and enthusiasm that burst forth amid the dullness of faded forms and colors, shed a new light upon everything, heightening our sense of beauty, virtue, innocence so that an all-pervading enchantment carries us beyond ourselves? This exaltation urges us to make translucent all the screens by which the current of life and the world hide these beauties from the common eye. It spurs us to transgress the limits of the faded, inert, stereotypic, dull, repetitious framework of the world by bringing into view all the marvels we believe ourselves to be the first to behold and to witness. Carried away beyond the borders of our present environment, style of life, tastes, blindered culture, and stagnant humanity, we fly on the wings of enthusiasm to reach and reveal this flower of light and beauty, of magic and elevation, by recreating it upon a canvas, in a music score, a ballet figure.

Enthusiasm, this exaltation of the soul, is the left wing of creation.

Its right wing is our unquenchable thirst to surpass the limitations of life, the contingent conditions of the world, the narrow confines of our self-seeking and launch towards the immutable and final, the unrestricted and unconditioned that is hidden behind the veil of the world within which we are caught like a fly in a spider web. Seeking freedom from the bondage of the nature that runs through our very veins, we elevate ourselves towards a vision of a creative object as towards a point of reference pure and uncompromising, translucent, and unyielding to the treacheries of contingency.

While all this subjective, most intimately personal creative elan transcends the narrow limits of the contingent, constituted world, its most profound meaning, upon scrutiny, is in its rejection of the fictitious universe of man as it aims to establish contact with the transcendent "ultimate reality," the "true reality," the "real."

As Ibsen runs through all the hidden springs of man's passion, desire, longing and details how life distorts, stifles, hampers their higher unfolding and robs them of their authentic, "truly real" aim, given the veil that contingency throws over our aspirations, spirit, genius, he repeats incessantly: "If only we knew" what is the ultimate answer to our plight, the sense of our existence, what is the "true reality" behind the screen of life, of the world, of nature.

What is the "real?" How can the artist approach it since it is to be sought beyond the human world? Does he have then to reject or ignore the world as an exponent of the human past, the cultural inheritance of mankind?

*c. THE DILEMMA AT THE HEART OF
CREATIVITY: COLLECTIVE HERITAGE VIS-à-VIS
INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE*

Human history is constructed upon a great number of cornerstones, each of which in its own way gave history a transforming reorientation of its course. On the one hand, each segment of human history consists of an accumulation of accomplishments, conquests made against adverse natural conditions by concatenations of relentless human effort. The world we live in is a phase of this effort; it is our historical heritage and the fruit of the collective continuous work of humanity, a reflection of the race's "creative spirit."

On the other hand, the real advance of this continuous line of progress, the steps that gave new turns to it, or led it higher, are the results of a personal, individual genius, insofar as an individual has stepped out from the concatenations of the collective heritage and challenged its course. Each new significant thrust consists precisely in rejecting previous results, in pitting the new endeavor against those of the past. It privileges the most intimate and personal effort by taking its innermost personal, unique evidence to be uniquely valid. From within its own perspective the creative undertaking of an artist, a thinker, a scientist, a philosopher is absolutely individualized and appears as a singularly personal affair of the individual, one confined to his isolated being as if the progress that it introduces into the world could follow the creative laws, conditions, and inspiration of individual consciousness alone as they evolve in isolation from the rest of humanity.

What is the relationship between these two paths that seem to antagonize, challenge, and prevail over each other? We have already shown that in order to take advantage of the progress of the creative spirit of humanity we partake of our own lifeworld wherein it is actualized. But it is by rejecting and surpassing that world that our creative elan springs forth and unfolds. Here again we meet the temptation to reject the collective inheritance of the past by ignoring it altogether and embark on a strictly personal, genuinely individual effort "at its source" within our individual being alone. A strong temptation indeed.

On the other extreme, if we follow the course of human culture with historical imagination, understanding sympathetically the intertwining of influences among individuals, we might get the picture that, although the actual work of creation is played by individuals, they are themselves only elements of the vast fabric of the collective stream into which their limited genius flows and from which it rises.

*d. PHENOMENOLOGY OF LIFE (PHILOSOPHY OF
LIFE)*

The philosophy of life has a special status among philosophical undertakings: usually it is either uncritically taken by unscholarly minds to be the "wisdom of life" or it is, as with Kant or Jaspers, concerned with society, personal life, etc. But this personal intimate reflection draws on and stands upon an established serious reflective philosophical standpoint, one concerned with the major divides in the nature of

being. The role of man in the cosmos, idealism and realism, the relation between universal forms and the concrete ungrasped flow of experience, the philosophical question of first principles, etc., these are questions that leave scholarly cogitation and its limitations behind and plunge into the intuitive, but dark to translucent reason, realm of the passions, emotions, desires of the living, aspiring individual.

The passage here made remains unilaterally unclear like that made from the impressive mathematical apprehension of forms and relations among abstract entities to the concretely felt realm of religious experience. The reason for this seemingly necessary gap and for giving up seeking any conducting continuity is that the overall philosophical endowment of man has been split into the clear, law-governed realm of reason and the contrastively dark and formless realm of the passions.

A special opportunity tantalizingly beckons to establish a philosophy of life without this radical and unexplainable hiatus between the rationally founded legitimacy of first principles and the insight into life to be obtained by renouncing the life of intellect and its prestige to seek the source, the vehicle, the promoter, and the meaning-giver and the whole enterprise that is for each person his or her life, his or her existence. Here is another harvest.

The pluridimensional being of man that we have already established in our *Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought*, as well as in our *Eros et Logos: Esquisse de l'intériorité créatrice*, and in our interpretation of psychiatric research offers us this unique, long-awaited possibility of developing a philosophy of life that is indeed grounded soundly in scholarly philosophical research but which takes off from the transparent lucidity of formal reason and moves stage by stage through the levels of human experience in a continuous line of questing.

Although this quest cannot, owing to the very nature of man's emotions, passions nostalgias, and yearnings, reshape the rational apparatus with its logically devised structural patterns, argumentative continuity, and conceptual schemes, and likewise cannot apply those schemata without falsifying the very sense of our palpitating fluidity in its unfolding, the project is rescued from any arbitrariness in interpretation or perspective by a series of intuitively intertwined patterns. Patterns of our inner experience that otherwise appear to be fragmentary actually display an isomorphic correlativity in their progress, providing purpose to each other and harking back to the rational structures of the empirical reality from which they, as well as our reason, take off.

Thus, not only may we probe deeply into the hidden realms of personal existence for the inward discernment of our own experience and for orientation, but without this remaining a realm apart from the line of reason, we may also gain through our inquiry a complementary cognition of man, his hidden drives and final commitment, his life-promoting and annihilating struggles, so that a continuity in our philosophical view on man as a central agency stretched through intimately coordinated and mutually interacting and influencing realms of experience then emerges. The sensory, emotive, intellectual, volitional, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual are not to be divided. These realms appear intertwined, as they are. The direct links between the

patterns of each respective experience do appear to be lost in the concrete pulp of experience, but an ever present profile of Logos gives unity to man's life. These realms appear intertwined as well as distinct, intermingled as well as autonomous, united as well as divided along the line of their origins in different sources and their careers toward different teloi. We distinguish their initial spontaneities and final aims.

Thus philosophy of life as a domain of inquiry does not belong to the scholarly "system" of philosophy. It indeed draws on all the branches of philosophical research, sets out from the basic findings obtained by them, is inspired by the convictions that they have solidified, and is illuminated by their flashes of insight. But it continues beyond their special questions in a quest for a complete knowledge of man, the world, his role in the cosmos, and his final aim or purpose. In this it does not follow their methods or adopt their criteria of validity. It does not share either the strict rational rigor or the conceptual precision found in these inquiries, for these become artificial when we turn to ponder life as a whole. Here we have to open the strict, narrow framework of the rational schemata of thought toward larger rhythms.

Situating our inquiry within the field of the phenomenology of life, we give it a special space of reflection in addition. This reflection is conceived as a free meditation of the human mind that goes where it is led by its quest. In these pages, before any attempt can be made to squeeze this quest into a discourse having conceptual molds enforcing coherence or selecting according to relevance to guiding ideas, we present the quest itself in its genuine meditative form, as it actually proceeds, as a meditation preceding any theory. We here avoid projecting any a priori links. Our meditation itself is meant to reveal them in its proceeding.

PRO - LOG OS

Structures, we inherit; experience, we laboriously conquer. Since its pristine surging occurs within the field of collective experience and the conceptual frameworks elaborated in and dominating a period, our experience has to be sifted, separating out its pulp out to its furthest horizons in order to come into its own in a new light.

The great pristine intuition lying at the heart of all metaphysical queries concerns the human condition—extending from the spark of life that animates it through all the spheres of life: from its life-favoring material base, its physiology, psychology, creative thrust, through all the cosmic relevancies upon which life is suspended and by which it is conditioned, through the intellectually impenetrable reasons of its origins, to the Unconditioned. It is this intuition in its uniquely personal nature—an intuition that touches most intimately the heart of the human person—that will be the object of the subsequent meditation here. Although in innumerable guises this intuition has been and is the subject of various types of reflection, the modalities by which it is approached are tributary to the spirit of the age. Hence this vital interest is ever renewed.

a. THE DOMINATING DRIVE OF OUR AGE

The dominating drive of our age seeks basic renewal through a return to the sources. We have developed an unquestioned belief that the present can be exhaustively understood through tracing its genesis in the past, that the forms of experience, that is, its expression in life, art, religion, and our very own personalities, are relative to this genesis. We are convinced that these are all constructs conditioned by circumstances and that they hide the authentic, the genuine, the only valid core of reality. Empirical psychology claims that what is really genuine in man are his primitive drives and strivings. Anthropology attempts to explain the meaning of our cultural life in all its aspects, our social institutions and habits, our religion and its practices, and the orientation for personal life found in the myths of primitive man. Psychoanalysis is founded on the creed that the most personal, most profound ways of feeling, desiring, evaluating that make up our existence are artifacts, that they should be dissolved, reduced to first elements for the sake of retrieving our genuine being. Even philosophy, which gave the lead in this universal quest for renewal, and the fine arts that follow up on that lead reject all the established forms developed throughout history. They seek in naive, spontaneous, everyday experience the “pure” form of feeling, the “genuine” truth or beauty. This quest for a radical and uniquely valid beginning of human experience means the rejection of all human inheritance as manifested by culture. *We radically challenge this contention.*

The question arises, “Is this claimed return to the source not an illusion? That is to say, could the primitive, primordial experience sought possibly be the unique, authentic, genuine, original source of man’s nature?”

We will attempt here to first see whether there actually be a privileged experience free from preestablished structures; and, what is more, we ask whether the creative effort through which humanity renews itself is not completely misunderstood when identified with the scientific or philosophical quest after a privileged, initial experience.

We will therefore analyze the nature of the creative quest and in doing so disentangle it from its relation to the cultural inheritance of man.

b. THE UNIVERSAL LOGOS

Husserl's stressing that intellectual intuition is most adequate when it is both self-given, that is, an object of cognition given directly without intermediaries, and fundamentally rational in nature (and that this is at the core of every object of cognition) has paved the way for the disclosure of the Logos at every level of man's concern and manifestation.

Although Husserl's narrow commitment to intellectual intuition, being geared to conceptual constructions, confined him to the cognitive constitutive function alone, when we follow his painstaking genetic inquiry into the stringent originary forms of this intuition assuming rational forms, we are led to the sources of intuition itself. Therefore, despite the fact that Husserl's emphasis misleads him in pursuing his intention by prematurely identifying intuition with intellectual retracing of the structuring of the genesis of an experience step by step, as we grasp the relation of intuition in its representative conscious form to the structuring constitutive function, we simultaneously unravel at the beginning of this genesis the elements of the ineffable spontaneity of consciousness that put in motion the constitutive mechanism.

Does rationality, the basis of our universe and cognition refer exclusively to the constitutive pattern of intellectual consciousness? Or can we, on the contrary, consider this spontaneity as the vital surge for survival, the initial logos, the rational flow of life, which extends the adventure of consciousness to dumb and blind nature and which means that the logos even there anticipates the distinctive level of genesis of experience known through those faculties proper to man, that is, our spiritual operations?

Phenomenological inquiry, in particular Ingarden's analysis of the various types of being, shows that these dimensions of experience are not distinct to the human universe and point to the pluridimensionality of man, his experience and his universe, each gradation of experience being differentiated from the others by a rational pattern, by the degree to which its structuring is knotted.

Each of these dimensions of human experience equally merits our interest and inquiry, for all dimensions are involved in the most vigorous and refined speculative interrogation, which progresses in tight structural relations on to the dimensions of aesthetic and moral experience and ultimately to the spiritual horizon of the ineffable Logos.

Indeed Husserl's "principle of all principles" proclaiming the legitimacy of all types of experience carrying evidence has come to exercise its full might and to follow to the end the philosophical style.

Each level or dimension of human experience reveals its distinctive difference.

Language is the privileged instrument of Logos in its transmission of experience, and consequently, it is a key form of influence and transmission in all the functions of human life, from the life-organizing route of sensory-motor functioning through all the levels of lifeworld, from transcendent constitutive cognition through the aesthetic, moral, and spiritual concatenation of experience. Language simultaneously serves experience and limits it.

Its intrinsic pattern is isomorphic with life-constitutive experience since all our faculties—will, intellect, imagination, memory, and emotion—accord with the aims of genetic constitution, on the one hand, and discovery, on the other, distinctively structured domains of moral and spiritual experience. We discover that this latter experience outlines in its specific genesis a whole realm distinct from the constitutive structuring field of consciousness. Although essentially escaping the forms of intellectual rationality, it appears as not altogether "absurd" in a Frommian or Kierkegaardian sense, but to carry a specific intention having its specific mode of Logos. Logos gathers in life's textures.

To unravel Logos' pursuits we have to abandon the beaten track of the discursive method and to actually follow its progress. In life's textures, in the structures of reason, in the confluences of emotions, in the quality and violence of passion, like the sap within the tree, like milk in the breast, Logos translucently flows through sparkling life, runs through the net of all reason promoting life, and reveals itself in the infinite modes of ineffable moral and spiritual experience, to advance life at its various levels. With each instance, the proposition, pattern of the Logos' cooperative distribution is different. Although the natural development of man—of his lifeworld, experience, and language—tends toward an increasing measure of rational structuring, yet it would be to falsify human reality to impose the criteria of one level of experience upon another. Each of them has its own experiential quality, so that the human functions collaborate therein in varying degrees, proportions, designs, and towards different immediate aims.

Hence demands are placed on style. Philosophical style is chosen on the basis of how we ultimately experience reality in following our philosophical conviction and decision about life's nature. A style's extensive assumptions as to where lies the major and decisive access to reality via intellectual reflection are crucial, and we will attempt to appropriately grasp life's totality in the framework of a rational discourse. Giving priority to emotions as constituting a *logique du coeur*, we will, following Pascal, adopt a Spartan mode of expression. Phenomenology too will inform our style for it has given us a clear set of devices for justifying different options as to the type of language used: the nature of originary experience of the giver's dimension of reality already predicates a style. It is up to phenomenological insight to recognize that experience in its unique nature and to summon the necessary supports that are its final justification.

In fact, the crucial question, one visible already as a profound preoccupation in Plato's *Dialogues*, is that of whether there are no other connections in philosophy but rational ones governed by logical laws? If the fluid nature of emotions, feelings, drives, moods, and states of mind, their concrete fluctuating qualities, intensity, tonalities appear so opaque, impenetrable, and fleeting to the rational mind, does that mean that they must be disconnected flashes, inconsequent and arbitrary, that derive their only sense from the role they may play in empirical, rationally organized life-oriented systems? Or do they perhaps have, like personal life itself, their own specific sense? Disconcerting as they may be in their seemingly chaotic emergence and even futile trajectory, so far as the rational schemes of life—of logic—are concerned, they might have a Logos of their own. It remains to show this through description that is close to experience and has in goodly proportion something of experience's own concentration.

c. *THE ISSUE*

The "question of all questions" that is at stake in this quest is this: the human condition vis-à-vis the Unconditioned. To leave that question unanswered is to ignore the truth. The question rises up not from the idle intellectual speculation that is so fashionable today, but from the heart of the human condition itself as an acute protest against the pains and limitations of the world around us.

We strike against the question—Is the human condition circumscribed and closed in upon itself even within its transcendental radius?

Is there no exit? No door that opens?

d. *THE RHAPSODIC LOGOS: INWARD ORIENTATION TOWARD A SENSE OF FULFILLMENT*

The infinitely versatile logos has to find a way to insert the meanings of the intentions, statements, desires, sentiments emerging in individual experience into the never completed complex web of individual/collective experience. These insertions are made in the human communication that transmits these meanings. Individual/collective experience has to be disrupted in its natural flow. Further this communication has to throw hooks that appropriately meet the specific capacity of the receiver, whose web of experience has also to be adequately disrupted and met again. This disruption and continuity of sense is strikingly and uniquely exemplified in the communicative mode that is dialogue. The logos makes the disruption in the understandings of both partners, and in their encounter, the coinciding understand that follows is their accomplishment. How could this coincidence be accomplished other than through selective retrieval along both coinciding logocic strings, which each belong to a subjacent web of sense sustaining the framework of each? Thus emerge circles of disrupted voices which yet maintain an orientation

toward the initial meaning by transmitting voices to each other. What we have here is the “rhapsodic” understanding of dialogue had by the ancients.

This mode stands in contrast to the theoretical representation of thought. The theoretical exposition of thought is founded on clear, logico-linguistic/logoic chains of meaning in which continuity of meaning is maintained. In contrast, in rhapsodic dialogue there is a rupture of the circle of underlying experiential significance and each of the dialogical voices has to be selectively matched by an appropriate voice from another and corresponding experiential circle. We have to seek meaning deeper within the natural flow of the experience within which it is be founded in order to stitch those circles together, and despite the transformation worked, that flow retains its direction of significance and advances toward accomplishments.

Yet there is an essential distinction between the rhapsodic way of establishing connections and dialogue per se. These differ in their essential orientation, purpose, conduct, and fulfillment. At one hand we have dialogue with an essentially *concrete* orientation, and at the other we have a rhapsodic innermost quest in which our whole being seeks *absolute* understanding of the ultimate sense of our personal beingness as such.

Within the turmoil of our inward experience, we are prompted from our innermost self to seek connections—especially in ruptured circles of representation—so that we plunge deeper and deeper into the dimensions of our experience to find links corresponding to our intuitions.

Unlike the theoretical mode of exposition of thought, which tends to arrive at a conclusive sense, this rhapsodic mode of thought is never completed. On the contrary, it throws novel perspectives open for consideration. In the stream of our floating experiential life, at each and every attempt to make sense of disruption, even as we find a circle of coherent rhapsodic voices, they prompt us to plunge further into the receding web of experience to find a deeper ring of feelings, emotions, meditative intuitions.

Ultimately, the congenial coherence of the fragments that is come upon derives its reliability from “belief.” While a concretely oriented dialogue naturally entails “beliefs” shared by the parties involved—“believing in” or “believing that”—which sustains the relative validity of the dialogical exchange of the partners, stitched from factors of reality, the rhapsodic quest, in contrast, extends through all the horizons of our thought and experience and is prompted by an innermost thirst to reach amid all the horizons of our thought and experience our own uniquely personal truth.

While concrete dialogue moves “outward” through concrete realities of life, this personal truth encompassing the meaning and sense of our existence has no support in exterior reality. It has no framework outwardly forged or invented. This truth that we searched out is realized “inwardly,” by forging our destiny in our innermost beingness itself, *in faith*.

But what about our innermost thirst for truth—for truth about the meaning of our existence—which prompts us to seek that meaning above and through all? Unlike a concrete dialogical mode of discourse, this search stretches and descends through our entire existence and does not promote specific concrete advances. This thirst eluding theoretical elucidation seeks corresponding deep rhapsodic voices that are

also searching and progresses through successive circles of meanings formed in our natural life experience, breaking each in a rhapsodic fashion, reaching deeper in our soul's experience, and binding to us the subjacent strings we stir in our penetration to ever greater depths. The rhapsodic flow of our quest cannot be elucidated in a theory completing its meaning. On the contrary, by throwing open the ever deeper circles of our quest and throwing hooks across the rhapsodic gaps, our quest moves closer and closer to its aim. We advance in the fulfillment of our spirit, *and in faith*.

P A R S I

THE FIRST SERMON OF TIMOTHY
THE DISPOSSESSED: *THE QUEST*

Brethren, we have come together to ponder the anxiety, disquiet, dissatisfaction that corrodes our everyday feeling for life, the thirst we experience for “something else,” something different, something beyond what the sum of our earthly satisfactions, joys, felicities may satisfy. We seek the sense of all these endeavors of ours, the meaning of our desires, strivings, the sense of it all. Our very “longing” for this is a sign that there might be such a meaning, a sense of existence that would be at the origin of it all.

You expect me to participate in your quandary and to be a witness to your meandering search, a witness who might have an inkling of the road to take, one who will see its dangers and who will not leave you facing them alone. This road is entirely to yours to plot and follow, but you are not left abandoned to yourselves. There is a light of human communion among wayfarers; there is the grace of lofty purpose itself, and there is hope that is not a vain expectation of some earthly event or finding but is an inward force streaming from this very urge that prompts our entire beingness onward in the quest. This urge cannot deceive us. It carries a promise that is granted in advance to those who enter and pursue the quest. We have the light of communion with each other in this grave undertaking, the grace in our elevating our souls toward such a lofty purpose, that and hope, great hope, which prompts us onward. . .and so we set out borne up by these.

T. S. Eliot
Four Quartets, East Coker III

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

A PERIOD OF PREPARATION FOR FAITH

1. SEEKING AUTHENTIC REALITY BEHIND ITS MEDIA

The individual, indeed, acts like a small wheel communicating with the great mill-wheels grinding the experience of humanity. He participates with all his functions in the vast process of the life of humanity, which proceeds through both individual and collective functioning. Individual as well as collective functions have been established and developed throughout history and take a particular form in the period in which an individual lives. The individual himself is an organic unity whose feelings, emotions, physiological processes, volition, actions, and even thoughts are essentially elements or functions following the same pattern. This pattern itself is a variation on the great collective pattern displayed at that period. We are so intimately interwoven with that pattern itself that it appears to us as the portent, the backbone of real life, to be reality itself, or at least its face.

However, if we consider the fact that various epochs and various cultures have developed different patterns which were all accepted in their given times to be the reality of the individual's life, we may wonder whether any of them reveals reality to us or rather disguises it, brings forth reality or just mediates it. A cultural pattern's shaping of collective and individual existence cannot be seen as mediating the ultimate, last, "absolute" form of life, its "authentic" configuration but rather to be a form of life relative to the specific configurations into which the forms of our individual functioning have been molded through the inheritance of humanity and our own initiative and natural cooperation.

Thus, when we then ask "What is the true reality?" and we feel the urge, a longing, to clarify this question, a question that arises in the midst of all endeavors—artistic, scientific, philosophical—then following the poet T. S. Eliot, but also Jean Wahl, Heidegger, and Rilke, we have to conclude that *we are not ready for thought*.

Of course, there must be a reason for which true, "authentic" reality has to remain hidden. Nietzsche says that Plato invented the world of essences in order to veil reality because an artist cannot tolerate the *real*, the poignantly concrete and immediately palpable. In the experience of the creative mind, in the real, true reality that is the ultimate target at which creativity aims, in contact so direct that we become identified with it, our very being is abolished and we are pulled with the real toward an irreversible flux that, as Heraclitus says, we never enter twice or maybe not even once. It seems to our poets that the creator, artist, poet, philosopher who enters into such a consuming contact with the real in the creative experience has to avert his eyes and turn himself back to what has already been invented in various guises in past experiences. To come to terms with the palpating and altogether simple, the creator introduces distinctions and separations into the indivisible; he fixes in color, sound, form, concept the ever fluid. We are thus tossed into an array, a projected scheme through which reality is envisaged as through a glass darkly, and so feel,

sense, and think within that scheme's bounds and with its devices and means. Yet to "think" as an original, individual act would be to come into direct contact with the true reality. Thus caught irremediably within various patterns as in a spider's web we cannot even know what thought is.

Man, says Eliot, and this is also the thought of Rilke, seems by nature not to be able to stand too much density, intensity, consciousness. Our consciousness is already arranged in such a way that we may dilute, extend temporally and spatially, disperse, separate, divide. Man divides because he is divided within himself.

To reach true reality we do not, as is often thought, have to appeal to privileged moments of joy or love, suffering or to a holocaust of self-sacrifice but have to strive to reach beyond the universal pattern of our own lives, of our period and what is more beyond the very scheme of generations. We have to go behind the scheme of things to see the real freed from the established cyclic chains of nature. Then the real stands forth like a "spring day in the middle of winter," contradicting the expected and following a more essential, underlying law that had remained hidden, one that the human mind hid or buried.

Our thinking is like Prometheus' chained elan. In order to free it and to establish the possibility of its authentic functioning, we have to reach behind all the schemata that habit and custom rely upon.

On his way to discovering what authentic reality is, a poet, an artist, a philosopher has to scrutinize the phenomena of life, birth, suffering, fulfillment, death, love, fecundity, all the elements of the scheme of things. He discovers then how every action is bound to time, which holds it tight to its inexorable laws. Already the nature of experience itself is the major barrier. Experience screens out the individuality of the content of an individual life because that content belongs not only to the individual but also to the preceding and the coming generations, which will draw upon it just as the actual individual himself draws upon the past. Through necessary obedience to its scheme, experience in its temporal unfolding makes the individual merely a link in the chain of generations, repeating the same preestablished cycle of birth, growth, suffering, love, and death; it makes the individual a mere repetitive instance in a scheme of eternal return. Through its laws and forms within which individual experience is preordained, in a way that establishes what we call "nature," the natural universe being correlated to it as well as the lived world, experience establishes the universe of phenomena, which—though transient and inessential—form such a consistent system that every new experience at its birth is already preordained to enter into it.

Given the cyclic repetitive scheme of nature, space and time—indeed, the entire scheme of forms such as essence, substance, substratum, idea, concept that serve to organize, structure, relate, separate, divide, and form experience at its birth—are basic obstacles to reaching the real.

Thus, in order to reach behind the established ways of our own response, behind the molds that take the spontaneity of our volition, cognition, emotion captive, and to overcome the totality of human tradition infiltrated with preordained forms already within the very patterning of our functions, we cannot abandon, discard, or neglect the collective heritage. We must, on the contrary, enter into a dialogue with

it and pierce not only the reservoir of knowledge and forms of thought but even the preestablished forms of generation down to the cyclic pattern of natural life and to the ultimate web of temporal and spatial rules, which have preorganized our experience within their molds. Behind them there might be, as Coleridge saw and as T. S. Eliot says, a “sacred,” “indomitable river” breaking instantly into the totality of generations at the cross section of the temporal and the eternal.

This is the basic conviction that the philosopher may share with poets and which would also be essential for the artist and the scientist.

There is, to repeat again, no privileged type of experience that would immediately introduce us into the heart of the real and unveil it. Creation aiming at the discovery of true reality—which with Jean Wahl and T. S. Eliot we say is not to be revealed through a particular experience of a specific quality or intensity—has its source behind the established schemes; it comes “out of season” like a spring day in the middle of winter, having gained access behind the stage, behind the cycle of nature, where according to Heraclitus birth and death are united. In order to reach the real, we have to seek not a specific way to it but to embrace the totality of the given and to bring ourselves face to face with it.

The creative undertaking is essentially an individual quest for this hidden reality. Whatever may be the extent of the cognitive, constitutive material that is necessary for the individual’s creative endeavor and the ways these be used, its evaluation and its final form are commanded by the basic aim, which asks: “How, with what is given, can the true reality be expressed?” Thus, the individual creative effort oriented radically towards the discovery and expression of the truly real is essentially a dialogue with the established scheme, a search for the invariant rules underlying changing patterns. The established pattern has to be rejected. Yet if we were to rebuff it in all its given features as mere media hiding the essence of truth, could we then evaluate it for our own purpose?

We can witness in contemporary philosophy itself such self-critical activity of the universal creative mind. The meaning of this term as it is used here is similar at base to Nicolai Hartmann’s “objective spirit” of humanity, it being sustained by individuals while it simultaneously molds the individual. However, the crucial difference in our approach to this mind or spirit lies in our understanding it from within its progress as it creates and establishes new forms constitutive of reality. First of all, it appears as if the unfolding of the universal scheme of Western thought has completed a cycle and with thinkers like Bergson, James, etc., a revolutionary suspicion has arisen against such basic notions as substance, essence, category— notions that were discovered and progressively established through two thousand years of Western culture as the constitutive principles of reality and the cornerstones of its rational ordering and grasp.

But with the progress of modern science a simultaneous devaluation of these fundamental notions as the basic constituents of reality came has occurred so that their opposites are now vindicated and priority is being given to becoming over being, to process over structure, to fluid duration over the static form, as seen in thinkers like Pierce, Whitehead, Bachelard.

2. THE CONDITIONS OF CREATIVITY AS SEEN
PHILOSOPHICALLY

For illumination let us here follow Jean Wahl in his personal philosophical effort. Instead of seeking reality, as usual, through limited particular evidence giving us an individual glimpse at it, let us undertake our quest from a macroscopic perspective, taking into account the totality of the different patterns within which humanity and individuals are caught and proceeding within the process of their ceaseless transformations, corroborations, and refinements.

This macroscopic system itself follows a line of development. In point of fact, individual creative efforts accomplished in different fields carry its main stream and philosophy as the reflective, critical aspect of the endeavor leads it onward, remodeling the fundamental molds into which human sensitivity, emotion, volition, imagination, and mind pour their content by emphasizing some tendencies while dismissing others and by corroborating nuances and redirecting natural bents. Thus philosophical creation assumes a very specific, unique role, that of guiding the progress. But it follows a specific line of development as well.

This reflection is an essential element of the creative endeavor. Scrutinizing the tradition inherited from past stages of growth and making this progress unfold is to retrace the steps and to unravel the ways of the creative spirit of mankind, the "universal" spirit at work. Following Jean Wahl, we have to grasp first the genesis of the entire cycle of realities produced by the genius of history and then penetrate to their conditions and grasp the virtualities of the human genius from which this gigantic game emerges so that we might reach the furthest limit concepts, the last principles of meaning, the ultimate footholds of structure and rationality beyond which we can find no more means to express, to structure anything that could become part of this system along its own lines.

Jean Wahl's metaphysical itinerary is the one taken by each and every creative mind. As individual artists, we follow the collective stream in retrospect, discovering the intrinsic workings of its progress; a dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, of acceptance and negation, of affirmation and opposition, of insufficiency and complementarity appears to be the intrinsic mode of the development that unfolds new forms and establishes a new pattern. This is a pattern that articulates the dynamism of progress by setting articulations of forces and molds for experiential evidences, intuitive insights to be poured into, there to grow and take shape. Ideas and concepts are to be transformed, unfolded, or left behind the main current.

The discovery of the thusly established pattern that simultaneously sustains the constitutive origin of forms and their cognition reveals the dependence, the relativity of the constituted universe of man, of the trend of man's culture, which could have been different had the initial molds and principles of articulation chosen been different. We also see the dependence and relativity of the singular forms themselves with respect to each other and the complete set. Unwrapped from that milieu from which they borrow the whole movement of constitutive functioning and their mutual coordinative adjustment, they may serve as antennae leading to contact with what has remained hidden, what in itself lies beyond any form, the "true reality."

When we follow the whole cycle of the creative spirit of history—correlating, comparing, sifting, distilling the classic ideas, insights, notions from all the perspectives that philosophical theories bring us to, we discover that validity is limited to their being intermediary mediations of the final and absolute. Is then the whole universe of our inherited world going to crumble? Since its cornerstones in such concepts as essence, idea, being, substratum, accident, category, universal, etc. are losing their value for presenting or structuring the absolute and those ultimate incipient and truly indispensable concepts from which the construction of the human universe seems to proceed are to be limited to those of “relation” and “quality,” should the immense reservoir of inherited experience be then discarded, altogether denied validity?

What we have to conclude from these revelations is rather that humanity in using media for transmuting the “real” into the “world” has always chosen certain patterns of relations over others. The very opaqueness of the forms established, their essential incapacity to lead towards the real rather than hide it, the obscuring role of the molds into which our lived experience is being poured mean that we have to make a crucial break with the whole patterning that has guided us: a critical inventory of the collective philosophical effort of Western humanity sifted through the sieve of the creative means of the universal spirit seems to be the way to clear the ground for fresh individual endeavor.

3. THE RADICAL BEGINNING: LIMIT CONCEPTS AND A NEW PATTERN FOR THE MIND

Authentic individual effort may begin after we have through a double scrutiny (one showing the relativity of basic cognitive functions, the other the relativity of the forms assumed in the constitution of our human universe) recognized the obscuring means chosen in the past in the effort to establish direct contact with reality. But we have found by the same stroke that there is a hidden reality that lies at the core of this endeavor. Indeed, the universal invalidation of basic forms has not left us with a void. On the contrary, if behind the given forms a true reality reveals itself, we start over again on a quest to find a more appropriate form by which to approach reality, a form that would be not so much a screen canceling it and disguising it before the naked eye as much as a conductor to its very meaning transposed, received, in the human heart.

We would search for forms accessible to the human mind, feeling what would express it most closely by a transmutation that enters one’s own vibrating being. It appears also that the human mind creates these forms precisely to express the reality transmuted by our being and that then in its historical advance, which means a sequence of ever reworked forms, it in accomplishing that task proceeds to scrutinize and disprove the validity and efficacy of each form. And yet these long series of attempts should not be altogether discredited by the individual who wants to undertake the quest on his own; they are far from being vain. Their creation has forged our virtualities, has developed in us a more subtle, acute experiential grasp, more

finely tuned our evaluating instruments, and deepened our appreciation of the great question. The question, in fact, needed this gigantic effort by innumerable individual and collective genius to disentangle the elements of the question so that the meaning of our human enterprise might be distilled, cornered, grasped. Finally, it is only through negotiating the maze of the merely partial, ephemeral successes that by confronting their limitations we come to attain sharply focused insight.

The criticism and suspension of the validity of the established allows the creator (philosopher) to differentiate some notions as *limit concepts of the mind itself* in its striving towards working itself through and within the real. Furthermore, although behind the screen of constructs, the real itself does not emerge to our inner eye in its absolute purity and there might be no way for the human being to reach or establish contact with the real other than through screens, we are not left dispossessed in front of a total emptiness as if the horizon were to close upon, us, which would seem to be the situation if we assume beforehand a transcendental view. But our whole course of development shows that, to the contrary, there is an object of our quest, the real as real that is as it is out there, the unconditioned standing independent from the screens of formal structures. That said, the role of limit concepts is not to again throw the veil of our cognitive media over reality, but to assess the very point of contact, discovering the very first medium our mind possesses to serve as the basic subjacent *filum Ariadnae* between the unconditioned and its possible manifestations.

There emerges a virginal ground as a meeting place between the real and the individual human being in all the feelers he extends into the real. The individual mind freed from the set of explored and found inadequate ways of proceeding appears in its essential permeability, is transparent before the real itself, and is ready to be thrown into a new pattern of motion in order to meet it.

Thus we have inadvertently arrived at what seems to be the absolute turning point of the human enterprise. The radical beginning, that is, the point from which human consciousness embarks on the long course of working itself through the real, appears as the individual creative undertaking. The whole human heritage, the immense development of humanity, its uncountable turns at the same task, is not a waste but is a long preparation for ever fresh creative efforts undertaken to work oneself through and grasp the real ever more closely, while fulfilling the individual's own virtualities.

Whereas the creative effort of man in all realms consists chiefly in forging media reflecting or approaches to reality, and advances on a discrete, episodic, and yet intimately continuous line, its very condition is far from the work of simply adding and corroborating but, to the contrary, is a personal, "subjective," radical beginning. The radicality of clearing the ground as opposed to the naive acceptance we manifest in our practical, empirical life attitudes wrings from our most personal, intimate source a point of contact with the ultimate. The decision to reconstruct this contact in objective forms, the choice of which would be made exclusively from our truly and uniquely personal source, responsibility, and judgment, gives to creation, whether artistic, scientific, philosophical, an unprecedented, unique character. It is accompanied by an acute awareness of this uniquely individual task. A poet struggling to bring about a new world of feelings and thought, one unique and unprecedented, a

philosopher on the verge of constructing a systematic account of the universe that more adequately captures reality with all its reasons to be made transparent to the mortal eye stands alone, pausing in front of the chaos as he contemplates the scheme he is about to set in motion.

The same quest to go beyond the already accomplished, discovered, and established forms of human consciousness in gripping reality is shared by every artist, inventor, scholar and spurs the creative effort of the philosopher. These do not set out with the same instruments, nor do they proceed to undertake the same type of dealing or use the same expressive media. While the artist, scientist, inventor, poet scrutinize established forms and make their critique for the most part intuitively and in the dark, by trial and error, narrowing perspectives to their specific, particular, very own situation and do so for their most personal sakes, the philosopher undertakes the task of a complete and objective elucidating inquiry in the light of sovereign reason. His investigation not only comprises the collective acquisitions in their totality but also has to probe into their very reasons and clarify their intrinsic laws and the working of the human mind besides.

The creative condition of man is thus fundamentally all-embracing and in its very essence aims at the final elucidation of the creative process, both its universal and individual conditions.

How could we solve any specific riddle confronting us in the nature of the universe around us or within us if we were at a loss in understanding, however dimly, the basic, initial conditions of our own dealing with the unconditioned ultimate, of which these two “universes” are but the most lavish fruit?

P A R S II

THE SECOND SERMON OF TIMOTHY THE DISPOSSESSED:
DOES GOD SPEAK TO THE SOUL?

Brethren, a little boy on hearing the story of Genesis asked, “How can we know it, since there was no one there?” The question is of the gravest nature. How can I relate to you anything from the Scriptures handed down as the spiritual heritage of a nation, or even the teachings of Jesus rooted in an existential occurrence in time, or any article of faith before telling you how we came by it. It is a strange matter, faith. It does not call for any justification or suffer one, unlike all the truths of science and the world for which philosophers advance explanations out of their cognition to support. Sense perception, speculation, induction and deduction have no authority to bestow on revelation. Yet to believe means to know “how God speaks to the soul.” But, does God speak to the soul at all?

Unless He does, we have only idolatry or plays of the imagination. Belief would amount to transcendent strivings on the part of worldly consciousness, the completion of one’s natural being, or finally archetypal regulation of our existential dimension. Holy Scripture, the wisdom given the simple by the Law, the inspired supernatural being Jesus, these would never be transcended. No covenant with the unattainable would be made, no contingency would be redeemed. All these would hover close above our little universe, which no matter how marvelous, would be condemned to remaining a little game.

Do we have then a need to save faith by proving that God does speak to the soul? There is nothing sillier than such a proposition, because to know how God speaks to the soul means to have faith.

GLIMMERINGS

1. HOPE: THE GODDESS OF ILLUSION—NO HOPE BUT DESIRE FOR GOD (AN AFTERTHOUGHT)

Dear Father, you speak of love of God and my whole being vibrates with yours; I feel each of the feelings you express with my being's "every fiber." They are so lively and penetrating that I am overwhelmed by the poignant sharpness with which they strike each chord, pick up every tired thread and lift it to a perfect frenetic pitch to meet your words in a harmonizing transparent net of ardor that transports one's very being towards the Divine. Then, instead of approaching the Divine, I am seized by terror. Having reached this peak, all seems lost, the ladder gives way, God vanishes from sight. The creature stands desolate and lost.

What was it that my being responded to so fervently? Was it God or man who was in play? Was I climbing towards God on Jacob's ladder, by which we can reach God ourselves? Or was it to Jacob himself that we clung; was it in him that we saw God? But why the terror? Why should we feel rejected and lost if we lose only a man to whom we cling, albeit one directly facing God? God yet remains out of reach. What we respond to is not God, but the Divine in man. It is the Divine in man we love. God is avoiding our approach, He is out of reach. The ladder takes us only this far, to the Divine in man

Yet you speak of hope in such an eloquent, appealing, convincing way. Hope, light of life; hope, the fruit we carry within ourselves; hope, the measure of our fulfillment . . . and yet, after I heard all this with open ears, I found myself disconsolately desperate.

What can I, should I hope for? Whatever my imagination turns to are matters of life. I do not hope for any of them. There is, in fact, nothing I might wish for that is not already within my reach and even grasp. Peaceful, harmonious, satisfying life. Family, affection, warmth, devotion, love and friendship in all their forms and variations. Could I possibly hope for more beauty, imagination, adventure in any novel and exciting form? My life is full to the brim. It overflows. It moves at the limits from one extreme to the other. It is gregarious and solitary, chaste and voluptuous, aesthetic and rational, organized and adventurous, gay and melancholy, serious and frivolous.

But had this rapture not something of God, would I consent to hope for it? And yet when we hold out hope before ourselves, it is through some one element of life that we expect to quench this thirst—a thirst that at times makes us suffocate. The joy you talk about, what is it, in fact, other than that evanescent glow that emerges from a certain plenitude attained by our being? This glow belongs to our being and so is as ephemeral as the contingent and fluctuating nature of that being itself. And so it vanishes in the same way that it appears. It vanishes with life. If ever our hope has a target at which it ultimately aims, it would be joy.

You speak of joy, coupling it with grace itself. But if grace is transworldly, joy is the marrow of life itself.

You exult with joy, and I feel as if I am shrinking inside instead of expanding. Joy over what? What might justify our elation, an elation involving our whole being? Joy is the Dionysiac element in man. It is drunkenness with wine, the spirit of life. The exuberance of a vanishing moment. Even the purest joy still glories in life, hope being in its being made eternal. Yet if we project and glorify life ad infinitum, can we ever quench this thirst?

Does this thirst not proceed precisely from the limitation of life, from its evasiveness and evanescence, its passing and leaving us as needy as before?

2. JOY AND SUFFERING

We often pass from mood to mood. When we attain a state of mind that is not colored by sadness, melancholy, joy, we are hardly aware of its duration or our own. At the threshold of a budding act, we seem always to be in a perpetual present. Once a portion of our present becomes colored by sadness or any mood, giving an intimate feeling then to the whole of the experience, we become aware of our own duration, of our self as being not an agent of bustling activity but as a person existing for herself—joyful or sad, hopeful or desperate . . .

In their impact, moods affect our experience of inward duration, imparting special personal significance to our experience, a specific intimacy to our inwardness, making one, in fact, more self-enclosed, an intimate of oneself. Our conscious activity, whether bursting forth spontaneously or consciously directed by oneself, may be so deeply penetrated by the felt quality of a mood that it is either slowed down, even thrown into desuetude, or invigorated and enlivened. Moods surge from the preconstitutive resources of our emotive system; they surge spontaneously, are incalculable, and they pass. They belong to the fabric of natural life, express its deep ferments, the distilling of its juices, its vitality.

But do we not, in the midst of concrete present experience, instead of being completely absorbed by our activity or by the feelings that it may engender, experience sometimes another joy? Instead of being infiltrated by such or other mood that imposes itself, threatening to submerge us, we might not passively submit ourselves to it, might not endure it, but rather it might be that our very being releases a secret vibration that brings all our faculties to the verge of a virtuoso performance that so concentrates them and intensifies them that we are brought to a peak of sensitivity, receptivity, reactivity, in which state, as in a delirium, our inward being cannot be flooded by any naturally occasioned mood, fear, anxiety, pleasure, or joy.

The person here radiates its own special condition. How often when quite naturally and for natural reasons we should be submerged by sadness and pain, we actually reach this peak of secret vibration and rise above the natural occasion of woe and radiate joy. What joy?

And often, too, despite circumstances that should naturally occasion, foster, and even guarantee us peace, satisfaction, contentment, and happiness, we feel desolate.

3. THE LIFE OF PASSION OR OF STOIC RESERVE?

What remains after our passion is spent, after the hurricane has passed? Does not passion seem to be the wings of the soul? Does not the spirit appear to be exalted by the fire of its sweeping delirium? And yet what is the fuel of this fire? If it is the very tender substance of our inner being, why do we feel carried far beyond ourselves, infinitely expanded, exalted through a wealth of newborn feelings, of self-generating emotions. After the wave of the storm breaks over us, we find our reservoir used up rather than replenished. The quiet that follows is not that of a harvest but of a weakening of dynamic forces. This sweep of spirit is nothing other than the sweep of an unattainable aspiration. This promise of invincible happiness becomes a tragic, burning delusion, nothing but unattainable phantoms of human folly. And yet this folly might be the grandeur of man. Holding tight the reins of our passions, we shall never savor their transports.

Then again, by keeping our forces, our strivings, even our exalted aspirations in reserve, using them sparingly and judiciously in disentangling the knots of life, trying to discover their deeper significance, are we not drop by drop enriching the pool of our inner self like the wise virgins who kept in reserve the oil for their lamps.

What then? The life of passion, or the life of stoic wisdom? But shall we in this way maintain the equanimity of our being, by withdrawing our attention from current concerns, or by simply keeping our passionate involvement at a lower key? It may be that if we want to pursue our reflections without drastic interruptions, we should withdraw from the traffic of life altogether. The hermits of old, the monastic recluses had no storms of passion to divert them, had no other concerns than the essential: their reflection.

However, did they have the full range of existence to ruminate on in their reflection? And is the glory of existence not precisely the very richness of life's facets, the array of its dimensions to be reflected upon? Teresa d'Avila repeatedly says that the most grievous of sufferings, that one almost beyond endurance, is that of not being understood in the spiritual life one is leading. However, what other types of suffering did she know of to compare that with? What would she have said had she been a mother and seen her children turning away from all she held as sacred? What would she have said if she had been altogether forsaken in a time of mortal need by her own family, to which she had been totally devoted and with whom she had the most tender ties? How would she have developed her spiritual destiny had she consecutively endeavored several lofty tasks and failed at each and every one of them? The question arises then of whether despite the paradoxical situation in which the very condition of our inner life stands, we should not take up the challenge and, putting aside both stoic reserve and the life of the passions pursued for its own sake, launch out on our quest within life itself.

However, this issue has a further bearing on more specific matters. In fact, in the course of a very active life in which our attention is solicited constantly by the matters of existence and all our faculties are worked, we do not have the proper conditions allowing us to reflect upon it or upon either life or ourselves. On the contrary, in order that we may reflect upon life and its meaning, we have to pause

in our active pursuits. Our will, desire, imagination, affections, speculative bents even have to be stilled, and only by pausing in the chase we are in, will we turn our attention, now set free from its concrete usual bonds, to the enduring permanent significance of this course. Moreover, we see that even if our reflection is already well established and, even more, if we are already advanced in it, fresh winds of passion blowing our way, the breaking through of concerns with life matters shatter this achieved state of quietude. The state of recollection in which we were immersed vanishes and all the threads of reflection break. We have to wait till all will again come to a standstill to pick up again the broken thoughts and start anew. Indeed, the question arises of whether we can while in the midst of life make any significant progress in it. What can we ever accomplish with the odds and ends of reflection that are interrupted before our getting anywhere with them? If a complete disruption of our being follows from our total involvement in matters that concern us, should we not keep these concerns at some remove and thus avoid the upheavals the storms that passion entails for our whole self and so maintain an equanimity of a sort?

4. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF TRUTH AND THE AMBIGUITY OF BEING

“If we only knew . . .” is the final word in most of Chekhov’s plays, which bring all the intricate play of events, conflicts of passion, tragedies of dashed aspirations, struggles between the ideal and reality to point of the ultimate yearnings of man. To understand what reasons underlie incomprehensible situations, to unravel the hidden interconnections among facts, to grasp the seemingly absurd course of events, going against expectation, efforts, and prediction, that is, to tear away the veil of appearance with which we deal and find what it is all about, what it is all for, to know at last *the truth*, is the deepest longing of mankind. If we only knew what our life struggle amounts to in the great economy of creation, if we only knew the meaning of our life in the mosaic of humanity, if only we knew simply that there is a sense in the course of the history we take part in, then our existence would be easier to bear. And yet, not only are we denied this knowledge, but within our innermost being we also carry the hidden wound of our ignorance.

How could it be otherwise? We may fool ourselves that the human apparatus, our senses and our reason, allow us to penetrate into all the hidden junctures among things, but the fact remains that if there were to be a final, clear explanation of even the smallest item of our worldly existence, the whole scheme of contingency would have to be exfoliated first. Is not everything tied up with everything else? Is not each tiniest fragment “what it is” because of everything else being what it is? Is not each of the colors distinctively itself in relation to all the others, its intensity, shade, nuance depending on an infinitely extended interplay with all the others? In like manner, is not each of our feelings, even the most intense and violent, such as hatred or disgust, not relative to our complete emotional stream in its fluctuating and effervescent nature and not only in contrast to past feelings over against which it takes its shape but relative to the future course this stream will take as well, which

will either reaffirm or corroborate its quality or bestow a different quality or meaning upon it? Can we truly know that this pain that tears us apart for obvious or even disguised reasons is love? But why should love, which in its nature seem to be the longing for happiness, be crystalized? But is all creation actually reducible to fleeting ambiguous being? If we look through the infinite series of variations through which all the processes of nature culminate in the human being, we will not fail to see that they pass through our being as through a filter. All the natural substances enter and leave our bodies; all the reactions of our being, reactions of sensation, feeling, thought, reflection, desire and longing pass through as well, yet there remains a line that we consciously and willingly attempt through all of these to unravel, to find, to devise, the line of our innermost commitment not to any earthly concern but to something transcendent in which our whole being is caught or engaged, and which, in fact, we forge while searching, namely, *the transnatural destiny of our soul*. We seek that destiny within the fleeting and escaping scraps of our passions, sufferings, the endured dull monotony of life, scattered thoughts and desires defeating each other, inconsequential drives. We fashion these into a profile through which all passes, with nothing sticking to it, nothing able to break or bend it. Nothing can be added to its purity nor taken away from it. It has no parts. It is for the sake of this destiny's eternity, which forges itself out of contingent substance, that all contingency seems to be outlined and its ephemeral existence to be defined. It is from the altogether simple purity of the destiny of the soul seeking her final meaning that the infinitely varied polyphony of creations receives its sense, and in the same destiny it culminates.

What are the ways and the plan by and in which the supernatural destinies of souls were devised at the genesis of the whole of creation?

What are the unfathomable truths reflected in these destinies?

What is the meaning of the Glory presented by this wondrous, superb play of all existences in all their modalities? From fleeting and utterly ambiguous, origins, the purity of the perduring path of the soul seeking the fulfillment of its telos, and reflecting the ultimate source and plan of creation as its truth, unfolds till the greatness of its project brings it clearly into the gigantic play of the eternal and the passing, the absolute and the limited.

P A R S I I I

THE WINDOW UPON THE ABSOLUTE

I. DESTINY

When, a child of nine, I ran ahead of my mother and sister walking through the woods to be by myself, I started to wonder about the course of the life that would be mine. I have to do my lessons now, I thought, to be ready for the boarding school like my sister and my brother; like them, I have to get my education, and what then? Then, like my mother, I will marry a son of some neighbors, and what then? Then, again like my mother, I will be the mistress of a house, bring up my children, enjoy literature and the arts, live a full life to the end. And what then?

If life be merely the repeated cycle of a natural course, one lived innumerable times by successions of people, what point would there be in it, I thought. Sad and disturbed, I began to compose a poem in my head. I longed to invent something original and unprecedented. The season being early spring with streamlets of clear water running down among the rocks at every step of our route, I compared myself to a pure, cold, and transparent stream. But I stopped at the very first stanza, discouraged because it sounded exactly like the poems in my reader.

As an adolescent I sought passionately to find out what life was about. One could, indeed, propose to oneself to acquire a far greater knowledge than that possessed by even our chaplain, the most learned teacher in the school. I could find some satisfaction in dreaming on professions that none of my schoolmates would have thought of. A fierce prosecutor, a merciful and infinitely wise judge, for example. But even if such a profession were unprecedented then for a girl and none in the class could excel in originality my wild dreams, the most unheard ambition did not seem to answer the need to know what is unique in a life and what is life's most specific sense.

Then came a series of "vocations," religious included, among them those of artist, singer, etc. But after having for a while pursued passionately each of these in turn, it became clear each time that while devotion to and the practice of a talent might well establish a conduit for our inner life, that in itself does not constitute what is unique, intimately unique, and absolutely personal, my very own and no one else's ever, the very quintessence of my ownness, the very marrow of my existence, and that is what I sought. I sought that which creates itself along all channels, using them all but disregarding them as well; that which persists through all vocations, giving them their inward force, devouring all the resources of life and yet endowing it with an autonomous singular sense.

Striking life careers, the great men and women, the rebels, saints, heroes and sages, all passed in review before me, but to follow any one of them would be to follow an established type, so that none of these paths seemed cut out for me as my very own.

If in our search we unwittingly aim at a question to which our life might bear the only answer, if it is this answer that we are determined to wring out of it, if for no matter what tasks and missions, we are intent on sacrificing all our energies, talents, predilections, tendencies, loves, and if in going after all of these but after none “too much,” if this be what we pursue, we are then seeking our “destiny.”

2. THE DIVINE SCHEME OF CREATION AND THE TRANSNATURAL DESTINY OF THE SOUL

—Is death the only door that opens?

Philosophers old and new have tried to explain what were the laws followed by creation such that a real world such as ours has been constituted. Yet the core of this world, its contingent, relative meaning has within itself no final reason, no justification for its creation, no support for its dynamic unfolding existence to be found. Unless these can be determined, our human longing to “know” will never be satisfied. This world, our life, our very self would then appear to us as nothing but a futile game of chance without an outcome, a dream without an awakening. And yet the coherence of the world, its unmistakable, if evasive, logic seems to indicate that life is not altogether a senseless game, that even chance has to have sprung from a design and to lead to an outcome of some type or other. But what design? What outcome?

It has been shown that the world could not have been designed for its own sake, that its constitutive laws must hang upon a telos beyond its operations. What is it? Is our very pursuit of the junctures of the haphazard turns that life takes among its segments actually an ever renewed effort to penetrate to the subjacent stream that is already blazing a secretive, most intimate, ineffable path along which our moods, emotions, and longings flow? The path is a vector and a mold, and the stream of an otherwise haphazard experience flows into it. This trek, as it were, revises life. Following some hidden inner laws, disparate, shallow, fluctuating and evanescent instants, our fragmentary life forges itself, through a mute driving striving, into a homogeneous translucent substance that is stronger than steel. Out of fleeting, inseparable, ever-vanishing instants that voracious time carries irretrievably away into oblivion, an indestructible substance originates that we identify as the very sense of our self in its most essential and secret nature. Once emergent, it draws our whole being into the quest after the complete outline that is to follow. The nature and motivation of life’s curves, its turns, its directions suddenly appear to a special “inward eye” that traces the steps further and further back, scrutinizing all forms, seeking to establish the inward path from which they emerged. This quest ponders as well the turbulent present that is submerging us and trying to carry us away into uncharted seas that never return to what they carry away from. It is so difficult to grasp this outline in life. We struggle to discriminate the evanescent spark amid this flux, to capture specific qualities and feelings, to determine their interrelations, to compass the wide intricate response to our nostalgia, hopes, desires and thus to melt

them all into a unique mold simultaneously projected so as to unify our past and present.

How can we find such a molding form that will unify the disparate spoils our rapacious struggle captures in all directions, following all signs? How can we discover one path, one line for this subterranean stream to take, surpassing the self-canceling, mutually abolishing currents into which our psychic life resolves itself naturally?

3. THE WINDOW TO THE ABSOLUTE

If God does not speak to the soul, directly or indirectly, there is no covenant with God. Salvation would be a game of hazard on the part of man and a predetermination on the part of God. Creation would be a mere construction instead of being a superb game of necessity and hazard, of contingency and eternity, of struggle and help, of chance and destiny.

If transcending ourselves does not mean to speak to God, then transcending is a mere continuation of our contingent existence. If there is no covenant, there is no relation of the creature to the Creator—there is no absolute sense of religion.

4. THE TRANSNATURAL DESTINY OF THE SOUL

Leibniz in his forthright inquiry into the sufficient reason and the final telos of the created world had to ascend to the great scheme of Divine Creation. He sought finally the reason of the world of nature in nature in the apprehension in the great scheme of creation of the individual monads or “souls” brought into existence. Here he, on the one hand, distinguished an infinite hierarchy of monads brought into existence or to be brought into existence and, on the other hand, discovered in every monadic individual substance or soul a distinctive and intrinsic route of development, their nature’s spurring them towards the accomplishment of a high level of perfection according to which type of “soul” a being has, some having a spiritual essence and some being immersed in sensitivity. Thus, Leibniz distinguishes the realm of nature and that of grace, with the first being created for the sake of the second! Whereas within the first realm the individual tends simply towards the accomplishment of a higher level of development as strictly prescribed within his nature, and so simply unfolds, in the second realm deliberation and choice direct this unfolding consciously, going beyond a natural line of progress. These rise above their entanglement with the mechanical laws of nature, being freed from material bounds by will and deliberate direction; they take a course of their own, one unforeseeable and unpredictable from the material viewpoint, and create a life of their own with its own specific—not only individual but personal—meaning, course, and aim. This meaning, its origin, reason, and destination, we never cease to deliberate on. We start from life’s progressive origin, advance from one instance to another, proceeding from one deliberation to another, and the incessantly asked after final aim or reason that would bring all these instances together always remains out of

sight; no matter what degree and amount of reflection we put into this quest, that meaning of it all remains out of reach. The final destination of this course that will give it its meaning and its sense, we relentlessly seek, looking for a direction to strike out upon, we relentlessly call for, expect, hope. We project a route, whether we are shown the way or not.

This final destiny of the spiritual soul, which appears as the main object of the hierarchy of creation, is the goal for the sake of which the whole splendid game was outlined and put into action. Still Leibniz did not tell us anything about the destiny of the soul or depart from the unfolding route of each individual nature. Neither did he try to reach toward the ultimate level of the creative scheme, that for which the whole system of creation craves, in fact, to seek for one last rule and principle governing it all. What governs the nature and choice of the particular destinies of the souls that unfold in such or another way? Why should we have such and no other destiny? How can we know that we have one? Do we create or discover our own destiny? Can we be clear about it from within as with the unfolding of creatures in the natural mold? Or do we have to search blindly and never know whether it is such or not? Does the Creator lead or control our course directly? Finally, and this is the first and crucial issue, before which none has priority: Does God speak to the soul?

5. THE PARADOX OF LOVE

Is there a more binding commitment, a feeling that pierces deeper into the core of our being, a case that puts our life or death at stake in a more radical way, a passion that draws more intimately together our body and our soul, brings together all the vibrations of our being into a sharper sounding chord than love? Is this why man searches for means to leap over the distance that separates him in his contingency from his Creator, the Unattainable Absolute? We have always been tempted to assume naturally that the most direct access to God is, indeed, love. Yet this is very far from the truth. It is not only that there lies at the bottom of our understanding confusion over what love is, but the question of love itself is rooted in a paradox.

God Himself has commanded us to adore Him and to love Him in our neighbor. It cannot be denied that "adoration" and "worship" are related to love or that love of a human being brings us "closer to God" Himself. And yet, if we look more closely at the matter, it becomes obvious that love of man is not possible, that love of God is not possible, and finally that love of man is detrimental to the love of God. Our highest tie with the Creator is, therefore, rooted in a paradox.

What is the nature of human love? In order that we, narrow, limited, dependent, insufficient beings, in fact, most precarious, shaky, and in the grand scheme of creation, no more weighty than a grain of dust, may find a link, a common platform, a path to the Great Architect, should we shrink from all the ephemeral features of creation in order to reach the deepest, the most essential ground of our being in a bid to discover a channel conducting us out to the immeasurable sea, or should we expand our being into all creation's dimensions and upon reaching the climax of an intense, sharp experience of creation's borders transcend them?

The mystics have shown us the first way in a most vivid and convincing fashion. What is love? Is it the expansion of all our faculties into affections, feelings, idealization of the beloved, the most beautiful and sublime elevation? Love, indeed, enhances our experience of life, it immerses us in ourselves. And yet, when we are drawn into this lived universe it covers us like the sun. The soul, overwhelmed by affections, actually loses the track, the longing for, the hunger after the Divine, Who, as a matter of fact, is thirst and need and privation of all there is. Once dispelled, love leaves not even a trace behind, departing like a dream at the hour of death. Are God and death not paired in our experience? Does human love not stand to the world as death does to God?

Let us look more closely at this superb game that is creation! No matter whether this immense universe of constellations upon constellations among which the human eye becomes blurred and altogether lost has germinated from dust or electrons what a supergigantic design and scope is here, what an immeasurable dynamo, the alchemy of means and vertiginous scheme! Here is a harmonic progress in which order alternates with chance, the improbable with the necessary, and fact with ideal possibility. And what then of the human world within which this scheme and its forces are revealed by myriad forms that man, this most fragile and vulnerable of creatures, projects and recreates after the most prodigious and ingenious of schemata in which every pattern generates spontaneously all its combinations and variations from the dawn of his coming into the world and throughout his worldly existence! Do we ever realize in what an enchanting game we are engaged when we open our eyes for the first time on this universal and half-empty grand design in order to fill out its details through our very own ingeniousness and skill? How rarely, in fact, do we have awareness that instead of being chained to blind necessity—to which we submit so readily and so helplessly in trying to obtain some purchase on it—we in reality participate in the glorious performance of a play in which all the possible richness of creation is being explored—all the ranges of sensation, of feeling, of action, of dreaming and disillusionment, of victory and defeat, of pain, pleasure, delight, and disaster, of voluptuousness and renunciation, of privation and indulgence. Their alternation and intensities, their unexpectedness and abruptness keep us alert at all times, spellbound, enthralled. Leibniz was right, indeed, to say that within this infinite harmony of the creative design there is a place open for every possible individual variation, for climactic intensities of ardor and passion as well as detached seeing-through-it-all *mal du siècle* and *mal d'exister*. And yet, this most fascinating of all games, this most realistic of realities, this most convincing of existences, vanishes like a soap bubble the minute our organs atrophy, our muscles lose force and coordination, our senses cease reacting, and our eyes close forever.

And what is human love if not an effervescence of this ingenious and enchanting play we devise constantly with the ceaseless activity of our being? It may indeed emerge from an interpenetration of all these designs within a scheme so delicate and beautiful and sublime that our very being seems to be lifted above itself to the level of a seemingly even higher reality than that of life, to rules and laws going beyond the rules of the game of life. No doubt here is the final element leading to the perfect completion of the individual game, the crowning of creation. And yet this

fulfillment vanishes together with life, followings its laws. Is it then in something as ephemeral as this experience that we are to seek a crucial overcoming of our own finitude and advance towards a union with the Creator, the plenitude of the infinite itself. Or do we attribute to human love features and nature that it does not have or maybe cannot even possess?

What we, fact, understand by love is precisely contrary to what it can possibly be. Earthly love seeks precisely within the beloved the beauty, truth, elevation of spirit that would lead beyond the confined, restricted, limited nature of both souls. Beatrice and Laura are the prototypes of the elevated vision of the other that seeks to satisfy in the movement of love towards the beloved the thirst for all the perfections the world falls short of. But as such these perfections do not exist in the reality. Indeed the movement of earthly love itself comes from an internal contradiction: it *asks after perfection in being, the imperfection of which it is aiming to complete*. The substance of this movement is made of fluctuating, ever changing affections and moods, aspirations, and vibrations within an ever advancing process that we cannot stop for an instant even to adjust or to strengthen, to solidify or to reorient, be it just a nuance in or fragment of this flux. These aspirations of the movement of love can, consequently, never be fulfilled. There are only nuances and fragments encountered in love, ephemeral sparks of a light that takes various disguises but never itself appears; this movement breaks down on approaching each point it tries to reach. And since it is within communion with the beloved that the soul seeks this plenitude and perfection out of her own want, could such a communion remain anything other than a supreme aim, dream, ideal that never can be reached otherwise than miraculously for an instant that vanishes at its apparition? Caught in the ever onward process of the world, with each of them tracing its specific infinitely complex pattern, how can two beings meet at the deepest levels of their nature, which is itself an effervescent torrent? Even if there is an imperfect, approximate encounter, it cannot be retained and vanishes in the triggering of newly surging affections and feelings. And since it is of the essence of the movement of love that we tend therein towards the infinite and everlasting communion, love is, given its very paradoxical essence, condemned fail us here.

Not only does love necessarily miss this target, but also in its very course, no matter how much it expands and enriches our confines, it vanishes with life and the world. In its nature it belongs strictly to the world's contingency. In brief, human love is not possible; by its very essence that which it calls for it cannot accomplish. What we do attain in love is merely approximations and defective compromises.

Yet earthly love awakens within us a yearning and thirst that carries us further. Indeed it releases within the human being a subterranean stream, a "sacred river" of desire that no contingency can quench. On the contrary, this stream repudiates each form of contingency. Aiming directly at the unlimited and everlasting, it frees itself from all bounds of sense, affection, aspiration, reason, and belief. It strips them away like the layers of an onion. Thus the world shatters and becomes annihilated within the consciousness that made it emerge as a world. The soul sees through all and renounces all. How could anything remain secure and valid, since everything

is passing, temporary, changeable, limited, and incomplete—when it is the infinite, the everlasting plenitude that we seek?

Thus, infinite richness glimpsed means total privation, the infinite glimpsed means spurning all likenesses; thus God, like death, means annihilation of the world.

Indeed, following this subterranean river, we enter into Coleridge's "caverns measureless to man," suspending all the light and all the flavor of the contingent world. There is nothing left but the nakedness of desire and the movement of a fervor that becomes the more acute, powerful, and piercing, taking all the breath out of our mouths and all the light from our eyes so that the annihilation of the world within us be the more complete. Man is in essence an émigrée and a rootless, dispossessed vagrant, a figure in a play of sheer vanity and illusion.

Once having suspended naive faith in the rules and instruments of life's game, has man the means to LOVE God? We have seen that love is the effervescence and the expansion of the contingent in man, of his inner thrust towards the fulfillment of his innermost strivings in communion; thus, once we have seen that God, like death, means privation for man, robs us of all fictitious, inadequate, play "fulfillments," love of God is now not possible.

Still, the soul, drunk with the purity of her loneliness in the night of the senses, the night of reason and imagination tends toward God. The invisible thread of our sharpened desire breaks at any instant, and we fall back upon an emptied world. How could solitude with desire for God alone, a desire without shape, form, fragrance, freed not only from all sensual forms but also from those of imagination and ideal constructs, possibly reach a lasting elevation? For the purity of the soul's renunciation, its negation of the world is itself coupled with the existence of the world; the world is its indispensable counterpart. It is necessary to be there in the world in order to overcome it. And so even if the solitude of the dispossessed soul filled with Desire for God alone represents the highest, most intimate path to God, that quest cannot sustain itself within the world and life. Even when life and the world with all its cares are abandoned, we have to fall back upon it intermittently. The solitary life seems necessary then if the soul's negations are to be pure, but were such a perfect stage of purity ever attained, this life would no longer be possible.

The soul fully withdrawn into the intimacy of her desire for God has to and will take up her earthly functions, but can she find *meaning* in them any longer? Will not every ambition, aspiration, task, dream, wish, or vision—whether practical, aesthetic, humanitarian or intellectual—appear to the soul to be mere little games? There will always be the mean and all too human instinct of competition and aggression, and an aptness to go in good and bad directions in turns. Yet the longing for the beautiful and sublime will always move humankind; the search after the ultimate principles and laws, after understanding and explanation will always animate minds; but, as we know, in striving for improvement humanity often advances in one way while retreating in another. All these measures are contingent and of human invention after all.

How can the soul really persevere then, suspended between the most burning of all desires to be with God alone, and the futile but indispensable human condition?

This is to endure that which one has to give *meaning*, the same meaning which one has just discovered to be meaningless!

Is there truly no *tertium quid*, no intermediary stage, no Jacob's ladder, no trampoline by which to negotiate a passage here, a middle way? Are we truly left between the futility of the greatest of expansions of earthly love and the total poverty and lovelessness of our loneliness and our Desire for God as two irreconcilable opposites? Do all our contingent, human strivings towards the Divine always have to come to naught?

Or should we make another try at love, essaying this time not to love man for his own sake alone, nor to love God, which is just not possible, but bear a *sacred* love of man for the sake of God?

If man's elemental earthly love of neighbor is necessarily a failure, it is chiefly because this movement seeking the fulfillment of all perfections, the completion of all shortcomings, the suppressing of all contingent conditions, is directed at man in himself and for his own sake. But is not each lover in his or her ardor not trying to find in the other something that is higher than her/himself? Does each rebuff, each defeat and disillusionment each delirious pursuit of what cannot be found not serve to clear the soul of illusory ballast and refine it into a purer and more transparent form, a sharper receptivity, and forge it into a more accurate projectile? Had the contingent nature of man not been an unconquerable obstacle to our reaching the Divine, would the incarnation of Jesus have made any sense?

Can we participate in the mystery of incarnation otherwise than by a total immersion into contingency? If love be the key to this mystery, we have to love, but not God Himself, which is not possible, nor man for his own sake, which is futile, but to love man for the sake of God. Yet how can we combine the two loves? Is there not a basic contradiction or paradox in such a proposition? Human love, that delirious ecstasy involving our whole being, that vibration of one's every fiber to each of the countless motions of the other's being, comprising the whole range of human existence, that frenetic drive to discover all, to comprehend all, to share all with the other, to feel one and to be one, does it not fill our whole horizon? Is not all our thirst quenched and all longing fulfilled? Not if we love man loving God within him! Finding love of God in man means to open a wound of the flesh for the sake of exalting the spirit. No doubt the affections directed at another human being do detract from our undivided attention to the Divine, but how can we otherwise experience the terrifying and terrible, unbearable mystery of incarnation?

How can we otherwise recognize the presence of Christ in the offering made on the altar, His sacrifice on the Cross, otherwise than through love of man? But what is love of God in man truly made of? Of neither concupiscence nor charity—the first being self-seeking, the second being too neutral. The sacred love extended to all is that only and unique communion of a being turned within himself against his most intimate bold hopes, torn apart at the innermost core of his existence in order to receive there by negation what he has exalted in himself most, what the other represents for him, that is, the Divine. Love of man for the sake of God distills not love of God but *adoration*.

The mystery of faith as the bridge between God and man and participation in it is rooted in a paradox: love of man for God's sake. Human love obscures the movement towards the Divine, while the movement toward the Divine makes love of man seem futile. And yet it is precisely from the wound thus created in this strife that souls may enter into a dolorous communion with another human being in God.

6. WAITING FOR GOD AND THE SPIRITUAL DESTINY OF THE SOUL

As reflected in contemporary literature, awareness of man's contingency, of the insufficiency of whatever life may propose to him, and of the violent, unquenchable thirst that man has to redeem this insufficiency of life, comes to a culmination. Life whatever the form our engagement in it may take, never rises, as Samuel Beckett demonstrates, to anything more than futility. To have meaning, the meaning we hunger for in order to be capable of enduring life's fragmentary, disconnected, haphazard turmoil, this we seek even as we cannot comprehend it, for we see no reasons for such or other of life's turns. We have then to interrogate life for some signs, some guidelines, some directions from "above," but as Kafka's *The Castle* shows, these never appear since there seems no way leading away from this incoherent chaos anywhere. All of life's antennae are broken. Yet we ceaselessly seek signs, call for illumination, and never renounce waiting for the answer. Contemporary literature shows all the variations of this insufficiency of life, its inability to yield any answer. Modern literature displays the whole range of attitudes possible from despair over the possibility of obtaining any answer at all (thus the sense of the essential meaninglessness of life and of the human being found in Sartre's *The Flies*), through a quiet and dispassionate acknowledgement of the futility of man's existence, his being thrown upon the earth as a perpetual stranger, one who truly can never tame either his surroundings, which have their own existence, nor himself before them (and thus may like Pavese quietly disappear from the earth), to a hopeless waiting for a guide and a direction that is always postponed, will never come (like Beckett's passionate waiting); and yet the waiting itself, the clinging to hope for this answer enables us to endure the monotonous and senseless struggle.

Can a direct answer ever be found? Can we find an experience, a voice, a hidden sign that would give meaning to the course of our existence? One that would by its very eruption into life's broken pieces give a direction to its course, sense to its progress, and a goal indicating the destiny towards which we strive? And if such a sign, such a voice, such a call would truly break in, could it truly be interpreted as to its meaning, truly believed in with regard to its message, truly received by our inner being if it not be linked already to the whole array of being? (Whence does revelation receive ratification? What convicted Paul of his luminous experience of the Lord Jesus?)

The difficulty is, in fact, that even if such a sign or answer were possible, its meaning would break in as something altogether foreign to our life concerns, to the natural course our existence takes, to our very disgust and dissatisfaction with life,

since they belong to our natural, contingent life for any answer or sign would have to transcend life. So our postulating tells us by its very nature. We would have to enter into a process of disentangling this answer within our own understanding by seeking some traces, some foundations, some points of reference that our natural life could provide for this supernatural guideline. Should such a sign be given, would it not have to embed itself within our being? Would it not require, in order that its message be understood, being interpreted with reference to an exfoliation of its relevance to the complete course of our existence, now to be considered from a nonworldly point of view, to be scrutinized for its transcendent relevance?

From immersion in the turmoil of life, from total identification, complete absorption with and in life, in which every instant is consumed for its own sake and so our being endures from one instant to the next, we look up to discern their possible subjacent junctures of these instants that make them in their succession individual steps down one path and but transitory stages of a trajectory towards a destiny. No longer does the transient experience of each instant have a self-sufficient value that, captivating us, absorbs our being, for now our focus is on the destination towards which we advance. It is the enigma of this destination that now comes into focus. Aimless life now appears to be oriented or being oriented, and it is only within the perspective of searching out this orientation that the sign could be received and become meaningful.

Should we seek for the sense of life, should we ask ourselves where we are going and why, we can find an answer to these questions neither within life itself nor in a transcendent message. Whether the meaning of life be created, invented, or discovered, its principles transcend life, but to embrace and embody that meaning we have to forge it within the contingent and yet reach beyond the contingent. It is within the futile and yet necessary that we may discover life's delineations, by digging a bed for its course, by outlining simultaneously a path to follow, a trajectory, the supernatural destiny of the soul.

7. HUMAN COMMUNION, THE EXISTENTIAL COMMUNICATION OF THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE COMMUNICATION OF TRANSNATURAL DESTINY

What an extreme solitude surrounds the profound impulse of true love! It is as if suddenly all our friendships, devotions, affections, likings lose their hold. Their objects fall into nothingness, our attachments vanish into oblivion. Our former joys pale and lose their fragrance; our interests lose their significance; our worries and disappointments lose their bite, and the world loses its shadow. In the stillness of our heart the hurricane around us is stopped in its course in a motionless stillness that bends age-old trees. The soul, stripped of all accidentals, stands in extreme solitude, bare in its waiting for "truth," personal truth in which to be clad anew—waiting for communion with the beloved. The Transcendent alone stands as a counterpart. In the void one awaits a new birth; for the communion of true love seeks the truth in the whole range of the soul's life, which establishes this world.

Then it is that the stream of suffering surges within us, suffering we demand relief from. The call for true love is an appeal to redeem this suffering hidden at the bottom of our being, suffering from all the delusions that life is full to the brim with, from all the limitations and restrictions that life imposes on our higher strivings, suffering from the necessity of starting all over again every day, this the unbearable task of Sisyphus, that of living, the suffering of seeing youth, beauty, all that we hold dear pass relentlessly away, the suffering of existence: *lacrimae rerum*. It is only within the circumference of loving eyes, of tender arms, that we may reach the bottom of the eternal cycle of life and conjure it to stand still for an instant so that we may hope to halt this burning pain and redeem it in compassion and faith.

For the communion of true love is rooted in the constellation of our affective nature. It is meant to penetrate and disentangle by affection our whole being's concentration, and its living quality dissolves our most personal ground for feeling, sensing, willing, evaluating. It is by reaching to the very springs of personal life that true love generates a novel world and the soul's new vesture.

The appeal for a true love is an appeal for redemption of the personal mystery of being, one streaming from this mystery and for its unique sake. This is redemption to be brought about through another's affection taking the cause of our suffering, in its form and quality both, upon himself, as his most personal, most intimate own. It is this most intimate, otherwise unshareable personal identification that love is seeking to reach. We communicate as well at this unfathomable depth, for the sake of existence. The search after the ultimate truth to be found in life and in the world is the motor of philosophical reflection. But may any philosophical reflection yield ultimate truth? May the human mind in its progress, given the opaque and stultified means by which it has to formulate in its play ever render anything but a series of ever refined but never decisive games and strategies? But can we ever then quench this thirst for truth? Can we ever reach anything beyond the constructs that we call "cognition"?

And yet seeking the *cognitive* truth of the state of the universe and man, that is, seeking to find the laws, principles, causes and reasons, finally, the very essence of our human universal condition, we might wander endlessly in a labyrinth of notions, concepts, and structures. How are we not to get hopelessly lost in our longing for ultimate knowledge given that cognitive truth has to be universal because finally things must be such and no other and that the cognition of each and all of us varies according to our being at different stages of development, our negotiating different modes of progress, and beginning with different individual dispositions, tendencies? And yet while the open horizon of cognition seems infinite, we find the haven, the repose so necessary for the life of the spirit carrying on our quest; we find faith, which gives meaning to our most intimate engagement in this enterprise given the finiteness of our universal human endowment and of its foundation and progress both.

Behind the structures and the meanderings of our discourse we may encounter the personal ground of another truth seeker; we may feel emerge from behind the doctrines and the theories, the arguments and the descriptions this finite and final ground of the lived experience of a spirit coming to grips with the REAL, the ineffable, this

“secret” doctrine (sought in Leibniz’s philosophizing) of authentic reflection, the discovery of a spirit identical with our own. A dialogue may unfold with another mind on behalf of this ultimate truth of cognition that is pursued in the communication of comparing, shading, nuancing, confronting, in sharing the ultimate faith that is generated in this communion of minds.

The communication of the spirit, being ultimately about the mysteries of Faith, does not stop at dwelling on the natural dimensions of man, those of the affections and the spirit. This communication proceeds to establish a novel *dimension of the sacred* within man.

P A R S I V

OPENING THE WINDOW TO THE ABSOLUTE

1. IS HUMAN COMMUNICATION POSSIBLE? THE DOOR TO THE ABSOLUTE

a. MARY AND ELIZABETH

In our encounters with people, whom we know or do not know, whom we know well just a little, or even whom we see every day at all hours, we always seek a piece of common experience, of common concern to serve as a rejoinder to our last conversation, to our last shared interest or simply to throw a bridge between ourselves, if only a bridge of quite ordinary facts, trivial notions, most common incidents, feelings, emotions such that we find for ourselves a place to start with within the same climate of such a convincing everydayness that there be no mistake possible as to the nature, nuance, form, intensity of experience we want to share as a conducting thread extending from one consciousness to another. We seek the commonest of situations, which embed this thread in the pulp of life itself, endowing it with meaning, with indubitability, with conviction, in fine, with the simplicity necessary for its being conveyed. Without this common ground we could not communicate anything to another being. This communication within life itself takes all and remains.

But when the Virgin Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth to share with her the event of the Annunciation, the situation was radically different. There is no doubt that Mary wanted to communicate to Elizabeth something she herself was not sure how to understand. The message she had received was not only altogether mysterious, unusual, unprecedented, but was also in its relation to everyday life, to the world, and also to Mary's experience absurd. How to relate to the ordinary course of life an event which as announced was by its very meaning a contradiction of life's course, a clash with the ordinary, a strange eruption into its established course? Could Mary herself understand what was announced to her when it did not concern her in her usual feminine nature but was meant to take her out of this category, chosen from all women, actual, past, and possible? The "fruit of her womb" that was proclaimed pertained to this life and world, yet in as much as the messenger came from "another world," so improbable an event, how could this "other world" even be conceived since there is no point of reference for it, for our whole system of intramundane reference closes upon this world itself. And "the fruit of the womb" itself was in the message given lifted above the ordinary level into an unknown sphere for which no account can be given in accord with our everyday standards. How to convey such a message to another being? Still Mary went to Elizabeth to convey to her own wonder, to marvel together with her about this strange event, to ponder all the extravagant terms of the message, and finally to strengthen her own faith in the faith of Elizabeth.

How, in fact, can such a message, which not only does not relate to anything known within the universe of man but which also even runs counter to its basic

laws, that cannot appear otherwise than absurd to the common sense by which we usually proceed be understood and received other than by a most intimate acquiescence surging from the springs of our innermost being itself: FAITH? But how could Elizabeth share this faith? The message Mary had received did not concern her, and she herself had not received a visitation by an extraordinary messenger. How could it be conveyed to her so that she might bring it to her innermost personal experience? How could she conceive of events that do not relate to anything of the objective world of life, but transcend it altogether, they going so far beyond even her own extraordinary personal experience? Most of all, how could Mary convey this message to Elizabeth without offending common sense? How could a bridge be projected from one to the other joining their individual worlds having differently oriented sensations, emotions, thoughts, strivings, convictions reaching to the deepest and most secretive area of personal being, from which our convictions, beliefs, spring forth? And yet Mary did not remain alone with her message. She did not keep it to herself, waiting for its fulfillment. The fulfillment of the message was not to be merely an event. On the contrary, the message leaves the ground from the moment we see that this worldly event of childbirth has an otherworldly, transcendent significance. It is in order to unfold, to understand, to realize within herself as such, to transform the message from the absurd into the marvelous, from the extraordinary into the transworldly, what is offensive to common sense into the supernatural, from the contrary to worldly experience into the transcendent that Mary hastens to Elizabeth's side. In short, it is in order to give to her extraordinary experience a meaning of her own, innermost personal faith defying all reason, common sense, and facts, that Mary had to find reaffirmation in the faith of Elizabeth. She had to appeal to Elizabeth's own most personal experience, reaching deeper than the evidence of life. She had to search with her kinswoman into the entanglements of the absurd.

How can such communication be possible? And yet, unless it is, Death would remain the only door that opens.

Since the monad each of us is does not speak directly to God, even if the Creator speaks to the soul, the message Mary received had to be sifted and weighed and filtered through communication with another being so that it could become a motivation, a creative link of destiny for the soul.

b. THE COMMUNICATION OF THE UNIQUE TREASURE

What is this unique treasure that we believe we have nurtured throughout our life and kept for this single, exceptional, rarest of all occasions? What is it that we feel we have distilled our most precious possessions into and that we now feel ready to share as the most precious of gifts? Do not we feel this to be the gift of ourselves? Were we to ask ourselves why we feel such an urgent need to communicate, we could hardly answer. It remains a question we want to raise, of counsel to ask, of information to pass deciding life or death, when we feel propelled to engage another being, precisely this one and no one else, in debate, in frank exchange of

views, out of concern for a cause we have made on our own. But this does not stop at the exchange of views or information, nor at counsel given in a warm, personal, competent fashion, for it is the deepest being of the other that we seek to engage in the course of endless debate unfolding into an infinitely expanding array of questions and problems, reaching deeper and deeper into the mystery of being.

Thus we burn with a most fervent desire to share this treasure. Our whole being vibrates, its strings so taut with desire that we feel might overflow and at any instant open our heart and reveal the treasure, offer it as a priceless gift to this and no other being. And yet we ask ourselves of what does this gift consist that we cannot put it into words. It eludes concepts. If we ask ourselves what it is that we want to communicate, we cannot define it, even as we feel it to be so poignantly concrete. Here is so precise a summary of our whole existence, past, present, future, and yet we can not define it. How is it then that we would offer this gift, or share it? If it could be communicated, could we not pass it to any of our well-trusted friends who cherish us and will understand instead of seeking out just this unique being? And yet, should we try to convey this gift to one who is the "best of friends," we might soon see that there is no gift that we have in store, that we are empty of treasure, that all our experiences are flat and trivial, no matter how poetic our final motive and how lyrical a form by which we choose to convey our self. No wonder that the friend, even if he takes the gift to heart, will never guess that along with the gift our inner being is tossed into the air and with the stroke of the pendulum its life or death is now in the balance. A friend will not sense that a response a trifle more in this or that direction and not in another throws us into distress or elation, into despair or into a night walker's felicity. To him we are just "in such or other emotional state" or have such or other problem to solve, one well-categorized and typified at that and common to many souls in widely different situations. Why will a friend not feel, not understand the uniqueness of our plight, the unprecedented appeal being made here, like a call coming from the heart of humanity itself, upon which not only our life but our very redemption, salvation, the meaning of life and the destiny of our own being depends. He will not really be touched by this appeal, he will stay sympathetically disinterested and aloof. Just what is this treasure that cannot be conveyed to any friend without disappearing?

c. THE UNIQUE INSTANT

There is no doubt that nature follows its own prescribed course. Our psychic and intellectual life has its own course as well. But do we not partake of the universal cycle of generation? If we do not in the life of the spirit follow exactly the ever recurring cycle of nature in which generation, growth, maturation, and the denouement of extinction or follow a regular sequence of seasons, do we not in our emotional, cultural, intellectual development see an analogical progress of preparatory germination, progressive unfolding towards complete form, and then disappearance if not into oblivion at least from the active field of present experience? When the philosophers of antiquity marveled at the laws of the natural universe, they attempted to go

beyond the cyclic laws of nature, to find the ultimate rules, the rules of being as such that like an onion would be clad in various appearances in accord with its temporal existence. But what about our human inner life, our human inner universe? Are we not also constantly wrapped up in the innumerable layers of the onion that would constitute our human life? Whenever we try to go beyond the particular feelings, emotions, images that incessantly flood our being, are we not always venturing into yet further avenues of emotion, feeling, recollection, imagery and losing sight of those that we wanted to pursue, getting lost in a labyrinth that draws us further and further into infinity? There never seems to be an "empty place," a subjacent stable point, an opening leading beyond this never ending maze of our experiences, all of them arriving, sparkling for an instant with the freshness and conviction of the actual present, and then vanishing slowly into the adumbrating horizon of the past. The harder we try to penetrate more deeply into these shifting sands, the more we feel desperately chained and mercilessly confined to a universe of our own making, closing in upon itself. Indeed, this universe that we ourselves project, becoming its prisoners, follows its own inflexible laws and principles for which there are no exceptions allowed, no more than in the cycle of nature, where birth already carries death in its heart.

The lived experience emerging from the deep springs of our very being carries with itself in its virtuality the form to take and its own unfolding, duration, and possible relations with all the other present, actual experiences as well as with those of the past and those to come. These virtualities take in the progress of our ever incoming experiences, which creatively confront other fading experiences and which stand as points of attachment for further incoming experiences, to form a real net of iron, a chain that is not breakable by any means. The past can never be changed, and it will always have round it a halo of dynamic hooks reaching toward the incoming present and the anticipated future.

It seems then, that just as we cannot get around the cyclic nature of natural generation (death cannot come before birth and carry the ripening of fruit with itself), so we cannot envisage any experience of our inner life other than that prepared for already by a past that has its own orienting perspective and that of the present that holds the already prepared molds of our life's future formations, and that of the anticipated future, which is half-projected by both that past and that present, and finally that of our life's very own source in our productive psycho-physical apparatus. We may at will change the course of our actions and thus lend a minor shift in direction to the incoming experience. We might also completely transform an actual experience in giving a different character to its mold, such as abandoning hatred and adopting attitudes of charity and forgiveness.

But are we not entirely dependent on the once and for all established reservoir of contributing factors, e.g., the possible molds, the established perspectives, our past experience and the indomitable laws of the flux of the unfolding that never ceases, experience upon experience following with such dense congenital cohesion that there is in ever and ever further retreating horizons no experience ever, it seems, that appears all for its own sake, all by itself, unprecedented and not calculated by the universal scheme of virtualities.

How could then God speak to the soul through all this natural maze chained to the nature of the individual himself, wrapping him up in himself beyond retrieval? How could we ever meet another being, who himself is equally deeply wrapped up in his own flux otherwise than on the basis of the strictly natural universes that both of them project according to some common universal human scheme? It would seem then that man is irremediably condemned to be his own prisoner, the prisoner of his own universe, and the prisoner of nature—out of which prison there could be no break made towards any “window on the absolute.” And yet in the case of a communication like that between Mary and Elizabeth there seems that there is a break made within these two individual universes, a break through which a message is received that by its very nature defies the strictly natural unfolding of their current experience, a message that does not belong to the universes that both of them have naturally projected for themselves and which constitute the counterparts of their natural beings. We could say that in this natural temporal flux of experience, which follows the natural law of progressive concatenation of experiences so that they mutually modify each other—such is the nature of the flux of time itself as it endlessly sustains its stages, preordains its molds, and sets the essential rules of progress—there surges from within this very course of unfolding an experience that is such that it breaks in on the natural line of progress. Mary comes to Elizabeth at a moment in her natural unfolding that does not belong to it any more. The progress of natural experience indeed goes on uninterrupted, but there is still a moment that does not belong to it any more, a unique instant that does not contribute to the natural molding of the present, nor to that of the future, and one which will also never fall back into the reservoir of the past as an integral element of the past. This instant assumes the forms of neither the past nor the future, it being an instant without duration that reaches beyond the cycle of generation and appears “out of season” like “a spring day in the middle of winter.”

This is an instant in which the human being seems to be capable of lifting himself out of the viscous maze of his being, to be able to grasp his being in its entirety and—in the purity of his being freed from all the contingent chains and molds of natural progress—in its absolute truth as well. In these unique instants we feel ourselves to transcend our natural bonds and to be able to reach out to another being and share with him or her this Promethean instant of truth that has opened for us a different horizon than that of our earthly, contingent condition.

P A R S V

RETRACING OUR STEPS TO THE CAVE, ILLUMINATING IT

1. THE TWO-WAY REFLECTION AND GIVING MEANING TO LIFE

George Sand shows so beautifully in her discourse on the joy of nature that paradoxically enough nature is connatural to man, he being part of nature himself, nature being his ground in existence, his source of primordial, vital juices, the reason for his being, the rarest of all beings. The peasant or the farmer is at the heart of nature's progress, has his hand on its pulse, and breathes to its heartbeat. His own sensitivity has to be attuned to its rhythm—one has to have a green thumb. He, Virgil's happy farmer, does not know of this subterranean current of juices transmitting to him nature's harmony and oneness. But he knows the beauty of the harvest is for him inseparable from the deep joy of its accomplishment and its promise for further growth. There is a peaceful deeper current of ever progressing generation of which he is a part. His is a marriage between passing concrete flesh and the elevating ever recurring cycle of advance in which he takes part. He does not know his joy, he is focused on the quality of corn, the price of cattle, the amount of milk he may carry through his pipes to the cooling tank. He does not reflect on the lasting values of his intercourse with nature, he does not reflect on his harmony it, he does not realize his cooperation with the great design of creation, nor with the work and ends of nature.

But the educated man who reflects on his feelings and thoughts, the poet, intellectual, scientist who comes to nature not to immerse himself naively in it but as a foreign spectator, it is he who feels the beauty of the landscape for himself, a feeling "abstracted" from the object of its inspiration. He enjoys lying on the beach for his "relaxation," in his turn of mind, his momentary mood, his scheme of life. But this holds not only for nature. We are capable of a real union with nature and beyond it, with the human world, with ourselves. We do not need to either be submerged by the stream of our experiences, thoughts, involvements, pursuits, volitions, or to be schematically appreciating them in an abstract way, calculating simply their role in a scheme of action or project we are about to endeavor or in an ambush we want to avoid. At certain instants we are capable of rising above the most captivating and devouring current of experience; embracing it from within the felt, we are capable of reflecting on this current not in a detached, rational way, disentangling and tying, seeking what is there that serves an end but trying to discover in these entanglements the expression, the sign of the mysterious, hidden source of its felt qualities, for their occurrence manifests in itself our innermost strivings. This striving to make them reveal what we were really after, above the calculations of achievement and failure, of gain and loss finds this underlying cohesive thread of causes into which we are admitted in our depths; we are led to the nuances of feeling that steer the course of events' development and to our reactions to situations and other beings, even to the highest point, to the ideal, the yearning, desire, to which all could be

harmoniously attached so that meaning would be given to the whole course of our lives. We raise our sites then from our lives' contingent, passing, submerged nature, not to an abstract conceptual structure, a theory, but to life's experienced design as it has been innate within us all along in germ, as it has unfolded to its completion, which means to us the quintessence of both our existence, the meaning of our lives on earth, and finally of ourselves. We find ourselves in this design.

It is this that we try to attune ourselves to when we approach a major turn in life, say on becoming aware of the onset of our declining years. Aware we are going around the bend, we try to retrieve this original, truly our own, uniquely ours course we have taken and to catch the wave that seemingly carries us along. Reliving our circumstances, our feelings, our virtualities, our decisions, we pry into what it was within our specific responses that motivated them in such and no other way. We scrutinize the role of our education and influences, inheritance, and milieu; we review accidental and unavoidable occasions to find out what therein reflects what is our very own, that which we brought with ourselves into the world as our life's unique germ to be unfolded in such or other way. Coming upon the ways and reasons we find for this unfolding, we use them again in their purity within our innermost design so that that which from our very depth in this circumstance we were bound to unfold may emerge. We live out this germ then in its lasting, unchangeable quality, lifting it to an immortal status.

But in this effort to retrieve the lasting significance of our existence from among the odds and ends of the passing flux of life, we are oriented towards the already accomplished part. It is instead our greatest of privileges as men to mature to the point that we realize and reap in our decline not the fruit of life, of our otherwise futile struggle, but our life's significance, its eternal design, our innermost sense. Death is the crowning experience and accomplishment of this creative effort to seize what is immortal, the sense of our existence: it becomes clear why the ancients particularly prayed for a "good death," for awareness of a fruitful end, our greatest privilege in life.

