



Philosophy and Holiness: A Metaphysical Essay on Communion¹

*Macario Ofilada**

Abstract: Philosophy, a free and intelligent response to the calling of the transcendental, is undertaken from the immanence of time and space within the limits of the objective world. Quite simply, philosophy undermines the very process of transforming existence into life.

This essay offers a model of viewing philosophy as metaphysical and that the roots of all man's metaphysical or philosophical aspirations are religious. Because of the discrepancy between the metaphysical and our perceptions of seeing the world objectively, the question of polarity between the divine and the human, the infinite and the finite, God and man, the Absolute and all forms of spiritualities are probed and put into question.

This paper further upholds that spirituality, as a consequence of our reflections on holiness within the perspective of metaphysics and guided by communion, opens up new visions and articulations to speak of truth with a much grounded foundation.

Keywords: *transcendental, finitude, culpability, hermeneutics, Absolute, metaphysical, communion*

“ Consider further the rites of sacrifice and the whole area with which the art of divination is concerned, that is, the interaction (*koinonia*) between men and gods...Divination, therefore, is the practice that produces loving affection (*koinonia*) between gods and men.”²

* Dr. Ofilada holds a Doctorate in Philosophy from the Universidad de Salamanca, Spain. He has published extensively in European and Philippine Journals.

¹ I wish to dedicate this piece to the memory of an admired master in things historical and beloved friend in loving all things Philippine, Isacio Rodríguez Rodríguez O.S.A (1924-2009). His passing opens up a yawning gap in the realm of Philippine historiography and cultural studies. May the Lord of History grant Him eternal reward.

² Plato, *Symposium* 188, c. (*The Loeb Classical Library and translation by A. Nehemas and P. Woodruff*).

“The blessing-cup, which we bless, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ; and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ?” 1 Corinthians 10: 16³

“Il faut répondre, je crois, que métaphysiquement parlant, la seule espérance authentique est celle qui va à ce qui ne dépend pas de nous, celle don’t le ressort est l’humilité, non l’orgueil.”

Gabriel Marcel, *Position et approches concrètes du Mystère Ontologique*.

Philosophy and *Holiness*⁴ or how does the immament, in its finitude and culpability, participate in the transcendental? This is the main point of reflection, inevitably agonic, of the present essay, which could be deemed as programmatic, for any philosophy is set out above all as a program, which becomes incarnate in a voice, a specific and contextualized tone that replies to a calling.

Philosophy is, first and foremost, a free and intelligent response (and inevitably, limited given man’s finitude and culpability) to the calling of the transcendental. Philosophy is undertaken within the immanence of time and space, within the limits of the objective world. As it is being undertaken, always as an “agon,” a struggle “for life,”⁵ as Unamuno would put it, philosophy recreates the objective and shared world, within the finite and culpable coordinates of time and space. Inevitably, the result is the lived world or a world hypothesized to be lived in. This lived world is derived from the objective or shared world. Philosophy, by means, of “inverting the habitual direction of the work of thought,”⁶ recreates this lived world into a home for man by providing a way of understanding this lived world. Philosophy, which is realized by inverting, is creative. It is not accepting a *status quo*, but transforms it, converts it. Inversion commences by questioning but does not end there. Questioning is the opening up of the path of inversion of a work of thought, to bring it to perfection in the love of that which transcends man’s finitude and culpability and embraces him at the same time. This is wisdom. Love of wisdom is the perfectionality of thought. Thought is not the overcoming of the love of wisdom.

Universe, World, Home: From Existence to Life

A philosophy is in its effectivity a discourse on this lived (in actuality) or liveable (in potentiality) world. World is the liveable or lived part of the universe, which is the

³ *The Greek New Testament and the New Jerusalem Bible*.

⁴ I pen this essay with thanks and, even perhaps, apologies to: H. Urs Von Balthasar, “Theologie und Spiritualität” *Gregorianum* 50 (1969), 571-587; J. P. Torrell, “Théologie et Saintité” *Revue Thomiste* 71 (1971), 205-221; S. Guerra, “Teología y Santidad” Several Authors, *La recepción de los místicos. Teresa de Jesús y Juan de la Cruz*. (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad Pontificia, 1997), 635-666.

⁵ Cfr. M. de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1994).

