

Spirituality as relationality of reasonability: Critical challenge of human reason to ontology from the viewpoint of metaphysics¹

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‘Ontologie ist nur als Phänomenologie möglich’
M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*.

Resumen: Este ensayo es un acercamiento a la fundamentación de la noción de la espiritualidad desde la metafísica, es decir, la primera filosofía. La filosofía solo puede ser espiritual, es construir caminos hacia lo originario. El alma de la espiritualidad, que se hace concreta en la mediación de la espiritualidad (camino de la realidad experienciada como real o lo real experienciado como realidad), es la conciencia de la presencia de lo Trascendente en la inmanencia de la historia, contenida en el cosmos,

¹ In these humble reflections, I wish to continue some of the reflections I have initiated in a previous work of mine: ‘Nostalgia experiencial de realidad y olvido del ser: la vocación metafísica de la teología’ *Estudio Agustiniano* 45 (2010), 305-322. I have also taken into account: G. Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute*, Toronto: Anansin, 1974. Likewise: *Real Presences*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. I also have wished to point out here a personal philosophical itinerary, taking into account the reflections of M. Blondel, *Itinéraire philosophique*, Paris: Aubier, 1966. I wish to dedicate these pages to the memory of two admired scholar friends whose scholarship have been exemplary for me and who have gone to the great beyond during these trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic: Antonio Vázquez Fernández (1926-2020) and Juan de Dios Martín Velasco (1934-2020). This piece is a written testimony of the struggle to do philosophy, especially metaphysics, in times of COVID-19. It is a proof that we can go on loving wisdom (philosophizing) even in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

que es la totalidad de todo lo real como realidad o de la realidad como real. Pero esta historia está ligada a categorías ontológicas. La verdadera espiritualidad se logra solo mediante la metafísica. Sin lo espiritual, que es el camino de la espiritualidad, la espiritualidad se reduciría en mera espiritualidad o en ontología del espíritu.

Palabras clave: Espiritualidad, Metafísica, Ontología, Comunión, Contemplación, Absoluto, Relacionalidad, Esperanza, Historia, Escatología.

Abstract: This essay is an approximation to the laying of foundations of an understanding of Spirituality from Metaphysics, i.e., First Philosophy. Philosophy can only be spiritual. It is the construction of paths toward the originary. The soul of Spirituality, which is made concrete in mediation of Spirituality (way of experienced reality in as much as it is real or the real experienced as reality) is the conscience of the presence of the Transcendental Reality in the immanence of history, contained in the cosmos, which is the totality of that which is real as reality or reality as real. But this history is linked to ontological categories. True Spirituality can only be attained through Metaphysics. Without that which is spiritual, which is the way of Spirituality, Spirituality would be reduced to mere spirituality or Ontology of the Spirit.

Key words: Spirituality, Metaphysics, Ontology, Communion, Contemplation, Absolute, Relationality, Hope, History, Eschatology.

We live in a world dominated by *ontology* or the science of being.² Its most visible sign is the dominance of technology. The science of being or ontology is the discipline of thinking.³ It is the search for certitude by the mind in elaborating a universal discourse which inevitably is formulated and developed in terms of being, by dominating things or realities and abstracting them into identity or into that which is and not respecting their difference or of how each one is. This sameness has been the thrust of the modern technological reduction of life.

² The impressive survey of E. Gilson has proved helpful for our contribution in this study: *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed., Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952.

³ For an excellent overview on this regard from the history of philosophy with balanced criticism, see: E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, New York: Scribner's, 1941, 152-220.

Life has been reduced to facilities, means, modalities to achieve things or goals in the swiftest and easiest manner. Life has been reduced to the exigencies of the act of existing, i.e., of being as being in order to keep on being *being* (conservation of being). In other words, the most radical consequence of this ontological dominance is that we have created new technologies to facilitate, to make comfortable, to abuse by means of power plays that stem from which is, i.e., being. Being, often mistakenly and simplistically termed as wellbeing, is the reduction of reality to technology, given that technology is full knowledge of a matter in order to make use of it, attain it or manipulate it. This reduction is the aspiration of all ontology, in its roots in pure phenomenology wherein everything is consciously grounded rigorously in absolute knowledge, which is absolute ontology (everything is being as being in consciousness), instead of absolute communion with the Absolute.⁴

The following reflections are philosophical and only initial. Philosophy, in technological modernity, has all but disappeared in everyday life. It remains, after all attempts to deconstruct it and to remove the dogmatic notions of all foundational and systematic thought in favor of present-day fragmentary ramblings especially in the humanities⁵, mostly hidden in the vision statements, underlying principles or mission declarations of institutions, movements and currents.⁶ In this sense, philosophy is the founda-

⁴ E. Husserl, *Ideas I: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1928, 33-40. The famous Husserlian dictum 'Zurück zu den Sachen selbst' is nothing new. It has been the thrust of all philosophies, since all philosophical traditions aim to go back to the realities themselves, to the things, to the facts (sachen) but ironically, Husserlian epoché and phenomenological reduction has reduced reality to essences, which Heidegger and those of the ontological school, have reduced to sein or being, since essences are the whatness of being as being. Cfr. M. Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, rev. ed. Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988; P. Ricouer, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967; Q. Lauer, *The Triumph of Subjectivity. An Introduction to Transcendental Phenomenology*, 2nd ed., New York: Fordham University Press, 1978.

⁵ I acknowledge the stimulating intellectual panorama presented by R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979 though I cannot accept all of his conclusions and all the consequences of his thought.

⁶ The following have also provided stimulating points for our reflection, G. Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992, 1-11; D. Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, 199 ff.; O. Benson & J. Stangroom, *Why Truth Matters*, New York: Continuum, 2006.

tional knowledge of human endeavours, human culture or cultivations institutionalized in history. In these reflections, we wish to grasp once more the very fundamentals of Philosophy itself capsulized by the so-called ontological tradition or the tradition of first philosophy, taking its cue above all from Aristotle.

1. Philosophy and Technology: Preliminary Reflections in view of Knowledge and Truth and Status Quaestionis

However, instead of taking care of each one of us (the wellbeing of each one and not of being as being but of beings or realities which beings conceptually, metaphorically and symbolically represent)⁷, the results have been disastrous, oppressive and destructive. We have become willing and complacent slaves of these technologies in our drive to enslave others, other beings for our own wellbeing, annihilating the other which is the ingredient of the real as reality, of reality as the real in its integral property as spirit which is the experiential constituent of being real, being reality.⁸ *Being is wellbeing. Ontology is technology (tekno)*. Ontology is science or certain knowledge reduced to the means of getting this knowledge or facility (technology), presupposing a discipline or *techne* or art, and this very means becomes the very end or goal since it alone promises wellbeing. Wellbeing or responsibility is more precious than that of being given or being in itself.⁹

Philosophy, as quest for truth which is the force of reality which may suffer but never perish¹⁰, begins as a theory of knowledge or epistemology.