This reflection is that of, again, a process completed; it is turned towards that part of the closed cycle we have in front of us, what the tree experiences in strewing its ripe apples after its energies have all been used up, or in the rising of its new sap, which in the spring flows for a new engendering, a revival of the cycle in green, fresh leaves, blossoms, and then the formation of fruit. The tree is suffused with ever new supplies of juices till that fruit ripens. In this stream, a series of initiatives are taken in a game played with the soil, the rain, the wind, and the sun. As the tree's veins empty of sap, it looks upon its crowning glory: the beautiful finished apple, in which nothing can be changed now that the final outcome of the game of the tree's resources and vigilance and tenacity is settled. Even so, we accept the ready fruit of our own lives when they are complete, with resignation and quietude; our spent energies, past opportunities, crossroads that will never return and decisions that cannot be undone. Our life is there in front of us, spent in scattered, seemingly haphazard and ephemeral efforts and adventures. Its fragments pass again and again in the complete ruminant absorption of our reflective attention and intellectual penetration as we run through our memories questingly retrieving its felt imponderabilia,

a whole gamut of nuances. We come to adjust our actual feeling about our lives to that which most adequately sums it up as we pass in review in our imagination all the possible varieties of situation and their elements. In short, though to retrieve our existence we in part re-create it, we are bound by the irrevocability of the done and never to be undone. Our destiny is made and closed, but we may still find redemption from the futility of the mere facts in their profound sense. And so we pass from the closed and realized back to open if now spent virtualities.

It is a radically different direction we take when we, at the height of our life, take our destiny in hand. Then, whether we seek the spiritual destiny of the soul in the sensitive recesses of our heart or we seek the meaning of life in the complete expansion of our personal being from within, we project our searching inner reflection onto the vast immeasurable open horizon of the future. In the feeling of our powers, we scrutinize the past, the present, for our deepest concerns when it comes to this project to be launched into the future, so effervescent are we with anticipatory, volitional rays, with sparks from the deep well of our spontaneity, charged with hope, desire, and will.

We shape our feelings, we reshape our tendencies, we bend and seek new, ever new schemes by which to establish a route for a single meaningful line assuring a great spiritual destiny, into the bed of which route we channel the currents of our experiences, present and anticipated; we seek a great lifework into the accomplishment of which we weave the web of our dreams and acts.

All into the future do we then project the thread of our reflective existence, a future open with windows of possibility. Perhaps only some of the possibilities can be realized, but all the visions spur our will and add fuel to our burning desire, stimulate our energies.

We retrieve the immortal design of our life, we create our destiny

2. THE SUFFERING OF LIVING (*LE MAL DE VIVRE*)

We search incessantly for "happiness." We imagine, devise, project infinite tasks, aims, wishes, investing them with the hope that once they are attained or accomplished we will reach a stage, a state, a peak of accomplishment, of contentment, of elation. From this point on, we expect to enter a world of "happiness" from which now we are blocked by a hundred obstacles lying in our way. However, we find over and over again that what we believe to be just temporary obstacles to be conquered and surmounted on the way to this absolute point are in fact the real vehicles of life. The human condition seems to be such that no matter what we have already accomplished, no matter what attainment of our dreams be ours, we know the hoped for happiness only few moments. This happiness is disparate, unforeseeable, instantaneous, and not retainable by any means. This elation of the spirit, a real feeling of accomplishment or contentment, finally, of peace, is transitory. No matter what we own, how much we like our work, how lovingly intimate we are and however much loved we may be, the continuous stream of life stretching from day to day, from experience to experience, from reaction to reaction remains hard to endure.

No pleasure, joy, or satisfaction ever becomes our possession. It comes and goes according to its own law. None lasts as we would long for it to, but each in being just a temporal psychological process follows its own measure.

Nor can we prepare our joys. As Louis-Bertrand Geiger so well put it, “Suffering belongs to life as shadow to light.” To elicit this instant of satisfaction we must suffer trauma, delusion, struggle in vain, doubt. To be carried away by the entrancing delight of human communion we must undergo at any instant the agony of this unique, gentlest, and most delicate thread that unites for an instant two beings, for it is suddenly and brutally broken so that in spite of ourselves, for unaccountable reasons, we find ourselves standing there in utter pain and distress, disarmed and helpless.

What is human happiness, then? We know from history that most “happy” lovers, heroes, saints, rulers lived through the same disenchantments, deceptions, remorse, doubts, unfulfilled desires, and struggles as the rest of men and knew these as long as life itself lasted. We cannot free ourselves from the suffering of living by changing either place or environment. Happiness always seems to be where we are not. How happy, peaceful, serene seem the sunny villages we pass by on a train. How well outlined, joyful, and blessed life must be there, we think with longing, for our souls are full of restless resentment over the drudgery of our own existence. Once there in that setting, however, we would not be at once enlightened and freed from that seemingly unnecessary burden, which we believe to be merely the outcome of our own incapacity and circumstances. We would find that burden still, maybe in another form. This burden belongs to life “as shadow to light.”

Contemporary literature shows us that our humanity is particularly acutely aware of this natural condition of man—endlessly to suffer. Man deprived of higher aspirations, of an ideal to strive towards, of belief in transcendent values will necessarily sink into the morass of painful delusion that is contingent, everyday life in itself. He will find no way to connect the bits and odd ends of occurrences, of our inner haphazard and apparently disconnected upsurging experience, and fashion an answer to the odds and ends of the circumambient world, and so will not find either their sense or the sense of life itself. Instead of rising on the wing of suffering towards self-encompassing exaltation, he will be drawn into a morass of meaninglessness.

Such is the human condition that we must suffer for our going with our wishes, illusions, dreams beyond the narrow framework of natural life. Human beings are not, in fact, hopelessly trapped within narrow limits like a stone or a lower animal. Man suffers owing to his obvious inner striving to encompass his nature, which would otherwise be his self-satisfying source of contentment and peace. Yet from nature itself with its limitations there arises the spirit that strives upward for what is more beautiful, more sublime, more complete, for what is endless and perduring, even as our contingency yields us merely broken and discontinuous bits and odd ends. It is owing, then, to this suffering of life that we can raise ourselves above the narrow boundaries of everyday existence and, supported by these exalted moments that are unaccountable for, sustain the higher course of our life through the spirit with its never completely to be fulfilled desire.

This same suffering may turn to something we might call hate, and the pain persists just the same. So at any instant of time, when we would want to know the “truth” about ourselves, about others, and our life, we enter a labyrinth of ever more complex relations and of ever fleeting shapes and qualities. We enter a current that before our eyes confounds everything, carries away all we want to seize, and moves endlessly on.

If we want to grasp the “truth” of things, we assume that things, feelings, events and all their concatenations have some clearly determinable sides, shapes, facets. No matter how complex they might be, we still believe that ultimately they could be captured by some “essential” structure, by some fundamental “nature” or idea. The fact is, however, that we deal with contingency, that is, with a changeable and infinitely complex fluctuating and palpitating Being, which even if it were oriented by essences and natures would not yield their presence in the concrete matter that we are confronted with in experience. We will never grasp an emotion or a desire before it is over and gone. But then in the perspective of the past and the new present will it be what it was? Was it a joy or surprise? Was it love or admiration, enchantment, or an idealization of our dream? Was it a manifestation of our suppressed wishes, or of our boredom with reality? Was it this or that? The fact is that it could have been this or that or to have presented several other aspects. In short, Being is neither this or that. Life is *ambiguous*!

Could we not complain too much, however, about this essential ambiguity of Being? Is it not precisely this fluctuating nature of life that keeps us spellbound by our living always ahead of ourselves? Always short on grasping what we experience and overwhelmed by its opacity, always short of breath from surprise and amazement at the turn of things that carries us, we endure, we evolve, and we flatter ourselves in believing that we direct the side currents of this stream; we believe we grow and are accomplishing a task. If only we knew what task! Its meaning: THE TRUTH.

But it is now clear that this will never be. No doubt we devise interpretation upon interpretation of the concatenations of life, and no one of them fit.

Is not every quality, each meaning of facts, therefore, relative to time? How long can love in its profound concern and piercing identification with another being make every instant last an eternity before it stretches itself thin amid other concerns and contacts? What truth is there in love, then, if it does not last long enough to be grasped, given that it is always projected toward a future that will dispel its promise? Was it ever what it was? It was always ahead of us, and now it is gone. Time carries it, makes it vibrate with promise—“Someday I will tell him all . . . One day all will be clearly explained in all depth and received, shared in TRUTH.”

What would I not give for the moment of ardent faith
That soon, very soon, may be the time of a heartbeat.
Thine eyes open upon mine,
Thy fingers close upon my fingers.
And this heavy screen is torn apart
and dissolved with the winds before it ripens.

Hate too dies before its own fulfillment. Should its dynamism be carried out, we would discover that there is no fulfillment in it since what we were after, once done, we find we never really wanted. We have been cruelly betrayed because we did not know what we wanted, but we certainly did not want the harvest of hate. Success from one point of view turns into defeat from another. Our quest after truth turns to derision.

We outline scheme upon scheme for our human destiny to cover up, to disguise this break within us, this thorn in the flesh, this wound that we long for truth and there is none. Being is fleeting and ambiguous, cannot be ascertained but by the blind.

3. THE MEANING OF LIFE AND THE IDEAL OF LIFE

If we consider all the subtle psychic network that enters into an ideal for life, with its predominantly intellectual enhancement of moral and spiritual values, we would readily identify the realization in practice of this ideal, our everyday striving to accomplish it or to make our life its specific exponent as one of the fundamental motors giving meaning to life. A vocation, an ideal for life, if it permeates the whole sequence of lived experience, or of it is, rather, the outcome of it, for as long as it inspires, this sublime, ideal scheme at the furthest extremity of human experience partakes of and is constantly revitalized through the living, vibrating juices of experience. That said, it might happen with the advance in our growth, and it does so happen that this system of ideas, values, opinions, sequential judgments will run out of this vital fuel. We will then be like the furthest branches of a tree to which the trunk no longer supplies nourishment. We may still “objectively” see, be persuaded, believe that the major values of this system are absolutely the most important in life, that the major idea that governs it is “objectively” valid, yet we do not experience its validity in all the infinitely tiny bypaths of our concrete, everyday experience. We may go on upholding it, but we no longer live it in our utmost depth. It may be as well, and this also often happens, that in our longing for a meaning in life, we follow up our being disabused with the ordinary, with the mediocre, with the futile with seeing objectively the “absolute” value of some ultimate aim and adopt it for our life, hoping to find in its fulfillment the meaning to our existence. This might happen, and yet it happens also that when some elements are neglected and do not unfold, do not develop at our utmost depth, we might well invest all of our talents, interests, devotion, and faith in a scheme of the ideal life that we then sacrifice ourselves for in order to accomplish it in practice. We may thus develop a second nature, we might immolate ourselves in the role that we thus assume as our verily true being, while still not letting open or appear those ultimately personal elements of our utmost depth. We might believe we have been perfectly absorbed by this second nature, the higher nature of our noble role, our “vocation,” and yet at those rare moments of truth when we listen to the inner voice of our “true” self, we might realize ourselves to be bare, naked, empty. This sublime role to which we have sacrificed our true, living nature has not given meaning to our life.

In fact, the meaning of life emerges precisely on the ground of this whole gamut of the most personal, the hidden, the instinctive, the emotive, the felt, our utmost deepest strivings.

It is an empirical aberration of our times that after having artificially reduced the human being to his animal level of experience, we should consider the instinct operative in the purely biological, physiological function serving procreation to be, if not separable, then at least clearly distinct from the "higher" ranges of feeling and emotion. This is as much a mistake as to think that these "higher" levels of experience owe but little to the emergence and operation of this instinct. To hold that we as fully developed human beings having full-fledged aesthetic, moral, and spiritual dimensions to our experience and judgment could be abjectly subject to pure and simple physiological attractions and so be totally blind to these values is as mistaken as to hold that the experience of these "higher" values have an authentic value in themselves in isolation and that the way to uphold the spiritual life alive, truly productive, personally meaningful, and creative is to make instinct subservient to these aims and to deny and neglect our instinct's own intrinsic value by "sublimating" it. Indeed, the sublimation of instinct does create an aesthetic or erotic climate and attitude, an esoteric life that lulls us into a cloudy state that, given its charm, may give us energy, a feeling of existence and of beauty, and may sustain us in signal accomplishments. But the inconsequential nature of this state, its ephemeral quality, its irresponsible charm does not penetrate our utmost being. It wears off, and going from one flower to another, we find that our very substance, instead of growing, wears off as well. Like hashish it leaves us empty after a dream in which for a short period life was illuminated as if by a stage light; and we are as empty after the performance as before. For sublime, elevated, noble, and aesthetic feeling to make us grow, in order for it to give meaning to life, the meaning that we desperately search for, it has to extend into the levels of the empirical, into sensation, to have a body, and to be of a piece with instinct.

Even if it be true that the emergence of instinct within a full-fledged human being could happen other than through the filter of his complete system of value bestowing experience, it certainly could not be sustained without that instinct's having the most intimate concourse with our most elevated regions of feeling. That said, if it were contrarily possible to conceive and unfold sublime, spiritual, moral, and aesthetic emotions independently of the operation of instinct, these feelings could hardly play such a weighty role as to convey meaning to life without their being incarnated within the complete system of our experience.

In its strictly brute animal form instinct may appear and be experienced only in a subhuman attitude. In a fully human love, in contrast, instinct in the most acute experience of it is already shaped, endowed with, differentiated, and powerfully enriched by an infinite array of emotional qualities drawn from the total sequence of our personal life, with its horizons of past and anticipated experiences. Real love is complete love only, and it is only so when infused with the juices necessary to give life its meaning.

PARS VI

IN THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

I. HUMAN KNOWING AT LOOSE ENDS

Disabused of the illusions of connaturality we are seeking in physics, we seek the final answers to the last reasons of existence that would illuminate the darkness of empirical life and infuse sap into our dried up soul. Feeling uprooted, we seek our real soil. Lost in a void, we grasp for a hold on our very own solid ground. In fact, if we look altogether behind the veil of objectivity, we discover that the only truth is within ourselves, personal truth.

The course of humanity has reached in our age a quite specific development of individual, personal self-awareness. In previous ages man's attention has been attracted chiefly by the seemingly independent self-absorbed nature in which he felt lost; submerged by nature's forms, or surely a part of nature, the focus of his interest was on the surrounding world. On the one hand, the development of science has given us an overview of both searcher and the searched, showing their self-contained limitations and transforming the idea of the world from that of a set of sovereign elements to a set of conditions for man's existence that he may then fashion as his milieu. On the other hand, when the philosophy of transcendental idealism, both Kantian and phenomenological, in the same era emphatically brought to light man's fundamentally creative role in the modeling of the human universe and the crucial status of man's consciousness with its complete sensitive, emotional, imaginative and rational apparatus, there occurred a switch in the balance in man's practical as well as deeply experiential attitude towards the complete "objective" set-up that faces him in his encounter with his life milieu. Not only do the forces of nature appear as mere conditions to be handled according to our purposes, but all the outside influx of ideas, the explanations, life, the world, and their lost source theories become subject to, if not suspicion, at least a sensed need for personal scrutiny; these are to be brought before the forum of one's individual consciousness to be debated upon with one's own powers and to be acquiesced to or rejected upon one's own evidence.

To go more deeply even, we do not have here the matter of *objective* evidence, understood as new information proving or disproving an idea. The horizon of man's capacity and junction having been scanned, the limitation of rational, objective intelligence having been ascertained, the new breed of man is acutely aware of both the demiurgic role and the limitation of reason, of discursive intelligence, and will not take for granted nor accept as valid any theoretical explanation, seeing how approximate each theory necessarily is, nor will he honor any authority without being in a position to confirm its evidence himself. But when the validity of reason is curtailed and the objectivity of the givens is disqualified, how are we then to obtain definite final truth? What will man turn to in seeking truth?

Contemporary literature, the accusing witness of the period, shows that by turning in upon himself man is often not capable of finding an answer, not even a pseudo-explanation cogent enough to support life. This search in turn becomes senseless, and man gets lost. Infinite self-awareness did not suffice to lead to the discovery within oneself of the fertile ground for truth. And yet in the disarray of our human universe we are not necessarily lost.

Disdain for intellect and logic, the delegitimation of adroit discourse and reason leads to absolute relativism and complete inability to make discriminations. The truth would be irretrievably lost.

In part, man has become aware that there is only one truth—personal truth.

2. THE SEARCH FOR PERSONAL TRUTH

However, would the primacy of personal truth mean a strictly subjective source of evidence springing from our individual and personal framework and taken alone to be truth's ground? Would "personal truth" emerge from the hazards of nature and man as he happens to be thrown into the world and develop? Would it consequently envisage the possibility and validity of haphazard intuitions that we could not follow to their origin, instinctive impulses that could not call on anything for their legitimacy, or primeval pulsations of our being to which we might lend significance via our momentary emotions? In short, if there is a personal truth, in what way is it "truth"?

If we renounce the finality of truth, that is, its validity for all men and in translation for all times, we renounce truth altogether. And yet it is only abstract reason that has ever claimed "absolute truth," a single, precise, univocal, conceptual expression of a state of affairs to be the only truth valid for every human individual who conceives it and for all times. All profound thought, except for this aberration of second-rate rationalism, has always been aware of the degree of relativism involved in the approach to the cognition of an object and that there is already implied a contingent set of changeable conditions, and of the human condition as such, and finally the specific forms and limitations of human cognition in approaching and penetrating intuitively the known, on the one hand, and the modes of expression, on the other. Lastly, we owe it to contemporary thought to have brought to clarity the fluctuations on the part of the known itself. Indeed, the known has clearly lost its status of having abstract static form. We know of the interference of our constitutive powers in the shaping of its nature and consequently its possible transformations in the course of human evolution.

Yet there is also in another sense in which the expression "absolute truth" has been used, namely, in relation to the ultimate reasons for the human condition itself, for the very nature of cognition itself, for the knowable sought by our final quest—the immutable, the ineffable, the source of final being. Here again, as we advance toward that final apprehension, the definitive contact with the known recedes. We become aware step by step how at each step we advance towards the goal, and at each we win a more adequate glimpse of the goal, and yet the finality we seek is always still there yet to be grasped.

Should we then turn to agnosticism, giving up the possibility of truth altogether? Since the yield we have does not meet the criteria of the “absoluteness” of a final cognition, one in which we could make a precise, univocal statement about our being’s final and exact state of affairs, and since the more we progress the more we become aware that our progress is relative to our own faculties and their development and that the ultimate might not be adequately grasped by any means of ours, being itself beyond description, unutterable, ineffable, agnosticism does indeed tempt us. Or can we rather rescue the truth by reinstating more appropriate and differentiated criteria for it, for both knower and known, uniting them for both? Certainly, on the one hand, had there been no progress in cognition but only a haphazard, instantaneous stream of experiences, there would have been no glimpsing an ultimate, final telos of life’s progress, a guideline for its organization. This involves, first of all, a definite state of the knowable to be approached step by step, which stands as a measuring stick for the experience as such. However, on the other hand, cognitive experience as such cannot be organized by corruptible, haphazard rules so that progress in thought would have no means by which to gain purchase on the being it ponders. Finally, could we actually envisage completely different rules for the organization of expression for each individual? We would have no common human world then, and we know that experience as such is as much organized and formed through intrinsic, subjective devices in play in it as by its relation to the human world in which the subject is extended and which he receives within himself in his moments of reflection.

Here is truth, indeed, and it is absolute since it refers to the final and ultimate state of things.

Thus, while the apprehension of absolute truth may not be accomplished in any particular act of experience, it is the telos of each act, towards an approximation of which the act essentially tends and is its final guideline without which the organized human world would not be. Otherwise, there would be in our being no experience as such but only a chaos of primitive pulsations.

All cognition of contingency holds incomplete truth by nature even though complete apprehension of truth is surely an ideal never to be accomplished.

Cognition is to be measured by the adequation between the object in intention and the expression of it, which can be accomplished only in the realm of abstract thought. The absolute truth does not break through the barrier of the ineffable. It is the nature of sensory experience to have no complete object of which adequate cognition can be had. It is not cognition of the contingent world or of man’s world that constitutes the object of his essential wonder, of his ultimate quest. The questions of freedom, justice, retribution, good and evil, man’s destiny or aim in life, life’s meaning, the source of life and of creation—these are our objects of wonder.

And yet these great issues that transcend the realm of contingency, of inadequate cognition, and of finite reason spring precisely from the nature of contingency, from the limitations of man’s embodiment, which subjugate him to the inadequate and incomplete and simultaneously draw him toward the absolute truth.

Questions unlike those concerning the trivial details of contingency now occur. These questions are not to be solved within the limits of nature and man’s work, and

yet by their very essence they are the very core of the contingent condition of man, of his spirit chained by matter. They are the very expression of the élan of a spirit doomed to slavery and called to a higher destiny.

These questions are the very core of our quest for absolute truth. By their very nature they go beyond contingency and reason and can be meaningfully framed and pursued only within the condition of the human world and of nature from which they spring.

The quest surges from the deepest personal source, and only within its own dimension can it be meaningfully pursued, certainly not from the aspects of abstract reason or of practical concern, though it has to refer to both. The intended objects of our real quest, soaring above the incomplete cognitions, above our empirico-rational constructs of the universe and of man as an integral part of it, above our works as part of this world, and above the abstracting of ideas in accord with rules of structuring as well as with ideals that orient our thinking in their never to be accomplished work of evolution and progress, escape examination by our cognitive apparatus, which is set to take in account contingency. These ultimate objects simply inform our ever advancing progress and repulse the abstract constructs of reason by holding to our innermost, unique personal convictions, and their evidence stems not from a universal concordance but from the very springs of our most intimate person. At the same time, these truths imply an ever advancing progress in our innermost sight, vision, receptivity, and this is precisely because the object of the ultimate quest is essentially related to man's incarnation, so that his progress is also in and through his complete set of contingent conditions. Thus the old paradox recurs on a new level: in order to advance toward the transcendent ideal of Truth, it is necessary, in order to free ourselves from the objective artifacts of the human transcendental world which we throw like a veil over the abyssal Real, that we still work with and upon the most intimate resources of contingency, of the world, of the finite and ephemeral human condition.

In short, there is no question of "freeing" the "personal truth" that is the progressive stepping stone toward ultimate truth from the primeval, preworldly, presocial, brute, and sure spring within ourselves, from individual animal impulses and drives. Rather we are to seek truth slowly and patiently within all the dimensions of our relatedness to nature, albeit with an orientation towards the abstract and ineffable, the immaterial transobjective and transsubjective ideal, the Real.

It is through distilling, sifting, diffusing and through commitments, loves, responsibilities, meaningful deeds and pursuits, through tendencies and strivings attuned to our transcendent quest that we forge from our purest, most personal ground the ground of Truth. How many paradoxes there are in this. We never make a final judgment—when judgment could be final from the perspective of the ineffable and could change our life perspective at the one extreme and from the perspective of our singular and personal knowledge at the other extreme—and yet we have to be capable of upholding limited judgments made into firm stands on behalf of unswerving ideals, to take a concrete stance and line of conduct. Not hesitation, skepticism, doubt but the force of conviction makes us advance in our quest. None of our stands attain the level of absolute certitude, and yet only by taking stands in which we are

ready to put our destiny at stake do we incrementally progress on the road of truth. No theories, ideologies, ready-made slogans, and popular trends, no matter how convincing and seemingly necessary and compelling, will even skim our authentic quest for truth. They all must necessarily be digested, disentangled from their abstract schemes as we seek the “eternal” meaning of their ideals so that we may leave them behind like corpses and press further and descend deeper into our own innermost tendencies and convictions as we forge them out of our specific situation in the world of man, necessarily completing them from a unique point of view. We may progress only through this dialectic of the without with the within, of our pulp from within and the whole apparatus of man from without, which we must use if we are not to sink into the morass of contingency with its futile strivings and false ideals and never reach beyond.

The greatest pride of man then is to be humble and in reaching for the higher to recognize how deeply he is involved in the lower, making the best of it. The greatest freedom, then, is in the most complete submission, working towards Promethean light by the use of one’s chains.

The highest pride of man, then, is to recognize how perishable, limited, shaky, irretrievably limited, and universally conditioned and dependent his situation is and to find in his longing therein transcendence towards the ultimate.

These, then, are the borderlines of our being, such as we find in the charity, love, devotion, sacrifice of the great.

3. THE BROAD OUTLOOK AND THE NARROW FOCUS

At the very heart of our forging the destiny of the soul, we find a paradox or a dilemma. The last measure of things, the ultimate evaluation of our acts, feelings, emotions, of our ideas and intentions is certainly quite different from our own limited estimation, which is confined considerably to an ideal of order among human beings within the world measured in relation to their own contingent, narrow and one-sided situations, a limited measure for our limited being.

How direct our choice? How to orient our points of view on the matters on which we have to decide? What criteria are to be adopted for deciding which of the alternatives is appropriate to the intended aim. What specific aims are to be set as steps in the successive progress?

Beyond doubt the views of God are larger than are those of the creature who sees everything through extremely limited organs. Are we not basically convinced that God’s mercy is infinite? And that His understanding is total, that is, that He is the only one who penetrates the most hidden, complex, seemingly unsolvable confusions of our will and feeling, action and intention? And in His understanding, how much must He take into account our weakness and how little would, in fact, His judgment take the form of positive negation!

But then, in trying to discover His criteria and His view, how limited we are! All we can grasp is limited to our human molds, and small and weak intellects, our biased sensibility, our scattered scheme of ideas disjoining all and never capable of

grasping the whole, and our biased distortions. And so all we ultimately know is that the ultimate Source, the final aim, the Creator who holds the strings of the great game IS and that He is certainly nothing that we could possibly imagine.

How then should we direct our choice? Between the ineffable, and the supremely concrete, between the final, unlimited, surpassing all and the most specific confined to our narrow frame, what are the criteria by which to choose, to guide our being towards its higher aim?

St. Augustine said, "Love God and do what you will." Is that not the supreme criterion, far above all earthly determinations? But what does it not entail! Can we direct our destiny according to the "large views" of the Divine Creator as we may dimly understand them and even more vaguely interpret? To take the large approach would never allow us to shape anything precise or forge anything strong and enduring. Since most of the work we take on consists in coming closer and closer to subtler and more transparent aims, we need the finest and most precise means by which to fashion our decisions.

Our moral action may well be oriented by love of neighbor as we discover the good for him within the limits of contingency but see it in the light of his eternal destiny. But if the final views on our moral behavior beyond the good of our fellow man and our own good be very large, still the first criterion orienting our choices would be the contemplation of the transcendent destiny of our being, the adoration of the Divine. The more we advance in our spiritual reworking of the trivialities of contingent facts and in forging the *filum Ariadnae* of our spiritual being, the more delicate and fine are the matters we have to decide on and the more refined must be the criteria according to which we have to treat them to do them justice. Consequently, the situation is truly paradoxical: to reach the transcendent truth and our destiny do we have to follow what would seem ultimate? To reach the ultimate do we have to deal with the final. To attain the truth have we to deal in the fictitious?

And yet this seems to be man's fate. Should we aspire to be all-understanding, we would find no other criteria for our choice but the whims of our appetites, natural tendencies; should we be all-forgiving, how could we discriminate what is appropriate for a given end? How could we discriminate among our momentary inclinations, strivings? Would we not lose any line of conduct and be submerged by the frivolity of our haphazard reactions? Open to everything, reacting to every impulse, we would be like a sponge remaining in one place, submissive to our instincts and natural, contingent conditions instead of advancing. Our total gain would be that of natural experience and maturation. We would hardly leave the ground when it came to transcending it.

On the wings of our sublimated feelings, beauty, truth, the divine and the eternal seem to be our very essence. But at sober moments what are we left with? Did one's real life not pursue fringe concerns, a spoiled and lost occasion? Loving all but none truly, giving ourselves without reserve but gorging in ourselves, serving nothing but what appears highest but ignoring it; stirring the most beautiful to generate it, but not to its very depth; touching on truth, but only briefly; achieving the most beautiful elevation of the natural man, but in a way too high, too evasive, too diffused,

too vague, stopping always before the most concrete, all-embracing scrutiny into the primeval depth of our being, specified to a point in which our whole being fuses, the most violent and poignant instant: the Only and Unique object of concrete experience.

4. THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

In the great Game of Creation and Salvation, there is a dialectic of infinite and finite, of complete and fragmentary, of total and piecemeal, of perduring and perishable, contingency and longing for its redemption. By its overcoming of the narrow boundaries of our contingent condition, Redemption means struggle in the midst of it, a struggle for life or eternal death, one in which each of our resources is significant, all of them entering into play, all of them bearing the initial spontaneity of both the vital and the spiritual. Could we neglect life and put it out of balance by shifting all in the sole direction of superior diffused spirituality? What peace, comfort, detachment we gain there, which simultaneously means some diminishment of the struggle we wage with contingent forces themselves. If in our superior charity and detached wisdom we abandon grief, violent efforts, the passion to strive for everyday, seemingly limited goods and aims, we then leave things to sway any which way. In our lofty spiritual state we might dispense with significant comfort, lift up our hearts for an instant, throw light on the darkness of souls and direct them gently some or other way, but the real work of salvation does not follow gentle touches no matter how inspiring. It is fought at the crudest depths of our whole being. We may relieve symptoms, but we will not achieve a cure unless we struggle together for life. We might lift up a heart sunken from want of love for an instant, but to bring it icy and inert into the vibrations of the life struggle again, we have to warm it with our own flesh, to infuse it with our own blood. To reach the cross-section between the temporal and the eternal we must enter the struggle for life, not for life's sake and yet with all the means that life offers to us. To keep our spirit alive, to make it surge over and over again against ever advancing bounds and in more intense waves, we have to keep alive our total contingent being from instant to instant. We have to drink in the Dionysian instant in its full richness with all its demands and implications as if it were the last instant, with our whole being at one gulp. It is not evasions, projections, illusions, but the sap of the unique concrete experience in its fullness, and yet not for its own limited aims, that bears the germs of our higher destiny.

However futile may appear our ambitions, dreams, striving, hates and love affairs, had they been only a game of survival, the animal fight for life, they would indeed be but a crawling on the ground, passing and vain like the existence of a flower, which unfolds and blossoms and perishes without an individual trace. And yet, if we struggle with all our means for life but not for life's sake, all has mattered in the final account. Without this struggle all sways to and fro, our forces atrophy, our spontaneity dries up at its source, the great passionate yearning for the lasting and ultimate itself shrinks to the level of vague ideal and perfunctory ritual. Actually realizing the ultimate, however, is coextensive with the fight for life.

That said, the renunciation of ambitions and aspirations means we hold ourselves in reserve to be spread and made available for others, means to give in to the enslaving forces of nature, to adopt survival values, to totally submit to contingency, to drift in isolation from the spirit above oneself. And what about the little joys of the day? The tokens of friendship, flowers of affection, moments of encounter, gaiety, and amusement? Could we place ourselves above these too and empty each day of its warmth and sparkle? In the great scheme of salvation, is not each day a precious and irreplaceable asset for which we will one day give an account?

P A R S V I I

THE THIRD SERMON OF TIMOTHY THE DISPOSSESSED:
THE MYSTERY OF INCARNATION

Brethren, we gather to clear our mind from the chaos of everyday traffic, from its confusions and deafening noise in order to find some spot of peace and quiet. We hunger to take a distance from absorption in our lives, in ourselves and to see life for what it is; we want to ponder over our struggles, our aims, our strength in dealing with them, in brief, to meditate on its sense: What is it all about?

And yet, even if we secure for a time some “peace of mind” so that we may have an observer’s look on our concrete day-to-day existence, we may obtain merely a generalized overview. We do not find the meaning of it all.

How could we, indeed? Our life, our concrete life, is moving within a preestablished frame with phases that we share with the rest of humanity, nay, with the rest of living beings, with life-existential conditions relative to culture, geographic situation, the present-day situation and its requirements. Seen from a distance we are just a link in a chain. This chain is forged by the situation of our birth, in our emergence within the world of life and moving through the intricacies of the interactive progress and regress of our individual unfolding in our vital/physical/psychological complex.

Is it possible for us to find the sense of all this when we are engulfed by our earthly conundrum of inextricable elements through our vital system? Our vital system of body/flesh/soul/psyche is grown into the earth and the cosmic laws that fix it.

That fact, which is the first and yet is the last to be realized, consists in the astounding insight that to be we are embodied. To live means to be embodied. The body is the crucial condition of being alive, of being ourselves, of being at all. We feel ourselves to be an immaterial I having its universe of experiences, thoughts, wishes at its center, from which we direct the course of our life. But we also feel ourselves empowered by being a bodily master of our wishes. *Our* corporeal members are instruments of our participation in the world of life, reality. Their reach in efficiency circumscribes our private domain. But simultaneously our physical organs inscribe us in the workings of that reality and keep us a captive of its realm.

In our embodiment—that of a spiritual being within the realm of vital existence—lies the mystery of creation. The yearning to surpass one’s own limitations, which confine our understanding to its strictly human orbit, is the deepest stirring of our soul. We yearn for a “sign,” a “voice” coming from beyond our strict confines within the framework of “reality,” of life—and I am your earthly “witness” to this yearning—but as in the case of Kafka’s land surveyor, *such a sign giving one one’s assignment in life does not come*. How possibly could a voice, a sign break through the tight skin of reality, of life? And yet the embodying of beingness so that it may be a living beingness, a beingness at all, is an indispensable condition of creation, making it its own prisoner.

However, we hear from tradition of messengers coming from “the other realm,” like the angel of the Annunciation who came to Mary, and even of direct communication with the Beyond like that which Abraham and Moses had. Are we ordinary

people deprived of such communication? Is this access given to exceptional human beings only? Is our soul, the recipient of such messages, not able to establish such a communication? Can no window or door be opened?

Our deepest yearning concerns also the futility of temporal existence. Everything vanishes with the timing of life. Thus we vanish with it. Is there no way to salvage our existence from its inexorable destruction? Creation with its embodiment dooms what it has created—this wonderful sparkling stream of life—to extinction. If nothing could be salvaged, our deepest being would revolt against this enslavement. Our urge is to find salvation for our fleeting life. Creation-embodiment—the salvation of life these form a most mysterious predicament, one in which each and every soul is involved.

We are bound to search for a way out. Where? From where does this urge come? It is from the depths of our soul.

EMBODIMENT: OUR INWARD DRAMA
SITUATED WITHIN THE WORLD OF LIFE,
NATURE, AND THE COSMOS

1. THE CONTINGENT EXISTENCE OF MAN WITHIN
THE SCHEME OF THE COSMOS

But what is man within the great scheme of Creation? What place does he occupy on this earth, alone among other beings, within the womb of Nature which brings forth, prompts, and regulates his very existence from origination to extinction? Is the tiny earth itself not a grain of sand on the bottom of the boundless ocean of a cosmos that with its gigantic waves regulates its ephemeral life?

What is man within? And what can he grasp of that gigantic scheme of Creation? Life, man, earth, planets we see and investigate, and those further realities that we conjecture are present to us through our cognition; they appear to us and we fall into their scheme through the prism of our own doing. The universe is an intrinsic part of us from which we cannot part, cannot free ourselves. At most we can only take some distance from Creation and observe its workings from that abstract point.

But what can we actually know about the role that our contingent existence plays within the scheme of the Cosmos?

2. ORIGINARY EVIDENCE: THE ANTITHETIC TENSION
BETWEEN IMMINENT MOBILITY AND THE URGE
TO REST

We always return to experience, our foothold in reality, seizing it ever anew. In the history of philosophy, “experience” has always meant some basic cognitive instance in which we supposedly receive a given prior to the fully developed constitutive activities of consciousness that will define it. Traditionally, perception has been singled out as this most direct access to reality. Phenomenology which has given the most elaborate and subtle analysis of perception ever worked out in history, has similarly developed the notion of “originary experience” as the primordial instance of our encounter with the world, one in which not only is a cognitive content grasped but also and simultaneously this world around and within us is being constituted. However, phenomenology has betrayed its own intuition by seeking this originary experience in perception that is already a strictly cognitive instance. No matter how deep we dig into the constitutive sedimentations, we will remain still within the constitutive circle with its transcendental rules, will be bound to cognition.

It is only by foregoing the prejudice of the priority of cognition and of perception as its privileged instance that we may discover the original root of the human being within the universe of things and beings. We share this root with all living beings; it is prior to one’s differentiation into a distinctive being, and after

differentiation it remains always one's fundamental vital background. Indeed, prior to the differentiation of our faculties into volitional, cognitive, judicative (whose entrance into action distinguishes us from other creatures as an interior being) there is a self-consciousness rooted in our pre-sense, as our participation in the universal stress of becoming.

Although itself not an instance of cognition or of experience, this pre-sense means neither a simple being there nor life itself. Indeed, in opposition to these modalities of being it contains an experiential content—not in cognitive form but in the mode of our ordinary participation within the universal stress of becoming.

Thus having turned away from the traditional path of cognition towards that of being, we may still intellectually distill the experiential evidence of our pre-constitutive, precognitive status within the totality of being. Putting aside the constructions of the mind and of the other constitutive organs, it can be said that all we “know” in the very primitive sense of our ordinary pre-sense is *motion* and *change*.

Motion and change seem to be the elemental ground from which we originate, from which we mobilize all our resources in order to emerge as a distinctive being—in our defiance and self-defense, our protest against the flux of motion that carries away all, which changes and destroys all. Our disclosure to the world and ourselves brings us in front of a dazzling turmoil of change that threatens to carry us away. However, we do not remain passive and indifferent. We receive it as a challenge and respond to it with a *vital urge for rest and stability* with which our entire germinating being vibrates.

3. MOVEMENT, CHANGE, AND THE TENDENCY TO SEEK REST THE ANTITHETIC SITUATION: EXPERIENCE AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE IMMINENT

a. ORIGINAL EVIDENCE—COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

As we have already stated, the experiential evidence of the notion of existence has been lost to philosophers under the ever newly fabricated sedimentations of their speculative constructs. In our attempt to retrieve that evidence, we will depart from tradition and take a radically different course. Traditionally, psychology has sustained the preconception that cognition—and specifically its particular instance of perception—is primary. Yet, as we have brought out elsewhere,¹ digging further and further into the genetic sedimentations of perception, we only add more and more sophisticated constructs to the account of it and so cover the original root of the human being within the universe of things and beings. If we search after the primordial instance of our encounter with things and beings prior to any subjective intellectual interference at the level at which we just differentiated and separate ourselves as an individual from the rest of being through the active intervention of our faculties, a moment at which we still have a strong hold on our roots

within the primeval ground, we will find (but note that this is also an intellectual reconstruction) that at the level at which consciousness is not yet differentiated and closed in upon itself, there we had a pre-sense within the universal stream of becoming. This pre-sense² as a being's participation in the universal becoming is the primeval ground out of which through structuring functions the individual acquires his autonomous distinctive form, and it always remains, there in the far hidden background of the field of consciousness. And yet, although not differentiated clearly, presence does not mean a simple being there; on the contrary, though not yet risen to a clear-cut form of experience, yet it contains experiential content—not in any cognitive form, but in the mode of our complete participation in the universal stream.

This experiential content of our pre-sense within the stream of becoming is that of mobility and change. In accordance with it, the basic concern of man is not with cognition—an error perpetuated throughout centuries of reflection—but with motion and change.

This basic experiential evidence of motion and change and the concern that stems from it is the collective experience of humanity, orienting its course, a specific self-sustained system which progresses constructively following its own devices towards an equally self-devised end. As such an inwardly-outwardly self-governing system, the real individual focuses and localizes to some degree the universal forces of becoming. And while accomplishing his own individual course, the real individual projects a relatively stable, functional system of the world-context.

b. ARGUMENT: THE CONCERN AND NOTION OF EXISTENCE

With reference to the just described originary precognitive experience, we will now argue that:

1. Concern with existence arises from the antithetic experiential condition of man: the contrasting fleeting nature of everything there is in the world and the vital urge to retain it; the search after a relative stability and perdurance and for their guarantee.
2. In the experiential quest for a point of rest within the fleeting scene we find *the real individual* emerging as the central factor of the process of becoming. Viewed independently of subjective and experiential ties, the real individual stands out as an inwardly-outwardly oriented system that centralizes to some degree the universal forces at play, serves as a transformer of energies, and stands as the cornerstone of the relatively stable world context.
3. Apprehended in its originary form, existence is to be conceived as the modes and conditions of this limited span of the relatively stable perdurance accomplished by beings and things within the universal world process in opposition to inexorable change. We conceive of types of existence of entities that would exist beyond change only derivatively.

4. THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE WORLD CONTEXT OF ACTUAL EXISTENCE

In the history of philosophy, the notion of existence has acquired such an abstract form and its content become so rarefied that that which is common to all has become a principle radically dividing types of being. In contemporary philosophy, existence, which in truth is the expression of the total structure and nature of a being, has been so conceived in early Husserlian phenomenology—and just as in the Platonic tradition—as to introduce a split into the very core of being, a split between what expresses a being's the ideal type, its "essence," and what seemingly pertains merely to its actual existence in the natural world. In contrast, in phenomenology's offspring, existentialist philosophy, the spiritual existence of man is singled out as the only authentic existence to the exclusion of all other types of being. The experiences to which both of these approaches refer are themselves highly rarefied intellectual products. At the other extreme, positive, naturalistic, behaviorist, that is, "reductionist" approaches, which equally call for their support on intellectually construed renderings of experience, dispense with types of being that do not comply with their notion of existence.

Philosophy, being entangled in traditional constructions, having lost its roots in natural, originary experience, continues to introduce cleavages and separations into the essentially homogeneous universe of things and beings, thereby depriving the natural order of its coordination and mutilating the very mode of existence of things and beings within the world.

If we scrutinize the modalities of the concept of existence in any interpretation we find that it invariably involves not only experience but also all types of beings not to be taken in isolation.

5. MORE ON ORIGINARY EVIDENCE

In adopting the privileged position of the Cartesian "cogito," philosophy deliberately has singled out cognition as the fundamental function of man in his dealing with the world, life, and existence. And experience in which this three-fold concern of man would find its origination is traditionally assumed to be the privileged instance of cognition.

Unfortunately, phenomenology has betrayed its crucial intuition by seeking this originary experience in perception. But perception in all its forms is already a highly construed product of the constitutive activities of consciousness. However deeply we dig into the constitutive sedimentations of the lived world, we remain bound to the vicious circle of cognition and its transcendental rules. Significantly, philosophers drew this conclusion from the analysis of cognition itself showing us the emergent lifeworld as its result, thus having at the very start narrowed the inquiry to one single channel out of many.

But what if we start at the opposite end, with the human world, life, and existence as they are already fully constituted not in a single isolated perception but in a

collective effort and then ask: To what basic concern is such a constituted world and life an answer? From whence does this concern stem? What is its experiential evidence and root? As traditional psychology arose and developed in answer to the question of *individual* experience, even so contemporary psychology and anthropology scrutinize types and sources of *collective* manifestations of man in primitive behavior, utilitarian and creative activities of social life, technique and culture, all of which requires a quite opposite course of inquiry.

We propose, first, to ask what is the originary experience of the forms of the lived world and life itself, apprehended not in the isolation of personal consciousness but in the course humanity's development has taken. To what basic concern of man is the world and life of humanity a response? In what fundamental human experience shared by men are the forms of the constituted world and of life rooted? What are the vital needs and demands of this experience that they have to satisfy?

Already in this sketchy account we see that the modalities of a notion of existence invariably involve: (1) experiential evidence; and (2) all types of things and beings. Consequently, to reopen the case of existence and to propose a more satisfactory approach than those fabricated over centuries of philosophical reflection demands a novel formulation of questions concerning the elements of discourse and their adequate distribution within their restored originary context. Here we shall merely outline the basic points of reference, the general terms of an approach, and the conclusion of an original field of inquiry: *phenomenological cosmology*.

If, instead of perpetuating the philosophical illusion so well-fabricated over centuries that the major access to experience and the main mode of man's self-assessment lies in individual cognition, we set out from the opposite end by scrutinizing man's world and the collective concerns of humanity in all the fields that express man's struggle to sustain himself in life and being, we will find that man's fundamental concern orienting all the basic kinds of his functioning—practical, imaginative, rational, cognitive—is his *primitive concern with mobility and change*.

Behind the economic, the social, and the cultural system of humanity we will detect a root awareness of the moving, changeable, irremediably fleeting nature of all and a vital urge, a vital necessity to stabilize the fleeting stream of the world and nature, to hold back its tides to some degree, to find anything to rely upon, to find some relative certitude and repose. But as St. Augustine says, there is nothing that time will not carry away. Things and beings, the nature that surrounds us, never rest for an instant but incessantly evolve. Neither do we find the sought for point of certitude and rest within ourselves.

In going further behind the sedimentations of human activities, we will see the concern with mobility and change and its antithetic urge for rest and permanency going back to the originary experience of the individual man—"originary," that is, at the level at which the human being originates in the act of his differentiation from the rest of the world, prior to the specialized functioning of his cognitive faculty, to be experience's elemental content.

*a. THE SENSE-BESTOWING STRUCTURE
OF COGNITION AND THE INEXORABLE
CHANGEABILITY OF NATURE AND THE WORLD
AROUND US*

In praxis there is no need for philosophical wonder at how the motives of man's actions express, on the one hand, the changeable nature of the world and, on the other hand, his own fleeting beingness. The history and development of mankind show clearly man torn between the demands his physical and developing psychic nature make for his survival and the difficulties he encounters in trying to satisfy those demands. In his organism itself—perpetually active, mobile, changing in order to advance in its functioning—life relies in its functioning on a nature that itself is in constant motion and change. To meet this situation man has to use all his hidden energies and capacities in what fundamentally constitutes a constant struggle with elemental change, which he has, in order to survive, partly to master and partly to adjust to with his own changeable nature.

Starting, for instance, at the primitive level of climatic conditions and of the corresponding sensibility by which man changes with circumstances, the intemperateness of both occasion the need for a whole system of clothing and dwelling that can stand against the extremes. The cyclic arrangement of seasons in nature, with the cyclic life of fauna and flora vis-à-vis the incessant demand of the organism to be nurtured accounts for the food systems developed so that the mobility of nature could be overcome. The practical life of mankind consists in devising systems of action and institutions to counteract the vicissitudes of mobility and change in order to secure the required progress of the human being.

Moving from the primitive conditions of life towards situations in which the projected systems have already dealt with the primitive elements, we see the same situations at a different level. We can say that man is advancing in civilization by inventing ever new modes of counteracting and overcoming the changeability of nature without and within himself, realizing his dream to be master of nature, as Descartes said, by mastering ever more closely nature's indomitable mobility and change.

And yet, however, close he believes he has come to having established a most detailed and stable life system with the construction of new levels of civilization, at every level the same phenomenon, albeit in different form, of universal change and the vital need to master it recurs. However remote we seem to be from primitive dependence on nature, we have not surpassed man's innermost condition within the world, the tension between the elemental flux of universal change and the necessity to master it. It simply recurs, albeit in more and more disguised forms.

Through a relatively stable system of housing, clothing, nourishment, and a calling, a person might have secured for himself a certain measure of order and regularity in life. Thereby he has conjured a certain stability of everyday life. Yet how relative this stability is, considering the unavoidable evolution within his own being involving disease, accidents, the vicissitudes of age, social changes, the cataclysms of nature, wars, social upheavals, etc. Man might attempt to gain a certain stabilizing power even over this partly unpredictable and partly unavoidably certain

fate. He has devised distinctions between the various stages of human life and set up corresponding systems for their security in order to capture the change of the individual from within. We have established the social institution of the family, which secures stability for the proper application of these measures meant to tame runaway evolution. For the phases of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, maturity, old age, we have corresponding social institutions to give them appropriate aid: education, apprenticeship, profession, retirement. In taking up time, however, we have reached deeply into the origin of this human struggle, its origin in man's originary experience.