⁶ H. Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 54.

great totality of all that there is. Philosophy seeks to transform this world into what is effectively liveable or home. Philosophy in its effectivity as discourse is what is deemed as a model of reality: an episteme⁷, a paradigm,⁸ a model for understanding (of what is methodologically to be taken as a “text”)⁹, comprehending it, for it is the product of a primarily hermeneutical venture¹⁰ whose end-product is what we call an interpretation, which in turn presupposes a description. This commences as a letting be, letting itself manifest or an act of *laissez faire*, which philosophy, takes by the horns. This taking of the bull’s horns is the hermeneutical task.

Taking the bull by its horns or wrestling with the transcendental stranger, whose name we ask for and whose blessing we demand until it is time to release Him or till the break of dawn, when release is letting the transcendental be transcendental or letting the Absolute be the Absolute in its own terms, after our struggle with Him like Israel. The philosopher’s task is to merit this name: “Israel”, for struggling with the Absolute just before the break of dawn in order to release Him to be the Absolute on His own terms. This release is what the Northern mystics would label as “Gelassenheit.”¹¹ The Spanish mystical tradition would call it “pasividad”, even to great extremes like “alumbradismo” or “quietismo.”¹²

Dawn is when Minerva’s owl does not take flight, for it is at rest. Dawn is when the dove of truth is released, after the release of the transcendental in its own terms and presupposing the struggle with Him in the darkest of the night (just before

⁷ Cfr. M. Foucault, *L’archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969); Idem. *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

⁸ Cfr. T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); H. Kung & D. Tracy (eds.), *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1989); H. Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁹ For a fundamental notion of text, see: P. Ricœur, “What is a Text? Explanation and Understanding” in *From Text to Action* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 105-124. Also, on models of comprehension of texts from the viewpoint of experience, which is crucial in the present essay: E. Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); Idem., *Christ: The Christian Experience in the Modern World* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1980); M. Alvarez, *Experiencia y Sistema. Introducción al pensamiento de Hegel* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1978); M. Ofilada, *S. Juan de la Cruz: El sentido experiencial del conocimiento de Dios* (Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 2002).

¹⁰ Cfr. K. Hartmann, “Phenomenology, Ontology and Metaphysics” *The Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1968), 85-112; D. Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology. The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

¹¹ Cfr. L. Cognet, *Introduction aux Mystiques Rhéno-Flamands* (Paris: DDB, 1968); Giovanna della Croce, *I mistici del Nord* (Rome: Studium, 1981).

¹² Cfr. P. Saínz Rodríguez, *Introducción a la historia de la literatura mística en España*, 2nd. Ed. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1984); A. Huerga, *Historia de los alumbrados*, 4 vols. (Madrid: FUE, 1978-1988); Several Authors, *Historia de la Inquisición en España y América* (Madrid: BAC, 1984); J. A. Llorente, *Historia crítica de la Inquisición Española*, 4 vols. (Madrid: Hiperion, 1980); Several Authors, *Inquisición española y mentalidad inquisitorial* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1984).

dawn), to search for habitable land from the dark ark of the cacophony of mankind amidst the floods of time and space, which besiege him for man's being consists in vulnerability to the ontological constitution of the universe that surrounds him. He is exposed to the ontological elements which constitutes his existence. His existential challenge consists in transforming his "being there" (existence) into "being there for someone and for something" (life). Philosophy is the very process of transforming existence into life.

The Holy, Holiness and The Sacred: Status Quaestionis

The Absolute, in its transcendence, is the Real of Reality, the Reality of the Real in the Supreme Instance. It is Generosity in its Infinite Instance. Generosity is wherein the self becomes more than itself.¹³ In the case of the Absolute, it is the overflowing of the self in self-emptiness or kenosis. It offers itself or it mediates itself as Love. Love is the very core of the Absolute.¹⁴ It is Love that is opened, that invites, that mediates, allowing itself to be experienced. As such it calls. It is offered kenotically or in emptiness. Its discourse is what is called agape, sharing.

In its self-sharing the Absolute mediates and opens history, at the same time constituting history, which is the venue of promise in terms of faith. On the part of the Absolute this faith is fidelity, and it opens up a path of responding to it which is Hope, the journeying of and within history towards this Absolute, in fidelity, made concrete in history, by man, in his finitude and culpability, who is called to be generous. Generosity is the basic trait of existence¹⁵ that calls for the overflowing of the self basically by transforming existence (being there) to life (being there for someone or something).