⁷ Cfr. M.Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961; J. Vidal, *Symboles et Religions*, Louvain: Centre d'histoire des religions, 1989; G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire. Introduction à l'archétypologie generale*, Paris: PUF, 1960.

⁸ We take into consideration the following words of X. Zubiri: 'Realidad es, ante todo, según venimos diciendo una y otra vez, una formalidad de alteridad de lo aprehendido sentientemente. Y este momento consiste en que lo aprehendido queda en la aprehensión como algo 'en propio', algo 'de suyo'. Reidad o realidad es formalidad del 'de suyo', *Inteligencia sentiente I: Inteligencia y realidad*, 3rd ed., Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1984, 191.

⁹ E. Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1979, 10-11.

¹⁰ St. Teresa of Jesus, *Letter*, 294, 19. I follow the numbering of this edition: T. de Jesús, *Cartas*, T. Álvarez (ed.), Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 1997.

As Popper eloquently writes: ‘The theory of knowledge is at the very heart of philosophy, not only of the philosophy of science, but also of ethics, political philosophy, and even the philosophy of art. This, no doubt, is at least partly due to the fact what whenever we try to justify any of our assertions, we being to wonder whether our justifications are valid. In this way, we are led to think about the *justification* of our assertions, our beliefs, our theories, and our hypotheses. And the resulting *theories of justification* form what is called the *theory of knowledge* (or epistemology)’.¹¹ This heart is the beginning of the life of philosophy which takes a life of its own, with its heart beating. However, ontology has substituted life for the heartbeat and has reduced every vital operation to the heartbeat or worst to the organ itself, the heart. The heart is only an *organon*, an organ and instrument or even a privileged metaphor indicating the life of a person, his centrality, his love. But it should never substitute the person in his totality, in his diversity, in his infinite possibilities or openness to the infinite which is metaphysical.

However, philosophy, in its ontological thrust or obsession and in its analytical-linguistic version (given that being and language are mere instruments to know in order to understand the real and reality and not to dominate the same and reduce it to ontologico-linguistic concepts and categories), has made this theory of knowledge into its end.¹² This is the summit of ontological philosophy: everything is knowable, within the idealistic monism of being which is the Parmenedean heritage¹³, given that it is being, i.e., being as being is the ontological given and it is the *givenness* of all realities, reduced to being, to full knowledgeability and thus manipulable, controllable. In other words, being and language are one since language must be ontological and being as being is the essence of language, which is the fundamental modus of operation of our being-in the world’.¹⁴

¹¹ K. Popper, *After the Open Society*, London-New York: Routledge, 2008, 3.

¹² Cfr. the trenchant observations on the American scene of R. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 211-230.

¹³ Cfr. G.S.Kirk & J.E. Raven (eds.), *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1963, 263-285. Also: M. Heidegger, *Parmenides*, Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992.

¹⁴ H. G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957, 3.

Language defines the modality of being human.¹⁵ Human experience is essentially linguistic.¹⁶ Language is the basis of meaning by which one can mean something by something.¹⁷ The result is the absolute dominance of technology, which is a linguistic feat and which brings about, the process of man s perishing as the center of all discourse,¹⁸ All discourses must be an occasion for truthfulness which is the testimony of reality as the real and the real as reality in as much as it is a happening¹⁹, which is dynamic and not just an event that transpired or occurred. Language, culminating in technology, is the fullness of being over wellbeing by converting the means (epistemology) into the end, losing the discipline to live life (art) in pursuit of the Truth, in its Absolute instance, by letting the Truth be as real and in its reality, and not being an ontological reduction of correspondence²⁰ and coherence by means of thinking,²¹ in a contemplative attitude instead of reducing it to a system or intellectual or ideal construct with an architecture and structure of being as known, excluding wellbeing. Even reality vanishes as language develops given that it is an objectifying, symbolical i.e. ontological, process that makes its own reality disappear.²²

¹⁵ Ibid., 68.

¹⁶ Ibid., 19

¹⁷ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York: Macmillan, 1954, 18.

¹⁸ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, New York: Random House, 1973, 386.

¹⁹ I acknowledge the inspiration of St. Teresa of Jesus, *Foundations*, Prologue, 3. For this work, I made use of this edition: Sta. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, 14a ed. de Tomás Álvarez, Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 2014.

²⁰ H. Putnam, *Meaning and the Moral Sciences*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 125; Idem., *Mind, Language and Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, 236. See also: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011, 1017a, 1024b, 10088a, 1051b, 1062a; St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 1, a.1: I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B22-24, 673.674; B82. Coincidence for Kant is coincidence of conformity of knowledge with the object within the realm of experience. In effect, Kant is speaking of not the truth in itself but of the truthful or of epistemological truth.

²¹ Cfr. A. Tarski, *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*, J. Corcoran ed., Oxford University Press, 1983; K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, London-New York: Routledge, 2002, 291-338. For an introductory exposition, see: J. Dancy, *An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, London: Blackwell, 1985. Also: B. Lonergan, *Insight. A Study of Human Understanding*, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1957, 396 ff; Idem., *Understanding and Being. An Introduction and Companion to Insight. The Halifax Lectures*, Lewiston, N.Y.; The Edwin Mellen Press, 1-100.

²² M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, New York: Harper and Row, 1971, 50.

2. Ontology and Thought: Metaphysical Reflections from the Foundations of Philosophy in view of Contemplation and Communion

Ontology in its insistence, imposition of that which is has lost the *spirit* of how each one is. Thinking has exiled the spirit, and has imprisoned and erased *contemplation*²³, the nurturing attitude of the spirit towards spirit in its Absoluteness²⁴, thus reducing everything, including persons, into that which is or which exist or instruments to or instruments of wellbeing thus reduced into ideas, into abstractions from their concrete and particular contexts, circumstances and events. Wellbeing or *beatitudo*²⁵ or the end of man is only for man and must be beyond instrumentality or of converting man and persons into instruments of wellbeing instead of being enjoyers themselves of the same wellbeing.

Thinking is undertaken by questioning, by bracketing and even annihilating all differences, which should always be a deferring of definitive and unilateral meanings²⁶, individualities, particularities, realities and their qualities all in the name of the wellbeing of some and not of wellbeing in itself which is metaphysical or beyond ontology. Ontology is the technology of metaphysics. Ontology is the symbolic representation²⁷ and instrument of metaphysics in order to communicate its aspiration for what is transcendental, universal which is *the wellbeing of all and the not the reduction of the all to wellbeing, to instruments of wellbeing*.

²³ I am indebted to this panoramic vision of the question, T. Álvarez & E. Ancilli, 'Contemplazione', in: Several Authors, *Dizionario enciclopedia di spiritualità*, Vol. I, Rome: Edizioni Nuova Città, 1990, 617-625. I have also taken into consideration my previous reflections in *Camino de la verdad. Historia, contemplación, mistagogía desde santa Teresa de Jesús*, Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2018.