And yet as it seems, nature remains indomitable not only without but also, as we will see now, within. All human institutions established for the progress of mankind express at their root the inevitability of change and the struggle of mankind to accommodate itself to it. If mastering or suppressing change is not possible it is still vitally urgent to accomplish at least a semblance of stability, however precarious and relative. It is urgent to satisfy not only physical but also psychic needs.

With time being the measure of the inescapable mobility that brings change into everything man would like to retain, that carries away everything man would like to keep, that brings with itself not only the construction but unavoidable fatal destruction of whatever man holds dear, and with everything he would like to hold onto slipping away from him, man has a most specific concern and that not only on the physical level but also on the equally vital, psychic level of his inner life.

*b. THE INSTANTANEITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
AND ITS ESSENTIAL FLEETINGNESS: NO
INTRINSIC POINT OF REST OR SUPPORT*

If we were with Descartes, Husserl, and their followers to seek a point of rest, what is lacking in the exterior world, within our own inner nature or consciousness, we would really be abused by the constructive tendency of the mind. Our consciousness itself is caught up in irresistible progress, and there is nothing real in it that would resist this flux. Bergson overemphasized the perduring aspect of consciousness as duration, which is already a speculative notion. In reality the basic duration of consciousness is synonymous with the perpetual mobility of all its elements.

Consciousness, seen not merely as the conceptual totality of its operations in their continuous progress but in the modes of these workings themselves, as it is lived, and in its nature and functions, consists in a continuous succession of operations that escape the gaze of our attention as it tries to arrest them for an instant. Indeed, whatever the feeling, emotion, thought we try to fix with our gaze we fail to do so. We pursue it for a while with the movement of attention itself changing and becoming involved in a net of other simultaneously performed operations of consciousness. The effort is in vain. Its object will become transformed before our "very eyes" and then escape from the actual field of attention. Tracking it further, we will be dragged into a labyrinth of ever further extending transformations dependent on the various perspectives in which it becomes engaged. Each of the successive transformations

acquires reverberations in new perspectives that open, and finally in this series of endless propagations the initial instance vanishes before our dazzled eyes, which become incapable of following it further. As is apparent, in such a concrete analysis of consciousness, its workings are instantaneous, its acts do not perdure, do not last, themselves lack extension or duration; they become instantaneously transformed in relation to other acts that intervene, such as the recollection of a past experiential field or new instances in the actual field of consciousness. Their unity or continuity is that of the content that we somewhat retain by memory, but which escapes us in its concreteness, its lived quality and can never be arrested, leaving behind but a shadow amid the perpetual transformation of the scene in other instantaneous acts.

However, it is not to the stream of consciousness that Descartes or Husserl looks for the absolute point of rest to which the fluctuating kaleidoscope of thoughts could refer as its immovable and unalterable point of reference. Rather, it is in knowledge of ourselves as existing that we supposedly acquire this unshakeable point of reference, in the cognizing self. As has often been objected, however, this self, while it may well be the ego persisting throughout the vicissitudes of the stream of consciousness, is altogether unqualified and unqualifiable.

This self would not have the psychological thickness of lived experience which passes yonder, and that for good reason, for had it been in its nature qualified by concrete experience it would have been perpetually changing and evolving with the flow of conscious life. It cannot, then, be identical with functions of consciousness of which it is the center and which it personifies (for thinking, desiring, affirming or negating appear and disappear in the field of consciousness changing its whole "climate" for an instant but leaving scarcely a trace) and for which it is supposedly a principle of unity, and so is nothing concrete and experienceable. To be real the self would have to be qualified. The self of Descartes as well as the "pure ego" of Husserl is, then, a "logical self." "I exist" is reduced to a simple intellectual statement of the intuitive—and not empirical—presence of "myself" to "myself," that is, it is reduced to an "ego" understood as the pole of identity and the principle of synthetic unity of all my operations.

At this abstract, rational level, we are in the presence of a perfect simplicity. It is by implicit reference to this rational ego/principle of unity amid the qualitative and varying contents of our experiences that we believe ourselves to perdure in a perfect continuity despite the disappearance of all the concrete content and operations of lived experience as soon as they are accomplished and despite the perpetual vanishing of our very substance and its operations. Yet as soon as we want to hold on to this substance itself, to find what we really, concretely are, we get lost within a stream that carries us away.

Indeed, it is these operations that pass away without cease that make up the substance of our concrete, real self. They make up the substance of this subjacent duration of consciousness that Bergson so much insisted on. But of what self? Besides the "self," understood as a mere principle of unity and logical center of identity of a complex and moving stream, there is, above all, the existing concrete, real ego that itself performs all its operations, that expresses itself in all its functions, and that is identical with the spontaneous duration of its acts—a self that

does find its substance qualified by the spontaneous duration of its acts so that they do not remain different and estranged from him. This really existing, living ego is that which itself performs the operations and does not remain indifferent to them. Instead of remaining indifferent and estranged from them, it is itself the concretely experiencing, living ego that is perpetually being qualified by its lived experience. It does not passively endure in isolation and in its qualitative substance does not remain stable and at rest. The living self, ego, or I cannot be reduced either to the principle of identity—not even in the form of a complete intentional system—nor to the principle of continuity. It is the self that attires itself in all the qualitative aspects of its operations, penetrates them all, that identifies itself more with some of them and less with others, that believes it possesses them all. Loving, it believes itself to be the loving one; hating, it becomes hatred itself; exercising its intelligence, it is intelligence personified.

Yet this is a self that we never “own,” even if it is ourselves; personifying us, it escapes us at every instant. It does not rest for an instant. Its perdurance is precisely this perduring evolution, change, escape. At the very instant we want to grasp ourselves, to understand ourselves better in our emotions or opinions, we are transformed before our very eyes. As soon as I attempt to grasp, for instance, what my attachment to the exterior world consists of, the way in which I am open to it, each thread that I would like to follow so that it would lead me concretely along the line of some particular attachment to the world, each of these threads escapes me the instant I single it out and want to follow it. It escapes so quickly that I am not allowed to concentrate on it as the particular path I want to follow for a while. It cannot offer us the desired rest, the urgently demanded halt within the stream of change. Its instantaneity is, on the contrary, the mode of its life, of my life.

For instance, whenever I attempt to grasp in what consists my being attached to the exterior world, being open to it, the thread that leads me from this intention, from this evidence of my own relatedness to the evidence of any particular way in which I would be concretely attached to the world escapes my grasp the instant I glance at it. It does not allow me to concentrate on it and scrutinize it for a while. Entering one beautiful morning into the garden fresh from the morning breezes and dew, I am seized by the sudden poignant emotion that I am alive. How beautiful it is to be alive. I discover with the vivacity of surprise that I am alive and that it is beautiful to be alive. This exceptional vividness of life that I experience shows itself precisely through the awareness that so many channels, perspectives of feeling, emotions, sensual engagements, reflections lie open in front of me and that I am deeply engaged in pursuing all these open avenues that lure me promisingly in every direction. This openness and its seemingly unlimited extent and the experiential depth of the vivid engagement give me the vivid emotion of being alive. To live means to follow all avenues, to explore their multifarious promises. In contrast, in everyday life I am accustomed to viewing my life, my existence, myself as one single path organized according to more or less temporal phases and proceeding in one irreversible direction.

But it is precisely with this temporal direction, with this beaten track of the psychological stream that I collide in the very moment I try to disrupt it by engaging

myself more concretely with one of these experiential perspectives that appear open and inviting. The minute I engage myself in the exploration of one of these avenues in order to find out what my real experiential potentialities in it are, what this particular engagement means, what does it mean that I feel alive—not in the sense of an indissociable, opaque, psychic duration which closed upon itself would deliver me with bound hands to a passive, dreamlike existence, but in the sense of this specifically vivid, thrilling aliveness, dynamis diversifying my involvement into the many channels into which it chooses to flow, at the cross-section of which I emerge as a living being—I then encounter the obstacle of the irreversible psychological stream. In point of fact, the temporal series of the moving stream cannot be arrested so that I may explore one of its particular dynamic channels. The stream passes ineluctably along, and I remain behind, bereft of the opportunity that has passed as well. When I want to grasp, to fixate the nature of any experiential engagement in its qualitative form—engagement that makes me a living element of the world—I hit at the impossibility of stopping the flux of my instantaneous activities, which at every instant have already delineated a most complex system of past experiences and go on to build further ones.

I cannot find the proper point to start my pursuit. Each drags me into further complexities, nothing ever staying long enough for my attention to be arrested for a while. The sensation of the pleasurable smell of a rose lures me into the universe of nature in which I am engaged this fine spring day. If by chance, the focus of my attention be directed at a social engagement, at any particular occasion, I am immediately enticed to enter into the complexities of my social situation, of the social system itself. For instance, as soon as I would try to grasp of what parenthood consists, each aspect of it recedes under the pressure of other elements connected with it. My reflection, therefore, like the magician's apprentice's release of magical powers, engenders a chain of consequences that does not cease ad infinitum. I enter into dimensions and perspectives far remote from my simple feeling of being a loving or angry mother, father, brother or sister of some individual, without my ever finding a starting point fixed enough to analyze this experiential avenue. The foremost reason for this is that I am myself inwardly in innermost motion. The ground upon which I attempt to project my inward being is an irreversible stream of my psychic functions. It cannot be typified. Another major reason is that both my attention and my reflective activity are instantaneous; they do not last, they break off in the middle of their effort to prolong any of their single actions. As soon as any of their singular operations is performed, my reflection breaks off in the middle of the effort. My intellectual intentions cede place to a new ones that arrive. The continuity of these intentions is partly guaranteed by their qualitative content. But I have to somehow establish myself; my "logical self" has to provide a hook bringing the different instances under the same idea, purpose.

Thus, trying to pursue one single avenue of my experiential engagement, I am drawn into a labyrinth of ever-increasing complexity following a stream of transformations that differentiates itself into an ever increasing number of channels and perspectives, with each novel qualitative aspect instancing a new transformation.

The complexity of this labyrinth, involving more and more possible paths in proportion to the advance, soon makes it impossible to pursue any path. By the same stroke, my own self as living and experiencing and engaged in the variety of experiences through which it extends into the world escapes me at every instant.

The concrete living self, however, is not identical with the stream of consciousness in the sense that it would come and go away with each of the stream's tides, for the self rises above the tides. Despite the fact that we pass from sadness to cheerfulness, from love to hate, from reflection to intellectual amorphousness, from frustration to satisfaction, from anger to delight, we ourselves do not pass away with each of these experiential shifts, each of which defined us for an instant. We are still perpetually evolving. But the concrete self, even though it resists annihilation in its continuing stream-like course, cannot give us the certitude Descartes found in the logical self. It cannot offer a point of rest.

Our living self (although it does not pass away) varies constantly owing to the essential instantaneity of its functioning and consequently cannot give us the point of permanency we crave.

All escapes us, but we are "by nature" possessive. We crave for stability and rest. As much as we need to adjust our organism to the moving world, we have also somewhat to adjust ourselves psychically to the fleetingness outside and inside us. We are dazed by this stream of motion that threatens to carry us away and it is by seeking a point of rest, to counteract the threat of being carried away as one of the stream's anonymous instances that we seek, we project, we construct our identity as an individual psychic being.

In this elemental struggle with the threat of change, the human individual emerges and not only at the physical level of nature but also and simultaneously at the conscious level. By mastering the elemental emotions of loss, fear, anguish, regret over all that is torn away from us, and anxiety before what inevitably will be, these small instances of victory differentiate the individual from the anonymous flux. It is in these struggles and victories accomplished by man that the course of history and the forms of various cultures are shaped, finally the character of the individual himself, who draws upon the various strategies that are the fruit of the collective effort of humanity. The psychic drive that is this need for repose is of such a fundamental level that it seems to preexist the differentiation of the individual in his particular noninterchangeable situation, and it seems that it has to be dealt with in a collective fashion.

Let us consider the testimony of the myths that express the most primitive ways in which man handled his concern with the universe, with the elemental forces. It seems that our imagination is stirred from limbo into work by this basic urge to counteract the threatening forces that endanger man and so we take possession of heretofore potential faculties and exercise them. Ours is an urge to endure, to acquire the status of individual identity over against the anonymous chaos.

Imagination sets to work establishing these values by framing a countering system of strategies. Inspired by an ideal of permanency, rest, stability, imagination never stops working at this vitally needed equipoise within the individual, who is torn

between nature without and consciousness within, all in motion, and a vital need for rest, perdurance, stability.

These collective strategies effort appear in myths and rituals, ideals and theories, in habits and styles. We see this struggle of imagination in early mythology, where the key myths represent the overwhelming power of change and its destructive threat. We need only cite a few of these. We recall Kronos, representing the change that comes with time, monstrously devours his own children, the world, and Shiva, the Destroyer of worlds, who embodies the terror felt before change and the devouring grave. The symbolic representation of a root element of life in all its terrifying power is part of a strategy to tame blind instinctive anguish by giving precise, definite shape to the threat, to stabilize the terror by assigning to it proportions, to submit to its inevitability by projecting it in front of us as a point of certitude, of absolute necessity, in brief, a point of terrifying rest.

Change leads to inevitable destruction: Eros, the symbol of the generation of life, always has Thanatos, death, as his counterpart. Imagination offers many other types of symbolic strategies as well for encountering the threat change poses. All of these signify the power to elevate ourselves above a situation of insoluble conflict.

Not only do symbols have a direct stabilizing value reflected in man's psychic functioning but they are also prolonged in man's intellectual approaches, theories, trends of thought, in other types of strategies at different levels of man's activity. The symbolism of escape that establishes the stability of transcendence over the turmoil of our inner sphere finds isomorphic correspondence in the intellectual dualism of the Platonic and Plotinian traditions and in rationalism in general.³ All of these also constitute strategies that the mind devises for its intellectual functioning.

But beside the escape that humanity envisions in a variety of ways, there is also acknowledgement of the limits of the strategy. That a direct face to face battle with the invincible forces of decay is hopeless is reflected in the myth of Sisyphus, who had to start over and over again daily, only to be defeated in his aim each time. Yet we do devise oblique strategies. These are strategies that intend to conquer the vital forces of the universal whirl by winning them over, by taming their destructive effects, by diverting their direct course. Thus, by foresight coupled with a submissive attitude, we play a ruse on the unavoidable. Not only do we feel its impact softened, but we also even find relative refuge and reprieve in acceptance of the irremediable.

Finally, we even attempt an active encounter with the inexorable and destructive change. In a way akin to our symbolically transmuting negative realities into beneficiary values, we chain the elemental drive into cyclic rituals and practices of life. We try to outwit blind drivenness itself directly in our sustaining the myth of progress, seeking the redemption of our individual destruction in the ideology of collective achievement. We even try to fight the all-erasing flux with its own weapons. The contemporary restlessness—which is the result of man's neglect and failure to secure for himself interior refuge—drives him to meet motion with motion. We would outpace pending destruction by doubling the speed of our own course. Contemporary man challenges time through his endless and frantic stream of activity.

Instead of temporizing within the intimacy of transmuting symbols, man would meet change with change; he challenges the universal stream by the speed of becoming he has devised and executed using and abusing the various types of motion that he has discovered in the universe for this purpose. Man will even strive as blindly as the elemental flux itself, for he wants to get ahead of the speed of elemental change in a frantic search for ever changing forms that he can manufacture himself. It seems that contemporary man has entered a race with the elemental speed of destruction. Science fiction abounds in stories in which man, having conquered considerably the forces of nature and even become able to overcome the limitations of gravity, challenges at some future point the speed of light and thus puts himself beyond the time of nature. Indeed, the dream of such a conquest over the laws of nature would be the latest myth of contemporary humanity. But not the last one.

The more the forms of human life become complex, the more complex becomes the scheme of man's elemental struggle with change and his ultimate destruction. Rooted in the fundamental condition of man's being torn between elemental change and the vital urge for rest is our attempt at counterbalancing the motion around us by working out a relative, limited reprieve. By achieving an equipoise, however momentary, man floats for a while on the indomitable tides.

c. COLLECTIVE EXPERIENTIAL EVIDENCE

In our investigation of the fundamental human concern to counter the passing nature of things, of which quest the forms of human activity and life are an expression, we have avoided singling out any particular function lest the whole picture given be biased and narrowed at the very start and all life's relations and significance be distorted. On the contrary, approaching the problem from the point of view of the way in which humanity collectively takes on the task of constructing a pattern of survival in its struggle with the elemental forces, we have come to see all human functions as emerging and cooperating on equal footing in this task. In bringing these manifestations back to this basic concern, we have only one step to take in order to reach the experiential evidence from which it stems.

Obviously this experiential evidence is not to be sought in the limited field of cognition or perception. We have reached deeper, we have encroached already upon a level where all the functions of man naturally cooperate, in a primeval spontaneity lying prior to their division and specialization, which introduces distinctiveness and separation. That means we have reached below perception as a specialized instance of the cognitive function. Indeed, perception means in the first place selection and discrimination; in the second place, it means structuring that is relative, on the one hand, to the content of the actual field of consciousness and, on the other hand, to the synthesizing principle, the constitutive a priori: ideas.⁴ But in our quest for the primitive concern orienting human life we have reached below any discrimination of consciousness. We reached consciousness at the level at which it surges.

Indeed, contemporary psychology agrees that cognition is by no means the primitive experiential function of man. Cognitive experience is already oriented by the

constitutive function, after a preliminary discrimination of the given elements, and is channeled towards a possible structuring. Not only that, contemporary psychology in its attempt to understand the way in which the human being functions no longer approaches him basically from the point of view of his cognitive activity but in all the ways in which he expresses himself and in his behavior. According to research on the most fundamental “reflexes” of an infant, prior to any other reaction that would correspond already to some specialized function there is the infant’s reaction to a change of position from horizontal to vertical. The infant then agitates his whole body violently as if he be in some sort of anguish. To his basic reflexes also belong his reactions to a drastic change in lighting, in humidity, etc. Finally, there are his nutritive reflexes, manifested by sucking and the turning of the head in the direction from whence nutrition is expected. In an older infant we witness his eyes constantly following an environment that constantly changes, with people coming and going, the light changing, objects being moved, etc. And if we try to reconstruct retroactively the pulp of the experience through which a newborn baby enters and gains a foothold in the environment, emerging over against the environment, it is to be found in the ceaseless chain of motion, of change, of flux. He slowly gains awareness of his presence and participation in all of this moving, changeable environment, which passes as a flux that threatens to invade him and to carry him away in its sway. He acquires awareness of his differentiated being in this flux while offering resistance and self-defense against it. He establishes the fundamental framework of a relative stability within this flux of motion and change by mastering his fundamental reflexes.

Thus after we have taken apart all the ulterior constructions of our mind and of our organs, we can say that all we “know” directly, immediately is *motion and change*. Motion and change seem to be that elemental ground from which we originate as we construct our self-awareness in self-defense and protest against it. By mobilizing all our resources, involving all our primitive organs and activities, this most basic instance of our primordial participation in the universe is complete. And in itself it is already the step we take “originating” our career as an experiencing—that is, a living, acting, sensing—being who is taking root in the universal process. Through this most primitive experiential evidence we come to participate in the universal scheme of things and beings by addressing its primitive existential aspect of motion and change. Progressing in our differentiation, self-awareness, and the development of our faculties, we internally reconstruct this elemental flux’s own structure as the world around that we participate in actively.

It is, however, our primitive participation in the flux of change that is our root in the universe and the world. This participation in the world does not mean being merely a part of it, passive and stationary like a particle; it means having our whole being pulsating with universal pulsations, taking part in the strife of the universal forces, partly taming them, partly using them to one’s own advantage, and emerging through its perils as a self-reliant and self-sustaining participant.

Our primordial experiential evidence is not yet the first instance of awareness that a baby has of the world around him. Neither is it any specific instance of

sensing, feeling, moving that is distilled and singled out from others. The experiential evidence of primeval motion and change is the complete experiential set present in every natural experience, which set of experiences is not entirely intellectually construed like the many types of our scientific, literary, and artistic insight. This experiential evidence lies at the bottom of all the constructions that our cognitive, inferential, volitional functions progressively develop and which overlay it with their structures.

However, our origination within the world poses difficult questions. It can be said that already at the embryonic stage an organic being participates in the world through the various processes of growth for which he requires substances coming in from the environment. It could be argued that there is no radical point of origination of an organic being other than at the embryonic stage, and that already at this stage the individual is in a constant transaction with the universal flux. And yet it seems that this is not yet the taking in of evidence, not when compared with the way in which a fully formed being emerges from an eggshell or the womb and makes his entrance into the world, no longer protected and sheltered by any cocoon that serves as an intermediary shield, but breaking into the world entirely on its own, exposing itself bare to that world's forces, self-reliantly handing himself over without any obscuring medium. The individual's origination does not mean the preparatory stage of the basic unfolding of his potentialities, but his self-assessment within the world into which he is thrown without reprieve and abandoned to his own devices.

That said, given that the ways in which the newly born organic being participates in the world, through all of the means that are necessary for his survival are in their exercise still so restrained, we cannot consider the instant of birth either as that of the individual's entering into full-fledged participation in the world. The initial disclosure of the world made at birth is radical, simultaneously involving disclosure and self-assessment, yet the "origination" of a being in the world is not an instantaneous but a genetic process promoted by the progressive unfolding of the various faculties and organs of the living being, that is, his growth.

It would be interesting to find out at which particular point in this development complete awareness of the circumambient world, of the ego and of its participation in the world, crystallizes. However, for our present purpose what matters is not the precise timing of that event—or series of events leading up to it—but the basic nature of the genetic process. It seems that man originates in his circumambient world through a series of physiologico-psychic reflexes that unfold ever more widely the horizon of experience and approach ever more closely the completeness of awareness.

In this perspective, when we speak of the *originary experience* of man, we cannot obviously mean one specific, privileged instance of experience, be it spiritual, intellectual, sensuous, etc., *but the crucial and pervading experiential content which is there in germ from the beginning of the genetic process within every experiential instance and is still—although pushed to the background of the ever-augmenting experiential structures—the root ingredient of the complete experience accomplished in the full self-awareness of the experiencing agent.*

This originary experiential content is prior to the specification of the individual through physiologico-psychic reflexes, specification that accounts for the subjective universe of the living being. It is the vital instance of becoming of the real individual non-transferrable yet collective, the existential condition of all. It is, indeed, not only the instance of our vital involvement in the world, but it also remains as the basic source of evidence and the all-pervading impulse for collective effort.

In opposition to the traditional notion of experience that gives priority to one highly specialized channel, be it that of perception, of a spiritual act, of intellectual eidetic insight, the originary experiential content in the above-described sense first of all demands the cooperation, the involvement of not just one single specialized capacity but of the person's whole being. Second, that experiential content is prior to the differentiation and specialization of the constitutive apparatus; it cannot be related to the prereflective level of consciousness insofar as that level is understood to be essentially related to constitutive perception in the phenomenological understanding (for in point of fact, if given a role preceding perception it would naturally become specialized in that role), nor be related to the field of consciousness, which is the theater of constitution itself.

As it is, the originary experiential evidence does not reach the field of consciousness. But if we bring it reflectively to the level of consciousness, we observe that its specific qualitative content and form is indivisible. We cannot distinguish in its exhaustive quality expressing a complete beingness any type of sensory functioning, neither the inner senses of our visceral, muscular, digestive, or generative systems nor the outer senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and kinesthetic operations. Rather, all our being participates in the originary experience of motion and change. For instance, the unexpected fall, slip, any sudden and abrupt change of equilibrium, even the idea of a fall or risk of falling moves our whole being in an inner motion. To the idea of change we respond with a similar type of excitement, one with either anguished or a joyous overtones.

The most striking example of this complete shudder in which all our faculties are interiorized and our total being shaken in one sweep is the danger presented by an abyss. In the attention that we give to the immense empty space yawning before our feet, we feel a fascination, but our attraction changes into the thought of a possible fall and we then feel vertigo. In vertigo our whole being responds in its elemental force and purity to the challenge of the possibility of a destroying motion.

However, a doubt arises. Do we not consider as originary experience the act of life itself? How do we distinguish between the two experiences? What would be the distinction between them, if any?

There could be no doubt that the biological act of living bears with it experience. Furthermore, the very act of living must involve already a manifestation of germinal awareness since to live is not to simply be there like a rock or a puddle or any other instance of inorganic nature that merely floats passively upon the waves of universal change. "To live" means to have entered into the waves themselves, to have gathered the universal forces unto oneself and to make progress in the universal tide, to not be passively at the mercy of its haphazard currents but to be oriented in one's progress by an inwardly devised design operating from within. Indeed, life is this

synchronization of forces within so tight an articulation of activity that it amounts to the scheme of an acting agent, a synchronization of external and internal action. However diffuse the articulation of this synchronization of the outward and inward may be, however simple and primitive this agency may be, to live means to take external forces into an inner agency in a self-devised and self-focused way.

This manifestation of germinal awareness, which is in itself a specific kind of superior synchronization does not attain the level of self-awareness. It does not rise to the grade of experience in any sense. If we try to grasp what it means to be alive, what our feeling of being alive consists of, we find that there is no specific feeling, emotion, awareness of being alive. On the contrary, coming back from a faint into a conscious state, we recover our "aliveness" experientially through all the channels of our participation in the world and through none in particular. We may imagine that what Lazarus "awoke" to in returning to life was no particular type or instance of experience but that the world to which he suddenly manifested himself immersed him in its sonority, its colorfulness, the specific situation of all the people around him, each of them with his particular background, etc.

Indeed, the germinal awareness of the act of living does not possess any experiential content of its own; it is merely the manifestation of the self-devised functioning of an active agent oriented towards its own survival. Although there must be some awareness involved in the primitive choice of alternatives, and though we do speak of the animal "satisfaction of thirst" or "hunger" in a way that seems to suggest that there is an experiential content in the "satisfaction" accompanying the performance of drinking and eating, these experiences remain at the stage of self-obliterating consciousness. It appears as if such a self-obliterating consciousness, erased in the performance of the act, accompanies a considerable number of the acts of the living agent, perhaps all of them. However, we are inclined to see the crucial content of ordinary experience as being not altogether self-obliterated in the performance of the function in which it arises, but as a specific taking in of the fact of universal change and as both participating in that change and challenging it in one's own enduring. The very essence of a reaction reaching the level of experience would seem—in contrast to the self-obliterating experience of living in its all variations which differentiates one being from another within the universal flux simply as different agents—to consist in the realization of the antithesis between universal change and a basic need for repose, for perdurance, for equipoise.

At this basic level the ordinary experience still shares with the act of living its essential orientation. It is not directly and inseparably incarnated by any specific vital function and yet it fulfills a specific vital function. It is neither identical with nor oriented towards the fulfillment of any particular function, cognitive, volitional, etc. but is prior to their differentiation, *is oriented towards the organization of experience itself*. Where the act of living in all its variations and in each particular vital act is oriented towards the direct fulfillment of functions indispensable for organic survival, the ordinary experience is oriented to serving a vital requirement of a higher level.

What would be this requirement that life would impose yet not for the sake of its organic functioning alone? Our release in germinal awareness into the world in the

originary experience brings us to realize our exposure to the overpowering turmoil of change. Menaced by an all too real possibility of being carried away, we do not remain passive and indifferent. The threat of the surrounding flux is received in a single vibration in which the person's entire being not only recoils but also actively responds. We receive the flux about us as a challenge, seeking first to minimize the threat it presents, and so we withdraw into what we discover to be our very own relatively stable territory. Then we mobilize all our resources to oppose the threat of change and counteract it. The tendency to counteract is as spontaneous as the realization of the challenge itself: it is a tendency to seek stability. As basic as the universal flux appears to be, as vital as the challenge in which we receive its threat is, the urge to secure perdurance, permanence, recurrence is just as basic and vital.

In the very first germinal awareness in which consciousness assumes a distance from the very function it is incorporated in and rises above the singularity of that function towards the universal meaning of the function, it exhibits awareness of the primitive antithetic condition: the threat of imminent disturbing motion and the vital urge to achieve stability.

It appears, furthermore, that the fundamental role of awareness would be to establish an equipoise between the dynamism and imperturbable mobility of the living being as a part of nature and the urge to secure the repose and stability that would allow one to develop a system of observation, differentiation, and selection. Where the sensory-motor system seems to be responsible for the primitive synthesis in which all a living being's activities are coordinated with each other and with external stimuli in a way that serves organic survival and progress, the primordial level of awareness initiates a second level of synthesis that is prerequisite for a conscious apparatus that would extend beyond mechanical rigidity and allow for a selective flexibility grasped at will and by which the various functions of the being become interchangeable and variable.

This second type of synthesis, which assures the living being a specific level of functioning, emerges from the antithetic situation the individual realizes in the originary experience and bears as its vital condition the achievement of equipoise between the irrepressible motion of universal flux and the urge to seek stability. This equipoise remains a prerequisite of the second synthesis in all its developments in the system of consciousness.

Seeking for a foothold in the maze of change about us, we progressively activate and unfold all the latent virtualities of consciousness. Securing this foothold is first of all, the fundamental function of *attention*. In trying to pause at this or that instant, we seek a basis for rest and any sort of assurance against being carried away as an anonymous object in the surrounding flux. Once the power of attention arrests the continuous stream of experience, the analytic and synthetic activity can begin, and with them the whole apparatus of the mind is engaged.

In analytic and synthetic activities there operate comparison and discrimination among the various elements proposed by attention, which work eventually culminates in "sensory perception" and the constitution of cognitive objects. Simultaneously, the volitional function emerges from the sensory-motor mechanism

and attains at the level of operating attention the powers of rational discrimination and choice.

Thus, it appears that it is through attention that our germinal awareness is unfolded and that with that the living being is lifted from the organic level to a secondary level, that of cognition and volition. This stems from our initial alarm over motion and change and from our original urge to then take the reins of our own being. We do so by projecting over the elemental abyss of motion and flux that our originary experience apprehends a pattern of recurring regularities and structures, forms, colors, sounds, which finally coalesce into a coherent system of the world that has our own coherent nucleus at its center.

In this way we evade the threatening tides by lifting ourselves to a higher level that we have projected ourselves, one wherein we are encircled by a system of relative stability.

This arrest of the inexorable flux, this system of relative stability conjured by the conscious apparatus called upon to accomplish it is indispensable for the life of the experiencing being; it gives the life of that experiencing being its specificity. What does our life consist in other than our constantly constructing and reconstructing this system of stability? Like a juggler we are always throwing new balls above the vibrating, threatening ground of the originary experience in which everything moves, including ourselves.

The life of consciousness emerges as a spontaneous activity from this antithetic situation in which experience means the contest between the imminent threat of change and the urge to secure ground from which to counteract the threat. It emerges as a solution of compromise: the elemental flux remains irrepressible and yet we are not carried away with it as another of its anonymous instances. In challenging its domination, we do not win the battle, yet we establish for ourselves a relatively stable mode of life, a world.

6. MORE ON THE REAL INDIVIDUAL AND THE CONTEXT OF ACTUAL EXISTENCE

True individual being emerges from the felt antithetic tension between the elemental flux—the turmoil of nature and of man's inner self as well—and the quest for rest, for a measure of equipoise, for accomplishing a relative, if precarious, stability in the face of ever imminent change. We find the individual to be the central factor in the universe of things and beings as well as the central actor of the experiential field involving cognition.

When we seek for a foothold, for a point of rest for our attention which at first is confronted with an indissociable blur of colors, sound, smells, forms, etc., it is the real individual that slowly emerges as a center of interest around which the restless dynamic chaos progressively organizes itself. Indeed, in our primordial attempt to discover a system of stability we do not find anything ready made in the multidimensional flux in which we are exposed to nature and nature is disclosed to us. But soon

the disparate elements of the full stream of sensations passing through our outer and inner visceral senses become organized in the focus of our attention, which functions as a center of interest on which they seem to converge, thus satisfying our need for a point of rest. We find our experiential field organized around what we call our "individual being," which stands out not only as a coherent, self-centered experiential construct, but which also appears on its very own as a being organized in function of one's very own, specific nature—in contradiction to the opinion of Bergson and his followers, for it is not tied up with the subjective constitution of experience.

7. CONSTITUTIVE COGNITION: THE QUEST FOR EQUIPOISE WITHIN BECOMING

In our quest after the basic, most primitive type of human experience let us turn away from the traditional attitude, which singles out cognition as the privileged type of man's functioning and toward psychology as offering the essential access to knowledge of man. In anthropological research we find clues as to how to approach individual experience in what is shared by humanity in the collective manifestation of its concerns and in the expressions given to them. Here we are at a more vital basic level, one so vital that it does not merely direct our cognitive processes, but, being perpetuated in every individual, also orients the essence and nature of human life and of man's world.

a. THE ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE OF MANKIND

Contemporary psychology agrees that cognition is by no means the primitive fundamental function of man and that consequently cognitive experience already oriented towards the constitutive work of discriminating and constructing objects is already a specialized form of experience. While naive observation seems to support the results of reflexology, we would say that prior to any other specialized function that a newborn baby performs is the reaction of the child to change, as it happens, to any change of position from horizontal to vertical. As Maria Montessori points out, this reaction is that of a violent cramping of the whole body, a sort of anguish in which the whole body participates. Reconstructing human experience retroactively, peeling back its layers, when all our constructs are set aside, what remains as the pulp of experience, that by which a newborn baby gains a foothold in the environment emerging over against it in awareness and that allowing his participation in that environment is motion, the ceaseless chain of motion, of change that threatens to invade and carry one away. Over against this motion the newborn offers resistance, an aware defense that signifies his aware differentiation of self. Through the mastering of his fundamental reflexes, to which should be added the nutritive reflex manifested in the sucking reflex and the turning of the head in the direction from whence the nutrition comes, the infant establishes a basic framework of constancy within the flux of motion and change about him. Taking apart all the ulterior constructions

of our organs and our mind, it can be said that all we know directly, immediately is motion and change. Motion and change seem to be the elemental ground from which we originate. We inaugurate our self-awareness in self-defense and protest. Mobilizing resources involving all our primary organs and functions, we have in this basic instance our primordial participation in the universe in its complete form. The step we take in which our self “originates” as an experiencing, acting, living, existing being is that of this first taking root in the universal process, in the universal scheme of things and living beings, by a move of our own that we will then reinterpret as we progress in our development. This participation in the world is not merely our “being a part” of it, passive and stationary, as though a particle of it, but a rousing of our whole being, which then pulsates with the world’s pulsations, taking part in the strife of its forces, using them to its advantage and emerging victoriously from its perils as a self-reliant and self-aware observer. This primal reaction to a shift in position is not yet the first awareness a baby has of the world about him, it is not a specific instance of sensing, feeling, moving distilled and singled out from all others, it is a complete experiential set present *in grano* as the primordial content of every natural (that is, not entirely constructed by the intellect) experience, which in its direct, immediate, and pure form, which comes to be covered by the sedimentations of constructs and structures.⁵

This originary experience in which a real living being emerges as an experiencing being in the world and in which there is inaugurated a potential world before the self is one that demands the collaboration, vital involvement of the whole of the new person’s being. In opposition to the traditional notion of experience, which gives priority to the single, limited channel of perception, and with that being almost synonymous with visual perception, we see that the originary perception, so understood, could not be limited even to the preconstitutive, prereflective level of consciousness insofar as these are specialized to bring about constitutive perception in the phenomenological sense, or even be limited to the content of the field of consciousness. In the originary experience the synthesizing elements of awareness appearing in the field of consciousness cannot be dissociated, nor can any priority be assigned to any part of the sensory functioning of the outer and inner senses, of the visceral and muscular preconscious reactions of our digestive, kinesthetic, and generative functions and the primitive nervous system. In our originary experience of motion and change all our being participates. We experience the thought of falling in our entire organic system, and to the thought of change we respond with excitement that has either joyous overtones or those of anguish, which response fills our whole being in a synthetic inward motion.

However a doubt arises. Do we not identify the originary experience with the act of living? Actually, there is an important difference between the two, one that contributes to the specification of the original experience.

There is no doubt that the act of living is the fundamental condition of experience and necessarily involves the manifestation of germinal awareness. Its degree, however, and its orientation do not rise to the level of experience. Indeed, the awareness of the act of living in a conscious being is like that of a plant oriented towards the fulfillment of the needs of organic preservation, of survival alone, in that it remains

close to the level of the vital, organic impulse. Of course, we speak of the animal satisfaction of thirst and hunger, etc. in terms that seem to indicate experiential content. But, leaving to the side the puzzling questions of animal “psychology,” we would say that although there is such an elemental experiential content in such instances, such as in the gaze and philosophically interested but placid expression of a resting cow,⁶ we might be inclined to see the crucial content of human originary experience, namely, the taking in of the universal change about one and reaction to it, as both challenging that flux in the securing of one’s own duration, and yet the very essence of a reaction rising to the level of experience consists in its having a basic orientation not towards perdurance, endurance, survival but towards a sort of lift above the mere self-obliterating experience of just living. The emerging person moves on from merely differentiating one being from another within the universal flux and discerning the distinct required response to each. At a further level, sensing, moving, etc. are brought to a sort of second synthesis, one not having the basic coordination of activity serving survival as its aim but having a distinctiveness such that the person in question possesses a flexible mechanism for self-government—for observation, differentiation, and choice. This synthesis is thus necessarily oriented towards cognitive and volitional activities by a conscious apparatus prerequisite for coordinating activities not in a rigidly mechanical way but with a selective flexibility allowing one to grasp the essentials at will, an apparatus that provides what in Kantian terms is called “the unity of apperception.”

And yet at this level the originary perception shares a basic orientation with the act of living. It is not oriented towards the constitutive function, for the sake of cognition, but rather for the sake of fulfilling the vital function of organizing experience itself for the carrying out of vital functions that the nature of this experience—and not mere organic survival—requires. What is this vital requirement that is not that of the mere organic nature and yet essential for life itself?

As we have already mentioned, our initial exposure to the world and ourselves in originary experience brings us before the flux of change, the dazzling turmoil that threatens to carry us away. Against this threat we are, however, not passive and indifferent. At that point we emerge as a being dynamic, sensitive, responsive, vibrant. Consequently, we react before this threat, we recoil before it (and receive it as a challenge that needs to be minimized and counteracted). We withdraw into what we discover to be our relatively stable territory and we mobilize all our resources to oppose the threat along a line which is spontaneously outlined: the challenge of instability encounters the tendency to perdure, and recur, the tendency to permanence, the ideal of stability. Then it is that the latent resources of consciousness enter into play. Seeking a foothold in the surrounding maze of motion, we exercise the most fundamental function of consciousness, that of *attention*, as we try to stop at this or that instant and seek in it and others some basis for repose and for gaining some assurance of not being carried away. The power of attention arresting the continuous flux of originary experience brings into action the analytic and synthetic operations of the mind in which comparison between and discrimination among various elements proposed by attention is effected, which culminates in the synthetic activity of constituting cognitive objects. Through attention the field of

consciousness if lifted, so to speak, to a secondary level, that of cognition and volition rationally developed, by which we defang our initial fear of losing the reins of our being by projecting over the elemental, originary abyss of turmoil a system of structures, of recurring forms, colors, and sounds to be finally organized into a coherent structural system of the world. Thus we encircle ourselves with, we lift ourselves to a system of relative stability. Attention and other conscious apparatus are called on to accomplish this arrest of time, this relative stability indispensable for the life of the experiencing being, which is precisely what makes up the life of an experiencing being in its specificity. Like a juggler we conjure the elements of this system, throwing them up in succession as a juggler does his balls, above the shaky threatening ground of the originary experience in which everything moves on including ourselves. From this antithetic situation in which the same experience is torn between imminent motion and the tendency to rest, out of this striving drive between the threat of change and the desire for stability there emerges the spontaneous activity meant to counteract the threat and which as a solution involving compromise gives the real individual the opportunity to construct for himself a modus of life, a world. Is this world stable? And is our experiential pole, to which we bring the world as a point of reference that appears stable, in actuality evolving from its originary germinal stage to a full, complete experience?

*b. THE SENSE - BESTOWING STRUCTURE
OF COGNITION AND THE INEXORABLE
CHANGEABILITY OF THE WORLD AROUND US*

The discriminating focusing activity of consciousness—comparing, dissociating, and constructing—projects above our experiential tremors a net of structures in order to minimize that instability's power, to hinder and counteract its tides, with the aim of mastering its indomitable dynamics, shifting the course of events away from the irrepeatable to the recurrent, from the unique to the repetitive, from the instantaneous, evasive, and passing beyond reach (and recall) to the relative stability of a structured equilibrium whose durability might be limited but which, despite the unavoidable eventual change within the flux of individual consciousness and that of the objective spirit of humanity, can be repeated (and kept in the store of memory).

And yet this balance having been established between restless spontaneity and a certain mastery of change through structured functions—these very structures themselves offering us a world of things and being consistently arranged according to a perduring scheme, so that we can take firm foothold within it and nestle, establishing our inward equilibrium and a harmonious functioning—this world of things and beings is itself only *relatively* stable. The attention by which we fix the elements of the flux around us is instantaneously aided by our analytic efforts, which as they plow through the variety of originary material can harness things and beings that evolve at their own pace, a pace that is set from an infinite variety of possible cadences owing to intrinsic elemental dynamics⁷ and thus harness those things' forces, but this achievement has to capitulate helplessly before the overwhelming

rule of universal mobility; we have to accept that though these things and beings can be harnessed, they are intrinsically changeable. One has to accept the essential mobility of nature, mobility which is its essential constitutive factor, its very condition, not to be overcome in its ultimate laws.

Briefly, at this second level, that of the apperception or of the constitution of worldly objects, the world around us and we with it are in perpetual evolution. How does this fact change for us in that at this level we are not abandoned to a blind encompassing necessity but can distinguish nature's sequences and its purposive orientation and can by a yardstick measure the dynamics of the whole progress of things and beings at a well outlined pace?—and that we see can the inner mechanisms of living beings progress through the stages of their generation, growth, and unavoidable decline as the rules governing the spontaneity of what we then call nature? What does it matter that we have established a universal standard for measuring this motion through the sequence of time? At this level at which we stand as a partly detached observer, we are faced with the world at once of our own making and in perpetual, inexorable motion and change.

c. THE INSTANTANEITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

If we seek stability and permanency, and lacking a point of repose in the world, we with Descartes seek that stability within our own inner nature, our consciousness, we will find that that point is itself caught up in an irresistible progression. In emphasizing duration as the "substance of consciousness," Bergson overlooked the fact that the duration of consciousness is that of the motion of its elements and operations at the expense of their durability. The basic duration of consciousness is synonymous with its perplexed mobility. Though we might try with our attention to fix it in pursuing it for a while, given the changing movement of attention itself as it gets involved in a net of other simultaneously performed operations, our consciousness will become transformed before our very "eyes" and then escape from the actual field of attention. Trying to pursue it we will be dragged into the labyrinth of the ever further extending systems of its operations, which succeed each other instantaneously and evade the gaze of our attention, for as we try to arrest that progression for a while, the mind's operations propagate themselves and vanish, leaving us behind.

This is so, because my very attention and my reflective activity are instantaneous; it breaks off in the middle of its effort to prolong that isolated action; as soon as a course of action emerges, it breaks off in its middle to cede place to another that arrives—indeed, if I try to couple, to hitch one of these thinking, reflective instances one to another, my "logical self" or the factor of "the unity of apperception" has to provide a hook referring both to the same idea. Thus, in trying to pursue one single aspect of my engagement with life, in trying to channel my experience, I am drawn into a labyrinth of ever increasing complexity involving more and more elements and that in proportion to my advancing.

By the same stroke, my self itself as a living, experiencing being engaged in a variety of experiences by which it extends towards the world escapes me at each

instant. True, the self is not identical with the stream of my conscious activities, which come and go, for my self still rises above the tide despite the fact that according to the changing quality of our experience we are sad or happy, frustrated or satiated, angry or peaceful. We do not pass away with each of the experiential instances that have defined us momentarily. But the self cannot give us the antidote to the elemental mobility of ordinary experience, cannot yield the absolute certitude of Descartes against all the dubitability of change, the point of rest and equilibrium we desire. When I seek the nature of any experiential engagement that makes me a living part of the world in its qualitative form, I hit upon the impossibility of stopping the flux of my instantaneous activities, which have already delineated a most complex system of past experiences and go on building it further. Thus I do not find the proper point to start, for each point drags me into further complexities. Nothing can arrest my attention for long. The feeling of pleasure at the smell of a flower lures me into the universe of nature in which I am immersed this day in mid-spring as I enjoy the pleasant fragrance of a rose. A social engagement that becomes the focus of my attention entices me to enter into the complexities of my social situation, and of the social system as such, etc. As soon as I try to grasp in what consists my parental involvement, each aspect through which I wish to grasp it recedes and loses its definition under the pressure of other elements that my reflection does not cease to present me, and so on ad infinitum. I then enter into dimensions and perspectives far remote from my simple feeling of being a loving or angry mother, father, brother, or sister of some dear ones, with the upshot that I never find a starting point from which to analyze this experiential avenue.

Our natural, living self does not pass away, but it varies without cease owing to the instantaneity of its functions, and consequently it cannot give us the counterpoise we seek to the shifting scene just by its very presence.

In practice, there is no need for philosophical wonderment over how the motives of actions are related, on the one hand, to the changeable nature of the world and, on the other hand, to one's own fleeting being. In the history of mankind we have quite clearly been torn between the demands our organism makes to be satisfied and the difficulties we encounter in satisfying them. Man has to use his forces and capacities in a struggle with the world of matter. He systematizes his activities to master this situation in which his organism, itself variable, has partly to master and partly to adjust to an ever changing nature. Changeable climatic conditions, daily weather changes, and shifts in our own sensibilities according to circumstances occasion a whole system of nourishment, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medicine, etc. The cyclic arrangement of seasons and the accordingly cyclic life of vegetation and fauna, along with the constant necessity of feeding of one's organism, account for a food system that can overcome the changeability of nature.

But moving on from primitive life conditions towards a complex and civilized way of life, we could say that man is advancing by inventing ever new modes of overcoming the changeability of the nature and that his dream of becoming the master of nature, as Descartes said, is ever closer at hand as he gains ever greater mastery over the indomitable variability and change both within and without him. Through the stability of housing and a calling, people may secure a certain measure

of regularity and order in life thereby conjuring for themselves a certain stability amid the continual evolution and surprises of social life and against the natural evolution of their own fabric, including the surprises of disease, the onset of aging, etc. A person might even attempt to gain a certain stabilizing power over these partly unavoidable and partly unpredictable developments by applying the laws of probability in taking out health, accident, and death insurance, and in investing in retirement plans. And so he might partly master the variability and destructiveness of the course of nature and societal life. The fluctuations of his own psychological stream—moodiness, ups and downs, instability—he would moderate through rationally outlined programs of education, professional codes, committed family life, and religious practice. All these and many other institutions that mankind has developed express at their root the inevitability of change and the striving of mankind to accommodate itself to it so that if mastery should not be possible at least a simile of stability satisfying vital and psychological needs, those most urgent for life, might be accomplished. This he accomplishes by various strategies, strategies forestalling predictable change, strategies introducing various systems of regulation of change. These regulations provide relative rest within the restless and relative stability within tempestuous strife—the ordering of change into closed systems of recurrent events, into a cyclic order that projects apparent certitude and guarantees amid an essentially unpredictable and unforeseeable progress.