Generosity makes the primordial Love of the Absolute attractive. Generosity is the Beauty of this Love. It has, primarily, an aesthetical function, for it makes the transcendental love not only perceptible or liveable, within finitude and culpability, but also ontological, i.e., knowledgeable. Beauty is the primary transcendental category in order for man to symbolically, i.e., ontologically grasp the Absolute as the Reality of the Real and the Real of the Reality.¹⁶ From here, the Real in its Reality and the Reality as Real behind its symbolization (which is its "being" or the symbolical mediation of

¹³ Cfr. L. Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

¹⁴ Interestingly, J. L. Marion in his insistence in the overcoming of ontotheology insists that the first name of God is Love. Being, or ontological categories, risk transforming God as an idol. Cfr. J. L. Marion. *Théologiques. Dieu sans l'être* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1982); Idem., *L'idole et la distance. Cinq études* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf). Also, see: G. Lafont, *Dieu, le temps et l'être* (Paris; Ed. du Cerf, 1986).

¹⁵ J. Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), 90.

¹⁶ For further reflection on this theme, see my essay: "From Aesthetics to Art: From Ontology to the Holiness of the Real with the Sacred and the Beautiful as Experiential Coordinates" *Philippiniana Sacra* 36 (2001), 289-312. Also: D. Orsuto, *Holiness* (London-New York: Continuum, 2006).

Reality as the Real and the Real as Reality) unfolds into the very qualities and properties of being which are being One, True, Good, Other and Thing.

Being is unified (One), in conformity, correspondence and coherence (True) with the Absolute, open and self-giving or diffusive of itself (Good), distinct (Other) and historical or concrete (Thing). However, Beauty (Kalos, Pulchrum) conceptually integrates all these transcendentals in being, which is the ontological attraction of the metaphysical. In other words, Beauty constitutes the call of the Real in as much as it is real and Reality in as much as it is reality. This call can only be “heard” as Being by man, who knows only in ontological categories and by means of the transcendental properties of Being. These transcendental properties constitute the Real and Reality in as much as it is knowable and as known, i.e., Being which is the Symbol of the Real in as much as it is Reality and Reality in as much as it is Real, which is the foundational basis of Being. Being (the ontological) is symbol of the Real in as much as it is Reality and of Reality in as much as it is Real (the metaphysical). “Reality is not a type of being. This is the ancient idea of being real, *esse reale*. I would say that what is real in being exists, *realitas in essendo*. Being is only a moment of reality.”¹⁷ It is the symbolical moment. Ontology is the symbolization of Metaphysics.

The Absolute is the Supreme instance of the Metaphysical. It is the Metaphysical in itself. Its call is Beauty. Its call is heard as ontology. Its call is Theological, for the call of the Absolute is heard in as much as the Absolute is heard as God. Thus, the call is in itself theological. Theology is *God-Talks* and not just *God-Talk*. It is the Absolute who calls, who is heard as God. This is the original sense of theology. Theology, as a rational task, is *God-Talk* or talking about God in all its technical sophistication¹⁸ or methods and insights.¹⁹ Theology, understood in this positivistic human level, is only possible as an analogical²⁰ response, within specific historical and cultural contexts,²¹ to *God-Talks* which is a call to holiness, an invitation to participate in *God-Talk*, always within the context of pluralism,²² and within the view of making God relevant to present-day experiential discourse.²³ Theology, as a human enterprise, is precisely

¹⁷ X. Zubiri, *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1987), 16.

¹⁸ Cfr. J. Macquarrie, *God-Talk: Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1967); Idem., *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1971).

¹⁹ Cfr. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); Idem., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1957).

²⁰ Cfr. D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination. Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 2000).

²¹ Cfr. S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and expanded edition (Manila: Logos Publications, 2003).

²² Cfr. D. Tracy & J. Cobb, Jr., *Talking about God: Doing Theology in the Context of Modern Pluralism* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983).

²³ Cfr. S. Guerra, “El reto del discurso cristiano: Decir hoy ‘Dios’ significativamente” *Revista de Espiritualidad* 53 (1994), 304-307.

a participation in the act wherein the Absolute allows Itself to be experienced, and thus reveals Himself, as God: talking about Himself or *God-Talks*.