²⁴ For general notions on the Absolute from a philosophical viewpoint, I acknowledge the panoramic vision offered by authors like E. Coreth, *Gott im philosophische denken*, Berlin, Köln Kohlhaussen, 2001; M. Berciano, *Teología natural*, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2018; G. Scherer, *Die fragen nach Gott*, Darmstadt: Primus, 2001

²⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6; *De malo*, q. 6. In *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 10, a.2 St. Thomas writes: 'Illud solum bonum quod est perfectum et cui nihil deficit, est tale bonum quod voluntas non potest none velle: quod est beatitudo.'

²⁶ Cfr. J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

²⁷ The contribution of the Jungian school has been decisive for the present reflection, cfr. Several Authors, *Man and His Symbols*, New York: Random Books, 1964. Likewise: P. Ricouer, *The Symbolism of Evil*, New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Thinking is the piety of philosophy. It starts with wonder, admiration especially with how the outside world is and how it could be the object of discourse which is attained by ontology, by technology. Philosophy is wonder.²⁸ But it does not end with wonder (*thauma*) but in the *arché* or beginning, the underlying principle to the On or being, which is reality as real or the reality as real which the Greeks have captured with a sense of wonder as the beginning, the principle, *the arché*.

Philosophy is a beginning that ends with the beginning, the originary, the origin at the end which is the root of all beings, the real as reality, the reality as real whose presence underlies everything and transcends everything so much so this presence is truly a Mystery, the source of our wonder and our response to attain it in the quest for grasping the sense of this Mystery, this Metaphysical presence which is the Truth.²⁹

Philosophy as love of wisdom, is love for this origin, for this root which grows and develops in man within the experiential dynamism of the quest for truth, which is the execution of philosophy. Bergson puts it beautifully: ‘...joy in joy, love in love. In addition, it would give itself to society, but to a society comprising all humanity, loved in the love of the principle underlying it.’³⁰ Society necessarily means plurality, communion, totality in diversity toward infinity or infinite possibilities. It is the metaphor for communion in terms of its constitution. However, this root or the real as reality or reality or real has been reduced to the ontological dominating pretension that is responsible for the dominance of technology, thus imposing a species of materialism that has killed the spirit of philosophical inquiry³¹, reducing everything to tautological statements and analysis with their logical and syllogistic twists and turns instead of letting the *arché* flourish by means of contemplation.³²

²⁸ Plato, *Thaetetus*, 155d.

²⁹ The suggestive reflections on the regard of sense in one’s own research or reflective work of E. Levinas have proved to be inspiring in my own reflections on this metaphysical sense, cfr. ‘La signification et le sens’, in: *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 69 (1964), 125-156. Also: Several Authors, *L’analyse du langage théologique. Le nom de Dieu*, Paris. Aubier, 1969.

³⁰ H. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1935, 212.

³¹ Cfr. J. Dewey, *Logic. The Theory of Inquiry*, New York: Holt, 1938.

³² This is the context of the reflections of M. Heidegger, *Was ist das-die philosophie?* Pfullingen: Günter Neske 1956, 37 ff.

Thought has imprisoned the *arché* by its ontological reduction of the same to the being of beings instead of letting the beings be as they are real and realities, as they are reality in being real. Piety is respecting the sacred in everything and consists of subordinating the ontological analysis, the monistic ideogenesis to the very reality in itself as it is real or the very real in its realities in the dynamism of experience, which is tendency (Spirituality) to metaphysical communion.

Thinking, given that it is only *organon* or instrument and not finality in itself, is a phenomenological process within the realm of being given that being is the first knowable. Phenomenology is the conscientious search of ontology of being achieved by description opening being to interpretation or hermeneutics which is the manifestation of being as known. Thinking is searching by questioning. 'All questioning (*jedes fragen*) is a search (*suchen*). On every search is imposed its previous direction (*vorgängige Direktion*) by that which is searched for.'³³ This directional pre-determination is precisely a bracketing, removal of qualities so that only the essential, which is being or the fact that it is and not what or which is, remains.³⁴

In fact, this directionality indicates a previous or foundational kind of knowledge³⁵, which is in fact the knowledge of being as being or ontological knowledge, since being is that which is universally and first known. This is the primary ontological principle. Being is thus the coincidence of all the differences and qualities as realities and real qualities, after the ontological bracketing process.³⁶ However, this principle has been absolu-

³³ M.Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 10th ed.,Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1963, 5.

³⁴ Admittedly, I am thinking of Husserlian phemonmenology upon using the term bracketing. This is in the background of Heideggerian thought. Cfr. W.J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963; H. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, Vol. I, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960.

³⁵ Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate* X, 1, 3; 3, 5. In Western thought, Saint Augustine represents an early point of confluence of the Greek and Latin ontological tradition with the Christian strain.

³⁶ An early proponent of this ontological line of thought is St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 4, 2 ad 1. M. Heidegger would qualify this thinking, especially with reference to Hegel, as ontotheology. Heidegger speaks of *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik*, cfr. *Identität und diferenz/Identidad y diferencia*, bilingual ed., Barcelona: Anthropos, 2013.

tized by absolutized thinking which brackets all realities and qualities in the quest to look for essences, for ideological oneness and totality in order to produce a monistic construct which excludes those which are not covered as non-being, non-entities, non-realities, non-existing. Such monism is the ontological attitude behind all forms of racism, sexism, intolerance and condemnation of all that is human and its diverse forms in the name of the wellbeing of some while eliminating the wellbeing of all by making the all or its use and exclusion as the wellbeing of the privileged ones in the monistic and idealistic set-up.

Thinking, in its absolutized sense, has breached its limits of being only an instrument toward a higher form of knowledge, which goes beyond the Parmenedean ontologico-idealistic monism of all diverse realities reduced as being as being, i.e., being as known, being in its totality as given to use, manipulation, production, technology.

3. From Thinking to Analogy

This universal coincidence, especially with reference to the Absolute taken as supreme analogate of being,³⁷ is undertaken by means of analogy.³⁸ Analogy is comparison of beings, related with the Supreme Analogate or Being which beyond the ontological terms is labelled as the Absolute. Analogy, beyond its ontological domain, characterized by linguistic comparison and analysis, and entering into the metaphysical-spiritual domain of communion ferments bonds, links, nexus, pairing, affiliation, connections, relationality in dynamic senses that go beyond the realms of the linguistic and symbolic which only limits itself to conceptual, symbolical, ontological (epistemological-cognitive) union or togetherness.

³⁷ God as 'ens subsistens', cfr. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 3.