Before all this, however, in the struggle for life that man carries on with whirl and change, there was established an overarching standard measure, that of the serial ordering of events, their organization into the three phases that accord with the human experience, with the ever advancing and irreversible progress of time—past, present, and future.

With time as the measure of the inescapable mobility that effects change, threatening whatever we would like to keep, change that brings with it not only revelatory constructions but also unavoidable and fatal destruction of whatever we would like to hold on to, man has a most specific concern, not only at the material level but also at the equally vital level of his psychic, conscious life.

We have started by saying that in our primitive experience everything is temporal. We will try now to investigate what are the features constitutive of the temporality of things, which amounts to their particular existence, and how, if they do so at all, these beings secure through time's specific organization the means needed to carry on the struggle with what they meet in the vicissitudes of time and attempt to arrive at a very specific type of destiny.

This struggle against the vicissitudes of change for the sake of, to use antithetic terms, rest, fixedness, stability, which are only abstract ideals, is indeed fundamental and draws upon all our human resources. All will escape us, but we are by nature "possessive." We want the stability of possessions, so we fight head to head with time for any scrap of such relative repose. It belongs to our basic human nature as it emerges from the ordinary experience through which we enter the world as sentient and thinking beings to be dazzled by this stream of motion and to seek for ourselves an identity. As individual psychic beings we have to oppose all this change because it threatens to carry us away and make us one more anonymous instance of flux.

Emerging as human individuals in this struggle with the threat of passing time, by which we measure motion within as well as without, our lives are lived not only at the material level dealing with nature but also at a conscious level that realizes the continuation of this struggle and knows limited victories over change and decay through mastery over the emotions of fear, anxiety, and regret over what has been torn away from us and what inevitably will pass away or be taken away. It is in this struggle that the shapes of destiny of various cultures and of individuals are being forged. The individual, indeed, draws on various strategic systems, fruit of the collective efforts of humanity. For the need for stability and repose is such a fundamental need of man that it impels the individual in his collective worlds.

Man's imagination is stirred from limbo into work by this basic urge of man to counteract the threatening stream endangering the very possibility of his taking possession of his potentialities and exercising them. Given his urge to endure, to acquire the status of an individual identity over against anonymous chaos, imagination is put to work in the salvaging of these values. This task of salvaging consists in the establishment of a countering system; inspired by the abstract ideal of a contrary stability, permanency, persistence, our imagination never stops working at achieving this vitally needed equipoise within the individual himself, who is torn between the changeable nature of his organic as well as psychic being and his requirements for rest, stability, persistence. Only the form of these strategies changes with types of civilization, which are, in fact, the different forms that human collective efforts acquire. We develop these strategies in the form of myths, rituals, ideals, intellectual theories, and artistic styles. The more man boasts about his achievements and power the more is he the slave of his basic urge to conquer the unconquerable. Our imagination is put to this task.

Seeing the results of anthropology in the light of Jungian theory, we can say that the archetypes of the imagination find concrete exemplification in man's devising systems of possible strategies by which to face the threat of change and destruction and to master them while still allowing for individuality in life. Time was represented as the monstrous Kronos in Greek mythology, as Vishnu in the Upanishads,⁸ symbol of the Zodiac, that is, as the sun measuring time, involvement, strife, and representing terror before change and devouring death. The symbol of dark water found so often in the work of Edgar Allen Poe personifies the becoming and course of time, which does not return. The dragon, one of the most popular symbols of the Middle Ages, is a creation of terror, symbolizing the insatiable voraciousness of time. In engendering and then opposing these symbols of the terror and anxiety inspired by the irremediability of change leading on to inevitable destruction and death, imagination offers several types of symbolic strategies by which to counter the threat. Eros, the symbol of the generation of life has always been the answer to Thanatos, death. What else could the symbols of the cross, eagle's wings, the arrow, and the myth of Daedalus and Icarus mean if not the hope of slipping away from our tragic condition, of freedom through escape?⁹ The theme of escape has been so well explored in poetry and art—the azure of the sky, its “purity” and “light.” The scepter and the sword symbolize the power to elevate ourselves above insoluble situations. This symbolism establishing the stability of transcendence over the instability of

the inner sphere finds isomorphic correspondence in rationalism and the intellectual dualism of the Platonic and Plotinian traditions. And it finds reflection in man's psychic functioning in that it allows one a degree of vital equipoise.

Since a direct face to face battle with the undefeated forces of change is hopeless, we devise oblique strategies for conquering the vital forces of the universal stir, for taming their destructive effects by diverting their direct course through reassuring channels of cyclic arrangements. Foresight is coupled with a submissive attitude. We trick the unavoidable into softening its raw impact, and even in acceptance of the irremediable we find relative refuge and reprieve. Instead of evading death, we follow the fatal course step by step, telling how the god Anubis or the ferryman Charon¹⁰ help mortals cross the infernal river to the other side. Christ's enduring in death and then conquering death transforms its negative meaning into a benefaction. Through symbolic forms involving container and contained, such as Jonah and the whale, and through symbols of universal maternity like Astarte, Isis, Demeter, etc., we of our own initiative approach the source of generation, the very source of our fatal coming to be, which source then acquires the value of intimacy, and we do not cease to explore the symbolic value of intimacy, searching all its forms, social and familial, which exorcises the pending danger of fatality's immediate impact, postponing its grievous intrusion, forestalling the stages of its arrival in a smoothed and almost disarmed way.

But we do turn to direct active encounter with inexorable and destructive change as well. In a way akin to our symbolically transmuting negative realities into beneficiary values, we chain the elemental drive into cyclic rituals and practices of life. We introduce into this process a transmutation of the negative into the beneficial devices by which we ingeniously take the measure of the blind elemental drive by channeling it into the cyclic patterns—habits, customs, and rituals—and we recruit the blind drive itself into the myth of progress, finding redemption for our individual destruction in ideologies glorifying collective achievement. We even try to fight chaos with its own weapons; our contemporary restlessness, the result of man's neglecting to secure for himself any inward refuge, his failure to secure for himself intimacy as such a refuge, drives him, into meeting motion with motion. He challenges time in endless, frantic chains of activity, he tries to defy and master change by using various types of motion in the universe for his own purposes, for his use, so that they are directed by him in their becoming. He seeks to get ahead of the speed of change itself in an incessant, frantic search for changing forms to be made by him, for some achievement transcending the value of an individual life.

N O T E S

¹ See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, "Quelques notions de phénoménologie créationnelle de l'être," in *Atti del XII Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia. Venezia, 12-18 Settembre 1958*, Vol. 2 (Florence: Sansoni, 1961).

² Ibid.

³ See Georges Gusdorf, *Mythe et Métaphysique: introduction à la philosophie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953).

⁴ See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, "Eidos, idea and participation," *Kant-studien* 52 (1960–1961), pp. 80–87; and *idem*, *Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing? Prolegomena to the Phenomenology of Cosmic Creation* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 1966).

⁵ Our origination in the world poses difficult questions. In a sense, already at the embryonic stage an organic being participates in the world through various processes of growth for which he uses various substances from his environment. And yet the appearance of a fully developed and independent being that breaks out of an eggshell, mother's womb, etc. is a radical step, for here is total, self-reliant abandonment to the world's forces without the protection of an intervening medium. Here emerges self-assessment within the world, for the living being is thrown into the world without reprieve and is abandoned to its own devices. Yet the ways in which a newly born human infant participates in the world are merely manifested and are very limited and his participation in the world, although total for the sake of his organic survival, is so limited in relation to life's full dimensions that we could hardly consider the instant of birth as that at which the infant takes possession of the world. The initial entrance into the world might be radical in the sense of the self-assessment triggered and the exposure experienced, yet the origination of the being within the world is a genetic process that goes along with the progressive unfolding of all the faculties of the living being in growth. It would be interesting to know at what point in this development there occurs a full awareness of the circumambient environment as the milieu in which the self-aware ego participates. But for our purpose what matters is not the precise timing of this awareness or of the series of instances approaching it but the fact that, indeed, it occurs through a series of psycho-physical reflexes that unfold the horizon of experience wider and wider, opening and approaching closer and closer the completeness of awareness. Awareness has to grow from tiny moments that man propagates within his circumambient environment, the world around him. In this perspective, when we talk about the originary experience of man, we cannot mean one privileged specific instance of experience but a crucial experiential content, one that from the beginning of the genetic process is there in germ within every instance and which becomes the basic ingredient of a complete experience accomplished in the full awareness of the subject. This content is collective also, in the sense that it is essential for all human beings as such and is the cornerstone of collective efforts.

⁶ If the cow were endowed with the apparatus necessary for experience so conceived, and if her behavior could be identified with some of its elements, there still seems absent the basic content of the experience, namely, the antithesis of the element of change ever present in life and the ideal stability sought. World and mind remain at variance and tear a person apart in anguish. This anguish man attempts to master through all the ways in which he exercises his functions. Could the cow behave so complacently were she similarly torn apart by anguish?

⁷ Modern science has provided insight into the various ranges of speed of motion in the universe, making those motions accessible to the direct observation of the human senses. The paces of many of these movements are extremely slow compared to that found in the nature around us (a flower opening from a bud). Consciousness itself, seen not merely as the totality of its operations in their continuous progress but in the modes and results of its workings, is instantaneous. But the speed of light exceeds incomparably the pace of nature around us and is itself exceeded by that of electronic activity.

⁸ Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, *Les Contes Haïtiens*, Vol. 1 (Paris: University of Paris; Wetteren: de Meester, 1937).

⁹ Gaston Bachelard, *Air et les Songes* (Paris: Corti, 1943), p. 83; *Kena Upanishad* I, 1; GUSDORF, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Marie Bonaparte, *Psychoanalyse et Biologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p. 124.

PARS VIII

THE CONSTITUTIVE ARCHETYPES: THE IMAGE
OF GOD EMERGING AT THE FURTHEST
BORDERS OF CONSCIOUS DEALINGS
WITH OUR PRIMORDIAL CONDITION
OF CONTINGENT EXISTENCE

I. THE FRONTIER BETWEEN THE TIMELESS
AND TIMING

The frontier between the contingent constituent reality of Nature, the whole milieu of our temporal universe surging from the primeval source at the originating fiat that began the temporal genesis of the unfolding creation and the collective experience of mankind appears to pass through the constitutive cognitive faculties of man. No living being could have existed without a degree of the consciousness that lends purposiveness to organic Nature, otherwise a brute, formless mass organizing forms indispensable to the very unfolding and progress of life. Life even at its earliest stages is receptivity, reactivity, directedness, sensitivity. These are primitive forms of consciousness or intentional organization. Life in itself already means organization, vector, consciousness, and thus the “presentation” of elements to be selected or governed or discriminated between, and thus with the establishment of the routes of life, we have progress itself. Cognition-constitution thus appears as basically a preparatory and conducting life function, as Bergson already said, though differently, and the route of life, its genesis, consequently outlines the succession and spread of time. Time starts with life, and the living being is rooted in the temporal genesis with its phases of past, present, and projected future, with its transformable forms, infinite horizon of structuring potentialities and referential groundwork in the depth of the living being’s generating past.

What of the frontier between the zone before the surging of time, that of the Eternal, and contingent Nature? Our opening towards life through consciousness’ conquering of elemental becoming—the surge of time that runs wild until we master its progress—could not start blindly. Could the route of life with its myriads of elements entering into most intricate patterns and then able to project schemes of its own become established by a spontaneity thrown up or surging chaotically without any direction or any point of reference pointing the way? And do we not find in the working out of the course of life a constant tug toward a missing element? The surrounding contingency itself with its fragile, haphazard, and incomplete side divides in the middle for man and opens up at its very frontier towards another timelessness as a yearning and vital urge for repose that turns man towards *the Sacred*.

Where do we find this horizon if not already within the primordial outfit with which our consciousness starts out in life at the frontier of the Timeless. The modes in which man attempts to project his inner, elemental quest for the timeless source,

his root in creation, the longing for the Sacred are already given him in germ at the outset of the incredible enterprise of life at the untraceable frontier between the timeless creative source and the game of contingent creation. The image of God, of incarnation, is rooted in the core of man's partly transcendental outfit. They partially respond to his system, and the vital forces and functions leading to its various structuring flow from an inner urge rooted in and surging counter to the vicissitudes of Time and aiming to go beyond Time towards the Absolute source. Man always digs deeper and deeper into the genesis of time toward the traces of his roots in the timeless.

2. THE IMAGE OF GOD

God is God to humans, not for Himself.

—Raimon Pannikar

While the image of God is a constituted product of man, it is not accidental, that is, it did not occur within human consciousness by chance or owing to one of the hazards of the evolutionary process, or as a fruit of invention that flows from the functioning of the constitutive process alone. We have tried to show to the contrary that this image is key in determining the equipoise of the human being. It is for the making of that equipoise that the transcendental system is called upon, and simultaneously adjusted to. That is to say the occurrence of the idea of God is not in the Kantian sense the fruit of the regulative function of ideas within the transcendental circle. On the contrary, it is a directive to be fulfilled in the basic establishment of the human being.

The constitutive function of human consciousness with its full extension over the vital instinctive bodily levels of man's existence and man's solid drawing upon his expanded world creates the image of God as a result of a specific configuration of the human historical condition. That said, these images, while culturally schematized and infinitely varied within unique personal experience, are by no means arbitrarily arrived at within a certain scheme; nor are they products of imagination or the results of the cultural stages of man's mind.

Among the set of conditions for the universal equipoise of human nature is the outlining of some great lives to be followed as examples. In the same way, it is a necessary and indispensable condition of man's difference or distinct specific creativity amid the totality of Being that we have a great pattern in the image of God to be fulfilled in man. In fact there is a universal set of underlying foundations upon which every representation of the Divine is suspended. Whether polytheistic, pantheistic, monotheistic—Greek or Abrahamic—the image of God is always a transcendent principle of superior force and reason, supra-earthly, a regulative order, unchangeable and, moreover, progressing with eternal awareness of specifically human values. From the worship of impersonal elements, humanity slowly moves towards specifying the transcendent principle, taking into account the progress in man's evolution in which the virtually contained elements of a creative design for man is being unfolded and actualized. This progression proceeds from the natural,

virtually animal features of man, from man as a creation of nature, as an individual both natural and social, towards the differentiation of man from nature, by which he lifts himself above slavery to the elements and becomes a human person who through deliberation, reflection, and free choice essays creative work, forges and articulates the network that yields his own level of interior life, an incomparably original, truly essential interpretation of the primeval merely necessarily acknowledged and accepted but otherwise dark mystery of the elemental conditional scheme (exigencies) of a creature's equipoise within the elemental network upon which the divine image is projected. At first, just the necessary lines of this image are limned, along which lines the human being projects his vital level of being. However, in its later stages of development this framework draws the body into a conscious crystalization at higher levels of personal consciousness. In fact, by taking the step of reflection the unfolding of man's essence (telos) leads to man's becoming successively aware of his basic yearnings and of the tension of transcending one's limitations. The creation of human personality is here again suspended on a necessary tensional framework: a human personality is necessarily created with reference to a transcendent telos and a set of moral and spiritually grounded and concretely experientially embodied values.

P A R S IX

THE INWARD SACRED

1. THE SACRED IN MAN

The sacred sphere in man does not consist, as Plotinus thought, in the sphere where the soul is all one as it was before it entered the world, but in the sparkling life of the tender love of man for man in communication. This is not a detached, impersonal goodness having only the love of God living in the soul as its object but is the unifying tie that joins human emotion/feeling with high transcendent spiritual bonds. Here is contemplative marveling over a creature for its own sake, with the marvel of Creation being retrieved, lived through, recreated in a spiritual process of progressive discovery of the elevated beauties of creation—for which discovery the appropriate means by which to appreciate them simultaneously emerge in the receiver.

Creation “for its own sake” and its every contingency are opened to elevated wonderment by the human “window upon creation.”

Man has always attempted to conjure the limitation of contingency and to rise beyond it. From this most essential striving of man stems his conceiving and establishing the Sacred.

Conceiving the Sacred involves a plane of mediation between God and creature, which implies two factors: first, we see the investing of the mediation with elements leading towards transcendence; here (a) the invested has to be contingent itself and (b) the features which are to be emphasized as mediating have to be charged with an elevating potential rising above them; further, the means have to be opened in the inward self to receive the potential to be carried by the Sacred beyond contingency.

The sacred that man has invented takes a great variety of forms. Most of the aspects of his incarnate condition at all of its levels have been explored by man in different cultures in order to rise above them. We find the sacred established through food, gesture, dance, song, clothing, speech, objects, animals, complex rituals, etc. Yet contemporary man with his loss of confidence in objective structuring of the world, in the world itself or in anything beyond the products of his faculties is disabused of investing objective elements with transcendent potential. From ritual, icons, symbols, he retreats to his inner personal depth and seeks the foothold of the sacred within himself. Inwardly, his emotional basis for intuition, ecstasies, immaterial love has dried up rather than expanded.

But if we had—in order to relate to the Divine, the nameless and wholly unqualified—to strip the soul of all not only contingency related trappings but also of all self-infused qualities, to become as bare as at our origin, what aim would these things have had in creation? What would the particularization, the personalization of souls out of the spirit have been for? “Reason implies multiplicity. . . . Having freed itself of all externals the soul must turn totally inward; not allowing itself to be wrested back from this route, it must forget everything, the subjective first,

and, finally, the objective. It must not even know that it is itself applying itself to contemplation of the One.” (Plotinus, *Ennead* V. 3, 14—*The Essential Plotinus*, trans. Elmer O’Brien, S.J. [New York: New American Library, 1964])

There is a Divine immanence within the natural, but it is the dialectic, ungraspable play of the natural with the sacred in man. What is the Sacred in man? God has to be transcendent to the natural, but incarnation is necessary for the great game of creation.

2. THE CONCRETE—THE DIFFUSE AT THE CROSS-SECTION OF THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL

“La vita sfugge,” Petrarch nostalgically laments, and nothing can stop its flight. Between two instantaneous raps of our fingers upon a table’s surface a portion of our life is gone forever. We are naturally coextensive with the flow of time. Our whole universe and our modes of existence through emotional, perduring vigilance or patient struggle slide on the rails of time into oblivion. We are caught in time’s net. Yet we passionately long to break its framework of steel. We long for perduring joy, happiness, freedom, yet each concrete experience of these is barely formed and in motion when it is cut short before bearing fruit. Immortality, paradise, eternal peace stand above and beyond all projecting of the ideal life that our concrete experience falls short of providing. Should we then, in our desperate search for the ultimately true and lasting leave behind concrete experience, and with it all the profound and yet passing forms that the deepest stirrings of our soul take, for the sake of the vague and diffused elevations of these yearnings themselves?

What access to ultimate truth and perdurance is offered to us that is fashioned in temporal becoming and passing away? Petrarch himself leaves behind real concrete feeling aimed at one specific being and in his longing posits a diffused, all-embracing feeling directed towards not a concrete, specific object but a universal one, one which can ever be filled with new longing, face admiration anew, which can serve as a pair of wings to escape the broken, helpless, aimless turmoil, the instincts, the passions that always leave us at a loss, they being made of the same viscous stuff as all irretrievably passing contingent becoming.

It was Laura who inspired Petrarch’s longing for eternal beauty and happiness. The diffuse universal object of this longing was like the Paradise she represented, the elusive ideal ever to be refilled with the fresh juices of life, but which ideal he did not care to take by the hand. We certainly need these transcendental ideals as possible experiences that in their diffused and deconcretized supratemporal nature stand as a counterpart to the concreteness of the fleeting instant. And yet no matter how elevated, beautiful, and satisfying our aspirations may turn out to be, we become disabused by the painful concreteness of love, by the suffering of languid expectations and deadly fear of disillusion. No matter how these sublime feelings beautify life and help us to be truly human toward others, what truth do they contain? What eternity do they promise?

Is not the product of the whole psychic process by which instead of incarnating the originally anonymous object at which our natural instinctive impulses aim we give it form within the most intimate personal context of aesthetic, moral, cultural emotions directed at a correlative uniquely individual object and then filtrate that object through the sedimentations of our personal life yielding a spiritualized form embodying a set of ideals that are thus not individualized but diffused in all possible directions, also in the end, however rarefied that form be as contingent as the forms engendered by natural processes?

What of the instinct that Freud sees as the origin of these rarified forms? Are not instincts as evanescent in their recurrent series as each of these individual elevations itself? And as for the ultimate truth, Petrarch in a dream felt himself entering Paradise holding Laura's hand, and yet the hand suddenly slipped from his and Paradise vanished, it being, as Kant would say, nothing but a transcendental illusion. How could it be otherwise, however? Contingent, fleeting, embodied in a series of sensory and emotive layerings, these visions are altogether integral parts of the instrument we have, our own being, with which to act the part of truth. Could we then like bad actors disregard the very conditions for the performance and incarnate a character for the sake of his spirit alone? If the performance is a temporal process, then its proper performance has to deal with all the dimensions of contingency. If the search after truth is the part to be played in the great game of Creation, it actually would have to be played with our whole being. Since all projection of feeling is an extension on our temporal frame, where could we find a cross-section between the temporal and the eternal but in a durationless instant? We project, organize, regulate our natural psychic being by forestalling it in spurious expectations, futile ambitions, unrealizable hopes—thus do we stretch the present by emptying it, robbing it of its poignant, unrepeatable experience of the instant, and drowning it in a dream. In what a beautiful and sublime dream do we plunge, in what a lofty, luminous cloud do we ride towards the sun.

The key to the mystery of the incarnation of man is that we cannot lift our being towards the Transcendent in a concrete way. Still we ascend not solely by an intellectual swing of the mind or by a ladder of abstract ideas, but also by the path of feeling, on both of the affective and spiritual levels, synthesizing our whole being and incorporating our existence, and do so through the contingent, the created. That is how the sacred is glimpsed always, through concrete, real life phenomena. But the true depository of the sacred in its purest form is man himself. It is in his innermost personal being that man feels the stirrings to surpass his narrow frame. Even as he is hampered by that frame's contingent turmoil, he would lift himself above it. Suffering, moral pain, distress, sadness, all forms of despair signify our helpless incapacity to follow the thrust upwards. What else is helpless agony if not a sinking into a morass of futility? Where is the helping hand? Affection, solicitude, understanding—all help to raise us up from apathy and give us strength to go on in life. Redemption from distress and despair in essence requires love. "True love" is understanding and forgiveness of all our natural tragic weakness and misery, is feeling for all the suffering creatures of God. This compassion, most tender affection, and solicitude that man may direct beyond his being and for each and every creature

in distress is itself a two-fold stream of rays, one extending toward creatures in the misery of transient reality, and the other towards the transcendent receptacle of all nostalgia and high yearning. Man, between the two infinities of the changeable and transformable ad infinitum about him and the infinity and undifferentiated absolute within him, constitutes a sacred medium, himself giving all to creatures because all is given, and so constitutes a transformer, transmuting through his love all the sorrow of creatures now poured into the joy of elevation, lifting all from immersion in pernicious gloom to the hope of hopes, infusing the sweetest of nectar into hearts dried up by resignation, the most tender sap of affection into the most remote corners of the soul sterile and dead to feeling. To thus radiate the life of the spirit into the decaying matter of each suffering creature man must renounce all creatures. Only in total devotion to his mission to rise above his finitude, therefore lifting himself above every finite attachment, may man open himself beyond and above all to all, entering a dimension of the sacred where the finite is transmuted into the absolute.

Yet could souls that by their essence live by the spirit take this road? They are subject to grievous distractions and destructive chaos. In their search for and discovery of their spiritual destiny, their spontaneity might dry up; their faith, enthusiasm, the very elan of the spirit might be dwarfed and weakened, made incapable of any longer sustaining the slow work of moral progress, of keeping aflame the inward light revealing the final telos and discerning its operations. It is as if the thread extending towards the divine has broken, and amid the profane, we lose our natural infinity. Our interiority too fails us. Still the mysterious secret of incarnation remains, the more so when affective impulse is dead, emotion dwarfed, the swing of confidence inhibited, our will dissolved, and our person/self disintegrated in an apathetic, slack condition. No elan of spirit will surge up from this frame again till the natural life of its soil be revived.

It is not that the soul will not respond to the subtle loftiness of the tender God invoked by man, Who loves all creatures. It is not that this feeling for each one and for all is not balsam for a scorched heart, but it is not the medium, the helping hand that could bring to life the spontaneity of the spirit.

In the incarnate being's dynamism of emotions, affective receptivity, in the complete gradations of quality, intensity, nuance, the wealth of felt beauty, in sorrow, elation and pain, love and desire, hope and disillusion in the well of the spirit, in the openness of our sensitivity to the source of its juices, and in the spread of our affective tentacles into the personal universe of men, we have the spirit's marrow. It is only through all these dimensions that new life may be infused through a complete design for our being. This most fragile and tender drop of dew cannot simply be instilled into dead veins. It has to spring forth from human communion—a communion of heart and feeling, a perfectly equal sharing and reciprocity *sub specie* of the highest elevation. This is a single and unique communion spreading over all spheres of affectivity, united for the sake of a common quest for the deepest sense of it all. Here is a progressive divination of ever new dimensions of beauty and truth in the other being for the reception of which our own being necessarily opens new receptacles, forges new sensitivities, more delicate and ever subtler means, and thus unfolds the virtual from the present. It is for the sake of the other and him alone,

given that he can virtually with ourselves discover, create, insure beauty itself, that we throw ourselves into this quest. This regeneration of all our embodied potentialities proceeds from the sensed, expanding into its most profound depth to reach the most intense and expanded experience of values. We are drawn from the most particular to the infinitely sublime, led by a subliminal thirst for transcendent truth. Such a communion involves our whole being in all its dimensions *sub specie* of its creative virtualities rather than of its actual state, for the sake of the other's self now seen more richly for the highest can only be unique at a point in time. Because the rebirth of the spirit cannot but be the rebirth of the whole person, this communion makes surge in both self and other a dimension of creative love, love of the sacred, and love of man. Universal love, yes, but first love single and unique, unprecedented and unrepeatable.

3. *ORDO AMORIS*—THE DISTINCTIVE HUMAN DIMENSION

When Augustine, Pascal, Scheler, and others speak of love and the human heart as an order of its own that has its own reasons and logic, what do they mean? Is this simply spontaneous affective love, the natural offspring of our yearning which in the proper key delineates the distinct ideal level of the human "heart"?

All the levels of man form a constitutive basis for love and yet the yearning that surges as a distinctive longing that has no direct object, unlike all our natural desires and strivings, and which takes as many forms as our natural affective life presents for its selection and yet does not become identical with any, which defies all the cravings of everyday concern, defies planning above all, and which is dissatisfied with all, a yearning that takes our whole being away from the present, this is a desire, a hope that rides on the wings of a dynamic stronger than the will to live and reaches so deep into our heart for support and extends so far into infinite possibilities, undetermined and endless, because it remains vague, open, and mysterious. The Romantics made a special case of its power over the human being, seeing as its quintessence "Weltschmerz," suffering over the limitation of our being itself, which knows not satisfaction, stillness, comfort or fulfillment.

This is yearning that surges from within our natural life's saturation and contingency, which raises within us awareness of its limitation together with the yearning for something higher. It thus breaks into the full circle of natural satisfaction like a window, representing a level of experience distinct from the purposes of nature, one that, although rooted in and serving itself from nature's means, is autonomous in its pursuits and course. We know too well the intermediate objects that yearning gives itself over to, always failing to find enough—affective love, creative work, friendship, humanitarian devotion, great deeds. This yearning always goes beyond these accomplishments, never finding in them the completion sought. It always remains a truncated intention that never reaches its aim, and yet this very intention raises us above matter with its strictly determined objectives, establishes a higher level of specifically human pursuits. What does it matter that human love is never fully

attained, that friendship is never completely reciprocal, that the great ideal once realized ceases to be great and like a dead body detaches itself from the creator? What matters is that in the elevation of our purpose above the practical, of our feelings above the empirical affections serving the aims of the species, of our evaluation above the utilitarian and pragmatic service of mere physical and social survival, of our attitudes above basic self-interest, and of our principles of judgment above the narrow logic of rationality, so that our whole universe is thus raised from the status of a narrow frame of rational scientific and “objective” artifacts of a structure to a profoundly felt level that gives priority to the ideal over the fact, to devotion over egocentrism, to sacrifice for others over using them for our purposes, and to being over possessing.

It is through yearning that a whole universe rises within us, a universe of felt (and not only rationally estimated) values, of spontaneity which gives priority to hope and the ideal over practical possibility and force. We feel for the sake of the beautiful and the good; we love not for satisfaction but for the sake of the other; we seek happiness not for the sake of momentary enjoyment and the present moment but for the sake of the enhancement of Truth.

Indeed it is for the sake of discovering the bottom of truth in a total clarity that we seek the reciprocity of consciousness in friendship, and for the sake of attaining higher perfection in beauty and goodness that we seek the bottom of the other’s and our own Truth in love. It is in this realm of our experience, so distinctive from the natural one slavishly serving the survival of the species, that there also emerges the search after the ultimate, the Divine.

Thus the order of moral life, “*ordo amoris*,” with its own logic is not simply the level of affective or even mystical love. Love of a higher order does not surge on its own independently—it is only a natural passion then. *Real* love is embroidered upon the canvas of the moral life with its distinctive set of values, of ideals, of logic following the higher principle of feeling the mystery of creation within each and every creature and the unfathomable depth of the designed destiny of each. It is on such a canvas that there seems to repose the love of all creatures, the love of neighbor, and the mystical love of the Creator. It is also from the same canvas’ woof and warp that surge human communion and participation in the sacred.

4. THE ARCHE-LINES OF THE INFINITE AND THE CONTINGENT, THE PROTOHYLE OF THE INTENTIONAL LIFEWORLD IN THE TEXTURE OF LANGUAGE AS CONCERN WITH THE SACRED

The protoplasm of language is the center of gravitation for man’s search to organize and express his life concern as it expands its sphere in correlation with the expansion of his interests and life. To participate in a larger or narrower lifeworld in language is to dwell like a cell in its protoplasm, in “archaic” emotions surging at the vital front of one’s life struggle, which one must face at the threshold of one’s real existence in the antithetic tension between Nature’s equipoise and our transcendent

yearnings, between satisfaction with factual existence and our sense of the fleetingness of natural life and an irrepressible desire for lasting values, between terror before the unavoidable destruction of the temporal and longing for the eternal. We see the incompleteness of the natural and seek the complete. We know the divide between our nostalgia for unity and the momentary nature of our factual existence, and we look for the unity of a progression in the infinite genesis around us. The divided versus the one, our impotence with respect to the elemental forces of Nature versus an absolute overcoming power, the anonymity of our vital course versus the desire for a concerned, loving direction—all these make up an antithetic tension at the very heart of our contingent being and release the protohyle of the dynamic and generic emotional texture of life that we discover at later stages in our development to be the ground of the sacred, from which ground all our life concern derives its gist and organization.

Thus the scholars of archaic languages naturally hit upon the notion of unity—at the peak of the whole linguistic scheme and spreading even into the scheme of meanings and their rational forms.

5. DOUBT AND CERTITUDE AT THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

Hormis Dieu rien n'est certain.

Husserl attributes “absolute certitude” to immanent perception given that (1) our experience of the immanent object gives it without our having complete perspective; (2) it gives it all at once, the same in each act in full, not to be completed; and (3) it gives it for *what* it is in actual appearance and not as an appearance standing for something it is not. So all the reasons for doubt inherent in sensory, transcendent perception—the distance between appearance and appearing, serial completion of each object’s incompleteness, etc.—is avoided. The *Truth*—complement of appearance—and spiritual experience, along with the appearances we perceive in the bodily present, lie beyond doubt, on the same account. But in addition there accompanies it a conviction of absolute certitude having a special frame of reference. This framework is suspended between the two poles of the subjective personal state of the soul and the Transcendent towards which the soul tends through her work as she progresses in the realization within herself of life’s sacred dimensions.

As we see, St. Teresa of Avila had unshakable convictions about various spiritual points concerning herself and her sisters. She had for these no objective support: no director other than Christ and nothing from the Rule of her order, since she was reforming it upon her personal evidence alone. Teresa speaks of the Act of Union as being one of absolute certitude, to doubt which would be absurd. It is placed outside of any frame of reference inviting doubt in reference to it. Simone Weil challenges the laws and dogmas of the Church based upon a direct relation with Christ. Immanent perception, in fact, conveys absolute certainty in contrast to transcendental perception, in which a series of instances or takes only approaches the “ideal”

object it tends to yield in presentation, never reaching its plentitude owing to the conditions of its specific functioning. In immanent perception there is no sequence of separate acts having only partial fulfillment of the anticipated apprehension. The tending toward an object here is directly and completely satisfied in its nature.

The spiritual experience, however, differs in its type of certitude as is seen in the nature of the tensions the act represents. *First*, spiritual experience is oriented towards an indefinable object within its reach, one that is intuited rather than being structurally present. And the other pole of the tension is the state of being of the subject. The subject's tending towards its object is not strictly intellectual, that is, an emotionally detached rational aiming at a structural unit; on the contrary, its very intention is imbued with and expressive of the subject's most complex personal state of being: from the state the subject feels himself to be in, he aims at another to come. This state of being in effect refers to an objectifying intention in that it implies a quest after a novel view upon reality and the human world, a novel human world so to speak. The subject's feelings, emotions, moods, yearnings, project a possible existence by indicating their virtual role in accomplishing it first by the dynamic spontaneity they generate with its searching intent and secondly through the framework of reference that they project. This framework has itself a unique nature. Where the framework of our constitutive-cognitive functioning is concerned with the human world, the objective world of man and so focuses on the expanding variety of virtual forms and their infinite potentiality for permutation, combination, transformation that make up the horizon of constitution, the framework of reference of spiritual experience is a dynamic and not structural pyramid having as its basis the structure of the personality and personal lifeworld of the subject and living them out like a projectile going towards the ineffable beyond. This is a projectile in which all the subject's emotional experiential-personal state of being is most intensively concentrated; the subject's whole personal being seems incarnated in the intention to transcend himself and his world and enter into a new, here not provisory but ultimate, sphere of truth and state of being.

Thus spiritual experience unites these two poles of intention: the state of being of the person and the cognitive discovery of a novel aspect of reality or of a new view upon the real. Its truth is not the logical truth of the correspondence between the structural object of the cognitive process and the process itself but rather the "personal truth" of a synchronized experience, the essential nature of which consists in the discovery of a new dimension of or view upon the real through becoming it oneself; this new depth of reality reveals itself in our new mode of inward being. Spiritual experience is thus revelation within acquiescence. Therefore, first of all, it stands in contradistinction to outer perception, which has the whole horizon of the lifeworld as a framework of reference for its validity and which has to be calibrated to large schemes of concordance to prove itself and consequently remains subject to doubts that may arise from any quarter.

Secondly, it stands in contradistinction to immanent perception's taking its "absolute evidence" only from the immediacy between the cognitive subject and object, for its intrinsic, individual completeness does not limit itself to one instance and does not complete itself in the correspondence between the cognitive act and its

object. The act of spiritual experience does not project a definite object and does not accomplish its objective completely in any structural isomorphic sense. It does not refer to any possible structure corresponding to its intuition to be checked against, and thus its accomplishment lies beyond any doubt. The objective framework of reference being surpassed, nothing remains in reality to call upon for a proof.

Does this mean that we are left in total doubt, having no way to validate objectively an experiential import? Does it mean that without reference to formal structures and consequently to the logical function of reason there can be nothing “intelligible,” that is, distinguishable, imparted in spiritual experience? On the contrary, the fact now to be brought to full light is that the key role of the revelation of the real in a new approach means a transformation made in one’s personal being. Thus the point of reference against the objective world-horizon shifts to the subject and is not to be found in the object to be constituted. It is with reference to the state of being of the person’s emotional, sensitive, imaginative, evaluating, yearning complexity that that which is imparted in a spiritual experience is to be checked—this in a historical review of the past, present, and future unfolding of personal life. We synchronize our life-transcending intentions with an ultimate reality having no objective criterion for we are in a mode of being in which this real is revealed not in a structural universal form but in a uniquely delineated personal itinerary, in the long progress of the soul’s discovery of her destiny. Here we reach the unique type of conviction with which spiritual experience is endowed. This is conviction for which no proof or validation is possible and for which none is necessary. No system of reference of the world can either establish it or throw it off; no completion is ever possible other than the construct of the personal transformation involved, which carries within itself alone its ultimate truth.

6. THE PORTENT OF THE SACRED: THE RADICAL THRESHOLD OF REAL ACTUAL EXISTENCE

To reach the limits of man’s finiteness, to consummate the contingent can be done only through enlisting all the dimensions of our complex individual and personal being in the cause. Although man from the very start of his evolution projected his existence along the arche-lines of his contingent condition, in particular, along the basic axis of survival within the factual world, elevation above that world—above the profane to the sacred—takes us to the borderlines of Nature itself. To get a glimpse of the transcendent took the evolution of man’s psyche towards the freeing of the spirit within the empirical soul, going from pagan identification of higher strivings with applying for protection to the elemental forces in nature personified in gods to the revelation of God as Spirit in the human soul. And yet at this stage of the sacred as incarnating man’s striving toward union with the transcending God, we remain at the stage of the covenant. Our contingency is not consummated, nor is it overcome. The key to a “good life in the face of God” is forged and supplied, but no key is found by which to redeem man’s finiteness within personal destiny. There remain two separated parallel worlds: the contingent and the Infinite. No ultimate

frame of reference translates from one to the other. There remains the thirst, the desire proceeding from the very arche-lines of our condition, for a “redemption” of a world that is liable to destruction, is definitely subject to futility. The yearning for the Messiah appears within the genesis of the time of man, from the cave of the finiteness of creation. This is desire for a key by which to open the closed lid of the box holding our survival, to overcome the powers of nature that chain us to the earth with its severe laws, misery of hazards, and terror of pending decay, leading to nowhere other than the anonymous renewal of the life cycle.

And this prison of laws, this misery of broken odds and ends of planned courses in which the worm of putrefaction is ever at work is within us. These laws hinder as much as they advance our natural course since for they pull the strings of the orchestration of our being, spread their tentacles through all the branches of our many-layered being, and by their ultimate interlocking interpenetration make our individual beings actually existent.

Could, then, the key to rescuing this system miss any of its branches in order to open it up and make it overflow? Does not the rescue need to reach the whole or its peak? Could the sacred through which the redemption of the contingency of man is sought within the heart of man glide in on any of his levels or should it catch him at his bowels? Should it not suck in the blood in his veins, nourish itself on the substance of his cells, breathe with his breath? That is to say, must it not necessarily reveal itself not through spiritual, archetypal, symbolic meanings and forms but by breaking into contingency itself, manifesting both realms, crossing the borderlines of each? The sacred key to the redemption of the contingency that draws the life blood from our hearts has to involve an actually existing, incarnate being.

We need the final dissolution of our foothold in the certitudes of life. Our existence, the security of our physical functioning, our psychic stability, nervous control, emotional quality, all this is changed by radical and impossible to master physical suffering. When we cannot handle it within our own wits’ reach, we seek a paradigm for its universal validity and apply that to our situation in order to understand our own disaster by analogy to it. We do not satisfy ourselves with a precept, be it that of stoic reserve, be it an abstract device of wisdom, for we cannot devalue the reality—the single and only thing we possess. On the contrary, we seek a way to retain our reality’s value while opening that reality to an enlightening significance. The *paradigm* we seek has to carry the key to the understanding of brute nature and to overcoming its contingency. Does not Christ in His destiny and in the mission of His life present such a paradigm?

Struck by the analogies between our sufferings and those of His human course proposed by our innermost aching for orientation in our chaos, we find in Him a possible reference for the understanding of our plight. His human course and His mission provide us a parallel path in which we can see analogies to the miserable, haphazard fragments of our own existence and by which we may relate them to the ultimate condition of man and his absolute urge to overcome that condition. In establishing these analogies and discerning parallel significance, we discover that Christ’s way of assuming the brute reality of man’s animal givens endows them with a plenitude in which their contingency dissolves, allowing us to interpret piece

by piece the “brute facts” with reference to their virtual relevance for the ultimate understanding of contingency as such.

By picking up the thread of the paradigm we enter the road of our own existence and that of the generations we partake of.

Christ appears as the portent of the sacred leading to redemption insofar as He reveals the Infinite within fleeting finiteness, breaks the narrow limits of Nature through His messianic timeless life: a life of timeless mission after which all the routine life pursuits are without consequence. He breaks through the lid of contingency through His assumption of finiteness and redeems it through His suffering. He inaugurates the new time of man’s final destiny begun now: the inward workings of the sacred.

7. THE INSTANTIATION OF THE SACRED WITHIN
INTIMATE PERSONAL EXISTENCE: ENCOUNTER
WITH CHRIST AS PORTENT OF THE SACRED

a. THE SACRED

The Sacred enters the most intimately personal sphere through the inner workings of its faculties at the impulse of spontaneous yearning to counteract the hindrances of man’s natural bent to achieve equipoise, to channel the forces he masters towards natural survival.

Despite this impulse’s going beyond that of survival, opposed to it in fact, despite its having distinctively different patterns of functioning, in fact, challenging the natural scheme in its tendencies and drives, despite its breaking the vital scheme, putting in doubt all of its accomplishments’ validity and questioning their very sense, this novel distractive, questioning, and challenging vital search that flows from our depths prior to our even reaching the border between the contingent and the Infinite is forging from within our inward most intimate uniqueness of being. We become thereby more uniquely ourselves than is all that constitutes our person. Proceeding by all personal means, using as instruments all our individual functions, this search seeks the Absolute through all the fugitive and instantaneous moments of life and creates our foothold in the Eternal within our own fleeting, miserable being.

b. THE THREE MOVEMENTS OF THE SOUL

The three movements of the soul are the three major stages of the origination of this impulse, the establishment of its working’s abstractions, and then the consummation of the sum of suffering used as a stepping stone towards the transcending of finiteness. It is through the interrogation of finite existence in all its limitations, in order to learn its hidden meanings, that we release from our empirical setup the movement of our soul towards a higher exalted existence. This occurs through the discovery of the basic futility of factual life as such; through this suffering, we appreciate the Sacred, which is but a generic term for all the ways we experience the finiteness

of man, how we are stopped in our higher aspirations by limits on our possibilities, abruptly become aware of the fugitive nature of our deepest human feelings, and finally know the animal terror inspired by the frailty of our bodily system. But so long as we receive the signals of suffering as shocks, obstacles, frustrations of our fulfillment, just so long we remain in an attitude oriented toward survival, toward self-preservation and the propagation of natural life, which is limited, fragile, and destined unavoidably to die. But in going through the burning fire of the inward quest to at all price find the meaning of life, we are carried by the suffering that consumes our substance and we distill from ourselves the third movement of the soul—the struggle towards transcendence.

This dynamic scheme of the surging up and launching of our spiritual unfolding/course consists in priming ourselves for discovery by throwing our whole being in the finiteness of our embodied condition and that of Nature as well into an unquenchable and irrepressible struggle to overcome it, to redeem that finiteness. We discover then the messianic destiny of Christ.

But does this mean to discover at once its message? On the contrary, we have barely reached the threshold. We need still to cross this threshold through the ultimately personal moral suffering that decomposes our personal self, the system of our ethical, aesthetic, cultural valuation, cherished aspirations and ideals, of our uniquely own ideals for our own existence and that of the generations we partake of. Ultimately, we need the final dissolution of our foothold in the certitudes of life and thought.

*c. THE NEW TURN THE QUEST TAKES IN THE
DESTRUCTION OF BASIC PATTERNS: THE
VITAL PATTERN*

After Teresa of Avila has described within her own experiential framework the “prayer of Union,” she warns us that this step in our spiritual itinerary, while breaking through the opaqueness of the empirical soul, does not establish a firm foothold for this act, that this act may never occur again, that the soul may sink back into immersion in everyday concerns. It is the emergence of the Unique Witness within the soul’s life thus transfigured under her very eyes that means the decisive step in the itinerary of our interrogation has been taken. Yet all three steps of the soul’s movement are indispensable. Consumed by our frenetic quest to discover and encompass the frontiers of finiteness, we go from (1) elevation above the triviality of life towards an ideal to (2) the discovery of life’s finiteness and of the finiteness of all contingency and (3) unfolding the soul’s own, spiritual course, which culminates in the emergence of the Unique Witness. These together form the stages of spiritual development. This development might stop there. It has succeeded in lifting our being beyond contingency by releasing from its subliminal depth the spontaneity of a transcending elan, thus transposing it into a more complete human framework. And yet it does not thereby reach the terminus of our deepest quest and longing. If we stop at that, we remain just halfway to the goal. To proceed further towards the goal—if that terminus could ever be reached definitely—we have to pursue our

interrogation through further stages of growth that are concurrently destructive and constructive. Indeed, Teresa of Avila warns us that after attaining the “prayer of Union,” the soul has to expect a long series of disasters, unbearable sufferings, illnesses, and cataclysms. If we are to advance, it seems that after the appearance of the Unique Witness, we have to initiate a new type of interrogation.

At first, we may be astounded at the shower of sufferings heaping itself upon us and catching us unawares. From the solitary inward course we have thus far taken, centered and closed in upon our meditative inner experience alone, we seem to be abruptly thrown out of equilibrium. Illness corrodes our natural confidence in the sleepy, perhaps, but perfect, and undoubtedly reliable, faithful workings of our bodily system. We discover then that the guarantee, which we always took for granted, to our organic system’s proceeding properly and faultlessly from within was a presumption and that, in fact, we are masters over neither its mute operations nor the results of its spontaneous interactions. Our natural confidence in the perfect faithfulness of our animal nature to our personal interests—this confidence which was the guarantee of our perfect balance and of our feeling of vital security within the world—is shaken and abused as we see the natural intimate unity of our functions disintegrate; a rupture seems to appear within ourselves indicating how very limited is the hold we have by will and desire over our whole system. We also become struck by the awareness dawning on us of the intrinsic weakness of this system and of its limited powers with respect to the forces of nature that animate and govern it. We discover then that we cannot rely upon our functional system to spontaneously be our personal agent and that we cannot rely on it to endure and safely conduct us to our personal aims. The pivotal role this fragile system plays in our whole being especially comes to light when it comes into collision with external forces in what we call “an accident.” With the shock of having been damaged in our vital functions, we are struck by life’s arbitrariness. By what right were we thus struck? By whose decision? By what laws could such a collision of forces happen? Now all the regularities of life and of the world that we have thus far trusted, naively relied upon appear at fault. Their establishment, or our belief in nature’s workings, loses its presumed finality. Thereby all ground recedes from under our feet and a vacuum opens. Since in our previous logic of security such a seemingly haphazard fact appears unaccountable for, now this silent slave comes to the fore. No longer may we take our bodily system to be such. We suddenly discover that our bodily system’s organic functions of circulation, respiration, digestion, internal secretion, were not, as we thought them to be, the functions of a dumb slave remaining in the shadows, below the staircase.