Philosophy, as the response to this vocation which is theological and heard in the ontological level, is love or friendship (*philein*) of wisdom (sophia). Sophia is the state of participation of holiness. Participation is marked by friendship, which, as Aristotle writes, “is the most necessary in life.”²⁴ Friendship is uninterested or selfless love. It is ascensional on the part of man, involving his own act of self-emptiness (*kenosis*) in ascending and intense response (*eros*) to the *Kenosis* of the Absolute in experience. In its ascent to the transcendental Absolute, by and in the state of loving wisdom (*philosophia* or *amor sapientiae*), philosophy is *eros*. *Eros* is force, intense directionality towards that which is beyond, that which is transcendental. *Eros* gives philosophy, as the response to the Absolute, its dramatization, which is the very force of the experiential narrative or history. Drama is history as it takes place as the mediational narrative.

The Absolute, in its transcendence, is *The Holy*. *Holiness* is his very quality, which by his generosity is mediational, i.e., experiential. The Absolute is the source of holiness. It has been described by phenomenologists of religion as the basic category of religious experience.²⁵ It is the trait of the Absolute which calls for communion, for participation. This call is heard within an experiential ambiance, which is derived from the shared and lived world, and is labeled as the Sacred. Holiness is the relationality of the Absolute with itself, or in the intimate level and which is lived out as Unity and Trinity, i.e., beyond the solitude of being the One, overcoming the duality of two and perfected in the community of Three Persons. Holiness, too, is the relationality of the Absolute outside itself or in the immanently economical (*oikonomie* in soteriological terms) towards man, in his finited and culpability.

The *Sacred* or the experiential ambiance of the Holy in its Holiness is configured in ontological terms, i.e., in the symbolical level wherein frontiers and horizons are established in cognitive terms, made concrete empirically (experience as *empereia* or sense data). Sense data are the concrete moments of experience as the mediation of the Real in order to be reality and of Reality in order to be real, in its transcendence, within the immanent realm of man’s finitude and culpability.

The Sacred becomes, in effect, in as much as it is differentiated from the *Profane* or that part of the shared world which does not facilitate the response to the Holy, but without which the response is not possible. The response, involving

²⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155, a,4.

²⁵ Cfr. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford-London-New York; Oxford University Press, 1958). Cfr. Ph. Almond, *Rudolf Otto. An Introduction to His Philosophical Theology* (Chapel Hill-London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

the integral man in all his dimensions (psychological, physical, moral, social and religious) commences in the free and intelligent passage of man from the profane to the Sacred. This act is called religion, for it relinks (*religare*), it is a rereading of man's existential situation (*relegere*) and due diligence (*relegere* as *diligere*) to the same situation, without necessarily being confessional or institutional, in relation to the Absolute.

Philosophy, Mystagogy and Ascesis: In View of Communion and Holiness

Philosophy is initiation into the Sacred, which is the venue of transcendence toward the Absolute, by ontological means and overcoming the ontological realm of being, by the mediation of experience and entering the Metaphysical Realm of the Real and Reality, ultimately in taking part, sharing, communion with the Absolute, which is the very essence of Holiness. Because of this, philosophy is mystagogical. It is mystagogy, by means of experience, into the dynamic way towards the Absolute. The attainment of the absolute is called "communion" and the living out of this attainment is "holiness," which is a way or a path. Holiness is lived out, in turn, as participation, on the part of man. On the part of the Absolute, it is the Absolute being itself, united to itself: One and Triune.

Holiness is a metaphysical exigency. It radically (from the very roots of the Real and Reality in as much as it mediates itself as experience and as sacramental presence) demands leaving behind that which is an obstacle or that which does not favor this path of communion. It is a path of exercise (*ascesis*), of opting to remember (*anamnesis*) what favors the path of communion and forgetfulness (*lethe*) with regard to the obstacles. It is uncovering oneself (*aletheia*), to be open to the Truth of the Absolute which allows itself to be experienced or mediated because of its and in its Holiness, creating the realm of the Sacred from the shared world, deriving from it the lived world (or "erlebnis" in Diltheyan terms).

Holiness is participating in the Holy in itself within the Sacred in the course of history. Holiness makes history geared towards the Absolute. Holiness is the mode by which history is relational to the Absolute, which becomes concrete in the encounter with the Absolute in Faith, Hope and Love. This presupposes cooperation in the manifestation of the Will of the Holy in itself in its call to transcendence or as a vocation to transcendence.