³⁸ W.Schulz, *Der Gott der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik*, 2nd ed., Pfullingen: Klett-Cotta, 1959, 13 ff.; J. L. Marion, *Dieu sans l'être*, Paris. PUF, 1982. Also: J. Anderson, *The Bond of Being*, New York: Herder, 1949; C. Fabro, *Participation et causalité*, Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1961; L. B. Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de saint Thomas d' Aquin*, 2nd 3d., Paris: J. Vrin, 1953; B. Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après saint Thomas d' Aquin*, Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1963; L. J. Elders, *The Metaphysics of being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, Leiden-New York-Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1993; J.F.Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000.

However, there is much more to this: metaphysical communion. Metaphysics is at the root of ontology and at the same time is its summit and goal. The struggle with being, just like the nocturnal struggle of Jacob with the Angel of the Lord, for which he deserved the name of Israel (or one who struggles with God) is the struggle of the spirit to go beyond the veil of being at night in order to see the face of the Absolute at dawn and to deserve the blessing for his spirit. 'When man becomes a metaphysician, he finds himself, by the fact that he is with individual existents here and now, already and always with being in its totality'.³⁹

When the Absolute is encountered or at least seen for encounter or a glimpse of its face, after the darkness of night⁴⁰, it becomes God. God is only a developmental phase in spirituality, i.e. the development of participation.⁴¹ God is the first indicative relational term in the spiritual way of growth and progress. It is the starting point for a truly personal, integral spirituality wherein the human self becomes a person determined to encounter relationally the Absolute which at the beginning has originally (origin or starting point or principle) impulsed the process and is the originary (the origin re-encountered effectively at the end) end-term of the same path.

God is a terminal term and original term in the process of participation which characterizes the metaphysical aspiration, the spiritual path in terms of growth and development toward communion, which is more than just togetherness but union with an effective, experiential taking part (participation) on the part of the human spirit, constituted as such by spirituality or the way of the self in becoming integrated in the spirit, because of a sharing on the part of Absolute or the Absolute Spirit.

In metaphysics, God is the Supreme Reality in its involvement, characterized by condescension (on the part of the Absolute) and participa-

³⁹ K. Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1968, 67.

⁴⁰ Cfr. St. Gregory of Nissa, *Homily on the Song of Songs* (PG 44, 891-892). Also: M. Dupuit, 'Nuit' in: Several Authors, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. 50 Paris: Ed. Beauchesne, 1981, 519-525.

⁴¹ Cfr. A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981; M. Sánchez Sorondo, *La gracia como participación de la naturaleza divina según santo Tomás*, Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1979; A. N. Williams, 'Deification in the Summa Theologiae', in: *The Thomist* 61 (1997), 219-255.

tion (on the part of man in the process of being a self in becoming a spirit). This thesis can be further explained as thus: in the spiritual process characterized by spiritual growth and development, termed criteriologically as perfection, in relational terms with phases: toward a confessional stance (Lord), to being a benevolent generator and relational stance (Father), to being a beloved equalized relational stance (Lover or Friend), all of which are degrees of participation in the metaphysical state of communion which is called plenitude or fullness in the Absolute who approaches as God and who is approached as God in relationality.

Being in its totality projects itself to the infinite, to the Absolute, to that which is spiritual, to the real and reality in itself. Metaphysics, or the question of the real as reality and the reality as real, in all its forms, is the quest that defines itself in terms of Truth and thus opening up a path, way, adventure to discover its fullness in terms of communion. And this way, path, adventure is what we term as Spirituality.⁴² This way, path, adventure of the spirit is a path of grace⁴³, because it is a given which supersedes that which is imposed, that which is earned, that which is abstracted, cogitated, symbolized in being.

4. From Analogy to Communion

Monism with its uniformity and identity in terms of being (ontological truth) is the system brought about by emanationism.⁴⁴ Communion,

⁴² Cfr. F. Ruiz Salvador, *Caminos del espíritu*, 5th ed. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1998; A. Solignac, 'Voies', in: Several Authors, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 16, Paris: Beauchesne, 1994, 1206-1212; K. Waaijman, 'The Way, Root Metaphor for Spirituality: A Biblical Exploration', in: *Studies of Spirituality* 13 (2003), 63-79. The universality of Spirituality as a way should be further explored even in Oriental traditions, see for example the following studies which present these philosophies as such: R. Sarvepalli, *The Hindu Way of Life*, New York: Macmillan Co., 1971; D. Kaluphanna, *Buddhist Philosophy*, Honolulu: East-West Center Publications, 1976; R. B. Blakney, *The Way of Lao Tzu*, New York: Mentor Classics, 1955; Fung Yu-Lan, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947; E. Stevens, *Oriental Mysticism. An Introduction*, New York: Paulist Press, 1973.

⁴³ J. Maritain, *Art and Poetry*, London: Editions Poetry, 1945, 32.

⁴⁴ Cfr. for example: P. Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, New York. Dover Books, 1966; S. Ting, *The Mysticism of Chuang Tzu*, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1975; E. Bréhier, *La Philosophie de Plotin*, Paris: Boivin, 1928. We can even include the annihilation or *anatta-nirvana* doctrine here, cfr. C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Bud-*

which is the fullness of metaphysics, underscores the unity and diversity whose dynamism is experience which is possible only transcendental difference between the Absolute and the Contingent (which is plural), the levels of immanence and transcendence from the self and the world, the opening of a path of participation which is only possible through creationism and the metaphysical autonomy of diverse realities (realities which are real or the real in realities) from the singular Absolute Principle (the Real in itself as Supreme Reality or Reality in itself of all that is real). Such an autonomy opens up a path, an itinerary, a way, an adventure characterized by growth and progress which we understand to be Spirituality.⁴⁵ From a criteriological viewpoint, this growth and process is the experience of *perfection*.⁴⁶ Metaphysical communion parts from analogates and experientially builds up relationality, in terms of growth and progress toward the goal which from the beginning has underscored respect for diversity in union, of the one and the many along the path called Spirituality.

This union is the common denominator shared by all beings or the diverse classes of beings (essences) as expressed by ontology in terms of being an epistemology or knowledge of being as being.⁴⁷ However, it is union that does not bring about solidarity, care, true wellbeing. This is the realm of communion. This is the realm of metaphysics, brought about by Spirituality or that which Levinas deems as an inner life, establishing subjectivity in its uniqueness and identity, together with Others, establishing, in terms of joy⁴⁸, itself as an identity which we would deem as Communion, which is separation in order to be united, to share, to care.

This realm is beyond thinking as thinking categorizes, reduces into common denominators without freely releasing experience so that the real

dhism, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962; C. Garma & C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1977.

⁴⁵ Cfr. C. Tresmontant, *La mystique chrétienne et l'avenir de l'homme*, Paris. Seuil, 1977.

⁴⁶ Cfr. the conceptualization of Spirituality as Perfection in A. Royo Marín, *Teología de la perfección cristiana*, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1954.