When the tacitly established routine work of these systems and subsystems is disrupted and all our functions stand out separate and distinct needing new coordination, we find ourselves to be intimately solidary with their operations. Each of them becomes now for us a manifestation of our very self; we measure now the balance and harmony of our existence by the regularity, speed, and rhythm of our heartbeat; the irregularity of its resounding seems to us to be the very pulse of this existence, of ourselves. We measure this pulse of our very existence by the depth and regularity of our respiration, which reverberates upon our experience of

ourselves: awareness of not breathing in rhythmic sequence brings our whole being into a state of anxiety, into undue tension; events seem to precipitate themselves upon us indiscriminately, and “breathless” we feel paralyzed and panicked. Thus we discover that these functions of our organic makeup, previously ignored as lying below the threshold of clear awareness, in fact constitute an inseparable, integral part of our life system and that we are intimately one with them.

Furthermore, now that that which carried us along and kept life afloat with compact unity and mute assurance is exposed to an external attack of, if not hostile, at least indifferent forces that in their haphazard and arbitrary working show life’s vulnerable nature, we realize suddenly that in reality we were always exposed to destruction, so fragile is the unity of this system, so destructible are its elements.

Facing possible peril, which we have become aware menaces us constantly, in every situation, at every instant, each of our organs, each part of our being differentiates itself from the whole in our vision and, as the possible target of external forces, solicits our particular attention and adhesion to it; each calls for an estimation of its frailness if exposed to danger as well as our appraisal of its part in the survival of our whole frame.

Through this new type of inquiry into ourselves amid growing awareness of our unstable durability and of the unaccountable for and unforeseeable conditions of our survival, we realize at once that we have been thrown into a crossroads full of hazards when we enter into the possession of our animal being. Finally animal terror invades us, taking over the basic pattern of our vital scheme so that our balance is disintegrated, dissolved. At every joint of this scheme, which upon breaking down, appears clearly before us who had ignored it before when it was in perfect condition, there lurk menacing, inexorable brute forces, and seized by dumb animal terror, our whole being cries out with an elemental desire to perdure, to live.

But, strange as it is to experience, when in the midst of the disaster we gather by and by our wits about us, in order to bring the scattered pieces of our being together into some balance, something indispensable for survival, we resume our inward interrogation and we ask after the *meaning* of these destructive events with respect to the course of our inner itinerary. These events, having burst into our seemingly closed upon itself system, disrupt it at all levels; not only is our strictly vital functioning affected but our inner path toward discovery of the meaning in life is challenged as well. Up to now we have pursued our inward course in unquestioned confidence, in self-oriented autonomy. This intrusion from without now makes a radical breach, and the previously established lines of our inward interrogation with the concatenations extending through all the sectors of our existence break down. We find ourselves again where we have started, with the chaos. When our interrogation resumes as it must, it cannot be limited to the scrutiny of our existence from the point of view of our inner experience alone; now our previously overlooked animal subfunctioning, having revealed itself as an integral part of ourselves, is to be interrogated—for it has emerged as the crucial and decisive factor in our duration, its peril signifying the peril of our whole existence. And so our interrogation enters with full force into the plotting of the meaningfulness of our existence. We are challenged by tantalizing questions. Why at times are we at peace with the world, allowed to

pursue our course, while at other times we encounter obstacles within and without and our very being is endangered? So our reflection is again called upon, and this time by situations of a vital nature. We have to pick up again the disrupted thread precisely where we left it, but this time we have to pursue it through all the functional dimensions of our being, reviewing not only our affections, passions, desires, etc. but also the *actio* and *passio* of our subservient systems of vital functioning in their fitness and capacity as well as our susceptibility to receiving and enduring the impact of external forces. Are these shocks brute and blind or calculated and planned?

Moreover, the interrogation that now is imperative takes a different form. Instead of simply building on the previously conducted efforts at discovery or meaning forging, we retrace our steps by reenacting our previous discoveries. As we now enter this *complete interrogation* through all realms of our functioning thrown open by the basic urge of a vital necessity, we find that—as already Louis-Bertrand Geiger pointed out—we retrace our past footsteps through our whole being, participating in each of its functions in its specific way. Indeed, having become aware of the extent of our bodily-psychic set of functioning, we discover that, contrary to our previous view, our silent functions were not limited to blind and dumb labor, toiling to provide a canvas upon which consciousness might embroider its designs, but that our conscious acts, from those of a strictly operational nature invested with a minimal degree of awareness to those having a complex intentional structure, that is, from the most concrete to the most speculative, have all along been enacted not by the intentional system as an abstract system of a mythic agency of “consciousness,” but through the whole system of our functioning. In fact, in our present “reflection,” which urges itself upon us not as any specific, additional operation to be performed or rejected, but as a vitally necessary integrated function of our whole being sprung from its crucially critical situation, we do not simply bring into present consciousness incidents from our past selected by recollection but rather it is the vital mode of our existence in our past experience that possesses us again albeit in a simultaneously faded and more poignant way that it did in the mode of the present in which we lived. That past is “faded” because, although it imbues the whole field of actual present consciousness, our consciousness has the present actual experience at its forefront; and it is “poignant” because, although the bite of the actuality of experience is dulled, it has sunk through the filter of our previous reflection into many dimensions of affective meaning that it did not reach when it first struck us.

Our reflection is thus a return of past experience within this complete dimensional spread that events acquire in the perspective of our development with time’s passing, through a spontaneous unrolling backwards. It is as if our past experience were registered with the complete system of our functioning with its hierarchy of functional subsystems. It is as if articulated through our nervous mechanism with its flexibility as it has first been enacted and is now decoded, through our respiratory, visceral, propagative, foraging, explorative, and expressive systems.

Our whole being longs for harmony and peace, however we remain in a perilous chaos. Aware now that our existence is endangered at every instant by its very situation and nature, and with all our forces challenged and on trial in the task of

reestablishing and maintaining our vital balance even provisorily with constantly renewed efforts in the face of the menacing extinction hanging over us like the sword of Damocles, we seek for a point of reference, a point of orientation, a foothold in the total void that has opened before us. Where else can we find this point of reference if not in retreat to our *moral* dimension? Now, when the great issue is thrown up—"Why should our life, our existence be spared? And why did it ever prosper if it is to be eventually annihilated?"—the only reason which we can find for our life's preservation appears to be our moral task or our moral mission in life and the world.

d. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BASIC MORAL PATTERN

i. Do we not find then a firm hold allowing the recovery of our equipoise? Is the moral task we have hitherto been working on not well enough established within the identity of our personal self, so that we may trust in its solidity? This, at least, cannot, we believe, be reached by the catastrophes to which our "animal dimensions" are exposed. It is, in fact, also now that we discover the distinctiveness of what we can call "the basic moral pattern" of our personal life. It seems to stand out as a specific aspect of our self, one not out of reach of the reverberations of the upheaval, yet not altogether submerged by it and keeping us afloat as a sympathetic partner. We find this distinctive dimension to be quite natural. We are aware of having distilled the total stream of our experience through the sieve of our aesthetic and moral sensibilities, suspended upon a set of higher values. Thereby we have given to our natural experience an extra "lift" particularly its own and of a seemingly distinct nature representing the higher ideals of men. Elaborated progressively into a patterned whole, this stream of a transformed experiential setup has elaborated its own molds, established lasting inclinations and bents for our reactions and desires, worked out lines of orientation for our mute stirrings as well as for our complex yearnings. Now, when our foundations in nature are shaken, we discover we possess a "foundational" nature of another type in this well structured experiential pattern, which imbued by a higher affective tonality has taken over the instinctive impulses of our brute animal nature. This moral patterning of our behavior has come to so entirely manage the realm that it has hardly ever come into independent evidence. We know ourselves as precisely this aesthetic-moral person owing to this pattern of experiencing, desiring, feeling, and acting through molds and preestablished routes. At the last, is not from this "personal agent" of ours that we receive our orientation and opening towards transcendence?

Thus, now besieged by the hostile blows of impervious nature, it is in our intimately personal moral and spiritual sphere of existence that we make our encampment.

But we discover that this encampment does not withstand the impact of the hostile, indifferent forces in their corroding and destructive reach. While we mobilize all our moral strength to not succumb to physical pain, to not give in to the paralyzing animal panic in front of each turn of everyday events menacing possible disaster,

we rely on the solicitude, compassion, tender affection of our surroundings; the ties of family and friendship established in harmonious, peaceful times seem to bear the promise, if not assurance, of faithfulness to a shared pattern of mutual moral commitments based on convictions shared in common and on profound mutual feelings. We discover, however, with a sudden pang, that the other's faithfulness breaks when an effort is expected or a momentary conflict of interests arises, one that would split attention between our course and his. The anticipated faithfulness of our family and friends to the common moral web of life fails. Annoyed by our demands, yet trying to comply with compassion, others will not give priority to our vital needs over their momentary personal pursuits; they will simply refuse to recognize the necessity of those needs. In order to protect the priority to be given to their own individual pursuits and aims, they shut their eyes and close their ears to our situation. In order to elude the necessity of becoming aware of our plight and mortal struggle, they offer theoretical, objective half-explanations. Ultimately, they are insensitive to our suffering, and with a view to preserving this insensitivity, they close themselves in their own shell. Or they will theorize, universalizing the situation in its factual, objective aspects and offer a "diagnosis" of sorts and so manage to avoid recognizing the subjective urgency of our personal case; thus they manage finally, with the help of a chilly, indifferent objectivity, to shake off all responsibility to meet impending and expected commitments.

Thus the common moral pattern shared in our environs having broken down, we find ourselves deserted to cope all alone with our urgent survival needs. With this common pattern broken, all the appeals and moral claims it has supposedly guaranteed us—claims to love, devotion, attachment, understanding, goodness, even those to universal charity and pity—denied, broken against a wall of resentful indifference, we are seized anew by the terror of a vitally endangered animal being now willfully abandoned to perishing. Discovering in stunned, dazed pain that we cannot reach the other despite what we had believed to be our common fabric of moral life, finding that it was knit from the yarn of false pretenses and joined by knots of false commitments, seeing that all our appeals must fail to awaken the other to our needs, even though here and now we will simply perish unless something is done, we ourselves break down; we lose control over the moral dimension of our being; the whole pattern breaks down, and its fragmentary guidelines, its empty molds recede, making room for an upsurge of savage, brutal, incalculable behaviors that spontaneously spring forth from the elemental pulsations of our "animal" subsystems. Reckless, heedless of any consideration, we mean to prompt a reaction, a response in others to our urgent needs, every other effort having failed. With shame, disgust, horror, we come face to face with the hidden "beast" within ourselves. This "beast" reveals itself to be capable of all the most awful emotions, feelings, tendencies, attitudes, and is ready to put them into action in a fight for life.

A recognition comes down upon us, amazement at the revelation of our ignored abysmal being. We see that what we once experienced as our "true," essential being—our most personal self, what represented our genuine nature, what we were really meant to be from the initiation of our project and what we have been, despite the false appearances that life's intricate involvements with other beings gave us as

we constantly sought to follow and to develop within ourselves our “identity,” our “innermost self”—was in reality made up of an infinitely complex fabric of attitudes and sensibilities we had developed and habits we had acquired. A tantalizing and mortifying awareness now comes upon us that this moral and aesthetic “self,” the existence of which we were so certain of, the role of which as an “absolute agent” we were so convinced of, and which gave us the strength of legitimate pride in life, made us feel that we towered above the pettiness of the everyday trivial concerns and vicissitudes of life and above evil, ugliness, perfidy, and injustice as well, was in fact not what we believed it to be. How could it have been this innermost agency we understood it to be, when we see it now, disentangled from its joints and fallen off from us like a used wrap?

And yet having lost this whole fabric in which it once acted and suffered, our self does not vanish. It persists. Bare, like a washed out thread torn from a piece of fine embroidery, it does not vanish together with the unraveled embroidery.

We are mortified by the new impulses, feelings, and incalculable reactions which have now taken the place of our previous carefully developed sentiments and which spring forth without our cooperation, without our being aware of their surging, out of the reach of our control, and which purport to enact our very self, mean to constitute our self-identity and act on our behalf. Surprised over and over by what, in the light of our previous life pattern, appears to us as savagery and barbarism, we must ask ourselves whether this is actually our “self.” Can we identify with this animal violence seeking to live at any cost, this reckless striving to survive, this self-defensive hatred directed at those who remain indifferent to our plight, our explosive resentment? But we must also ask ourselves if it is doubtful whether we were really in the past what we believed ourselves to be. How can we judge ourselves, however, other than by way of deepest self-recognition, feeling ourselves to be this or that? But now it becomes clear that this self-recognition is not an “absolute” yardstick but is itself rooted in the very nature of our actual intentions, bends, and ultimately in our spontaneous impulses and feelings? And yet this sudden upsurge of radical violence, seemingly alien to our previous “self”—and even at the antipodes of our hierarchy of values—reactions and motivations of crude and primitive quality, like animal survival itself, confutes our right to legitimately achieve self-recognition. This is a paradoxical situation. We do not recognize ourselves in these reactions, and yet we cannot deny, refuse to admit, that they surge from our own elemental ground and that they appear in the last instance to protect our existence and that they even try to establish themselves in our very self-consciousness plunging deep roots into it.

Caught between two extremes of our innermost tendencies, one precious to us but vanishing having lost the force of conviction owing to its inefficacy, and the other repelling us but invading us by the force of its vital efficacy, we try, bewildered, to fight back by seeking the truth of this puzzle.

Indeed, first, the truth descends upon us that neither of these sets of behavior put to our service as living, self-determined agents really represents our “innermost self.” “We” are identical with neither. Neither can claim to exclusively represent our genuinely own, “authentic” self. As one stands for the efforts of the agent to

elaborate a scheme for the expansion of his personality, the other stands for the brute forces of Nature, which endows us as with our primal resources for survival. In addition, a *metaphysical* recognition strikes us. In discarding the claims of these two paths to be our authentic self, we still do not apprehend what our “authentic self” is; neither pattern of behavior reveals it, and with the adoption of neither does it perish or loses its force. The question then arises: just what are these versions of our self as an agent’s equipage, each of which plays its respective crucial role in our progress, other than patterns through the establishment of which, we have means for achieving balance or equipoise between our initial natural forces and virtualities, enabling us to forge our way and the flow of the shifting tides in the elemental ground from which we proceed as distinct beings, the universal instability ever lurking in life’s cracks and opening us towards other human beings. Our assumed moral “perfection” was but a self-protective wall. Instead of expanding our selves into the great scheme of Creation, instead of reverentially feeling ourselves to be a part of it, the pattern of assumed perfection was setting us in the forefront and rejecting prior existence. In short, we discover that our conviction of our own virtue sclerosed our heart, which, centered upon itself, was ready to call for an exchange of hearts but remained incapable of abandoning itself without reservations and conditions. We must consider that our separatist perfection had to break down and vanish to leave space for a spiritual mission to be assumed within the world. The thread of our destiny is to be picked up again along this line.

Our being, which relied on false securities, all ingrown as it was in their fabrics while pursuing its life-and-world-expansion, now stands bare, these fabrics being dissolved. The freeing of our being from these false fabrics of life means a crucial turn in our quest after an “authentic self”: and yet, as we have emphasized above, we are embodied beings, which means that in order to exist our being has to partake of all the processes in Nature’s course. Thus we have to take up again the complete apparatus, whose false claims we have renounced but whose operations remain indispensable.

We now rework all the scattered elements of our being into a new scheme. We reestablish our natural place within the world. However, this time we do so upon different assumptions. We no longer build upon a tacit, naive security presumably guaranteed by blind nature, but we throw our efforts into abandonment to the aims and path that our spiritual mission within the world indicates. We invest our confidence in that mission; from that starting point we reestablish our lost familiarity with nature and our human relations. The human commitments that broke down when they rested on the ordinary interests of life are restored by us for the sake of this election.

ii. We conclude by reflecting that both patterns, the basic vital pattern and the basic moral pattern were but frameworks for the balance to be maintained among the various forces forged in their respective contexts for the most appropriate and highest projects keeping us afloat amid the tides of Nature. Upon their destruction, we find them both to have been screens of false security thrown over our pulsating being. Indeed, the basic vital pattern lulled us into a peaceful and comfortable slumber within nature’s womb, in our natural belief in our safe, lasting, and unlimited

progress, one so well engraved in us that we did not even realize we were taking the future for granted.

And then the basic moral pattern made us feel seated in a fortress against all world struggle, a fortress so equipped that it was our conviction that it could not be taken, that the arms of its enemies would break on its walls and our own would be ever victorious, keeping our majestic flag flying high.

We now know that these claims were equally false. But on unmasking their false claims, we simultaneously discover their metaphysical functions.

We cannot reestablish the equipoise we require other than with a clear awareness of its relativity. But even then, where shall we find a guideline for its establishment? How might our spiritual mission offer us concrete points of reference or indications? What can we work with in order to construct it anew? From our previous considerations, it is clear that we cannot work with the raw material of the survival instinct, whose bestial animality revolts us. And even if we do not trust its absolute validity, we have to gamble with what our shattered moral pattern offers us. In our need for equipoise we throw out a provisory pattern for as long as it may serve, and we reinvest our resources in it for as long as it will last. Our only point reference—our vector in this progressive work—is our belief in our spiritual mission within the world. Does it give definitive direction? In any case, it is all we are left with. We assess the progress that we have hitherto made, however provisional our path. We have to pursue our quest to the very end. Having lost confidence in these schemes of life and nature, we have not yet found FAITH.

The whole edifice having been shaken and its foundations shattered, it cannot fail to collapse altogether.

8. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE INWARD SACRED

a. "HUMILITY" AND "EXPIATION"

Even as brute impulses, instinctive drives, and crude reactions, blind to any evaluation, invade us, there comes through the cracks of our dissolving moral pattern and from within the course of our decoding of the past, a new light shed upon ourselves. As we have hinted before, past instances of our actions, attitudes, feelings being unrolled now through our system in their factual nature, as recorded by our integral being, strike within us new chords having a fullness hitherto unknown to us, which experience baffles and captivates our whole attention by its strange force since it as it were brings our complete existence to us in the form of a discovery. We had taken these episodes of life for a dead fact, all appraised, classified, and finished with. They now appeal anew to our judgment and evaluation, our criteria for judgment having undergone evolution in our inward progress. These manifold perspectives on our progress give the returning past a violent vividness that invades our experience and calls for the revision of old appraisals and appreciations. We have already discovered the relative value of the moral dimension within our being and discarded its pretense to represent adequately our inmost "authentic" self. However, together with this line of interrogation there is mixed another that asks, "Were we

really the moral person we thought ourselves to be?" Is the appraisal of our moral conduct not challenged by acts, thoughts, attitudes, intentions, and feelings other than those previously openly acknowledged and which now sneak into the unrolling sequence of the past? Indeed, we are surprised by the unexpected intrusions of these experiential materials, which swarm within and around our previously registered experiences. Their revolting egotism, crudeness, cruelty shake us out of our well-satisfied settlement of our accounts with the past, our assumed perfection. We, who took ourselves for paragons of filial piety, now face inconsiderate and cruel acts committed against our parents revived in our consciousness. We, who exulted in our love and respect for them, revive instances of our blindness to their devotion and self-sacrifice. Simultaneously our belated recognition of the degree of our waywardness is heightened by the discovery of our shameful ingratitude.

But what about the indifferent, cowardly selfishness that lurks now in our conduct towards our devoted friends and neighbors?

Too late for reparation—its time passed before we recognized our omissions. We are now submerged by this recognition of our concrete guilty self, which is released now from its confinement by the breaking of the prism through which our being had been stylized before. Freed from the egotistic perspective of our moral aspirations, our conduct falls naturally within the perspective on other people's lives, as *they* have experienced it.

How can we live with this cancerous guilty past permeating our present experience and drawing fresh juices from it? Burning shame, remorse, regret over the irretrievable loss of occasion to make up for failures, all this gnaws deep down into the very marrow of our bones. The verdict of time makes us pass on ourselves a judgment of condemnation since our acts must remain final, cannot be undone now.

All occasions past revive now within us and we are immersed in compassion, affection, gratitude, commiseration, with our beloved ones' fate now standing sharply at the front of our mind. They appear now within a vision enlarged by a binding human communion in the common misery of contingency—each and every one of us relying in his misery or felicity on the others, each and every one of us holding the key to the secret lock that turned this way or that makes the other's fate unbearable or alleviates it. They revive within us now, we respond with all our chords to their stirring appeal, we throw ourselves unreservedly open to engagement, with our whole, new, sensitive being, and we recoil from the most chilling and mortifying of losses, our lost opportunities.

How to live with this excruciating loss within ourselves? It is a total loss since not only are we ourselves devastated by this urgent new moral sensibility showing us what we should have done, what we should have done and failed to, but also and what is more, how can we now face our higher call, our mission, when our previously assumed perfection, the expected preparation for our destiny, is demystified and our real, concrete weakness, our cowardice, recklessness, in short, our real wretchedness is laid bare? Should we, like Adam at the call of God, feeling unworthy in our true nature, hide away? And yet, this "call" remains now our only foothold in reality.

Realizing now, precisely with respect to this call, that instead of what we before took ourselves to be, we are a base creature altogether unworthy of it, we see that our actual capacities stand in no proportion to our aspirations. Yet we cannot give this call up. No matter what, we have to find a way to redress our past and diminish the distance which now yawns between our call and our being. We cannot deny the past, hide it under the carpet, withdraw ourselves from its return. All we can do is accept it as it unfolds itself in the progress of reflection, rebrushing the lost history in the experience of the present, and so accept it by reworking its misery through the filter of this novel attitude of meekness and submission to the recognition of the truth, as appalling as the truth may be. We may do so constantly measuring the distance that separates our past wretchedness from the intimations and aspirations of our call: this distance diminishes in proportion to our progress in *humility* and *expiation*.

b. THE "CONSECRATION" OF OUR BEING

Should we not identify this review of our past retrieved in the fresh experience of our present reflection with what is usually called "meditation"? This meditation, in which all our functions openly participate, being stirred by some or other retrieved element seeks ultimately to establish a new and polyphonic rhythm in our being at a new level of integration of our functional systems and subsystems. This meditation draws us completely in. It should be emphasized that this integration is being accomplished at a twofold level. Let us repeat that what is in question is not the automatic return of temporarily dislocated organic mechanisms back into the complete organic scheme, as in the case of recovery from a serious illness. Neither, on the other extreme, is it recall, the recollection of the past as retrieved by associative links or the ever present horizon of experience. No, it is not the faded and sclerosed images memory yields us as one of the functions of our cognitive apparatus. Lastly; it is not the simple decoding of the recordings made by our nervous apparatus and the dominant agency of the brain in its past operations.

Let us emphasize again that this reintegration of our functions occurs not only with respect to the organic laws and rules of the whole system of our operations but also with respect to our meditation on our unrolling past experience and our concrete being lurking through it. This meditation, again, is far from reducing itself to a simple examination of our past, seeking there to find the hidden meaning of our life, or our "real self," but is the reworking of this returning past in a new experience. Indeed, this past, having come to the fore with the disarticulation of the functions that anonymously carried it, is in the process of being retrieved, remolded, given the spiritual exigencies developed or induced and with reference to our higher "calling." Thereby our functions proceed into a new integration, are being lifted from their previous level of automatic submission to the slavery of blind Nature to a level at which they are intimately integrated with our inner labor to transcend contingency, that is, Nature itself. At a certain point, sunk in this labor, we are taken aback by the striking observation that we are no longer what we were before.

In fact, we discover ourselves to be our own master no longer. In a mysterious way we seem not to “belong” to ourselves in the same way that we used to. The experience of the presence of our hands, head, legs, and the rest of our “body” is no longer an experience of concrete, uniquely our own possessions that we may engage in actions that will prompt reactions, and through which we may engage ourselves in commitments expressing our attitudes, feelings, and desires towards others at our discretion and will. We discover that of a sudden we are not free to engage our body naturally, spontaneously in commitments to others, naively transmitting our natural attitudes in the whole spectrum between hatred and love. Our spontaneous response solicited in love’s natural course has to be bent since we have to contend now with an inner exigency of our body for a specific spiritual allegiance. Our body in all its spontaneities of feeling, sensing, reacting, impulses, and instincts refuses to act on its own behalf, for its own sake and purpose. It is seemingly no longer oriented towards its own limited aims of preservation and procreation but is “consecrated” to another aim. Our embodied being’s functioning in its spontaneous affectivity as well as reactivity no longer appears to be chained to empirical tasks only. Nor does it find its loyalties divided. Obviously our effort is to retrieve our being from blind bondage to brute Nature and to convert its functional relevance to response and complete commitment to our “call,” to the transnatural destiny that has transformed our being. Our embodied being, what we called our “body” is transformed by this new allegiance that lifts it to a different level, becoming thus so different that it as if it were born again.

We have now to contend with our transformed body, transported into a new dimension; it cannot be used any more as an instrument enacting our natural attitudes; its adhesion with reference to our spiritual task at hand has to be obtained in order that its natural spontaneity may be conjured into action. Is this development not the foundational meaning of what is called “purity” and “asceticism”?

Ultimately we come to understand that this new being of ours emerging as though from a “second birth” does not “belong” to our narrow ego limits, it does not obey our personal ego-agent. This new being of ours, and we ourselves through it, is “consecrated” to our call, for our destiny.

9. THE UNIQUE WITNESS: THE FULFILLMENT OF THE ACT OF TRANSCENDENCE WITHIN THE UNIQUELY PERSONAL SELF

St. Teresa of Avila tells us that in “the prayer of union” the soul can only love, that it knows not how, nor whom it loves, nor what it desires! And yet in spite of the fact that this union in the act of transcendence is without words and is beyond conceptual structuring and social or ethical values, beyond any form and infrasideal constitution that would essentially reflect our personality down to its emotive nuances, the act of union is not an absorption in an anonymous cosmic stream or uniform sphere.

Here is a frontier that it is impossible to draw sharply. On the one side, the human individual surpasses the anonymity of nature in the development of his personality—which was meant to be the answer to the quest for the meaning of life and which is formed, molded in a long process of self-labor based on one's own choices, one's genesis, with reference to those values for which one develops a particular sensitivity from among the many that present themselves for consent or repulsion in the heritage of generations and thus all along partaking of a selected and unique way in the transformative progress of man, in all the ramifications, the inherited data, and the given elements of the circumambient lifeworld.

Thus on this side the personality there is a unique specification of the individual among the herd, his uniquely human formation of selfhood and participation in the world of men.

On the other side of this frontier, the transcending act leaves all forms, structures behind; it absconds from the interworldly intentions, relations, emotions. Does, then, this most intimate act surging at the end of long, most intimately personal labor cut away from the very mold in which it surged? Does it cut any relation it has as an umbilical cord is cut? If so, does it not then become an anonymous dissolution?

Nothing less than the role of a specific personality would finish with the opening of the spontaneous act of union in which the Divine flows through our being; here personality steps aside and yields to an "impersonal" neutral existence. If that were so, then in the union with the Divine, the inhaling of the Divine breath, the most complete of our acts, that which brings our whole being to fulfillment, giving meaning to our concrete life and our yearnings, we would lose our self and see it scattered in instantaneous fleetingness in a holocaust that lasts for Eternity and our own unique Eternity would be one and the same for all. The Divine would remain irresponsive and passive, to be participated in without any difference of mode as in the practice of Zen, all occultism, and other cosmic rites.

How then does the cosmic transcending act occur?—when we accomplish the labor building towards the third movement of the soul. Then totally disabused by our finiteness, abandoned to ourselves and lost in our quest for the meaning of it all, we discover within us an appearance, a sudden presence. We discover that our abandonment was only from a limited, incomplete ungraspable project that never could have given us any answer. We now find ourselves in the purest sincerity of our heart in the presence of a Unique Witness, who has followed all from the Time of Times, who has grasped all, who understands all in this instant of our unique communion.

We enter this communion in the open, brought into this presence at once out of the unity of our history as it has unfolded through our most personal life even though we at this point in our history appear to be despoiled of all the uncertain, contradictory, dubious, world-oriented, life-directed, egocentric aspects that our personality has lent to our acts, pursuits, deliberations, quality of thought, reflections, and sensations. Here we stand uniquely ourselves, since only we could have journeyed through life this way, down this particular carnal, emotionally shaped path. Only we could have striven, loved, fought, and renounced in just this way. Yet here we stand, totally despoiled of all these like a musical score envisaged by the composer

freed and purified of all false notes and excesses, of even the most minute insufficiencies in shading and in the most perfect executions. Despite all that, in the act of union, the Unique Witness is there. He is life's terminus and form, the recipient and giver of the eternal act. Here is no passive anonymous cosmic force. Here we feel Him feeling with ourselves in all our beings present, past, and future in a total exposure of our ultimate self, who struggled and failed, who willed but was too weak, who presumed too much and went astray, who recognizes now at last that we did not to know our way. We feel that we are now before the witness of all, Who knows all we are lacking, all that we so desperately long for, but lack, Who will let us at last surrender our longing heart without fear, constraint, and limit, *as we are*. Whatever in the incompleteness and haphazardness of human communication has survived, though always truncated, impenetrable, and misunderstood, necessarily fragmentary, and altogether opaque so that it was merely in sidewise glimpses surrounded by darkness that we could have contact with another self, here we can communicate transparently our whole being with no fragment hidden, with no truth suppressed in a holocaust of total nakedness. And neither does our spontaneity and longing for love meet with the hurt of partial commitments, held back feelings, apprehensions, and prudent distances. The Unique Witness does not withhold anything, does not doubt, question, hold in reserve, hide, limit, or impose. He is present without reserve. Even in communication in the secret mystery in which Mary and Elizabeth lifted their souls above the contingent, they did not share a single fragment of the reality of the soul, and thus shared a secret mystery but not transparent truth. Indeed, the truth can be revealed only with the uncovering of its entire field since each of its elements partakes of all the others. Without each of the nets of our personal truth being stitched together for the revelation of the Witness in a totally transparent encounter, all human communication in the sacred remains fragmentary, the appearance of a spark within a world remaining in darkness, instantaneous and limited, a mystery waiting to be revealed in its truth.

And yet we can enter into a unique ultimate union, one so "personal" that every last person would in ordinary communication withdraw, one so specifically ours that through the prism of our personality so complex and palpitating one can never master it, a union in which we are so authentically ourselves that our hitherto presented personality is but a screen hiding the specific, pure quality of our unrepeatable modality.

The Unique Witness penetrates through the maze of our personal sphere reaching this pure quality of our self in its core and by His solicitude He fulfills our specific longing and desire. He surges within our inmost intimate sphere, wherein we emerge freed from all contingency in an absolute purity that is the union's necessary cognitive completion. He participates in our long search, in our seeking light and direction, in a plight that is so uniquely ours that we could have never revealed it to any living creature since no other could have known all and seen through all more clearly than we ourselves were able to know and see, who had journeyed in the dark. He responds through participation in all our dimensions, lending a supra-rational transparency to our becoming towards a telos that He alone seems to know, and responds with tenderness to our singular modes of longing for the lasting,

infinite, absolute. He responds in all the nuances of our life—with higher aspirations and progress toward the Eternal being the ever-recurring motif and the focus of the ever-returning strife extending through all our involvements in the aesthetic, moral, intellectual realms without cease, and in the nuanced response in each of these realms that makes us ourselves, different from everyone else, unrepeatable. He partakes in a complete fusion in all the ungraspable, unnamable, unsharable movements we make, in particular in every timid, half-knowing and yet most ardently cherished nuance of the sacred we establish within our soul. He reviews within us in retrospect the whole journey we often blush and stumble to reveal, yet now He absolves all in view of the faithful struggle. He purifies all, He makes all transparent lifting to the light of lights all we truly meant when we spurned direction, when we made cheap the grace given us, when with obstinacy we trusted our own wisdom and fanatically defended our will, yes, when we went astray but in the depths of our heart meant well, embracing the great cause but dimly seen.

It is in His sudden revelation of the unique specificity of our destiny that the Unique Witness matters for us. We find that a transparent thread runs through all the maze of the journey that we are entered upon, the total fusion of our being with Him. We meet the Unique Witness of our way, which is such and no other, non-exchangeable, unsharable and which prompted the transcending experience of our encounter with Him where He could be met by us and we could be received in just that way tailored to our measure. (That is what faith teaches, that God loves each of us in particular, in a singular incomparable way, as He loves no one else!) In the bursting forth of our destiny we sustain the personality that helped to forge it, and in the purity of spirit, we yet remain singularly unique.

10. GOD IS PRESENT TO US WHEN WE ARE NOT PRESENT TO OURSELVES

We discover then that our own being has been ever escaping us. Was it such or other? All our searching to find out what our real talents, tendencies, wishes were, what were our sins and our virtues, what were our real intentions, has again and again escaped us. We mostly imagined what we believed on this account. Maybe we were never positively such or otherwise? Who were we truly? Did we ever appear in our essence to ourselves? Or even at all? We believed we “knew” ourselves. What a vain attempt to try. We stop short always at some trivial tendencies in our reactions or patterns of outward behavior. We are never present to ourselves. The Unique Witness is. His advent in the soul has put all in perspective. In Him we see in our poor distracted, fragmented being some consistency of purpose and effort, in Him we see our failings and our victories, whatever we were after. In Him we find the unity of our being. Dispersed, fragmented, haphazard in our contingent being, we are never present to ourselves, but God is.

And when our existence, the security of our physical functioning, psychic stability, nervous control, emotional tenor are challenged by radical and impossible to master physical suffering, we will enter on the road leading from human

abandonment to Golgotha, meeting Christ at every step of our innermost personal passion. We meet Christ only, reviving the steps of His passion. This Passion consummates the finiteness of all men in self-sacrifice, redeems them out of the abyss of nothingness, triviality, and the futility of blind contingency.

While the three movements of the soul constitute the first stage of man's breaking through the opacity of his pluridimensional being and embracing a transcending mission, the soul once launched and established in her course enters the second stage of transcendence. The consummation of contingency releases in her modes of transcendent elevation in prayer and meditation. Already, the discovery of Christ in suffering was simultaneous with meditation. The identification with His way of redeeming the finiteness of mankind plunges the soul into an infinite stream of prayer. Our innermost being moves to transcend distraction seen as such through the establishment of the Sacred within us.

The three movements guide the soul towards the radical espousal of man's finiteness and his immanent call to transcend it. There it is that from the innermost workings of the soul Christ emerges as the portent of the Sacred in man. Christ in His agony wed the contingency of human being, the infinite suffering of creatures, in a supreme effort, superhuman, truly divine, to take it to Himself through all the dimensions of His being, to live it through all the phases of human distress and abandonment, to penetrate to the mute distress of our animal cells in His passion. How else can we redeem our contingency, which wretchedness we fully realize only after our inward self becomes transparent to the Absolute plenitude of the spirit in transcendence, than by His living through and through the final injustice, selfishness, cruelty, and recklessness of the world of man as well as the radical abandonment of the crucial moment of Christ's condemnation? Can we avoid carrying all alone the burden of the limitation of the human heart down a deserted path, having no human being near capable of sharing this ultimate loneliness. We may elicit some pity or compassion, but we will not find companionship. And how could we ever fulfill the consummation of our finiteness and be swept up in a transcendent elan other than by living out that consummation in the terror of our whole bodily being, without our knowing our abysmally dull animal anguish for life and our being's revolt against this radical abandonment? Then we are capable of rising in our last breath to the only path that opens forgiveness and unlimited faith in the Divine wisdom.

In short, how could we at once embrace and surmount the finiteness within our human heart other than by repeating the path of Christ from the judgment seat, up Golgotha, and to the Cross?

The anger with the traffickers in the temple courtyard, the tender affection felt towards his mother, the disciples, Mary and Martha, the moment of supreme sorrow on Mount Olivet, the humiliation endured before Pontius Pilate, the temptations of the Devil, the searing suffering on the cross, one must consider this a fragmentary inventory of Christ's passion. Would this when completed by the suffering of living from day to day, comprise the links making the chain of our human passion? And is it actually this chain of suffering that will pull man out of his cave into the light? Certainly to lift the human condition from its narrow framework towards its higher destination, Christ had to be of this condition Himself. Since it is made of

limitations and perpetual suffering, this could not have been done otherwise in His encountering them than through His making Himself a complete holocaust. And yet is that enough? By even His thoroughgoing way of embracing His congenital human misery could Christ have thrown a bridge between the narrow and the limitless, a bridge upon which we can engage in the struggle for transcendence?

And yet Christ's holocaust that we live from our innermost self is not merely an inward pattern of redemption virtually foreseen for man at Creation! Christ, Whom we find over and over again within ourselves throughout the centuries, must have marked for us this outline of inner discovery. Since our reality in its very sense depends on its full complement for existence and since the complete sense of all is rooted in the fact of our real existence, it is owing to this very nature of contingent existence that the problem of the Sacred emerges at all, for existence in the cave of matter, of real existence is the touchstone and the foothold of validity. Christ had to be a fully incarnate being in order to become the portent of the inward Sacred in man.

P A R S X

THE TRANSNATURAL DESTINY OF THE SOUL

1. THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Creation, design, the Creator's intentions, initial dispositions and regulation, individual tendencies installed by coming into existence, the role of grace in inclining without compelling, these indicate and create appetite for creative intentions, and yet does not the great game of creation imply that there is a part for the inventive? Creative freedom on the part of the creature? Contrary to Leibniz and to the voluntarist at the same time, creation has considerable margin for choices to be made in the game since the concrete can never be grasped adequately by universal schemes. Might it work out that our course overflows any scheme and even go in a different direction? The configuration of the context of human life might concur in this, so that it belongs to the great game of creation that the Creator assured for Himself surprise in the details, in marginal and yet sometimes essential factors.

The prayer of the soul: Thy will be done? But also may my true contribution, my personal judgment and option be realized? Is this not so in order that I might truly take part in the game Thou hast devised, and that Thou, Divine Master, mayest have with me a relationship surpassing that of a puppeteer with a marionette? Hast Thou all regulated and foreseen beyond the initial elements Thou gavest? Am I not as it were an artist? I become an artist myself and contribute to the great design by my own inventions.

2. THE SCHEME OF CREATION AND THE WEB OF THE DESTINIES OF SOULS

It is already a thread of our destiny to be unfolded to be the children of our own parents with their characters and paths of ultimate commitment. It is not so much their characters, emotional systems, their views, way of life, hierarchy of values, moral judgment or even life ideals but underlying all these and pervading them in an ungraspable, undifferentiated way, the ultimate concern of their very being that is key; we sense that in our parents, and we retain it, preserve it intact throughout life no matter what else of their thoughts, ideas, precepts, and notions may otherwise be forgotten.

One wonders whether it is not through this ineffable sap that we are infused with our destiny as we branch off from the tree of generations into our individual existence. This ultimate commitment that we live by, could we possibly hide, abolish, neutralize it, withhold it from the sucking mouths of our children? Thus do children receive the weight of our heaviest burden, this poison of our veins that keeps them awake, keeps them from falling into the sleep of nature.

They might judge this ultimate concern to be too heavy and revolt and reject it! It might dry up or just barely survive if received in a dull being. But infused

into vigorous pulp, it might be the animator of dormant forces and be carried as a torch by spirited fighters who pass on the cause from generation to generation. In wearing our personal destinies, we add our own fabric to the tight web in which the destinies of generations branching from a common trunk are reciprocally intertwined.

And is it not also formative for our destiny to have such and no other children? Will they receive the unutterable message? Will they blazon it as their own and so convey our own tonality and elevate our destiny in theirs? Or will they blindly revolt against the vocation we would pass on to them and cut themselves from the trunk, leaving it mutilated and barren? Cut the thread? But the scheme of destinies forming intentions in them stretches throughout our existence over all the guideposts, signs, signals that we have recognized and received, given and imparted by great masters, exceptional teachers, unique friends who have helped us on our way, something above and beyond the guidance of merely external road signs. For does not the current of our ebbing spirit intensify in a receptive encounter with a sensitive being? Does not the spirit grow, expand, discover new directions and forms in the springtime brought in by a new congenial force? Does it not then belong to the destiny of a teacher to find such disciples? They spin the same web.

Our contingent life is immersed in the ties of deepest affection between us and those whom we love, from which contact we draw yet more strength and confidence in life when it falters. Our life is part of theirs, and theirs of ours. When they end their earthly course, should we feel abandoned forever? Do these ties atrophy like dead branches on a mutilated tree? Or do we continue to live within the same life order, they living in us and with us ever, sinking their roots into our existence; our own unfolding of destiny enhances their role in it, which acquires new and more profound meaning. They might have vanished from contingent life, but we continue together with them, forging our destinies, one through the other, within the same scheme. What else would the Communion of Saints refer to?

3. TO DISCOVER THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL WE
HAVE TO ABANDON ALL HOPE! COROLLARY
TO THE SECOND SERMON OF TIMOTHY

But what about Hope? We struggle, we inquire, alert to the tiniest fragment, to each nuance, to the slightest glimmer of the Possible, we throw ourselves into every corner, opening closed doors, splitting every crack and prying with our indomitable eye, but we are thrown back upon our thirst. Nothing lies behind the most secret door. The most luminous sparkling eyes hide a dull mind, the most tender of caresses leads to deceit, and apparently inspiring words have but one layer of meaning. Our ardor rebounds on us like a ball thrown against a brick wall. We may not hope for happiness, love, beauty, contentment, and fulfillment since all these belong to a contingent framework that falls short of any accomplishment. They are vain ideals. But desperate for a sign, a secret message, devoured by fresh hope, we just will find

it here or there, but then we will be thrown back on ourselves. Our hope is disappointed everywhere. The greatest love, the deepest devotion, the purest admiration is shattered or evades our grasp.

We had started from the highest point, which we thought most clear, certain, and true, and yet it seems we called upon the wrong being, at the wrong instant, in a wrong cause.

Is this then hope for the Impossible? Is there nothing but our own thirst, our own wounds for us to return to again and again with fresh blood flowing from them? Is there no other food for our devouring hunger but this suffering, which fills our heart to the brim. Is this the only milk to suck and the only concrete catch our quest makes?

Oh my miserable soul, be quiet from time to time and seek within yourself, and then you may find a hint, a trace of the unnamable and not found. I do not know how, but once embarked on the search for your destiny you might find among the desolations into which your quest will throw you a soft, gentle, almost imperceptible touch—if you only listen well within yourself—a touch that will console, put you at peace. And hope will surge that all this seeking, this struggle for life might find a good end. How could we know what turn our destiny will take, how our soul will unwind its folds, what wings it will open, what turn it will take? And yet, we may hope with this ultimate ardor of quiet hope that no matter what alarms, hurricanes, defeats will break us, tear us to pieces, destroy all we build, and drown all we want to salvage, our destiny will not lose its ways, will work its own way, so that at the end it will accomplish its aim.

So hope beyond all hope.

Let time do all in its ravages, let it carry away all illusions, all expectations, let it cut short all attachments and all bounds, let it divide and put asunder the closest links running through our very heart, let it destroy youth, beauty, health, and life itself. Death, fearful, incomprehensible, menacing, annihilating doom, is not a doom any more, no fear, no menace, no finish. It is a destination, the harvest, and the final touch. It is the transit station of HOPE.

4. H A P P I N E S S

But how will we come to embark upon our destiny? Will this be a radical jump, a violent turn of tide that submerges all?

Is it a jump for a silkworm to come forth from a chrysalis? It is true that our soul on embarking upon this new tide does not leave anything, does not cut any tie, does not destroy the order of life in which it is embedded, and yet it rises upon its own wings unfolded, almost free. Indeed, we are no longer slave to our emotions, our desires, and willfulness. The *mal de vivre*, the suffering of life seems to have lost its imperious hold on us. We are not plunged any longer into the pit of misery, disappointment, and despair for each trivial cause as once we were. Our emotions, the failures, disappointments, and deceptions they come up against, no longer submerge us.

5. THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL: THE UNIQUE DESIGN,
THE GREAT GAME OF DIVINE CREATION, AND
PERSONAL FREEDOM

Thy will be done, yet lend me a favorable ear for my own personal choice!

If we follow the lines taken by specific souls, if we consider the inner labor, struggle, and the victories achieved over obstacles by intentions and aspirations streaming from within, the very continuity of the struggle and of the progress, then the most intimate links and substantive flow running through this unfolding of destiny seem to make it obvious that all was not altogether haphazardly unfolding and even had such and no other outcome. Yes, just possibly and at random, a hero could have been a saint, a great mind could have been a statesman, especially, if we see that in the realm of the mind, great scholars or thinkers have shown from the earliest age universal capacities and talents. But nevertheless, following the inward progress of personal life, we discern cases where a true vocation went together with an inward destiny. We see clearly that there likely was at the very outset a germ, a sign, a hint present of the destiny to be unfolded. All the same, very often the universal endowments that carry us through our individual human development cannot possibly be separated altogether from that development's inward process. It cannot be identified with it either, however. We may be inclined to believe that the same person could have been as good a painter as he is a poet. We may note that starting with Hesiod and going through to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, philosophers, thinkers, were, in fact, poets. And poets like Cocteau, painters, etc., have been major thinkers. But we will still be inclined to think that it was inscribed within the very being of Teresa of Avila to become a spirit of the highest religious elevation, that her inner labor had from the start been grounded in such a way that it led to the reforming heroism of one standing over and against the lax ways of her time and her radiating a new vision. As historians paint it, Alexander the Great was from his earliest childhood forging the substance of a world organizer with penetrating insight and wide vision.

Examples could be extended infinitely. Should we then, with Leibniz, embrace the view that this would all be in accord with the omnipotence and omniscience of the Ultimate Creator, which design by the very force of postulation emerges from a haphazardly organized empirical reality seeking a final and ultimate reason? But given that the world and man chose from among an infinite number of possible models and in accord with the best possible criteria of excellence for individuals as they enter into the most excellent harmony of the whole, this destiny should have been considered in all details and in all its possible developments. Yet the basic fact about all creation, the world, and man is that all and each is dynamic and it is through dynamic development that all and each should prove their excellence. At no point can we really stop the endless process of change within which we are caught so that we might evaluate it using static values. To the contrary, the nature, the enigma, the wonder of creation is that in every realm, physical, moral, transnatural, there is the paradox of the play of forces and an endless measuring of strength, valor, values, etc., as in the myth of Ahriman and

Ormazd, day and night, light and darkness vying for stakes that are never to be definitely fixed, because they lose their power and values as long as the struggle for life and death last, because their emotive force vanishes once one of the protagonists accomplishes the victory, because each victory in the final account of the passing of time does not amount to more than a loss. Indeed, the great enigma of life, of nature, of the world lies in this tremendous game of the whole of creation, which far from being so beautifully arranged into a creative harmony that could and should be viewed by the Omniscient Artist at a glance, as Leibniz would have it, is to the contrary like a volcanic eruption, which prepared in the infinitely minute processes of nature, spends its own specific force and forms its flow while it is occurring.