The Absolute is fullness in transcendence. Paraphrasing Zubiri, the Absolute (or God in as much as the Absolute makes a discourse about Himself as God or theology) is blessed (*feliz*) because He possesses the fullness of life, which is based on the transparent fullness of being, in the fullness of Truth. Men are far from this joy, we are full of "philia." Thus, we are "philosophers," lovers of the knowledge of

the most real of reality, of a knowledge that allows us to be the realest of ourselves.²⁶ Love, then, for the philosopher is the very weight of himself, as Augustine would put it: “Amor meus pondus meum.”²⁷ As philosophers we are called to radiate the very life of the Absolute, which is Holiness in itself, like the glow of burnt offering²⁸, the puja of our very existence being burned and transformed into life.

The Dawn of Philosophy: The Mediational Path towards Transcendence

Philosophy does not commence when Minerva’s owl takes flight at dusk, but at dawn, after waiting for it, especially through the darkest part of the night, which is precisely before dawn. Philosophy does not report or just speculates on a dark world or in its completion, but awaits and keeps vigil and sets out to look for the olive branch, creating paths, which direct the itineraries of others. The search for the olive branch transforms the cacophony of the flood waters into a symphony of hope, of continuity after the dead-end of the deluge and exile from the land, which is home to man. This symphony we call, history: the experiential narrative of man, an experiential construct, model and paradigm for man’s immanent reality in its immanence, in its finitude and culpability and his struggle or reaching out for transcendence. Philosophy, as an immanent (or human: finite and culpable) response to a transcendental calling (that of the Absolute) bridges both transcendence and immanence. This bridging is in effect the construction of a path, a way. It is the way to holiness: the way to union or participation of the immanent, in its free and intelligent finitude and culpability, with the Absolute in its transcendence. Communion could only be in intimate terms with the Mystery, with the very sacramental presence.²⁹ It is mystical.³⁰

Philosophy commences not at sunset. Philosophy prepares for its flight, by means of “agon,” at the darkest part of night. It announces the dawn and takes place at the aurora as a flight towards the transcendence. Dusk is the hour of the scribe or what we vulgarly label as “historian-” which should not be the case, for the historian is not just a scribe or imitator (*mimesis*) but a creator by testimony and teaching (*martyr*), but not

²⁶ X. Zubiri, *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*, 21.

²⁷ St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, 13, 9.

²⁸ E. Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1982), 119.

²⁹ Among many treatises on sacramental theology, I admit being influenced most by E. Schillebeeckx’s landmark work: *Christ. The Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963). Also from the perspective of main oriental traditions, which do not identify the Absolute as God, cfr. H. Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1996), 350-372.

³⁰ Cfr. J. Carmody & D. Carmody, *Mysticism. Holiness East and West* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Idem., *Serene Compassion. A Christian Appreciation of Buddhist Holiness* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); P. Sheldrake, *Images of Holiness. Explorations in Contemporary Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987); R. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, 1985).

an inventor of truths (*poiesis*). Philosophy is *martyrion* or testimony and teaching. It is also virginity (*parthenos*) because it is the exercise of continence, discipline and purity.³¹ Philosophy, in its discursivity and textually finished form, is a *parthenon* and a *martyrion*.

Philosophy takes its cue from the rooster's crow. The task of crowing is assigned to the man of letters or of culture: he who takes charge of man's cultivation, as opposed to what is natural or given and even sometimes, from a haughty perspective, denominated as "savage."

Philosophy emerges from the culture (what man cultivates and from not what is given him or *physis* or *natura*) and enters into the realm of the transcendental, not only to provide the foundation for man's experiential and cognitive foundation (this is the interpretation of the transcendental of Kant), but to reach out for the transcendental acknowledged even in the most ancient of all traditions, including the Ancient Greek west (beginning with the so-called mythical period with its anthropomorphism of the transcendental and the break away of the so-called "presocratics" to Plato especially with his notion of the Good and Aristotle who postulated a "first philosophy" identifying it with "theology") because of the religious ("religare" or "relegere") root and directionality of man's cultivation – and not necessarily because of the confessional implications with regards to the institutional and its fideistic demands - whose presence as history and permanence in history culminates in what we call civilization and its concreteness in the "polis." The "polis" or at least the individuals within it must find their "way back" in an odyssey that runs smack of salvation (in the Ancient Hellenized world, this was greatly emphasized by Plotinus).