⁴⁷ Cfr. L.M. Regis, *St Thomas and Epistemology*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1946; Idem., *Epistemology*, New York: The Macmillian Co., 1959

⁴⁸ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981, 114.

would be reality and the reality would be real. This is already the realm of contemplation, viewing reality from a metaphysical viewpoint which is a vital perspective. Because it is vital, it is spiritual as it denotes the growth and development of the self into a subject and eventually in spirit. All this starts in the overcoming of the ego by the self to constitute itself as subject, beyond mere substantiality or objective or ontological existence such that there is openness to the cultivation of an inner life (which is spirituality and its metaphysical aspiration to communion).⁴⁹

Contemplation, as the concrete viewpoint of spirituality and its vital attitude toward the self as subject constituted as spirit in relation to the infinite metaphysical All (irreducible to the ontological totality of which Levinas has spoken against), implies a personal act of seeing reality. And this vision of reality is the Truth itself in its oneness and plurality, in metaphysical communion and not in monistic ontological terms and its pretensions of an absolute grasp of truth to reduce it to being, to thought, to technology and technological use, to system or intellectual construct based on ideas instead of letting the Absolute Truth be itself as the real in reality (and amidst realities) and as reality in the real, instead of reducing this same truth as that which is ultimately conquered in its absoluteness. The Absolute Truth is absolute not because it can be conquered or known absolutely (as claimed by ontology and its reduction of all truths into ontological truth or the truth of being as being and thus reducing everything to this) but because it only reveals itself partly, inviting to a participation and not a monopoly of itself in this life and in the next:

‘Seeing’, however, is a personal act. The original vision, the ‘seeing’ that originated in the genius of a great thinker, has to be kept alive through the subsequent personal ‘seeing’ of others. Human truth does not exist and live outside the personal and collective history of individual human beings who ‘see’. It is possible, therefore, for human truth to die in the course of history.

Truth, however, never reveals itself as an absolute ‘light’. Within the history of truth as encounter with reality truth allows itself to be ‘grasped’ only as the chiaroscuro, the semi-darkness, of unconcealedness and concealedness. For this reason, any act of ‘seeing’ is at the same time an invi-

⁴⁹ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 110-113.

tation to project a new 'seeing.' Those who fail to recognize this fact deprive truth of life because they cut it off from its future.⁵⁰

5. Communion, Contemplation and Metaphysics

Contemplation in itself is a realm of freedom, whose roots is rationality⁵¹, from the limitations of thought, of ontology, from its activist imposition of technological dominance of being instead of the passivity of appreciation of reality.⁵² Philosophy is metaphysics, or is beyond ontology because it strives to that originary unity beyond and more intimate than the being of beings in the contemplation of beings instead of the being of beings, of realities as they are real or what is real in as much as they are reality. This metaphysical path of Philosophy is what we label as spirituality. Metaphysics as spirituality has for its object the Truth in its absolute-ness.

Contemplation parts from the notion that 'knowledge is piecemeal'⁵³. Contemplation parts from the notion of the finitude and limitation of our human knowledge, that we know that we do not know and yet we could grow in it which is the way of wisdom. All our knowledge starts with this acknowledgement of our ignorance. This attitude is not of scepticism. Nevertheless, it is the contemplative starting point acknowledging the grandeur of human thought, especially its cognitive, symbolic and ontological power of symbolizing or representing the real and reality as being. And yet, it is an acknowledgement that these are paths and not ends in themselves, that they lead to something which is metaphysically transcendent through this

⁵⁰ W. Luyjpen, *Phenomenology and Metaphysics*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1965, ix.

⁵¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 24, a.2: 'Totius libertas radix est in ratione constituta.' Cfr. also: J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, Boston: Beacon Press, 1987, 8-42.

⁵² I have here in mind the reproach of M. Merleau-Ponty to Husserlian analysis which is purely constitutive of act instead of leaving out space for passivity: or the experiential openness to historical realization or experience, which is growth, development and perfection of the self as subjectivity, cfr. *Le visible et l'invisible*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, 297. I acknowledge the contribution of this excellent study on this regard, A. Montavont, *De la passivité dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*, Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1999.

⁵³ E. Stein, *The Hidden Life. Essays, Meditations, Spiritual Texts*, Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1992, 28.

immanent historical path which is a spirituality. The way affirms not only possibility but a call that is to be realized, fulfilled, res-ponded to.⁵⁴

Contemplation is the growth, development and overcoming of the absolute pretensions ontological monistic reduction in order to reach what is Absolute, which as Nicholas of Cusa says is the apex, summit of all contemplation.⁵⁵ It is growing and developing in the plurality of realities as real in themselves and the union of the real embracing all reality. Contemplation goes beyond the symbolism of ontology, which is only a tool for comprehensibility and beyond its reductive process whose absolute instance is monism, which is formulated as a system, i.e., the reduction of all realities to ideas. Ontology, with its notion of ontological truth or the truth of everything as being in so far as it is being (without historical distinction and experiential dynamism) strips the Truth of its absoluteness by reducing it to being as being without allowing its unity of the real in diversity of realities, plurality of reality in the oneness of the real. Contemplation, following Maritain's happy turn of phrase and from a cognitive viewpoint with a view to metaphysical fullness, is *distinguishing to unite, uniting to distinguish*, seeing the degrees of reality with the tool of being, seeing the degrees of our knowledge in its imperfection and how it needs to ascend metaphysically by means of spirituality to a mystical level.⁵⁶

Metaphysics opens up as spirituality or way of access to truth⁵⁷ which opens up as a way of contemplation of the real as reality (as beings in being and not being of beings) or of realities as real given that this plurality, access, universality of oneness in plurality and plurality in oneness is the avenue of communion whose dynamicity is what we call experience which is a historical path of realization parting from life which is movement of self-perfection, characterized by growth and progress. Metaphysics is the pursuit of the spiritual because it is the elevation of thinking (proper of

⁵⁴ The immortal work of N. of Cusa expresses this in a beautiful way: *De docta ignorantia*, especially Book I. Also: *De venatione sapientiae*, XII.

⁵⁵ It is worth reading on this matter, his mature work, *De apice theoriae*.

⁵⁶ Cfr. J. Maritain, *Distinguer pour unir ou les degrés du savoir*, Paris: Desclée, 1932.

⁵⁷ Admittedly, I have taken into consideration my reflections a propos of M. Foucault but without integrating or making full use of them totally in this essay, cfr. 'Michel Foucault-The Spirituality of Moderation and Care of the Self as the Basis for Sexual Ethics', in: *Studies in Spirituality* 18 (2008), 313-331.

ontology) to contemplation of reality as it is, in its quality as real; in its being real, with reality being a quality. In other words, of its beauty, beauty in itself and beyond all symbolical or ontological representation. This is the perfection of metaphysics, which is spirituality in the attainment of its goal of elevating the spirit or man's integrity to the Absolute, which is reality and the real in itself, beyond all contingencies, beyond all cognitive symbolisms. In pure perfection, in an act of perfection that implies the spirit or man in search of the truth, the spiritual, the metaphysician.