If we are tempted to believe, then, that the great scheme of creation has not only foreinstalled but also foreseen all the dynamic eruptions of the universe, we would truly deprive the Greatest of Artists possible a marvelous artistic, creative project by making it all known by Him from the start, and thus allowing it no surprise, no novelty, no originality, no excitement of its own. Such a created order would be, in fact, a lower achievement than the work of a great human artist, who starting with a project with a composition or a face in mind, can never be sure that the actual work will not far surpass that initial vision, carried on wings of imagination, inspiration, hazard being inherent in the production. Is it not that anxiety to follow the lines first laid down for a great work while not knowing the reality of the accomplished work that sustains the artist's endeavor and also allows also his superior satisfaction? An artist is never, in fact, at the same level in his capacities as that of his final production. This is the enigma of artistic creation, that it allows artists to go beyond themselves. Should we then in such an infinitely superior creative endeavor as that of the universe assume not only that all the lines, factors, means and regulations are laid down but also that the whole outcome is already predetermined? Should we think that the Great Artist deprives Himself of the truly artistic, specifically creative aspect of creation, that which differentiates it from mere production, namely, that creation may in its results go beyond the stiff outlines and rigid, well-defined, and determinable elements? All who have truly educated a child know that it is an artistic, creative endeavor surpassing by far the work of the artist who works in marble, on a canvas or on a sheet of paper with pigments.

Each work of the plastic arts is fixed once and forever in its forms and qualities. The passing of time does not improve or corroborate its nature. The richest and most intense painting does not develop further from within. Its richness consists only in its evocative powers, while in itself it remains inert and passive. In contrast, all the most intimate molding which we may accomplish in the sensibility of a human being, all the formation of his lines of thought, of his articulation of mind, of his exercise of will, and of all the directions towards which his will and his desires might be positively linked that we stimulate into opening, all the bents towards such and no other tendencies for evaluating, for cherishing, for interest that we might make unfold, that is, all the basic lines that we may lay down, these are infinitely surpassed by the richness, the variety, the intensity of the development that our living work

of art then unfolds from within—by his own creative spontaneity. Each talented disciple surpasses the master. That is the great wonder, the perpetual unexpected gift of life, the mystery that gives it its interest and charm.

Could we then assume, to take the narrow view, first given divine omniscience and second creation *ex nihilo*, the first and the truest of creations proposed to us, that our whole life career would have to be already outlined, and that philosophers would then have a hard nut to crack in attempting to figure out how the individual freedom of man could be reconciled with the omniscience of God? Should we assume that all is already preestablished and that what remains of freedom for us is deliberation between the concrete alternatives and following our higher inclinations enacting the superior alternative? Or, should we, on the contrary, adopt the voluntarist view, which dismisses altogether the greatness and splendor of the creative project attributing it to the unpredictable, irrational, spontaneous, whimsical actions of the Creator's will?

It seems, however, that starting from fundamental intuitions, first of the nature of the created universe of man as a dynamic superb and infinitely rich game, and then following the inner labor of the soul, we will come near to concluding that the ideas of the Great Artist and of the Great Game of Creation, instead of blurring, clarify the part in the game that we human beings are called upon to play.

In fact, if the universe with its infinite arrays of contingency is the actual milieu of the self-creative work of the human soul, if the vicissitudes of life, the passing of time that devours but also opens virtualities, that destroys and carries everything away but also throws up new occasions, new materials, is the woof and warf of the soul's labor, there would hardly be any truly responsible, authentic, truly specific personal work of the soul if all its choices, bents, evaluations, and roads to take were predelineated. The whole game of creation, of contingent limitations to be overcome by a transnatural destiny, of redemption from rapacious nature through a heroic continuous effort of transnatural elevation of the spirit, these would fall flat, to the level of a marionette theatre, if the individual soul has not an intimately personal contribution to make to the great game. There can be no question that a great design lays down the foundations, establishes the initial scheme, and that we are "chosen"! And yet, within our strict rules concerning our minute everyday acts, rules of social morality, the infinitely intricate system of rules possibly leading towards a mastery of ourselves conducive to this inner labor of the soul, and within the infinitely complex natural setup of elements to be mastered judiciously to forward the formation of such and no other personality, with the first step of our own productive activity, of our own taking responsibility for ourselves, amid the struggle and strife among our natural inclinations, talents, tendencies, etc., each of our deliberations and each of their outcomes pertaining to, influencing, conducive in some or other nuance to going down one of a thousand lanes, like numerous rills streaming towards one river, all these little infinitely intricate decisions taken half awake, half asleep, follow a laid down mechanism, and yet the great decision, that which lifts our spirit above is left to ourselves alone.

There is no doubt we are the constant beneficiaries of a most intimate comfort that streams into our inward river from nowhere, a comfort that none of the little

satisfactions, joys, or moments of encouragement or of contentment accounts for. And yet, we do not often follow the hints that this comfort may convey. There, in fact, is where our choice lies. Some souls will partake little of the inner consolation coming from nowhere. Others will recurrently, even high constantly bathe in it. And yet if our initially laid down frame and this frequent or constant inner consolation lifting us above the dissipation of current concerns and transactions constitute the established pattern and flux of the spirit in the dynamic creative design, which means that we are chosen for a higher destiny, we are chosen only virtually. We have as many constantly offered opportunities to repudiate that destiny as to follow it up. And just in what sense is there a question of “rejecting” or “accepting”? What precisely is there to be rejected or accepted? Nothing is precisely given, nothing is, in fact, proposed. God never speaks directly to the soul!

If we should respond to this comfort, this call, we would engage in an endless and often desolate quest, a search after what we know not what. The soul might naturally have recourse to her virtual potentialities, which are rooted as much in her natural physico-psychic endowment as in her spiritual gifts, but there is no foothold that she will find in herself beyond all they might suggest, each instance of which may through trial and error be disproved, no point of reference out there that she will find revelatory, clear, and neat. Like the artist, who is surrounded by the universe of colors, shapes, music, poetry, emotions and who has at his disposal a framework of talent and apprenticeship and who bears within himself the longing to create a great work, the soul in her great work has to work from within herself. She will proceed by conducting an infinite series of sketchy searches, using all there is, but each of these will be a shadow, a fragmentary and elusive exercise, standing like a dead, inert screen between her and the object of her quest; none will answer, all are deaf and mute. But it is from this endless mole-like laboring in life's subterranean corridor that at an instant in time she will come out into the light. From within is found the clue to the masterpiece. It is only then that we have the work that the soul would have chosen to make, but to choose it she had to invent it all by herself.

The destiny of the soul, assuming that we are chosen or called, is imminently a personal authentic creation. The outcome could have been otherwise. There is a strife of inward forces, there is the heroic effort of will to overcome day by day, hour by hour, the stagnation of obedience to nature, the constant victory to gain over the suffering of life, there is the inward spontaneous, indomitable call of an artist for a masterpiece. . . . Could the Great Artist in laying down the rules and purposes of His creative game have proposed a higher and more beautiful way to play out the great lines of contingency and eternity, of fall and redemption, of good and evil, of spirit and matter? If all the forces of nature are sooner or later called upon by the universal advance to play their role, nothing having been devised uselessly, is there a more efficient way to wring out from the human being all his resources, exploiting all his forces, to stretch them to the full?

What an infinitely rich, varied unexpected, by any measure, unpredictable history, and by any standard what an incomparable harvest is that of the Game of Creation at the end of times!

6. THE BEING OF MAN ENVISAGED IN A TRIPARTITE SCHEME: CONSCIOUSNESS, SOUL, AND BODY

Considering Leibniz's cosmological system, we see that his major concern was to give a metaphysical explanation of the crucial religious concepts by which the creedal statements of the Christian faith relating to man's embodiment are to be grasped: the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the resurrection of the body at the last judgment, the Church as the mystical body of Christ. We will see that his apprehensions of the monad, of the world, and of the universal harmony of Creation were geared to yielding such a philosophical notion of the human body that would allow for a rational account of these mysteries of faith. However, Leibniz falls short in his proposal. His approach was biased at the start in that the nature of the religious discourse itself was so distorted that the proposal could not have been satisfactorily accomplished. For since he assumes from the start the sovereignty of reason over all human functioning, Leibniz conceives even religious discourse as being essentially rational. It is enough to recall his hope that the rationale of Christianity could be laid bare as one among other sectors of the "universal science of characters" in such a way that missionaries would not need any other means by which to convince peoples of its validity than this exposition. Inasmuch as he fails, then, to recognize the specificity of the message-content of religious discourse, he has failed to see that the declarations of religious discourse relevant to faith evade the grasp of rational structures and escape the authority of rational reasoning. For the mysteries of faith derive their relevance from man, from man's fundamentally experiential dimensions. Consequently the mysteries spoken of cannot find philosophical explanation in Leibniz's cosmologico-rational conception of the "body."

Our philosophically presuppositionless analysis of man's spiritual development seems to have improved upon Leibniz on this crucial point: in its conception of man as an embodied being.

Firstly, we may call "soul" the overall master-agent, who, through the nervous system, supposedly centered "physically" in the brain, distributes roles, and governs operations in their universal as well as most specific order of advance. The soul not only maintains organic life and regulates its growth but also prompts, regulates the origin and unfolding of its manifestations at all the levels of man's distinctive perduring, and while projecting a route, it records it in sequences for the sake of the person's stability.

Secondly, we may profitably call "soul" the entire complex of man's experience, extending from subliminal strivings through the formation of the consistent processes of the passions—in contradistinction to the instantaneity of the acts of constitutive consciousness.

Thirdly, we may call "soul" the current of the inner labor that draws upon all the preceding work, and upon that constitutive consciousness as well, while going in a radically distinct direction. This current of inner labor appears distinct even at its origin, it being obviously prompted by a unique type of spontaneity, one proceeding

from our yearning for liberation from the automatism of nature, for the sake of which labor the whole functional system of man seems ultimately to be devised for and subordinated to in the unfolding of specific self-projecting aims.

A question arises then. If, as we have described elsewhere, these remaining configurations of our operative functioning within the system that serve life's purposes through objectifying, constitutive cognition make up "consciousness," what remains that we could still call "body"?

As we have indicated elsewhere, in constitutive cognition the "physical body" appears, first as a set of various instrumental organs in our system, as acts of kineshetic and organic operations, and third as operations serving various functions postulated by the system of experience and which are the ground and source of a living being's initial spontaneities.

Thus the distinction made between the three basic functional configurations we have termed the "soul," "constitutive consciousness" (and for that matter the higher configuration of the "creative function"), and the constituted body appears to be an abstract distinction of thought. The "body" would not be anything without the dynamis that flows into its functional articulation and is generated by it in turn. But would this dynamis be actualized without entering into consciousness? Without serving the lowest degree of articulation activating purposeful, intentional, conscious operations, the body would remain an abstract aggregate of brute mass. But does consciousness in its turn, amount to anything more than abstract ideas and their calculations—like artificial intelligence—without all the lived processes being enacted throughout our complete functional system at its various cross-sections? Could we experience anger, insult, shame, passionate love, and hate other than with our entire being, that is, in our skin, in the swelling of the throat or in its dryness, in unbearable aching of our whole body from which we cannot assume a distance from, withdraw from, or hide from, as long as the experience persists. And is the exuberance of joy and enthusiasm not essentially a vibration of all the functional sectors and operational dimensions of our entire system?

In summary: Does our advance in our transnatural destiny stop with the third movement of the soul initiated by the release of the specific spontaneity of the soul? Once the transcending ascents or "leaps" of "prayer" and "contemplation" are instaured in our interior experience, does our personal self remain arrested at that stage? It may be. And yet we are prompted to go "to the very end." And indeed we advance unknowingly preparing the radical turn. We do not choose, we suffer: first, the breaking of our basic vital pattern, the framework of our vital equipoise; second, the breaking down of our basic moral pattern, that is, the pattern of our moral worldview and conduct. We are progressing towards the unavoidable dissolution of all our life-frame except the spiritual pattern—or our mission—into which we have retreated.

Having crossed, unknowingly, the frontier between the spiritual and the sacred, we are now engaged in the quest for the ACT OF FAITH.

7. THE ACT OF FAITH

*a. THE ACT OF FAITH AND THE INSTAURATION
OF THE INWARD SACRED*

Now, at last, we know where we stand! Our innermost is laid bare. But this time, we cannot again forge a compromise between the demand for the Ultimate Truth and the urge to be lulled asleep in a relative stability achieved through the illusory devices of contingency. Our settling of accounts with contingency will have now to be definite and final.

All our previous securities, all our guarantees appear now as having kept us in a false state of existence. They have also divided among themselves and thus dispersed and diverted the current of our deepest and most essential yearnings and spontaneities. We must grant that it has been filtered and specified through their sieves, but their intensity and force was spent in these schemes. The false security of our bodily-vital-psychic balance, the false guarantees of the force and "right purpose" of our "perfection," together with belief in the absolute validity of their criteria, are now destroyed. We have to undertake the elaboration of new directions for our existence and seek new points to hold on to, but this time our quest after equipoise is terminated. From the Act of Faith into which we now lift ourselves, all flows.

We have to go about the usual business of life, but we now do it in a new and different ways—without the anxiety we formerly had over its success or failure, because its success or failure are no longer our concern. We admit not to having the scale, the criteria, and the sufficient reason to weigh and to judge what in the definitive account failure or success means.

We might now and then lose the thread of our destiny, and yet we do not despair and worry over being lost in the chaos because now we admit to not knowing what ultimately our route is to be made of and we trust that it is a good one.

Our frenetic quest for signs for direction, for the means by which to apply them to our progress, our tenacious struggle with the opaqueness of the contingency of life, to not to miss the right turn, to not to be carried away from our path, finally, the delirious personal will to advance in our search, to not omit any occasion or hint in the workings of destiny and to concentrate on destiny all our efforts, all this no longer dominates us with a most intense power. We are now subdued like the winds of a hurricane after the forces of the storm are all spent and the black clouds vanish before the rays of the sun.

This hurricane of our being is over; its nature-driven energies are spent, its overpowering surge has lost its violence and bite. We have withdrawn our innermost allegiance from our natural willfulness. Our struggle, desire or personal will, our destiny does not belong to us as cells of the complete human scheme in nature's program, nor as partakers of the human world. No, our allegiance is oriented towards the Ultimate.

Suspended upon one single thread, we spin more and more out of it; instead of devising designs and patterns, we weave the thread into all the cells of our life, spontaneously; we use all our natural life resources to serve as a cocoon for the chrysalis and to get a stronger hold for our Ultimate Commitment.

But if we no longer devise and project provisory patterns for this work, what lines does our spontaneity follow?

We need a paradigm. Our humanity is such that at each point of time in which we undertake our work we cannot start it from scratch since we would not get anywhere. The stage of our development that at the very start determines our demands for a compass and for contingent means but also for a vision of our aim, offers also a paradigm and measure of this task by which we may discover and appreciate the whole preceding progress of humanity. We cannot undertake the task at just any point. We have to use to our advantage the work of generations, into whose web we work ourselves. Having once recognized the absolute significance of Jesus' mission to redeem our contingency and having made the analogy between our own struggle and His, we spontaneously refer to Him as the paradigm of our work. In our work of transmuting nature into a consecrated realm, we follow His steps. Retracing them in an analogy, we establish through unraveling our own life and in a never complete reflection all their possible significance. Yet it is always in the third person that we consult Him in His mission—indirectly as a paradigm, whose meaning it is left to us to discover, interpret, and assess erringly. We have not "met Him" personally to receive the fullness of His message. And yet we do not fret, we are in no haste; we dwell in peaceful certainty that we are advancing in an Encounter, an Ultimate Encounter, that cannot fail us, which nothing can detract from, deviate or retard—an Encounter out of time.

*b. THE INSTAURATION OF THE INWARD SACRED
AS THE DEFINITIVE AND FINAL MEASURE OF
EQUIPOISE*

The weaving of our thread of Ultimate commitment goes through all the levels of our, at this point dissolved, framework. It is centered in the present stream of experience but it proceeds through a review of our recorded life experience. However, now our passively acquiescing adhesion to the past's meaningful revival is mixed with a reworking of the story in the light of the Paradigm which leads to a novel taking possession of ourselves at a different level. Indeed, dissatisfied with neutral revision of the past, and having now lost the threads of interpretation with reference to higher finalities, since we discovered them all to be breakable and provisory, we seek to look behind the Ultimate. But we are caught midway: we need precedence and analogies. What better analogy can we establish for the recording of our course with its puzzling series of sufferings, and disasters challenging our power of comprehension and our strivings and which open the enigmatic question of their finality than that of the human course of Christ? We discover these analogies by and by, receiving thereby a deeper intuitive insight into the mission of Christ by lending to it our own experience and so enlighten its meaning, which it lacks in its felt pulp alone, by reference to that experience. This parallel process worked into living itself and running through all the life series, through all its dimensions of past, present, and future, makes its elements stand out in a *completeness*, finally attained, of a new type of experience.

The question occurs, whether, in fact we do not pick out the occasion for the interpretive analogizing. Strangely enough, although we do not clearly see the continuity, since not all the intermediary elements of the sequence come to the full light of awareness, it appears that there is no question here of an arbitrary choice.

On the contrary, it seems that we have to submit ourselves, without exemption to this elemental review of the record: we have to enter old rhythms of life and rework them in a novel rhythmic meter, one acquired by our being as the new rhythmic balance of our whole functioning. This rhythm establishes its control by our measuring intuitively the regularity of our breath, its depth and height and, by the regularity of our heartbeat and by weighing, measuring, and balancing our emotions over against each other and establishing an emotional equipoise in virtue of which their individual violence recedes into the background and our impulsiveness loses its vehemence. We establish thereby the lost "silence" of our being again. Yet this is not the amorphous and mute natural confidence and security of previous stages in life; this new silence is tuned to our new self-awareness. In this new underlying rhythmic polyphony, the running series of the past and the present penetrate each another in a reflective effort that is ever present, like a subterranean stream, doing its work, while our alert inner sense (intuition, spiritual impulses) enters off and on into its current—at an inwardly regulated interval, that our intelligence is not capable to assess—picking up a fragment of experience, which is not isolated but by its very nature and extends through the whole and brings it into a parallel with a corresponding fragment of the human destiny of Christ, the Paradigm, again not as an isolated fragment but as extending throughout His encompassing and complete course and in the perspective of His orientation: the encompassing and assuming of all contingency. Ruminating over this apparently singular segment of experience enters then into a complete process of reinterpretation, and we become receptive to the next experience when the previous has already attained the complete spread of its reverberations within the stream.

Plunged in this slow current, we realize by and by that through our disarray the final arbitrariness of our contingent being reveals itself. Simultaneously, we distill from the troubled waters of the unfolding stream a novel experiential quality emerging that goes counter to the haphazardness of our contingent experience. It is this new quality of experience that constitutes the building blocks of our reconstruction. In the closely balanced rhythm of our "resurrecting" being, we weave into the design of its new functional orchestration these new qualities of experience as a dominant, distributing artery; we weave them in through the pulsations of our blood, through our carefully measured breathing, through the modulations of our instinctive propagative impulses and their own line of progress, through our emotional stimuli of dark passions; keeping them all in the one and same rhythm, we establish this new functional system with our substance.

The present moment is its fruit already. From within our self-enclosed silence we would expect that all external interference cannot reach it, and yet we ourselves at times open our being to the external world. We unwittingly volunteer to participate in the external world process believing that we may keep ourselves at its surface while we pursue our silent retreat.

But we get drawn into the world's stream through our personal experience and commitments which, seemingly are out of our own context. Is it arbitrary, or do we lack consistency? Will not this disruptive adventure throw off our just initiated harmony? Or it may even be they will dissipate it altogether. Would all have to be started all over again then? And might that harmony never be retrieved? These lapses are out of our control, but they prove themselves to be not out of the order: the rhythm of silence returns unexpected and its return marks the degree of progress that was accomplished by these side excursions. In the long run they reveal themselves to be steps in the progress of weaving a new fabric of our being as through the quality of our experience we molded them. They were but the next step of our inner work, like a test proving—by a sort of objective standard—the solidity of what already has been accomplished, the test being in itself a natural segment of the rhythm of the series of experiences.

*c. THE ACT OF FAITH AS ABANDONMENT
TO THE ULTIMATE*

We have tried to describe in detail how through our complete functional system the Act of Faith, as total abandonment to the Ultimate as our unique direction, our unique hold and point of attachment in existence, for both our psycho-biological and our transnatural existence, transfigures our embodied framework and being. That framework is no longer felt to be the vital basis for our struggle for a transnatural destiny, but to be the past work and progress of destiny itself; it appears now as the instrument of destiny, one devised precisely for its progress. Our whole concrete natural system is the mechanism of this progress: will, desire, the vital intensity of our survival drives. But these draw back now from their roles as initiators, engineers, promoters, and judges. It was through embracing those roles that our personal agency carried on the work of destiny; in doing so, the personal agent is itself dissolved. Our frenetic quest, search, and concern for our destiny are stilled. Destiny is no longer in our hands. The work and progress of destiny is abandoned as the ultimate commitment is made. We have nothing to desire, to be feverishly concerned about, to seek frantically—it will come in its proper instant. The urgency of accomplishing one's destiny is replaced by a mute assurance that all will come to its right end. From extreme self-concentration we throw all our attention into one single thrust towards the Ultimate, leaving behind our being as the platform. But we do not leave it behind in contempt. On the contrary, suspended upon this single thread we have transported our complete framework above concern with material survival and have come to vibrate with the tonality of the sacred.

All our intentions are retrieved from their bent towards the immediate purposes of nature and now flow right into our concern for the Ultimate. They have emerged transmuted: anxiety into serene acquiescence; inventiveness and creative urge into submission to higher designs; desire and will into acceptance of the ultimate moral law; impatience with the final accomplishment of our mission into adoration of the ultimate wisdom. . . .

All vicissitudes of existence which come are now welcome. They appear to us as the means of our redeeming struggle. We search to expose their significance seeing in them analogies to the paradigm agon of Christ. Consequently, our practical turn of mind retreats before our contemplation of spiritual analogies and our life deliberation is transformed into meditation on the significance of its elements and the spiritual ramifications of their ties. All impatience and urgency is quieted as our being respire while adoring the Ultimate Wisdom.

Seeing it now in the perspective of the unfathomable designs, our being appears insignificant and perilous. But commitment to the Ultimate alone lifts it into an order that we cannot estimate, envisage, or even guess.

In our material life station, uprooted and dispossessed, we have found in that commitment at last our authentic human inheritance, one absolutely our own, one that no cataclysm can destroy, no change may corrode or soil, no man can take away from us or hinder. We have found the inward sacred.

8. THE INWARD SACRED

... Czego chcesz od nas Panie za Twe hojne dary Czego za dobrodziejstwa którym nie masz miary? Kościół Cie nie obejmie wszędy pełno Ciebie. . . .

Złota też wiem nie pragniesz bo to wszystko Twoje Cokolwiek na tym świecie człowiek mien swoje. Wdzięcznym Cie za tym sercem Panie wyznawamy Bo nad to przystojniejszej ofiary nie mamy.

—Jan Kochanowski

What marvelous gift is water from a spring that we sprinkle over our face in the heat of summer. How ecstatic a rapture we discover in the harmony of field and forest at the sun's setting at end of day. . . , a universe permeated by the fragrance of late summer flower and plants, tuned to the symphony of crickets and the swaying of foliage in the winds. We take in this wondrous gift of the universe and life. Our being dilates beyond the attainable in the exultation of gratitude.

Now our apparatus for reflection, built up in reviewing the run of our experiences, transmutes each newly arriving element before fusing it with the emerging fabric of the sacred, wherein each experience finds at its heart a transcending elan and each is lightened by the spark of humble but exulting gratitude, each strengthening and deepening our act of total abandonment. What does it matter, then, what the next moment may bring?

We are free from every desire—all have been unmasked as disjoined from their objects; free from all aspirations—all having been unmasked as proposing only provisory aims; freed then from all planning, scheming, foreinstalling, and projection—all having been unmasked as not apt to carry out and conduct our authentic intentions to their end and as merely equipage without meaning in themselves.

Hitherto dispossessed, we now enter fully into our inheritance. After having lost a fake familiarity with nature, that is, no longer being able to take all for granted in a finite perspective, we receive now all the marvels of Creation, which encompass us infinitely, in the perspective of the Ultimate. We expand ourselves in this serene

silence in communion with the marvels of Creation, which we partake of with every particle of our being—in a rapture of wonder.

9. TOWARD THE PURITY OF ABANDONMENT

However, shall we stay forever in this felicitous state? Is the delectation it brings to our entire being gathered in a euphoric elevation over the rightness of the praise and adoration we offer? Then it will not last. We know how fluctuating our state of mind has always been and that that will remain so to the extent that our states draw upon our faculties and the workings of contingency for their operations and have to rally them to achieve this effect.

As we advance from day to day, from stage to stage in our current existence, we see that these delectable instants of adoration do not endure. Nothing could prolong them. We have no means by which to retrieve them at will. And yet, of the Act of Faith once made there is something essential that perdures.

In fact, the modality of adoration is neither uniquely expressed by nor in any way affected by the degree of felicity or even of “consolation” that might be attached to it for a fugitive moment; its sole human measure is the purity of the act and the totality of the abandonment to Ultimate Wisdom.

Our commitment to the Divine is not a guarantee of everyday harmony in life or of imperturbable comfort, nor by making it do we reach the long sought for lasting happiness and peace of mind.

Yet that is what we expect upon our being able to make that commitment, and soon we can find ourselves altogether lost in bewilderment. We do hope to achieve equilibrium within ourselves at a higher level, but what has to become of this “self” of ours in order that our being opens all its pores to the Ultimate?

Should we look upon and seek adoration for its delectability or for its enhancement of our being, we would approach it erroneously as we did our own virtue before reaching the turning point. We enjoyed that virtue of ours, let its taste linger because of how it elevated our heart, lending courage and devotion to our sublime life mission. We exulted in it as expressive of our self, and we sought it for its own sake. Should we experience adoration in a comparable experiential context, we would again just turn ourselves towards ourselves, in a renewed attempt to possess comfort, consolidating our forces and closing the dilated pores of our being. As we have seen, it is precisely in losing *all* support from, *all* confidence in, *all* comfort from our own framework that our porous being opens to the Divine.

As we have described it, the rightness of adoration is above and beyond our self-interest. Indeed, our interests had to be scattered and left behind to be replaced by adoration. Should we “adore” the Divine for the felicity it creates within us, for the harmony that it might allow us to establish in our family life, for the contribution that it might make to spiritual progress in our surroundings, or even for the sake of the redemption of our soul, we would be merchandising it at a low price and lose altogether its absolute value. Adoration’s authentic value escapes all human

standards. On the contrary and as we have seen, the soul in her path despoils herself in two consecutive stages: first, through her three movements she despoils herself of even her own spiritual accomplishments, her own spiritual agency within, cutting her contingent ties with the world, and second, through the breaking of her basic patterns culminating in her spiritual pattern, she despoils herself of even her own spiritual accomplishments, her own spiritual agency.

10. DESTINY, INVENTED OR DISCOVERED?

Indeed, in the first cycle of her development, the soul despoils herself of contingent interest; in order to forge her own spiritual personal being. It is this spiritual being of hers that supports her, then, in her progress; it becomes the dynamism, the vehicle, and the center of investigation; and like a seismograph it registers each hint of direction or orientation. In the second cycle, in which we are oriented toward for the Ultimate, having arrived at the turning point in our destiny, by the release of the Act of Faith, whereby destiny took a decisive transnatural step forward, we see that in order to make this act the very essence of the soul—which we have been so relentlessly working at forging and creating—had to be shaken and dissolved at its spiritual foundations as if to despoil the soul of everything, as if to smother the very breath of her own life. In her further struggles, she finds no support, no resistance within herself.

In fact, at the opposite extreme of delectable ecstasy are states in which our soul is horrified by her own portrait: submerged by evil bents, weaknesses, shortcomings, foibles, and impulses that have hitherto been camouflaged by her virtues and which now assert themselves in every act and attitude. The soul is disgusted by herself and even sinks into abominating herself since she finds within neither her previous fervor nor the courage to engage in the struggle. Thus dispossessed of her sublime faith in her own virtue, she submits. She submits to the greatest of humiliations: accepting her base impulses, vengeful bents, callousness, and pusillanimity. She sinks into despond seeing no way to escape the vermin devouring her flesh and watches herself helplessly create hostility around her and drop into total isolation through her own growing hostility towards those she loves most. This is a state of total disappropriation, emptiness, and dryness of heart. And yet, as we have seen, having lost the solidity and spontaneities of her very substance, the soul does not vanish under the devastating impact of all this. On the contrary, it is precisely in this most abject of conditions that the thread by which she holds on, the thread extending towards the Ultimate, is laid bare and she then throws all her being towards the Ultimate in the Act of Faith. The soul holds on to her thread whether the abject states of being continue, suffocating her, or whether she passes on to states elevating all her frame in ecstatic felicity: the *purity* of the Act of Path is the same.

The modality of adoration accounts for this continuous condition, which once attained is that of pure thirst for the Divine ever renewed and ever quenched. We accept joyfully all that the day brings: joys and pains, frustration and contentment, with an equanimity, an “equal heart,” for they come as steps along our route of Faith.

Each is a cipher, the meaning of which we decode through our whole being as a new mesh in this fabric in the register of humble submission, docility, total confidence, and exultation in the marvels springing forth within our heart, now elevated towards the Ultimate.

Carried by the Act of Faith, all we do is abandon our life, our being, our destiny in absolute confidence that we cannot fail to make an intended rendezvous, that we are preparing ourselves for the Final Encounter.

11. HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO THE SOUL?

The “secret architecture of the soul” and the “ultimate commitment” in the shaping of different destinies come directly to light at the pivotal cross-section of the contrary directions in which the work of the soul is taken:

- (1) The self-determination of the soul’s personal agent versus her possible preordination;
- (2) The radical solitude and separation of the personal agent from other beings in the process of spiritual advance when it comes to the choices and decisions she has to make, as features of the autonomy of the soul’s architectural scheme, versus the orientation towards communication with other beings in all the personal acts and processes through which this advance proceeds;
- (3) The specificity of seemingly personal objectives in all types of communication versus the transpersonal finality of them all in “communication in the sacred,” in the “Ultimate Commitment.”
- (4) The crucial role of the specific personality of an individual in his or her development versus the essential requirement that this personality, once formed, be dissolved in order that his or her destiny be definitively opened to “the Ultimate Commitment.”
- (5) The seeming self-sufficiency and isolating egocentrism of the individual soul in the progress of her destiny as an aim in and for herself versus the essential significance of the prophetic vision that she slowly creates (or unravels?) in her advance towards a redeeming of contingency that is coextensive with sacrifice for the redemption of other beings.

When all our aims, purposes, and efforts on behalf of other souls under the auspices of the most elevated values and the Ultimate Commitment fail and all footholds of this last destroyed by life’s scheming—all the lamplights extinguished, all the prospects and hopes gone with the winds beyond retrieve—then the soul stands at last naked, separated from all, being nothing else but herself face to face with the Ultimate. Was this not the final telos of all this? We would be tempted to believe that, firstly, all the exterior events that have contributed to that final outcome—as well as, it may be, even the tragic course of existence of other men are conducive to our own progress—were all meant but for this purpose. We might, secondly, be inclined to assume that the soul’s ascent was a separate aim in itself, independent of the destinies of other men and even despite them.

Yet in the specific case of destiny's taking the sharply determined form of a "vocation," we see that this relation of the soul with respect to her destiny is not so simple. From the point of view of the soul's work, an intrinsic agency has been forging, articulating, and distilling out of all the material that existence has offered her specific course, one that is seemingly oriented exclusively by this telos; the soul's *arche* seems to lurk in this work of her developing design, which proceeds perpendicularly, having this *arche* as its only orientation. Thus the direction of the progress is set by the intrinsic concern of the soul that her uniquely own nature be fulfilled. But in the "horizontal" perspective of the canvas, the loom and the threads being constantly woven by the agent, upon and with which the design of destiny is to be embroidered—and considering the nature of the design too—it seems to become obvious that this design is not meant to be isolated and disconnected, closed in its otherness, alien to all the rest, an incongruous item left to itself and reposing in its own strangeness. To the contrary, it appears that this design, as uniquely original as it might be, essentially extends out towards the Other; it stretches beyond its own nucleus, establishing through its ramifications a level of communion with the other. Similarly, souls on branching out commune at a level above their respective designs, which do not directly meet but which allow for an ascent towards communion in something higher than themselves.

Although all the efforts at unilateral communication with other beings are bound to fail—Thomas Aquinas and Leibniz after him rightly tell us that the person, the soul is incommunicable to others—yet in all these abortive and ever-repeated efforts at communication, it is this *communion in a common ascent*, communication in the sacred, that was aimed at and anticipated. In this perspective it would seem that it is the "community of the spirit" that is ultimately sought in this labor of the soul rather than an isolated and estranged perfection of the soul alone.

12. THE MODALITY OF "ADORATION" IN THE LIGHT OF THE CLASSIC CONTROVERSY OVER THE "PURE LOVE" OF GOD

The inner conditions of our being which have thus far been analyzed descriptively and defined as a modality of our being we call "adoration" seems to fall right in with the learned theological controversy over the love of God—rooted first in the views of antiquity of Plato and Aristotle and then in those of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine—which broke out notably between Fénelon and Bossuet. In fact, it seems as if that modality of our being that has been so far described corresponds to the conditions that must be met in order for "the act of pure love of God" that Fénelon describes to be realized. Our own concern arose from the paradoxical situation of love with respect to the Divine, but it will deepen our understanding and intellectually enlighten our analysis of inner experience if we place it in the perspective outlined by this controversy.

First of all, we find there all the basic issues with which the interrogation we have here carried on has been explicitly or implicitly concerned. In sketching them first

and then bringing the analysis made above forward to be clarified by the specific positions taken by the major protagonists in the dispute, we also it turns out might clarify a fundamental misunderstanding involved in that dispute, for it seems that the protagonists might not have been talking about the same inner phenomenon.

Are Fénelon and Bossuet both really describing “love”?

The crucial issues are these:

- (1) Is love neediness or fulfillment?
- (2) Is love of God based upon our self-love or does it go directly beyond that to its transcendent object?
- (3) Does it belong to the nature of the love of God for it to include the hope of eternal felicity or must it be free from every outside motivation and purely disinterested?
- (4) Is the love of God purely spontaneous or deliberate?
- (5) What is the relationship between love and hope? And between our craving for felicity and our submission to the ultimate designs and will of God?

Basically, however, since, as we have seen, all these issues refer to the complete system of our inner life, the question that was at stake in this controversy as well as implied all along in our analysis was that of the relation of love, felicity, and hope, briefly of the acts belonging to the context of Faith, to the spontaneity of our being, on the one hand, and to our deliberate, reflective capacity, on the other.

13. IS THE WEB OF GENERATIONS THE WEB OF THE SOUL'S DESTINY?

Picking up again the thread of the discussion of the “web of the destinies of souls” made in our work *Logos and Life*, Book 2: *The Three Movements of the Soul* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) we might ask whether it was not because of this web, albeit seen and interpreted differently, that the ancient Hebrews considered the growth and prosperity of the family, its expansion into posterity, as the continuation of personal life and the greatest blessing? Why was the crucial temptation proposed to Abraham, who was so thoroughly open to the Divine, the necessity of choosing between faithfulness to God's will and love for his son? Consider that the major influx of our energies as parents in our constant efforts, aspirations, strivings, and ideals goes into the life of our family. We work these and all our other vital, affective, moral, and intellectual functions through the specific reactivity, receptivity, and even individual progress of the members of the family. We initiate our efforts on their behalf at first, by trial and error, following simply our own spontaneous inclinations of the moment. Soon we have to adjust them to each member's respective mode of reactivity to our initiatives. We have to prepare ourselves for them in order to be effective, and we have to ourselves prepare long-term strategic devices as well as have a constantly alert sensitivity to their reception and development. In short, the essence of the work parents take upon themselves is accomplished through the work put into the family and each of its individual

members. It seems that the natural role to be assumed by the parent in the family is such that most of their own existence comes to be enacted in and through their work in their children's existences. If the parents elevate their existence to a clear act of Ultimate Commitment and assume a moral and spiritual responsibility or a mission—one their very own—to be accomplished within the world of man, the first objects of this responsibility are naturally their own children. If they seek to make a lasting contribution to the effort of man to elevate himself above the turpitude of everyday existence, it is naturally into the future of their family, into the future of their children, that they first inject their hopes as into branches into which their work flows, so that in their children's response to them their own destiny progresses. The declaration made in the Decalogue that the iniquity of parents will be visited upon the children "to the third and fourth generation" could well be founded upon this most intimate web holding them all together, since parents through their moral and spiritual molding of experience, habits, and patterns spread their influence through all the branches of the family and not only in the first generation but through them down to further generations coming in as well.

Finally, when we consider the crucial issue here, that of how it occurs that external events (accidents, illness, abandonment, failures, and cataclysms) seem to happen just at the turning points of our inner spiritual progress, we might also see therein the reason for considering the growth and prosperity of the family as well as the continuity of generations as being the continuity of our own existence—for the family is subject to these events and has to face them as a whole unit, and lives through them as a unit in which the attitude and conduct of each member affects and decides the destiny of each and every one of them. In fact, in ancient times, owing to tribal family ties, the external events of life were particularly tightly synchronized with inner growth—within a common scheme of family life and destiny. The destinies of children were not those of their parents, Isaac having a different destiny than that of Abraham, and yet they were, intimately, if only partially, fused together. It is within the closed circle of the family—in a way similar to the way that a tree extends all its branches from its trunk—that the current of life was, in the ancient type of the family, synchronized with the inner destinies of individual members, given their mutual ingrownness with each other. It was as if personal destiny could not be fulfilled without its extending to others.

From this situation seems to stem the specific vocation that in ancient times was "fatherhood." In our times, in contrast, this role has passed rather to women in the vocation of mother. It seems that the vocation of motherhood is worked out on three major levels; firstly, *in ordine entis realis*, it is the task of education that a mother spontaneously undertakes. Going beyond the basic and vital orientation in life that a mother, whether human or animal, instills in her offspring, paving the way for their not yet developed life skills and thus securing their psycho-physical existence, the task of motherhood as a specifically human proposition consists mainly in her instilling into her children the moral principles serving as guideposts for an "honest life." It is hers to introduce them through the acquisition of appropriate habits, tastes, and selectivity into the pattern of the social life of the times, while inculcating moral awareness of the family's roots in the past by imparting to them their common

inheritance. Secondly, *in ordine idealis*, the mother endeavors to plant in her child the seeds of ideals concerning attitude towards, the appreciation of, and responsibility for other human beings—one's family, one's country, and humanity at large—as worthy aims and purposes above those serving everyday success. Although at their current, primitive level these ideals do not seem in their application to amount to more than passively accepted, conventional principles for life's conduct, at a higher level of awareness these "higher ideals" elevate one above the trivialities of typical life pursuits and become interiorized as personal and constructive ideals.

Thirdly and foremost, the vocation of a mother as it gradually unfolds through her efforts is to convey to her child the experience of her and the family's Ultimate Commitment in life. What is it that after all the direction on practical and moral problems be settled, that after all the discussions explaining the whole conduct of life—dealing with all attitudes and principles of choice concerning all matters from the most complex down to the most simple, from the most reflected upon down to the most instinctive—provides answers? What is the last reason we would give to them that makes clear the sum total of our conduct. We might or might not have argued clearly, even to ourselves, what this ultimate answer clarifying our life could be. And we might or might not have found the correct answer. That which we believe to be it might not be the right one, the one which we enact, that is, which we ourselves adopt, might be mistaken as to what our Ultimate Commitment truly is. We might believe it to be virtue, whereas, in fact, we are only using virtue to camouflage our self-interest. We might have a pedestrian view of ourselves and believe that we are motivated merely by a pacific wish for peace and quiet in life, whereas in truth we are all dedication and compassion to our neighbors for their sake. The fact is that our Ultimate Commitment works its way through our existence and that finally it is what a mother strives to hand down to her family. This last task pertains to the transnatural destiny of the soul.

The tendency to fulfill that destiny runs through all the channels and points of communication with the child. It is precisely in the attainment of this aim that a mother accomplishes her specific destiny, the destiny of a mother.

And yet the destiny of the soul of her child is independent from her own, even independent from the influence of her maternal work upon it. From the instant of the break when it occurs between the destiny of the mother and that of a child, from the instant which creates an inner separation between them, the destiny of the child is to stand face to face with God Himself.

14. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE LAST PATTERN OF PERSONALITY IN THE LOSS OF SPIRITUAL POSTERITY

Job in losing all his children lost the thread of the extension and continuation of his spiritual message and mission. His highest endeavor within this world was abolished and vanished without a trace. Was his transnatural destiny not thereby truncated,

mutilated, and shrunk? Was, in fact, his destiny itself—in his vocation as father—not altogether destroyed?

We have to follow this question through the whole sequence of dissolution that we are endeavoring to retrace.

Let us return to the critical point at which our vital pattern of life shattered under the pressures of the arbitrary forces of the external world or became corroded from within owing to the limitations of its own natural setup, events quite beyond our control, to the point where our basic vital equipoise collapsed and then, when under the impact of adverse and conflicting human interests, the moral patterning of our personality disintegrated and our “natural” expansion into the spread of our “natural” human ties and relations—that is, our “horizontal” world-extension—atrophied. The question arises then when we take refuge in our spiritual dimension and focus all our attention directly on our spiritual destiny, what do we do with our mode of life? How do we take up again the human contacts and ties that are inevitable within the world context? Of course, we may succumb to our first spontaneous impulse to isolate ourselves from the rest of the world and life and become naturally estranged, all in our unique concern with our own personal struggle to redeem the contingent.

Being so radically thrown out of our natural situation, how can we avoid the tendencies to isolate that lead to the above questions? To repeat what we have already developed, while we are tantalized by our new situation, we ignore its demands and we lack at first any indication of what to undertake and how to direct ourselves. To our rescue comes what seem to be gains of our labor thus far untapped and which we now find ready as a ripe harvest. Let us assess its value with respect to the problem at hand.

In point of fact, contrary to first appearances, although our natural ties—responsibilities, attachments, commitments—remain binding solely on the basis of social conventions, since they have lost all the juices of value and enthusiasm, our moral life having been fused to them, we are not, in fact, left with but an empty mechanism of obligations to be fulfilled. Gathering now all our attention in the channel of our spiritual destiny, which remains an enigmatic reality that we intuit but which evades us our grasp, we question it again and again, this time for the clues to our present problem: Can our destiny continue unfolding through the disarray and human isolation in which we float? The question assumes full weight when we recall that progress in our path had human communication as its basic vehicle. The struggle for communication with the Other, Otherness Itself, always personified by some or other being we modulate ourselves to encounter, the message we desired to communicate and for which communication we transformed our innermost self—no matter what degree of success or failure was accomplished—this is what carried our inward genesis, which advanced upon these tides. And, indeed—though against all expectation—it appears obvious that as long as our task of development is situated within the contingent framework we cannot but have a mode of extending ourselves within it. To find a new mode of encounter is then indispensable to making the next step.

We find, in point of fact, that our empirical ties and our emotive and moral involvements with our surroundings might have failed altogether, and yet when

these ties are cut, others deeper and more essential surge. We might not feel any longer any moral responsibility for our family's and our friends' material and moral well-being—they having rejected our authority, our help and our guidance—and we are left altogether helpless. And yet we discover ourselves to be committed to their life courses by an even stronger net of links: we bear responsibility for their spiritual development.

Our very situation within the world context indicates this: we are at every instant immersed in the complete situation of life within the world. Although we might be disoriented as to how to use them, our functions are constantly being solicited within this context. Our spiritual work proceeds within this complete situation, drawing upon the dynamism of its play of forces, inducing from them creative sparks and taking advantage of their productive techniques; this work's progress is simultaneous and is carried by the life process in the complete situation. How could we than advance spiritually if our ties with others were altogether atrophied? The contingent situation that we strive to redeem through our effort is not singularly our own predicament! It is common to all, and its crucial challenges are heightened by our sharing it with others. "L'enfer c'est les autres," said Sartre pointedly. We are contingent because we are by our essence infinitely entangled with others in the complete situation of existence. And so, it is, at this point on our path, while preparing our next step out of destructive chaos, that we find out that picking up the thread of our transnatural destiny out of this debris of life means to also take up the tasks of others.

In fighting for our own destiny we cannot do otherwise but be concerned about them as well; their recognition of the higher level of human experience reveals itself to be necessary for our sharing existence with them; this existence in common, this solidarity is indispensable to our effort.

In short, at this point the struggle for our personal escape from the claws of contingency cannot be fought in isolation from the struggles of other creatures. On the contrary, it concentrates on a mission of redemption of others identified with our own redemption and moves towards a communion of souls in the whole chain of generations.

In oriental cultures the mother was the vital, emotive hinge of the family, guaranteeing it emotional stability and a refreshing fountain of love, trust, confidence, and devotion, and it was the father who had the role of spiritual guide. But the spiritual spread of destiny's work through posterity is in our Western culture focused in on the maternal vocation. This role was epitomized already by Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi. It is the mother who undertakes the task of laying down the educative foundation of the nation. This is particularly strongly emphasized in Polish culture. The Polish mother is traditionally considered to be the custodian of the nation's spiritual inheritance, in virtue of which Polish tradition, culture, and the nation itself has survived intact despite centuries of oppression by invaders. As a classic Polish song says, ". . .bo nie zginela jeszcze Ojczyzna poki niewiasty tam czuja, be z ich to serca plynie trucizna, ktora wrogowie sie truja. . ."

It has happened over and over in Western history that when hostile forces aim at disruption of the pattern of a people's spiritual life, they attack the vulnerable hinge

that safeguards the passing on of the spiritual tradition: the children's devotion to their parents and the parents' authority with respect to their offspring. (We have seen this happen most strikingly with Nazism and with Communism. We think of Cromwell's command that Ireland's harpists be killed, the repository of the nation's lore being in their songs. And many have been the attacks on the Church.)

When we consider the many-layered polyphony of functions which make the human being, in which the organic impulses entering into the bodily psychic scheme are reworked through the whole spread of the network, and, at each and every level are molded in specific fashion, we realize the uniqueness of the ties between a mother and her offspring. Is it not through the prism of our mute sensing, of our blind emotions, of our dumb muscular and visceral contractions that we experience ourselves as being embodied and vitally participating in nature and in the world process? On the one hand, it is from this seemingly dumb foundation that spring forth the streamlets of natural spontaneities supplying and carrying the passions, the emotions, and the whole flow of experience. On the other hand, as we have seen, the whole emotive net of the personal life developed through the morally and aesthetically oriented interpretations transmitted on various levels and using the person's reflective as well as speculative functions has in all its movements vigorous repercussions throughout the web of that person's operations and finds its last echo down in the subterranean regions of the body's organic roots. These penetrating reverberations that run back and forth through our whole system are to be acknowledged not in dualistic fashion by rationally coordinating two events from different realms on the assumption that they are concomitant and that they stand in relation to each other as "stimulus" and "response," but seen to be directly experienced as parts of the same experiential sequence. Thus, we feel our disappointments through a malaise of our complete experiential scheme and our "physical" pain reverberates in the "down" orientation of our mood, etc.