Mystery, Communion, Participation: Experiential Mediation

Man is finite and culpable. He is not transcendental in his existential conditionality, which is the main ingredient of his historicity, commencing from his consciousness of transcendental origin and destination (the origin to be re-

³¹ I have taken into consideration the following studies: W. Rordrof-A. Solignac, "Martyre", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique. Doctrine et Histoire* (Paris, 1932-1995), Vol. X, 717-735; H. Delehaye, *Sanctus. Essai sur le culte des saints dans l'antiquité* (Brussels, 1927); Idem., *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, 2nd ed. (Brussels, 1933); M. Pellegrino, *La spiritualité del martirio. Il martire e Cristo* (Turin, 1957); Idem., "L'imitation du Christ dans les Actes des Martyrs" *La Vie Spirituelle* 38 (1958), 38-54; Idem., "Le sens ecclésial du martyre" *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 35 (1961), 151-175; M. Spanneut, "Patience et martyre chez les Pères de l'Eglise" *Several Authors, Pleroma, Miscellanea A. Orbe S.I.* (Santiago de Compostela, 1990), 545-560; Tertullian, *De virginibus Velandis* (Rome, 1984); F. de B. Vizmanos, *Las vírgenes cristianas de la Iglesia Primitiva* (Madrid: BAC, 1949); *Several Authors, Mystique et continence* (Brussels: Etudes Carmelitaines, 1952); J. Alvarez, "Vírgenes cristianas" *Several Authors, Diccionario teológico de la vida consagrada* (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 1989), 1814-1824; C. Murnier, *Matrimonio e virginità nella chiesa antica* (Turin: Traditio Christiana, 1990).

encountered as the goal or the “originary”). Man possesses a vocation to be transcendental, not to be transcendental in himself, but to be holy: to participate (*koinonia*) in the transcendental. The transcendental in turn becomes present in the realm of man’s immanence and transforms it into a living history by being “mysterion” or mystery or sacrament: the presence of the transcendent in the immanent. Mystery is inevitably incarnational, for it is assuming an experiential narrative. Experience is mediation: it brings together, links, integrates and mediates what is transcendent and what is immanent. Experience is not just data perceived by the senses (*empereia*). These data are the logical derivation of this mediation in the level of the empirical which man in his intelligence assimilates and processes in the process of cognition.

Experience is the point of encounter, because it is mediation. Man is called to participate, to become holy like the transcendental. Such that man is the holy, the Absolute in experiential and participatory terms because the Absolute allowed itself to be experienced and sacramentalized, even to the point of incarnation. Man is the Absolute in experiential (finite and culpable mediator of the transcendental) terms. The Absolute became present (mystery) in its transcendence within the realm of the immanent to create history, becoming even incarnate in this history, giving it course, directionality and relationality with the Absolute in terms of *koinonia*, communion, sharing, fellowship or participation. In a word, experience.

Communion is not absorption of the identity of the other or becoming that other or monopolizing the other’s traits, but rather it is only “taking part,” sharing, fraternizing and being united with common denominatory metaphysical terms in intimate (mystical or “rootedness in the mystery”) terms. Communion is mediation or it is going beyond one’s frontiers, stretching them without nullifying them. Communion is experience. Communion means the Absolute becoming man by experience (or by participation) and man (the finite and culpable) becomes the Absolute by experience (or by participation).

Holiness is man’s participation in the transcendental which participated in man’s finitude and even culpability, without moral responsibility for it.³² This is what we call condescendance or self-emptying (*kenosis*). *Kenosis* is the basis of *koinonia* or *methxis* or *participatio*, (experience, which is not simply *empereia* or sense data for *gnosis* or cognition).

³² Cfr. W. M. Thompson, *Fire and Light. On Consulting the Saints, Mystics and Martyrs in Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Several Authors, *Teología y Santidad. A Special Issue of Communio* 9 (1987), 483-563; L. Mendizábal, “Vocación universal a la santidad” *Manresa* 36 (1964), 156-157; Several Authors, “Perfection chrétienne” *Dictionnaire de*, Vol. XII, 1074-1156; E. Ancilli, “Santidad Cristiana” Several Authors, *Diccionario de Espiritualidad* (Barcelona: Herder, 1964), 346-355.