This self-perfection is attained in terms of Communion with the Absolute, which is unity in diversity, distinction in union, in shared and participative union. All these are constitutive of experience. Experience denotes unity in plurality, sharing and participation and not the monism of absolute ontological systems which monopolize all of reality into the idea of being instead of permitting the activity and passivity of taking part, of participation, in communion.⁵⁸ In other words, care which is the executability of wellbeing which is possible only in Communion, in Metaphysics, in relationality and not in the dominance of Ontology or being which is the imposition of the solipsism of the ego.⁵⁹ *Beatitudine (Eudomania)* or wellbeing is only possible in metaphysics with its individuation of the real in realities, of reality in real in unity and diversity, in the one and the many. 'Happiness is the principle of individuation.'⁶⁰

Thought, which is the dynamic activity of ontology and which sustains itself with essences, has its summit in union which is linking, connecting, attaching in terms of common denominators (essences), starting with that of being or existing, and is governed by comparison but leads to isolation, reduction to commonality, erasing differentiation and variety, which are the fundamental dimensions of reality in as much as it is real and the real in as much as it is reality as avenue for communion or full sharing instead of just commonality which is pure culmination of the isolational comparison from the viewpoint of the essential.

⁵⁸ In the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas: 'Est autem participare quasi partem capere; et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud', *Expositio super Boethium De Hebdomadibus*, II.

⁵⁹ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 37.38, 114 ff.

⁶⁰ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 147.

Such *isolationality*, however, does not bring about solidarity but only comparison, reduction, segregation, separation which is lack of empathy, sympathy. All these suffocate communion. They do not bring about *care* and its metaphysical discourse⁶¹ of spirituality (wellbeing at the service of oneself and others in communion) but only selfishness or the exclusive care of only oneself as textualized in ontological and technological discourses (the others are reduced to the wellbeing of the ego). Such exclusiveness, brought about by the discrimination by analogy (which is not differentiation), is not authentic care but narcissism.

Thought is the discourse of the instrumentality of human reasoning in trying to grasp reality. This instrumentality is attained discursively through Ontology or the symbolic knowing and understanding of reality, whose roots is transcendent and in which man, in his reasoning, finds himself as immanent. Thought, in view of this, is the discursive response to the *search* for Truth, which is expressed ontologically and whose finality is to find the wellbeing of human reason, which by nature seeks to know and grasp transcendent reality, and this grasp is expressed symbolically in terms of being; this expression is the realization of the wellbeing of man, of human reasoning such that being is wellbeing. From this, all means or modes become concrete by means of technology. Technology is the critical point of ontology, as discourse of being in its realization as goodness, as wellbeing given that this same wellbeing is its primary instrument in developing being as being has to be well in order to persist as being. However, this wellbeing has been reduced to being a goal in itself and not just a point of departure given that wellbeing in order to be so must always be subservient not to an abstract monistic construct but to diverse realities which are real and thus are real in being realities and are thus experiential.

⁶¹ I acknowledge my indebtedness to M. Foucault for this notion of discourse: *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972, 216-220. I have likewise taken into account the following works for the points to be developed here: J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1975; E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 2 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1974; D. Bourq, *Transcendence et Discourse*, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985; F. Ferre, *Le langage religieux a-t-il un sens*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970; J. Ladrière, *L'articulation du sens*, Paris: Aubier-Cerf, 1984; A. Martinet, *Éléments de linguistique générale*, Paris. Libraire de Armand Colin, 1960; F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Paris. Payot, 1968; G. Mounin, *Clefs pour la linguistique*, Paris: Seigners, 1986; B.R. Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, Paris: Minuit, 1981.

Experientiality is the dynamics of wellbeing in as much as it is effectively lived in history, in man in as much as he puts himself on the spiritual path of spirituality, which is metaphysical, in order to participate in an inquisitive manner in this experientiality. It is an act of self-appropriation, as Lonergan would put it⁶², to come out of the shell of the ego and to be self which is the opening of wellbeing in order to be a subject which is the constitutionality of the spiritual way in which by experientiality the subject becomes spirit, integrated subject vis-a-vis communion with the Absolute. Wellbeing is dynamic because it is unity in diversity, manyness in oneness, reality (realities) as real, the real in reality (realities) and as reality. Wellbeing is the curvature of reality in encounter, in communion of ambiance.⁶³ Experientiality or experience itself is the metaphysical process of communion in its realization, in its becoming real in reality (or in realities in history), in its becoming reality in the real, in the alterity of and for the alterity (the other for the other, reality for the real, the real for reality).⁶⁴

In view of all our previous reflections, this essay proposes two temporal directionalities in order to lay the foundations for the path of overcoming the isolating and essentialist rigor of ontology by taking into account: a) epistemological considerations or its *relations* to foundational and relational disciplines, specifically philosophy and theology; b) from these same considerations, we will map the *coordinates* for directions to be taken; and c) such directions must necessarily carry out *challenges*, which are primarily epistemological considerations thus, we go back to the beginning, to the foundation, but encountering it after an enriching journey which is characteristic of spirituality or the journey of the spirit to recover its spirit and to find itself in the end, enriched by its communion with the Absolute and the Absolute is now lived from an enriched perspective after the journey. It is not the purpose of this essay to exhaustively reflect on the dimensions of these directions but rather to only point the way.

⁶² This has been especially explained aside from the aforementioned works of Lonergan, in his *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972), pp. 3-25.

⁶³ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 291.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

6. Experience: From Ontology and thought to Metaphysics and Spirituality in relational fundamentality

Man, given his rationality⁶⁵, has made fully use or exploitation of thought or the abstracting power of his rationality to reduce everything into symbolic instruments (since all cognitive activities are symbolical and hence are manipulative and technological) within the sphere of knowledge of man.⁶⁶ This process of reduction is a process of identification of individuals into their most common or universal denominator: being or that which exists. Being, in itself is a call to wellness, such that wellbeing is the fullness of the discourse of being. This is the foundational basis of all ontological discourses founded in turn on the metaphysical supposit that all that is real is experientiable and what is experientiable is real. Spirituality, as a metaphysical path, is a way of experience toward transcendence, toward reality in itself, in its Supreme instance (the Absolute) in as much as this reality is real and in as much as this real is reality. This is in turn symbolized in order to be knowed by being which is a call for wellbeing, given that all discourses of being (ontology) is a discourse of wellbeing, of responsibility for being in its preservation and development (wellbeing).