This reality lies at the basis of—and explains—the fact that a mother experiences her child as an integral part of herself. She feels one with her offspring in an exhaustive way encompassing her whole being. The child, the youth, and the grown adult seems to develop within her own complete body-psyche-spirit system. A child seems to be nourished by her own flesh and blood, her constant concern and care in a more essential way than was so when it grew within her ignored and blindly and automatically drawing upon her vital resources when within her womb. The steps in the progress of a child as well as the hindrances on the way have a deep resonance within the mother's complete framework. She counts and registers the advances and defeats of this progress in her own muscular sensations. The vital ingrownness of two beings that a mother experiences is unique in nature; a father can never experience it, nor a friend, nor a lover, nor a nanny, nor tutor, nor a teacher. Hence throughout the history of mankind we witness the impulses of mothers to protect their children with their own beings, to throw their lives on the line or into certain death in order to protect the life of a child of theirs.

Thus any damage sustained by a child, be it physical or moral, is for a mother damage to her person. The experience of it runs through all the channels of the complete web of her being and existence. The loss of a child strikes this web at each and every one of its strategically vital joints, damaging it in all the ways in which it functions normally down to its vital spontaneities and their surging. When a mother engaged in her spiritual mission towards her child realizes that he is lost to her, spiritually lost, that is, that he has turned away from her and cut the thread of inheritance, this is a blow extending from the highest point of the heart and mind and to her whole system, a stroke that destroys, annihilates.

The annihilating effect runs back through the whole web that is a mother's ingrownness with her child. It disentangles all the knots of a mother's vocational destiny—of her destiny as the promoter and custodian of the spiritual inheritance of generations. Not only does this rupture dissolve the network of channels through which her personal destiny as a mother works, but in a devastating sweep it also destroys the experiential molds, structure, and directedness of her intimately personal destiny; it leaves it naked and exposed down to the marrow, fragile and defenseless. Will it not annihilate that destiny too?

The whole experiential pattern mirroring the human universe within her has fallen apart. How can this most vulnerable of all substances maintain itself, this radical exposure to the void suddenly opening around it? The vehicles of human life have disintegrated together with the disentangled knots of her bodily-psychic network of ingrownness in the human world. All having been dissolved, only some vaguely related organic-psychic functions remain capable of securing a degree of vegetal existence from day to day.

The treelike, horizontal spread of the workings of destiny are now shrunk, the leaves dried up, and the current of sap running no more from the trunk into the branches, and the mutilated branches themselves falling off, the tree itself becoming but a vertebrate column, with the nervous system conducting life through its infusion and outflow of energies being dismantled in its expansion and thus isolated from the essential mechanism of life. This personal "tree" has either to perish or to be capable of initiating a total transformation.

This last pattern of our most intimate spiritual in-world mission—the dynamic of which constitutes the crowning stage in the construction of our personality and to the creative progress of which our complete personal system was subservient—once dissolved, the whole structure of personality disintegrates. Shall the work of destiny which can no longer be picked up at a point within this system, vanish? Its spontaneities dried up in the branches, lost in chaos, in virtue of what could it survive and continue?

It would, on the contrary, seem that a human being, having lost his bearings in an alien universe, standing bare and helpless, cannot surmount this cataclysm; it would seem that the only possibility open to him is to fall into the torpor of a vegetative existence.

And yet Job did not succumb, he lifted up his heart and glorified God.

15. THE TRANSFORMATION THAT IS THE RADICAL
TURN

The initial shock of our children's severing the ties of the generations is crushing, and yet only rarely—precisely when one of the basic elements in a mother's vocation has not been strong enough—does the maternal give way, and this shock then takes an irremediably destructive turn. If that does not occur, however, we will even in this apparently radical disaster have something to fall back upon, namely, our within and without thread of reflective interrogation. In fact, when all ties within and without seem broken, we would have to withdraw to the most primitive vegetative state had we not initiated and developed the spinning faculty of our inward quest, which now, no matter what happens, continues to spin its thread. Indeed, as violently shaken as we might be after we have assessed the crucial point of the disaster and recognized the irrevocability which cuts down all the tentacles of hope desperately maintained until now that "not all is lost," that "things could still turn for the best," etc., our questioning effort sets out. In amazement, from our utmost depths, we ask, "How is it at all possible?" Endlessly, the effort at understanding resumes.

We take up our interrogation again. While we work at the analysis of the empirical situation in which the cataclysm happened, trying to bring together causes and effects, while we seek the deeper tendencies of the persons caught in it and try to unravel the final meaning of these severed ties, which severance cuts us off from life itself, while we progress in the reconstruction of the picture of the situation and come to some approximate understanding of what really has occurred and how and why, we initiate the process of *appreciation of the awful break's ultimate significance*, and this is preparation for the final act.

After first estimating the direct effects of the disaster, we follow up its consequences in depth. In fact, by following up the destructive process, we in our scrutinizing reflection not only discover the otherwise mute dimensions of our experience in which this tragic disaster is lived, thereby clarifying it through our awareness of it and making the qualitative expansion of our self-awareness measure up to it, but we also by bringing to light the whole extension of our being involved in it reflectively appropriate ourselves in this process of dissolution into an encompassing interpretation.

In the dissolution of the arteries that conduct the juices of spontaneities—from the most subtle and rarefied, which draw upon experience of higher values down to those arteries that supply the impulses and pulsations of our being—the last target of the demon of destruction, we discover, is our experiential background, which is simultaneously the point of departure of our evolutionary process and the depository of the results yielded ultimately by the full experiential apparatus when it covers the full circle.

It comes clearly to light on this occasion that, indeed, the thick organic substance of familiar nature and the supposedly deaf forces of life are not a neutral organic ground simply supplying resources for our existence so that no matter how our human existence evolves we may always count on this neutral support of ever fresh renewing forces; this might be so at a "borderline point," impossible to assess,

between the organic and the animal or human, at an abstractly differentiated borderline between the anonymous forces of nature and the individualizing process of the living being, something we have pointed out before. However, it appears differently from the point of view of full human experience. The otherwise mute and largely remaining in the shadow background of our experience, the background of our feeling, sensing, subliminal dreaming, the ground for the upsurge of passion, no matter how we would—as psychiatry does—determine its universally human compass and composition in abstraction from the individual forms and content it assumes in each being, appears in such a case of inward disintegration to be far from a universally anonymous natural background and to be, on the contrary, a most specifically personally formed dimension that prolongs into the twilight and then in the shade or darkness of awareness the zones of greater experiential lucidity.

At the point of our coming up against limit situations, when our whole universe of experience is challenged, put in doubt, and shaken out of the confidence we complacently accord it, we discover precisely at these subliminal levels the echoes and reverberations of the most delicate and subtle fragments of experience. We find ourselves not hitting dumb ground, but, on the contrary, finding our own experience reflected in that subliminal content. We find, in fact, that our complete experiential context, instead of being established above, as we were tempted before to assume, is established right there, and only in higher spheres of awareness does it reach us at the levels of clearly articulated conscious life; the whole game of experience, seems to have been played out there in the dark and the twilight of awareness. The reverberations deep down in this subliminal sphere of all our otherwise consciously acknowledged and performed inward proceedings indicate that this background, from the perspective of human experience and as its background, in its quality and pattern hangs upon our complete functional apparatus, and that our moral, aesthetic, and intellectual functions work and rework our vital concerns, which appear first at the borderline of the anonymous forces of nature and our individualizing apparatus, thus constantly informing this otherwise incongruous material with the higher forms of mind and spirit. Hence this thick and opaque dimension is not a separate realm mythically called the organic body but is a familiar bed in which we maintain our very own specific roots and from which we draw the balance of our forces, and which engulfs us as a protective zone by being open to an unlimited, undiversified extension into the elemental forces and resources of Nature, while securing us space in which to retire from the struggle in which we stand alone against the whole world. We need to experience this area's being haunted by menacing ghosts of our own making, with forces of our dreams tearing our viscera to shreds and hurling monstrous weights upon our chest in order to realize fully what the "normal" pattern of experience this zone has meant to us. Here repose has lulled our every disquiet by recruiting primitive forces into dreams or by allowing us to fall back upon ourselves and relax the tension of the functional system of in-wordly being. When in limit situations we do not find anything but the piercing and obsessive resonance of our conscious pains and anxieties, it becomes clear to us that there is where we unknowingly had a lasting, "unshakable," assuring milieu that served as a keel of security amid our exposure to

perpetual hazard. Therefrom we drew our dynamic drive and directives for renewal as well as balm for specific bruises and momentary support in breakdowns in our resistance.

Seeking to estimate the extent of the destruction in our climactic disaster, we find that it has reached even this subliminal space of semi- and altogether shadowy awareness—that most intimately personal soil in which we are concurrently planted as an element of nature and as its most specific particularization. This ground's opening to Nature now laid bare—if not itself infected by the decay of the rest—can hardly suffice for the existence of even the animal in us. We are left uprooted, inwardly distraught, and thrown into a total void. We haven't even a human desert in which we might plant our feet on the ground, as arid and as inhospitable as that would be. A yawning abyss surrounds us on all sides.

Vertigo menaces us as our next step threatens to be the last step we take before vanishing into nothingness, and yet we hold on; we do not float absurdly in the void but are held by a thread, an iron thread. This single thread that holds us we discover to be our ultimate commitment. It is from this climactic point that a new panorama unfolds. We embrace our situation from above.

The more clearly we come to see the haphazardness of our contingent being as a whole, the more clearly do we realize within ourselves the strength, the unbreakable resilience amid all influences and all powers this thread has. Acquiring this encompassing awareness of our nature and situation, we advance in the intensification, the concentration of our whole being—now retrieved from subsidiary errands and engagements—in the single direction that thread indicates, into which it draws us, and which solicits our total attention.

At last unhampered by the personal-psychic-bodily system, which has dropped away like a worn garment, the spontaneity of spirit we have been in training for so long springs forth with overwhelming vehemence and terrifying purity as we come face to face with the Ultimate.

But what work of a spiritual kind did we do that we took for solid ground for our expectation to take off from? What were the touchstones for its efficacy from which we drew the fallacious conviction that the work of spirit was being taken well by the soil and germinating? When we now trace back the series of our past acts, playing them back, we are moved to our very depths on each occasion—be it by associative links or by simple remembrance, or through the desires, feelings, tendencies of the past that find resonance in the present, which shows that their echo never altogether vanishes, nor is this broken by fresh encounters with reality. We find that the work we did as educators, inspirers, parents was all in a way planned in one direction: to conduct the current of spirit through and for its expansion. Passing our work in review, we recall all the means we have applied to forwarding the emotional and mental growth of our charges at various stages as well as the means we employed to point them in the right direction, the intuitive insights we got into the respective talents, types of sensibility, and special bents of those whose charge we took and the creative schemes we devised for molding such and not other qualities along the whole spectrum of aesthetic and moral experience that leads to the vision of the good, the noble, and the sublime. We recognize how all this planning and

programming plowed through the wealth of human resources and sowed a fertilizing selection from the great store of seeds. This was not a neutral rational scheme to be implemented by mechanical psychological techniques, but the closest personal exchange, for the empathy and intuitive communication that has been carrying us together is at a deeper level of existence than that of the current moment and prompts ever new modes of moral participation in each other's experience and seems to guarantee our effort's success.

We wonder in bewilderment: Could all this planning have been misleading? Could these penetrating insights into the Other's experience have been false? Could what we took for communication have been untrue?

Scrutinizing now the joints among our efforts to convey through all these thoughtfully fashioned networks these intimately felt spiritual waves with an indisputable conviction that they are being received, shared, and appreciated in the light of the strange developments that have taken place in reality in our precious charges—now sensed to be no longer intimately our own but alien to us, as manifested by events, we come to unexpected conclusions. We discover that there is a sharply accentuated hiatus between ourselves and these beings we experienced before as "our very own." It is as if a veil made from our own experience is lifted and we find that there was no basis at all for the expectation that even our most guaranteed psychological and educative devices would lead to real participation in their lives. We find that we have no basis to believe that we had the necessary recognition of their inmost nature to be able to match the soil with the proper kinds of seed. We go in retrospect through the whole genesis of our most deep communion with our child, through his growth and development seeking to ascertain the touchy moment at which the current would no longer pass from one to the other, and we discover with amazement that, in reality, at no point in the expanse of our relationship could we ever have been legitimately sure of its presence however so much we took it's being for granted.

And so in this interrogative revival of the past we discover by and by *the ultimate condition of our inner personal existence*. We live the present by planting in expectation of a totally unknown future, and no matter how carefully it be planned, the future remains unforeseeable nevertheless. We have planted on soil that we cannot make an accurate assessment of. We have built upon moving sands.

All our planning shows itself essentially a miscalculation since we were ignorant of the decisive factors and laws of the sequence on which we counted. Why was it that we were unaware of the adverse turn the progress of our labor was taking? Is it not because we have been, like a spider, spinning this web for the sake of our children but simultaneously advancing ourselves as well and being engulfed by our course's progress within ourselves, and that no direct insight is possible into the progress of that course within our children? We saw it all through our own prism.

Our work on the dynamis of a precious human being, who by his own agency alone will steer a course over the waves and currents of life, even as he is torn in all directions by his own innumerable tendencies which break free at any instant, change at any instant, now tells us that the complete situation is like writing a story meant to be a lasting monument with one's finger upon the dunes.

Thus, though our present was impregnated with a projection of the future that proved to be but an illusion, since we can neither outline nor encompass the future. No future belongs to us.

Freed from projections into the future, we by the same stroke free ourselves from the reality of the past. Indeed, with the present having become unreal, so is the past. And recognition of the futility of the past that we long emphasized as the presumptive guarantee of our reality and of the reality of our continuous existence strips our being from its enslavement by temporal forms, molds, patterns, from the illusions of contingent existence, and lays it bare. We have entered into our final settling of accounts with contingency.

From the inside of the Other's workings through our functional system—now that in its disintegration we have broken into its very ground, throwing light on all its constitutive operations and their mechanisms—we find that time which appears to be an autonomous elemental agency carrying us, both in our organic existence and in our inward psychic perduring, to be a system of our functioning. This opaque "substance" of experience in which we are sunk and owing to which we feel the solidity of ourselves as being "someone"—not to say "something"—has often appeared to philosophers as "temporality" (for Bergson, "duration," for Husserl the "temporal flux of consciousness"). But already Husserl had a foreboding of its insubstantiality when he found the temporal flux itself already in its phases of present, past, and future to be not pre-given but constituted by consciousness. Yet he maintained, as did Heidegger after him, that this flux itself was of a specific, mythical nature, which he called "time" and which he identified with our innermost existential ground.

But we have seen now that all the temporal aspects of ourselves as a contingent being—and what are the conditions of contingency—are manifestations of our system of operation with its subsystems, patterns, and their final regulative system. It is this system of our functioning that organizes us into a temporal being; it is this system that creates the conditions of duration itself. It is this system that "temporalizes" our being, human existence, and contingency as such. Once we have reached behind the screen of time's workings and the network that penetrates to the most minute aspects of our constitutive as well as creative functional orchestrations, once this network goes through its complete disintegration and the system is lifted away from its bed in the initially given, we find that the material, the dynamism, and the forces from which the system sprung and which prompted it were our own *initial spontaneities*, in both the natural and spiritual registers.

Our intraworldly vocation might have been destroyed by this. The worldly mission of our spiritual destiny is abolished, and all its accomplishments are strewn in the wind. Yet, in this final settling of accounts with our contingent being, the soul's ardor is freed from all the constraints of devices of prudence, intermediate schemes, and regulative patterns. The soul's dynamism is gathered back from the dead branches, back into the trunk, saved from dispersion in side issues and springs forth in the only direction open.

There it is that the soul establishes herself in total abandonment. Freed from all plans, projects, ideals, aspirations, and responsibilities—since all of them are a false issue, none of them is well grounded for success, finally we can decide upon none

but God. By this recognition we become free of all desire and will. Now we can in total abandonment to the Ultimate lift up our transformed being and with neither reservation nor assurance in an ACT OF FAITH ask with Teresa of Avila:

Que voulez-vous faire de moi?
 donnez-moi la mort ou la vie,
 donnez-moi la santé ou la maladie,
 donnez-moi la gloire ou le mépris,
 donnez-moi les combats ou la paix parfaite,
 donnez à ma vie la faiblesse ou la force;
 à tout je dis oui;
 Que voulez-vous faire de moi?
 Donnez-moi la richesse ou la pauvreté;
 donnez-moi des consolations ou des desolations;
 donnez-moi la joie ou la tristesse;
 donnez-moi l'enfer ou donnez-moi le ciel,
 Ma douce vie, ô soleil sans nuage,
 puisque je me suis remise à vous toute entière,
 Que voulez-vous faire de moi?
 Si vous le voulez, donnez-moi l'oraison,
 Sinon, donnez-moi les sécheresses;
 Si vous le voulez, donnez-moi l'abondance de
 l'abondance de vos biens, et la dévotion,
 Sinon, la disette
Là seulement je trouve la paix,
 Que voulez-vous faire de moi?

16. OUR TRANSNATURAL DESTINY

The creation of man belongs then to the whole scheme of creation. Yet there is a clear distinction between the concrete physical origin of the universe, animate nature, and then man in it, which once released follows its own evolving schematization and further develops an entire pattern. Yet the pattern itself with its infinitely complex and intertwined order of ebbs and flows regulating themselves and hanging upon an even more intricate scheme of ebbs and flows that the human mind attempts to partially penetrate but which no human mind could ever grasp as a whole, this complete design with its ungraspable reason and its telos is with man's advent no longer one of the concrete order of the rules of the universe but of the order of a primeval law, the order of Creation. And if in the order of the world man has his origin within the entanglements of the entire scheme, which from his outstanding position among living creatures, he through following his reason and feelings and fascinations may unravel through images that lie ready in the space between reality and dream in answer to his longings, images of an idyllic transworldly paradise. And if man out of a lack of confidence and trust in absolute goodness and justice has put his trust in his own limited wisdom and so has fallen, still the real question of the origin of man and of the world's being concerns not its concrete factual existence and subsequent progress or regress but the pursuit of the ultimate meaning of nature and of man's existence, namely, the Primeval Design of Creation. The

classical view of the universe assigns a privileged position to man for whose sake the universe has been devised. Indeed, it is he whose existence upon earth demands the most intricate and extraordinary arrangement and establishment of conditions and circumstances, which become more and more rarefied as man rises from animal beatitude amid nature to greater and greater elevations of mind and spirit. Time is showing us with more and more precision the infinite complexity of the human physico-psychic being.

Yet we cannot grasp the crucial element in man, what is unreachable through instruments or any empirical or rational means, that which defines the truly human core: the spirit at the heart of the human soul. Is it not the individual real spirit within the human personal soul that is the giver of meaning to human life? Is it not the elevation of man in his yearnings to reach beyond the scheme of nature, the universe, and his life on earth that gives the meaning to that life and universe? Without that elevation, it would all be nothing but an empty game of chess, of success and failure, an absurd game in which we would spend all our force to attain an aim that ultimately turns out to be our own necessary extinction.

If we ask ourselves about the sense of human existence, about the sense of the universe, we will not find an answer yielding the truth except within the design of Creation, in which the human spirit appears in a privileged portion and for the sake of whose appearing the whole scheme seems to be designed. Yet what is there in the human being that would justify such a position?

Science probing deeper and deeper into the human being has given us new clues yielding corroboration of the old image, one as old as human culture, that of man as a contemporary of God upon earth, with man taking his measure from God, man as the image of God, the image of God being inscribed in man in the design of Creation. Indeed there seems to be inscribed in the very being of man an outline of the Divine.

At the most primitive level of human development at which man barely emerges from the animal circle towards the exercise of reason in organized communal life within a tribe, this very organization shows that man's situation is not simply like that of the animal and to be resolved by a set of physical, survival-oriented measures, but that his very survival is suspended on a physico-psychic equilibrium that stretches through the whole realm of nature beyond. It seems that it is not enough for man to satisfy the demands of his physical existence by handling satisfactorily the varying and unpredictable play of elemental forces. Man is carried further by fear of unpredictable forces in an elemental awareness of his limitations and of the encompassing forces of the unknown governing the course of his existence. To secure his survival he has to establish an equipoise between the real which he controls and his psychic nature.

He has to conjure the vaguely, and now acutely sensed, encompassing forces by giving them a form within reality, by inventing for them an intellectual mind.

Time, the vertigo induced by the uncontrollable passage of things, and the unquenchable urge for perdurance, we attempt to conquer through a cult of the past, through the living memory of ancestors. The vague fear of the encompassing forces, of the higher powers, we address by limiting natural forces and attempting to tame them through a hierarchical organization of human life.

With the development of higher civilization, man projects his feeling of limitation and longing for the infinite into representations of higher forces and perfect beings—mythical gods.

As spirit unfolds within man, his equipoise becomes suspended upon immaterial forms that the outlines of a man's rarefied spirit takes. Indeed, the connatural striving toward transcendence finds forms of God inscribed at various levels of the human being which give rise to the image of the Divine that man projects before himself from within himself.

There is then truth in the perennial creed that sees the key to the creative design in man's being created after the image of God. But could God, the undefinable, individual, ineffable have outside Himself an image? It is only within specific particularizations in which His transcendentally constitutive scheme is broken down by His transcendent extension that God may be present in a relative representation in the human fabric, one that has its germ and is basically embedded in our transcendental as well as creative system of human functioning.

Thus, God's Absolute Infinity finds its infinite relative particularized representation in the infinite variety found in human souls. Here is an infinite procession of His richness, each of us a unique version of Him—as well as receptacles of the Divine inspiration by which man lifts himself from futile decay and passes into the eternal. And the image of Christ only brings this out the more.

17. THE SPIRITUAL DESTINY OF ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

Leibniz's final word about the creative system, the monad's primary role in it, and the Creator was this: the monad communicates directly only with the Creator Himself. This is where we start. Does the soul communicate with the Creator? If so, how?

In her *Story of a Soul*, St. Thérèse of Lisieux gives an extraordinarily concrete document of the life of a soul, its struggles and circumstances. Wrapped seemingly completely within contingent conditions, having physiological dispositions of an organism susceptible to tuberculosis, that is, a supremely sensitive disposition, having an ardent, supremely tense, and erotic temperament, on the one hand, and growing up in an exceptionally religious family life into which nothing of the triviality of ordinary life seems to have penetrated and then entering a Carmel, Therese seems to have been perfectly conditioned by her empirical, contingent situation for a religious life. It seems that she naturally from earliest childhood manifested a religious exaltation, one that apparently carried her throughout her brief time on earth. Her memoirs also seem to be wrapped in an empirically preestablished mold. The supreme importance that the call to love had for her in her development, the total submission to and dedication in love to Christ seem to be natural processes of sublimation within her given framework or appear as the natural course of a mind following a transcendental illusion. And yet in the same time that her unfolding runs its course seemingly naturally, there are striking elements present that make of this a unique document displaying the interplay between contingency

and the supernatural, each so distinct and yet one subservient to and necessary for the other's unfolding. We witness with what extraordinary struggle a soul unfolds its destiny. No matter how much Therese was imbued with hypersensitivity and constantly spurred in her innermost exalted being by the religious feelings of her childhood, and despite her then convinced dedication to God, she had to operate her real conversion by herself alone. Indeed, her spiritual destiny was not given to her. She could have rejected religion. And she could have fulfilled this same destiny without chronic disease, or have been cured of it, and done so either in a Carmel or as the mother of a family.

No matter how she herself may have appreciated her development, it seems that the crucial point comes when, as she describes, she hides herself behind her bed in the school dormitory *to think*. She estimates later on that her "thinking" was a self-invented "oration." As she describes it, however, it possesses all the features of a conversion, of a complete vital-psychic-spiritual scrutiny of her entanglement within the world of man, of nature, a scrutiny of the very nature of contingency in order to find what it is all about, what life is about, what her specific life is about. It is in this thinking about the world and life as she describes it that she is obviously examining the meaning of life for herself. Only she herself by herself can examine it. Only in examining it may she release within herself the *possibility of freedom*, her intimately personal freedom from the bounds of natural and social conditioning. Only from within this universal and deepest felt scrutiny may she prepare the ground for a truly personal spiritual act.

We must immediately note that such a universal examination already involves two basic realities, the origin of which could be argued. First, there is the questioning intelligence together with the power of analysis and universalization, but second, and of supreme importance, this scrutiny does not appear as an altogether natural function of the faculties of reason. It appears to be carried by a specifically profound upsurge of concern with life, a particularly deep quest to know what life is about, one not aimed at satisfying intellectual curiosity but having the purpose of sustaining this life. It might be argued, therefore, whether this be already a special "call" or an inborn spiritual demand.

Let us leave it at that. What follows is the struggle to establish the answer to this quest, to find a place where to start. It is often insisted that the waves of suffering that submerged Therese while she was desperately seeking love and affection within her company were in vain! Indeed, we may gather from the later attitude she developed towards human relationships that it was at first from contact with other beings that she hoped to find her starting point—but in vain. How did she find it? Were all human contacts vain? Could there be no one essential contact? Therese did not have to find it.

How could she have found in her companions younger and older what she sought? Could she have ever found it?

In fact after the extreme demands she made in childhood for affection and tenderness, Therese sought something deeper. Later on, becoming aware of the shortcomings of simple natural affections, of their inessential, albeit conducive, value, she describes how in her relations with the novices and with other sisters

she sought to disabuse them of natural spontaneous affective attractions when there was nothing more there to be found. But what could have been found? And were the companions from whom she at an earlier age sought affection not aware of how insufficient their love would have been? Did they not shrink spontaneously before bestowing their simple love upon someone with whom they instinctively felt a simple, human, animal coziness and intimacy would not be possible?

Disabused herself of this vain search for fulfillment among others, and having discovered the futility of the natural world, of life taken in itself as a natural phenomenon, of contingency as such, she also became disabused of attributing any essential value to human relationships. Thus readied to dispossess herself of them all, she slowly returned in upon herself to seek the only foothold there. But she did not do so in an egotistic way, trusting in her own powers, cognition, tangible emotions, or inward satisfactions. Together with the poignant enduring of the futility and contingency of existence came true longing for the eternal, for the really valid, and the true conversion of a soul dispossessing herself from her love of tangible attachments and aspiring to the transcendent reality. We know from her autobiography (written under obedience) that none of the suffering of conversion was spared her by the fact that owing to her childhood preparation she seemingly knew beforehand what she sought, that she seemingly knew all the words and all the names for that transcendent reality. Had this knowledge and the faith alone sufficed, Therese would have been spared this suffering, but then that would mean that she did not have to make the conversion, that she would never have made the radical start, that she would not have lived to be redeemed.

And yet this conversion of the soul, her recognizing in its deepest heart the necessity of dispossessing herself from the contingent and her longing for the transcendent, is nothing but a start made on an unchartable sea and in the darkness. It cannot be accomplished except through the end of life itself. Happy the death, the final moment on this road, that is the death of all ties and hopes, a total abandonment, a complete dispossession.

There seem to be two elements in Therese's search for her own way. There is the ongoing stream of inner suffering, the suffering of dissatisfaction with contingent existence, of being repeatedly thrown back upon yourself since wherever you launch your heart, a wall blocks the way, since whatever you wish for falls short of expectation when the wish is fulfilled, since whatever you undertake ends in disappointment, even in dismay, so that whatever you hope for proves to be a deception. And so your very heart, which has the spontaneity to throw itself into everything, distills suffering, the most intimate, intense, and incurable suffering of hopelessness. There is certainly nothing in this world that we may hope for with such an ardent heart, with such utmost intensity and fervor as that had by Therese. And yet another Hope, Hope beyond Hope, is not present. We may postulate it and know all the words of incantation, we may have ineffable faith in the existence of the transcendent, and yet, in order to live it, in order to feel with that hope the void of the heart, we have to forge this feeling, enhancing all conviction within ourselves.

A postulated faith is still not a lived faith, and to have faith is still to remain empty-hearted. What else is faith but a guiding principle, a sign? It has still to be interpreted

by our innermost, personal, specific being. It has still to find the means by which to make this interpretation within ourselves, and we have to launch ourselves into the pursuit of fulfilling its promise and so pave, forge, invent for it a way. We have, indeed, to make a road of all the pieces of life, build it ourselves upon the givenness of natural life.

What were the elements of the road made by Therese? She relates often that in the midst of her suffering, her struggle, her endless and never relenting efforts in which all of them seem to be so finite, so limited, there will come most unexpectedly from within herself an experience so specifically personal and intimate that it could not be shared without losing all its meaning. This is an experience of minute and yet absolutely convincing significance conveyed in a most certain way. Therese discovers that experience which St. Ignatius Loyola calls a "consolation" or a "desolation of the soul" and which is for him an indication for our conduct. She learns to listen within herself for these experiences and accordingly directs her course with an absolute conviction of being right. She looks all the time for "signs." Her hemorrhage appears to her to be a "sign" that God has decided on her dying. And yet she discovers how elusive and false the interpretation of signs might be. Yet stumbling over errors, despairing over illusions, she directs herself step by step along the path of an inner conversion and once started on it, dispossesses herself slowly of all earthly ties.

Her inward certitude, which step by step she gains, is such that she declines having a spiritual director, saying that Jesus alone may guide her. She discovers that only her own unique scrutiny and deciding is valid. She expresses this by saying that in Carmel one is "repliée sur soi-même." But did she really thoroughly renounce human help, support, reassurance, in short such "communication" of the spiritual life as can be made? From the very style of her memoirs and her core thought therein, we see that this is not so. The different Mothers Superior, especially Mother Marie de Gonzague, to whom, according to the organization of the life in Carmel Therese was meant to confide the problems of her inner development, were, in fact, of great importance to her progress. She was attached to them in various ways, even up to longing sometimes to be reassured by their presence, and yet none of them seems to have been up to communing in the way she sought. In vain would she have shared her deepest concerns with them, her sense of destiny. She had to remain "repliée sur elle-même." And yet they did understand in so far as the "unusual" way in which Therese apprehended her existence and trusted in her superior abilities in the spiritual realm was working a complete transformation in Carmel. Therese herself, however, tells several times that certain of her experiences had to remain with her, it not being possible to share them without their losing their "fragrance" and sacred character.

Even if it had to be exclusively one's own, uniquely own, decision that one would have to progress towards one's spiritual destiny, can one not share it as an instance with another human being. Can we not share the object of our conviction in a mutual lived communion? What of Mary's seeking to communicate with Elizabeth the sacred annunciation of the Angel Gabriel? What about the communication on the sacred between St. Monica and St. Augustine, between St. Francis and St. Clare, etc.? But such communication on the sacred was not given to Therese to experience.

However, it is obvious from her expressed thoughts that she did communicate in an essential way with certain other Carmelite nuns. If she uncritically obeyed, having total confidence in their discernment and judgment, that was her obedience. But even in following her own discernment, she communicated a lot of her struggles to Mother Agnes and Mother de Gonzague for the sake of more than obedience. It is in this effort to communicate and interpret her tendencies, her temptations, her aspirations and beliefs that she was herself following the path of scrutiny once entered upon. It is precisely through this effort at simultaneously expressing and interpreting in accord with a need to search for truth and to make herself understood that she was establishing for herself a serial continuity. It is the Rule of Carmel and a spirituality of renunciation and prayer that seems naturally to be the mold and the system of reference for Therese's progress, and yet in order that she might infuse it with a new life and an original reorientation, she must have made that rule and spirituality explode from within her. If through these forms she communicated with her sisters, she nevertheless was inventing a new position in the "game," and for this she had to scrutinize it within herself over against the felt experience of others.

Descartes has seen that the essence of spiritual life is in the will. One may unjustly be tempted to see in Therese's progress proof of this opinion. True, during her loss of faith, when she remained all in the dark, incapable of lifting her spiritual elan towards the transcendent, it is her will to believe, her will to give the testimony to God, her will to cooperate with Jesus' work of Redemption. Will that carried her onward no matter what. Here we are reaching the culminating point: her religious vocation.

In fact, spiritual destiny, such as that forged by Therese, is not solely religious. There is an infinite variety of supernatural destinies, as we witness among great artists, poets, thinkers, philosophers, heroes, etc. That being acknowledged, there is, it seems, a specific element in the progress of the supernatural destiny of a soul that decides on a religious vocation.

Each such destiny starts by supernatural conversion and successive dispossession, a progressive aiming at union with the transcendent. The conversion consisting in becoming disabused of contingency, which is conversion's negative aspect, is only preparatory, and if, as Kierkegaard saw it, it does not lead beyond to a "radical leap" into the transcendent realm and then a return back to contingent life, then, however much illuminated life may become, this is still but a negative mysticism. In the case of Therese, however, we have an example of positive mysticism in that here is a positive counterpart to negative conversion: this mysticism is in her feeling for the contingent situation of the whole of humankind, of all the souls stuck in viscid nature, some incapable of lifting themselves above it, others not strong enough to persist in the effort. It is this feeling within herself of the tragedy of the human condition, of the necessity of a mortal struggle in order to overcome it, of a responsibility for all the souls in such distress, this makes up the complete religious VISION of the religious mystic.

We see such a vision in the great Jewish prophets, in Isaiah, for instance, when he prophesies the "Good News" that "binds up the shattered heart, sets free the slave. . ." and even more in the Messianic proclamation of Christ. One may object that Therese knew all this, that she did not invent it. It is the essential teaching

of Christianity. And yet, in order to live this essential teaching in times when live faith was lacking, when only her will to help redeem souls through her suffering sustained her, she had to have discovered this vision for and by herself. It is owing to this vision that she was able to unfold within herself this messianic intent to sacrifice herself for the redemption of others, and to impart her strictly personal sacred experience within the absolute silence of her soul to other souls. She declares a belief that a lot of good will come from her confession of her life, from her sharing her “little way” to salvation.

Thus, Therese’s spiritual destiny culminates in a mystic vision that is none other than a vision of the passion of Christ Himself, with Whom she feels most intimately united in reality as an instrument of His.

18. HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO A SOUL? SHAPING DIFFERENT DESTINIES

- a. God does not speak directly to the soul. Even if there could be a direct approach with a concrete message, it has first to filter through the whole distillation of soul’s experience towards an understanding felt from within for which the soul has to make herself ready.
- b. Yet in the case of a “vocation,” there is an inward spontaneity that shapes one’s other aims, the developing of some tendencies rather than others. John XXIII shows in his spiritual journal how, moved by an unconscious desire, he tried continually to master all his being, taking up again and again the same resolutions over the years, year by year, until the inner capacity sought was mastered or such or other propensity deemed unfitting was uprooted. All the nuances made, all the changed newly biased feelings and differently oriented strivings, these framed an inner bed for other types of experience. John XXIII applied himself chiefly—as his journal tells the story—to acquiring humility by renouncing all affirmation of self, all personal tendencies and convictions, all individual strivings and beliefs. In short, all the building of his personal inner being aims at being humble, at putting himself in God’s hands alone and letting himself be blindly guided. His final consecration on this path showed forth when he said on his deathbed, “I have opened myself totally to His inspiration.” It is by that progress in abolishing his human, individual, egotistic self that he made God speak and act through him. This “opening to inspiration,” the life work of a soul, brought absolute confidence and blind abandonment to God’s will, presence, and action through Him.
- c. This mastery of one’s inner destiny culminates sometimes in an outwardly directed mission. The soul might prepare itself for undertaking a mission toward humanity. In the case of prophecy, of martyrdom, of heroic self-sacrifice, we see the capacity of the soul to undertake a responsibility transcending our natural human tendencies and propensities, denying fear, anxiety, in the certitude of undertaking a task for the sake of a “higher” and not earthly “principle,” a mission with the vision. This vision is not a scientific generalization or a sociological

view of humanity, but is an intrinsic interpretation referring to a supernatural aim, a perspective beyond the interests, aims, purposes of contingent need.

- d. God may speak to the soul through a destiny. Louis Lavelle describes such a mission in these terms: “someone puts his whole being into a task believing that he is the only one to accomplish it; he is forging his destiny in pursuing it.”
- e. Even though no one else can understand the meaning of our purpose, a purpose with a transcendent aim that is directed by a supernatural ideal repeatedly proposes itself before the inner eye.
- f. For St. Thomas More in his fidelity to the dictates of his conscience, keeping in mind how he will answer for his deeds to the Lord when he is called was the principle that shaped his destiny.

19. THE GREAT CHAIN

The problem of the breadth and many layers of understanding involved in the very nature of revelation is certainly as old as humanity’s becoming fully developed, that is, capable of raising itself to the level of the spirit with its dissatisfaction with the limits of contingency. The quest for the ultimate answers to questions of life then opens, and the yearnings of heart that cannot be satisfied within the empirical confines of the human universe are released.

It belongs to the very nature of the “sacred” as the object of this quest to be difficult to transmit into understanding. Human understanding in its nature, organs, functioning is a doing of nature, a part of the natural world, and as such is designed and formed for the purpose of serving life, the survival of the individual and the perpetuation of the species, and beyond that of the natural world itself.

Consequently, whatever there would be in the way of revelation to be understood, grasped, received, assimilated would have to be conveyed within the limits of the human system of functioning. And this system extends over the complete human setup in a most tightly organized network from which nothing can be omitted or neglected without hampering the final outcome.

a. THE CHAIN

1. The light—the spirit—the fire
2. Is the soul the incarnated organ of the spirit?
3. But the soul itself is:
 - sensitive,
 - affective,
 - discursive,
 - erotic,
 - constitutive.
4. Through its first two strata the soul represents the bodily functions of life propulsion, orientation, and life preservation:

- a. nourishment; spatiotemporal motor activities
- b. the visceral functions of organic activities
- c. procreation—propagation of the species
- d. the life instinct:
 - i. *élan vital*—joy
 - ii. preservation
 - iii. propagation

The functions of maintaining life and carrying it along. The soul in these activities, based on kinesthetic intentionality, constitutes the lived body itself.

5. But with the entrance of the discursive and constitutive levels—those of reason—the reflective and interpretative level of fully conscious activity begins, which transmutes the spontaneous reactivity or phenomenon of the soul into complete experience by giving them various configurations through selection, giving them their cohesion over against instantaneity, giving them “qualitative meaning” with respect to their dispersed elements and their instantaneity, in sum, a perduring cohesion.

At this level there emerges the presence of the *spirit*. It is at this level that instantaneous and meaningless spontaneity may be transformed into Eros—which both partakes of instinct and pertains to the spirit.

We see how from the beginning of man’s quest for the supernatural—that is, to transcend the limits of the humanly constituted world—the answer to this quest appeared to be *mysterious*, that is, to be *not directly translatable into the understanding of man*. Human understanding is geared towards a direct grasp of life and nature and is basically rooted in the primordial means of sensory perception. In fact, going through the whole ladder of human functioning we might show how all is geared towards the organization of various levels of this perception, that is, towards the more and more advanced, so that the subtle organization and clarification of bodily movements is coordinated with the cognitive elements they entail in the human universe. What is sought in our spiritual quest is sought precisely as something different, alien, something surpassing and transcending the universe. But since human understanding refers to the linkages within the human being—the chain of his embodiment—the understanding of the revealed word enters this chain and finds its way through the laws of that chain’s functioning. (Is the soul the instrument of the spirit? Is spirit individualized as an immaterial infusion of the bodily soul or is it *personal* as it is formed qualitatively *by* the soul? Are we speaking of the destiny of the soul or of the spirit?)

20. CIPHER LANGUAGE AND THE INCARNATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

If revelation is a supernatural message breaking through the narrow limits of contingent nature, how possibly can this message, which by definition does not belong to the realm of nature, be received, interpreted, understood, followed? The human

being has expanded within the world and is made up of several layers or dimensions, all of them implicated with the whole of nature, partaking of it, expressing its laws and inner ties. The human being intrinsically coheres with nature in a tight knit. And even if the human spirit in its longings for immortality transcends the conditions of nature, even if the human heart in its yearning for final justice, which is not to be found within the world, encompasses the world's limits, even if the human mind with its thrust for final principles, of which we may only infer some hints within the world, is seemingly transposed thereby to the ultimate logos, could we ever receive and adequately comprehend these final answers to our yearnings since they do not cohere with laws reigning within us and with the measure that our limited faculties know?

To receive such a transcendent message we have at our service only means bound up with nature, all of them tied up with nature in the closest bond. Throughout human history just these means have been called upon to receive, interpret, and understand revelation according to the measure of man. What was meant according to the measure of God has had to be estimated according to the measure of man.

Thus not only the directly uttered messages of revelation but equally all the elements of man's yearning for the divine have through the history of man been brought down or elevated to the level of a *tertium quid*, where the naturally experienced desire of the Divine, the absolute, and the ultimate would take a humanly graspable form mediating between the unattainable and the tangible, the unalterable and the expressed.

Man has seen the Ultimate and Absolute in nature in an infinite number of ways. The fertility of plants, the fecundity of man, the infinite aspects of the unforeseeable and intangible aspects of the whole of nature in which our life is involved, and our psychic, moral, affective existence itself with all its fluctuations, all these have offered man at every turn in his concerns a mystery transcending human understanding but also a way to approach the greater mystery. . . . It is by their giving a form to our yearning that these mysteries as they present themselves to our understanding that man has been able to establish a *tertium quid*, a bridge to the Divine in the form of the "sacred."

It is at this level of the sacred that man has attempted to lift himself from his contingent condition and establish a contact, communication, communion with the encompassing Absolute. Whether man sought his own elevation via sacrifices, mysteries, oracles, etc., to conjure and obtain a message from the encompassing forces or whether such a message was given him spontaneously, it always touched the level of the sacred, that is, the borderline realm between the ineffable and the concrete with all its ambiguity and intangible odds. This threshold, indeed, becomes the threshold of life itself with all its elements.

21. C O D A

Ora il vento e silenzioso e silenzioso il mare . . .
 —Giuseppe Ungaretti, *La Terra Promessa*

and from my heart, which did not die, does not die, does not agonize—although life and its waves, which previously agitated its fragile wings—there still springs the flow of ardor, of urgent prompting, of the work within to bring forth from limbo, to make germinate, grow, unfold, blossom, and render fruit. One wave of life dies, and another will start; one current of passion agitating our heart passes, and another will arrive, but the work within will neither be born nor die with any of them. Must it not then have its own womb, its own embryonic cells, its own creative impulse, and its own vital resources!

Caught in the course of forging our inward destiny, always half in the light and half in the dark, wandering just where exactly not being clear to us, we still go, living the greatest adventure we feel—God gives me life so that I may pursue this venture. Only in this life may I accomplish this, and I long to live out the sequence. Nothing in life has ever been so fascinating as this adventure. I cannot foresee the sequence at all. All that promises, beckoning us to follow, appears in an instant, but to what is a mystery. Do I slowly forge this mystery or just discover it? How much has been laid in me as a design even before I have been propelled into time as a project to be realized by unraveling that design through my own effort? Or was this route of mystery only made possible by germ potentialities springing from the spontaneous flow of the timeless that threw me into life, with the whole of my project to be invented by me as a personal creation? Am I chosen, predestined to redeem contingency or am I totally free to venture and accomplish my project with the resources I have? Will this remain the unfathomable secret of the Creator? And yet. . . .

22. THE FAREWELL SERMON OF TIMOTHY :
C H R I S T O - L O G O S

Brethren,

Having covered this complete cycle together are we not truly, at last, Brethren? Brethren we are, not only in this flesh which prescribes for us the common joys and miseries of life's commotion, not only in our common aspiration to enliven and elevate this life from its animal torpor towards its higher dimension, and not only in our outward faith in the Christian gospel as the means by which to achieve this elevation and partake of it together. But how often have we forgotten all these acquired means and started from a primitive germ within ourselves, on our own, without a spark of outward light or a word of courage. We have followed our inner spontaneity wherever it may lead us and thus step by step have dug into the soil of our being and along the sacred river where our roots plunge, have retraced the path, the winding path of the genesis of our authentic life. We have rediscovered the light within ourselves, each coming upon his own innumerable experiences yielding evidence of the eternal precepts revealed to mankind and so opening our opaque, enfolded being to the Absolute. Are we not in this so truly and all the more Brethren?

We have found a new community of heart with a depth that nothing can mar, pervert, and dissolve, that contains the Time of Time of our inner core condition freed from contingent temporality since we are freed for:

- the only love possible for man, love in God;
- the only true hope, the hope that God will accomplish His work of redemption within us;
- the only valid desire, that of living the Divine with our whole being, up to enduring its loss;
- the only expectation, that each instant will mean the completion of our abandonment to the transcending elan;
- the only pursuit, to help other men to enter the journey towards a face-to-face encounter with their destiny;
- the only shock, that of retrieving ourselves amid immersion in the Divine;
- the only passion, that of living Christ’s path to Golgotha within ourselves through and through;
- the only obsession, the suffering consequent to contingency and the inner labor of redemption in unity with Christ, the Unique Witness;
- the only true joy, to discover the divine upon opening one’s eyes in the morning and to meditate on Christ’s passion during sleepless nights, spare moments, half-conscious states of mind, to adore the Creator, projecting over and over at every instant in the time of times the marvelous game of creation and redemption;
- the only conviction, that nothing is ever lost, that we are not alone, that we may abandon our will, our scheming wits, our prudence, even our ideals to the ultimate and primary role which was assigned to our destiny in the Great Scheme of Creation and to the loving hands of Providence, walking in the footsteps of Christ, Who did not sow nor harvest but lived day to day fulfilling His destiny.

Do I need, if I ever could, to ask you any longer, “How does God speak to the soul?” To know that is to have faith, to have worked through a dark tunnel transmuting all the richness of our faculties and the infinite richness of life into new mechanisms that make of them a new food to nourish and make flourish the fragile plant of our spiritual soul, to advance us to a novel dimension of our existence extending to all a novel tonality that as we settle our accounts with finite life ratifies the positive side. How does the soul speak to God but through our whole being lifted in its tonality in acts transcending our finiteness: acts that we call “meditation,” acts that we call “prayer,” acts of devotion to others in their plights—acts that stream from our being after it has settled accounts with finiteness, taken the cross, and met the Redeemer on the way to Golgotha. They stream endlessly from our being after we have in our quest retraced the flux of life’s timing from our protogenesis on, after we have suspended all our temporal intentions and set our inner self above time and freed from time’s net through the unique concern of the Divine.

Now that we have unveiled the territory of the Sacred both together and each exclusively on his own, do you not see that I never could have taught you the acts of Transcendence: meditation and prayer? Both stem from recognition of our finiteness, which is necessarily a personal discovery and from an innermost desire

to transcend that finiteness, a desire that flows from its own spontaneity through incalculably long labor, out of which only the soul may render accounts to her Creator.

Now that all our concerns but concern with matters Divine become futile, now that the Divine Witness bears the only certitude we know, after we have suffered the agony of finiteness with the Unique Witness, and after He has revealed Himself again on the road of suffering and passion as the Christ, the pioneer of redemption, and invited us to follow Him to the Cross, after we have died with Him in the animal terror of the flesh, we are reborn with Him in boundless security.

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