The Way of Holiness: Presence as Mediation, Mediation as Self-Diffusion and Unfolding

The way of Holiness³³ is the experiential mediation of the Transcendental (the Absolute) and the Immanent (man, in his immanence marked by finitude and culpability). It is a road of encounter, of meeting. It is the road of presence, of mystery, wherein the Infinite is present in the Finite and the Finite is present in the Infinite. It is the sacramental road of history with its many dramas (or episodes), but metaphysically it is a unique way, common to all that is finite and culpable in their relationality to the Absolute. It is a road of meeting for the finite and the Infinite, wherein the latter becomes visible in the mediation of the finite, wherein culpability, at the same time, spirituality (or concrete historical and dramatic path towards the Absolute) is cultivated.

The Absolute, let us repeat, sacramentalizes itself as Mystery. It opens up a way of experience, a way of the spirit. Spirit is the Absolute in its integrity, allowing itself to be experienced or communicating itself in Revelation as God. The way of experience or the way of the spirit, which is man, in his finitude and culpability, responding to the integrating call of participation or holiness, finds the presence of the Absolute or its experientiality in historicity, in the forms of: *History* (the way as experiential narrative given the presence of the Absolute), *Society* (the way as communion of man desiring to live together given the presence of the Absolute), *Liberty* (the way as experiential individuality and choice given the presence of the Absolute), *Politics* (the way as the communion of man who act together towards a goal given the presence of the Absolute) and *Beauty* (the way as experiential driving force and sublime goal and criterion given the presence of the Absolute). All these, with *beauty* occupying the sublime place of the incarnated goal within *history*, as *society*, in *liberty*, through *politics*, takes place as experience and defines man, as spirit, conscious of his origins and of his goal. Borges puts it beautifully: *¿Qué arco habrá arrojado esta saeta/qué soy? ¿Qué cumbre puede ser su meta?*³⁴

The aforementioned are the concreteness of the Truth of the Absolute, revealed as God, made sacramentally present. The aforementioned forms are sacramental responses all cultivated by man (culture). They constitute the main categories of man, in his finitude and culpability, in the highest level of his rationality: thought. *Thought* centers itself in the aforementioned forms as its coordinates for discerning and determining the Truth, which is in effect, the presence of the Infinite in finitude.

³³ J. Guillet, "Sainteté de Dieu" *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. XIV, 184-192; A. Solignan, "Sainteté-Sanctification" *Ibid.*, 192-194; T. Spidlik, J. Picard, et al, "Saints" *Ibid.*, 196-230; P.Molinari, "Saint" *Dictionnaire de Vie Spirituelle* (Paris,1983), 977-986.

³⁴ J.L Borges, "La rosa profunda" *Idem.*, *Obras completas 1964-1975* (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 1993), 407.

This discernment and determination is in fact the grammar of Holiness in order to participate in the very Mystery, which is the very essence of Holiness. Thus, man as spirit is man responding to the vocation of integration with a view to communion or full participation.

Given his response as spirit, in the way or path of participation called “Spirituality,” man opens up the aforementioned forms as area to realize itself as spirit in terms of participation. This opening up is a cultivation. It is culture or man recreating what has been given him (*creatio, physis* or nature). Culture, as the participatory act of man in order to realize his vocation as spirit, has three main areas: *Art* (or the spirit as creative, given that creativity, as the self-appropriation and renewal of the given in creation and nature, is the mediational realization of experience related to the Absolute), *Science* (or the spirit as knowledgeable, for science is certain and true or credible knowledge) and *Morals* (or the spirit as embodiment of virtues, translated as norms and as the experiential agent of the Law from its Eternal and Natural level to its positive elaboration and praxis). When man lives morally, he elaborates an *ethics*, an *ethos* which in turn serves as paradigm within the dynamics of *history*, within the area of *society*, in accordance to the principle of *liberty*, within the praxis of *politics* and within view of *beauty*.

Culture is man building himself as spirit and making this universe, liveable, transforming it into a world, and within it his home, wherein he feels “he is the Absolute.” Culture is about building home. Its aim is dwelling, to habitate, to be at home, to be the Absolute. It is religious in its nature. In fact, religion is the underlying force of culture, which is the concreteness of spirituality. Religion is relationality to the Absolute and becomes historical in experience.