However, this fullness has reduced human reason, for whom wellness, especially since the dawn of modernity, has been or is being derived by means of technology. Modernity is the paradigm shift centered on man and on his comfort by means of instrumentalization which takes place as

⁶⁵ The classic case of St. Thomas Aquinas demonstrates that in the search for God or the Absolute is a rational effort but with the possibility of error and imperfections. However, such a search, which brings about knowledge of the Absolute or God, is the truth on which man fully realizes himself as a reality and in as much as he is real, i.e., his salvation, Cfr. *Summa Theologiae* I, 1, a. 1. Also: *Ibid.*, II-II, 2, a.4; *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 4; *De Veritate* 14, a. 10. From the Christian tradition, though identified with God, the foremost definition of Absolute is that of St. Anselm: 'Quo maius nihil cogitari potest', *Proslogion* 2 and 15. Nicholas of Cusa speaks of the Absolute or God as *Maximus* in *De Docta Ignorantia*, I,2. I wish to evoke an essay of mine on this regard: 'La venida de lo Absoluto como Dios', in: *Studium* 44 (2004), 165-181.

⁶⁶ Cfr. R. Nozick, *The Nature of Rationality*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; P. Anand, *Foundations of Rational Choice Under Risk*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984; C. Bicchieri, *Rationality and Coordination*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

technology. This absolutization of being in technology (which identifies being as wellbeing of man and not being for wellbeing of man) suffocates the spirit by eliminating, by questioning differences (which are the factors that guarantee that wellbeing would be instrumental and that the instrumental will not be the reducing point of wellbeing), which are the diverse pathways of the spirits to realization toward the Absolute as spirit or integrity in terms of communion or *spirituality*.

Spirituality is the call to wellbeing, the call for the wellbeing of man and not man as wellbeing or being reduced to wellbeing. Communion is the ambiance of *participation* wherein wellbeing is a *shared* goal of the diverse and not the monopolizing power of some in converting the others into instruments of wellbeing. Participation is only possible in terms of sharing wellbeing as a goal and not in reducing those who share into the wellbeing attainable or attained as a goal. Participation is the realization of wellbeing of man and for man and is the elimination of the slavery of man or being as wellbeing.

Spirituality affords man the path to redirect his rationality, characterized by thought or reduction of everything to commonality or essences characteristic of ontological union, to the originary path of discovering the way of integration which leads to communion, which is the non-reduction of variety and difference bringing about communion or sharing or participation in being realities which are real and the real which are realities. It goes beyond the analogical comparison which only leads to isolation.

Communion means relationality. Relationality is the very soul of reality in as much as it is real and the real in as much as it is reality. Relationality signifies realities that are real and the real that are realities. Plurality creates community. It engenders solidarity. It engenders not only bonds, links, nexus. It creates Communion which is shared union, shared and participative union in the Absolute which is the fullness of wellbeing in the Other, in the transcendent. Communion denotes freedom from the imprisonment of being as wellbeing by insisting in the differentiation of reality as real instead of the absoluteness of the ontological reduction, wherein everything is reduced to being and all being is wellbeing.

As the way of integration which is necessarily relational, Spirituality is a personal way, journey or adventure, undertaken by the reality who is

real, the real who is reality, who in his finitude and culpability, in relation to the Absolute, is in need of integration which is the personal process of his full realization in relation with not just the Supreme Being or Analogue (or isolated and isolational point of reference and goal of union) but with the Absolute which is a Person and is in itself point of convergence of not just union but of communion).

The Absolute, which is the determining point of all metaphysical aspiration and as such of all Spirituality as its origin, goal and the originary (the origin reencountered throughout the journey or way especially at its summit) is above all a value, a goal, an end-point in the journey. Communion with the Absolute is the determining criteria factor of all paths of integrity. Union is a connection that is impersonal, essential, Communion is a connection that personal, relational. Spirituality can only view the Absolute, which is the Supreme Value, as a Person, as a Supreme Person which then translates in care, which is solidarity.

Communion, which is nourishing in itself, is nourished not by essences but by Experience, which are can only be plural, diverse, different (ingredients of communion because of its relationality).

Ontology, with its goal of analogical and essential union, is the privatization of reality and of the real into being. Ontology is the privatization for the privileged ones in the hierarchy of being. Spirituality, on the other hand, because it is the way of communion, goes against this essential reduction of simplifying everything and elitist privatization to satisfy the all-knowing ego and the pretensions to have Absolute knowledge and be the Absolute Spirit in itself instead of a relation with the truly Absolute Spirit which is indeed the *Primis Principiis*.⁶⁷

The egoism of ontology signifies breaking away. Spirituality, in relation to phenomenology which is the possibility of Ontology, is a paradigm shift, an epistemic shift. Spirituality is sharing with others, in communion, in its historical face of solidarity and in its intimate feelings of empathy and sympathy, the same hopes and to live out that hopes by sharing the same experience, in plural, diverse and different experiences.

⁶⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. q. 72, a.1.

7. The Critical Function of Spirituality as the Way of Metaphysics in the overcoming of the Absoluteness of Ontology and its coordinates

On this regard, Spirituality plays a critical role. It above all plays a role in setting up limitations such that the same would be accepted by ontology as such in its epistemological pretensions.⁶⁸ Human reasoning functions in terms of the truth, to be grasped and lived at subjectively in its objectivity or transcendence and yet present in the same immanent realm of human reasoning. Human reasoning seeks truth patterns within this same immanent realm, conscious of transcendental of objects to itself, and these truth patterns form a narrative which we call history.⁶⁹ The notion of transcendental implies a Supreme Transcendence even beyond the common immanent realm which is termed as the Absolute. This Transcendence is the very concern of Metaphysics. Metaphysics is concerned with realities in their transcendence, in their participation in transcendence, which is symbolized cognitively by ontology in terms of being.

In the ontological reduction of being as wellbeing, reason has been absorbed by ontology. Thus, there is a critical need to rescue being in order to set it free toward transcendence and this is the role of Spirituality. Spirituality is not solely hinged on the Transcendent as an immanent way toward it. Spirituality underscores that this very Transcendental Reality in its Supreme Instance is present, available to man in his immanence. Hence, the limit as point of view unlocks a way of possibility, which is spirituality in terms of growth and progress, toward the transcendental while putting the question of being or the ontological question in its proper place. In view of this, Spirituality is a metaphysical endeavour. It is the realization of metaphysicality as its critical function, with regard to ontology, allows the growth of the subject into spirit, as we will discuss later on.

A key to this endeavour is to place reason as an instrument of criticism. Reason as an instrument of criticism promotes being not as identi-

⁶⁸ For the moment, I will mention this source as starting point for our reflections, cfr. Cfr.I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Nach der ersten und zweiten Originalausgabe hrsg. von Raymund Schmidt, Vol. 37a, Hamburg: Philosophische Bibliothek, 1956, Transz. Methodenlehre, 1. Hauptst, 2, Absch. (B766/785).