Experience is articulated within history, in society, in liberty, through politics, with beauty as goal as philosophy. Its voice is theological, for it is an echo of *God-Talk* (or the Absolute allowing itself to be experienced as God). The way man opens up with his voice is spirituality. It is the response to the calling of the Absolute in its integrity, who is Spirit, and who is not just immaterial, but integral in its transcendence, in its metaphysicality.

The Absolute as Spirit, is “lived out” in its transcendence,³⁵ by the mediation of experience. within its presence in the immanent level (history, society, liberty, politics and beauty), because of the relationality of Religion. The Absolute, as Spirit, many times limited to its onto-theological reality, is not just any reality or real, but is the Real of Reality and the Reality of the Real in its Supreme Instance. The possibility of participating by means of *God-Talk* to *God-Talks* constitutes the

³⁵ L. Dupré, *The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1972), 245.

core of what it is to be a person, which is “the most noble and most perfect being in all of nature.”³⁶

As Jacques Maritain writes beautifully:

“Spirit is the root of personality. The notion of personality thus involves that of totality and independence; no matter how poor and crushed he may be, a person, as such, is a whole and subsists in an independent manner. To say that man is a person is to say that in the depths of his being he is more a whole than a part and more independent than servile. It is to say that he is a minute fragment of matter that is at the same time a universe, a beggar who communicates with absolute being, mortal flesh whose value is eternal, a bit of straw into which heaven enters. It is this metaphysical mystery that religious thought points to when it says that the person is the image of God. The value of the person, his dignity and his rights belong to the order of things naturally sacred which bear the imprint of the Father of being, and which have in Him the end of their movement.”³⁷

Projections and Recapitulation:

I have essayed here a model of viewing philosophy, parting from the conviction that metaphysics is not only the first philosophy, but all philosophy is metaphysical and vice-versa. I have attempted to show the roots of all man’s metaphysical (philosophical) aspirations, which is religious. At the same, the relationality and goal is religious in nature.

In the light of the foregoing reflections on mystery, sacrament and the like we see the play of what is near and what is distant, what is hidden and what is manifest. This essaying is far from over. What remains is our condition of being finite and culpability, the very conditionality of all our reflections.

This conditionality would inevitably bring about a methodological confrontation to be formulated in the question of polarity between the divine and human, the infinite and finite, God and man, with the Absolute as an all-encompassing notion, for all forms of spiritualities. Spirituality is a way, but its concreteness lies in

³⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 29, 3. “Respondeo dicendum quod persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura. Unde, cum omne illud quod est perfectionis, Deo sit attribuendum, eo quod eius essentia continet in se omnem perfectionem; conveniens est ut hoc nomen persona de Deo dicatur. No tamen eodem modo quo dicitur de creaturis, sed excellentiori modo; sicut et alia nomina quae, creaturis a nobis imposita. Deo attribuuntur; sicut supra (q.13, a. 3) ostentum est, cum de divinis nominibus ageretur.”

³⁷ J. Maritain, “The Conquest of Freedom” *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain. Selected Readings* (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1956), 32.

being spiritualities, whether oriental or occidental, atheistic or theistic, trinitarian or strictly monotheist.

Spirituality too seeks to break the dominance of ontology (or better yet, ontotheological) by pointing out the metaphysical beyondness of the Absolute, which is the Real of Reality and the Reality of the Real, without falling into the empty abstraction of just positing the Real and Reality in themselves, bereft of a Supreme Instance and of individuality, even to the point of positing the notion of person and personality, amidst the reflection on Spirit and its ways of the spirit (Spiritualities). In this light, the confrontation between Being and God or their resolution has been methodologically relegated to the already overcome past of the historical traditions of philosophizing.

Spirituality, after our reflections on holiness, within the perspective of metaphysics and guided by the originary (or the origin, now viewed as the goal), which is communion, opens up new horizons. From these same horizons, we can speak of Truth, with more foundation. Truth is the effectivity of the Encounter between the Absolute and non-absolute, in his finitude and culpability.

The questions are difficult and exhaustive. They are a consistent call to overcome by renewal our experiential, thought and linguistic patterns deeply rooted and contextualized in the philosophical tradition we studied and have been accustomed to in the course of our search.