⁶⁹ My ideas here have been considerably enriched by the study of M. Álvarez, 'Crítica filosófica, razón y verdad', in: *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía* 1 (1974), 49-72.

fied with well-being but as a means toward well-being which is shared or participated in communion. For this reason, reason is aware of its instrumentality and not of its absoluteness. Reason, to remain rational, must be instrumental and must open up to reasonability wherein reason is not isolated but is shared in a community, transcending the immanent historicity or particularity of this community but projecting it eschatologically, with the aim of communion.⁷⁰

Reason, if it pretends to be absolute, becomes irrational. Absolute reason is dogmatic and becomes a disruptive force in society as fanaticism. It becomes differentiative in view of communion as *ideology* or the subjective reduction of reality to one's ideas or ontological interpretation of reality instead of *realism*⁷¹: contemplation of reality as real and of the real as reality in its unity and diversity, in its metaphysical communion which opens up a path called spirituality. Ideology is the discourse, the logos of interest in the disguise of truth, the discourse of the ego in the disguise of the subjectivity. As a disguise, it is a falsification of the reason. This falsification is due to the predominance of interest, proper to the ego, instead of the truth which is proper to the subject.⁷² To guarantee that reason remains rational, it must always be view of the truth. And the view of the truth is criticism. The critical instrumentality of Ontology remains rational (the quality of the thought of wellbeing) if it aims only for reasonability (the thought of wellbeing as shared instrumentality and not as aim in itself).

⁷⁰ I have taken into consideration the reflections of J. Rawls on this matter, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Likewise, this suggestive essay has proved helpful in order for me to build on my ideas: J. Heal, 'Back to the Rough Ground: Wittgensteinian Reflections on Rationality and Reason', in: Several Authors, *Wittgenstein and Reason*, London: Blackwell, 2008, 47-64.

⁷¹ The following works have proved to be useful in the present reflections: H. Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992; Idem., *The Many Faces of Realism*, La Salle: Open Court, 1987; Idem., *Representation and Reality*, Cambridge, Ma.: MIT Press, 1988. From a more traditional background, see: E. Gilson, *Le réalisme méthodique*, Paris: Tequi, 1935; Idem., *Réalisme thomiste et critique de la connaissance*, Paris: Vrin, 1939; P. Noël, *Le réalisme immédiat*, Louvain: Institut de Philosophie, 1938; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le réalisme du principe de finalité*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932.

⁷² In my opinion, the reflections on this regard of J. Habermas have not lost their relevance, cfr. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

Spirituality is, at first glance, openness to the Other beyond the ego. It is the Way of Man⁷³ to the Other through others, to the real in realities, to the reality in the real forms. Thus, shaking the ego of the ego by constituting it as a self. The self is openness to being a subject. This opening is attained by the release of the ego from its self-confining symbolization (egoism) by being a self.

The self is the growth of the ego into the subject. To be subject is to be able to place wellbeing as instrumental goal and not mode of identification. To be a subject is openness to growth and development as spirit, in terms of participation with the Absolute in metaphysical communion by means of a historical path, way or adventure, characterized by growth and development, which is spirituality. Spirituality is the breaking up of the absoluteness of the ego with its ontological-egotistical discourse of solipsism by making the ego a self or that which reaches out to other in order to grow and develop, constituting itself as subject, growing and developing as spirit, always in relation to the Absolute Reality or Spirit.

Irrationality is the negation of rationality by means of identifying being with wellbeing, instead of identifying that there are beings, hence many realities represented, in search of a participated and share wellbeing which is the current of reasonability within a shared domain institutionalized in history as society and whose maximum expression in terms of identity is the nation (the link of shared identity) and in the realm of action it is the state (the polis or the realm of politics).

Truth is the reach of the transcendental in itself within immanence. It is the participation of all that is immanent or within the narrative of history in the reality of the Supreme Analogate or Reality, in its transcendence, which is the concern of metaphysics given that Spirituality is the process of metaphysics or of the realization of the metaphysical vision in the growth of human rational subjectivity into spirit which constantly makes this rationality caring and nurturing within a reasonable or shared or communal context.

This reach is cognitively captured by human reasoning as wellbeing. Wellbeing is not the domain of the subject of nature or of its subjectivity.

⁷³ The reflections of M. Buber have been enriching on this regard, *The Way of Man*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1994.

This would be absurd. Wellbeing is the reach of truth and reaching out of truth in its transcendence, going beyond party lines or subjective ideologies. Truth is the aim of subjectivity so as to grow as a participative subjectivity in what is termed as objective and not in the absoluteness of its egocentric tendencies which is the involution instead of the evolution of the human subject.

Truth is correspondence between knowing faculty or reason immanent in man and objective or transcending reality. Correspondence is openness to reasonability, to sharing, to participating. Correspondence is the effectivity of wellbeing in as much as it is open, shareable, participable. Truth constitutes a true subject in as much as a subject is one that distinguishes himself from others and in doing so distinguishes himself with others from wellbeing.

Only a true subject can be the subject of experience or the mediation of reality as real and the real as reality in the life of man as reason in his reasonability, in his subjectivity which is open to evolution, to growth, to change in terms of reasonability of the self, in its constant reflective act (wherein the self goes back to itself in the particular moments of experiencing or metaphysical mediation) which is the constant shedding of the ego and its egoistic tendencies whose ultimate expression is solipsism.

8. Projection: Memory and the constant directionality of the Challenge to be Spirit as Holiness

The ontological tradition, including its analytical and linguistic-structural reductionist version of monist origin, reveals a persisting conflict within the philosophical tradition at large and specifically within its metaphysical, i.e., spiritual thrust. 'Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict'.⁷⁴ Thinking is the piety, the way of thinking of ontology which reduces everything to essences whose essence is language. Contemplation is the spiritual way proper to metaphysics which reaches, enjoys the beauty of the real as reality and reality as real in its plurality in communion, attaining, respecting and conserving its metaphysical sacredness of participative communion in the Absolute.

⁷⁴ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London: Bristol Classical Press, 1981,204.

Thinking must give way to Memory. Memory is not just making present. It is a constant hoping by means of contemplating the horizon as a way to attain communion in the midst of the storms of the present.

The challenge then is to make Memory contemplative. This can only be undertaken by a veritable metaphysical attitude: that of liberating memory from the ontological attachment to history and by releasing it within the metaphysical heights of eschatology. Hope is the horizon of eschatology.

Hope opens up new epistemological possibilities. This entails further reflection beyond these pages. Thus, we end our reflections with this projection, ever hopeful for new directions and paths on this regard.

And by hoping we grow as Spirits, as integral persons toward the Absolute within history, transforming it in hope into eschatology. This is the path of Spirituality, by which the ontological and its attachment to the here and now of history becomes metaphysical or eschatological. From this viewpoint, we can expect, we can hope that we will indeed come closer to this spiritual ideal and to distance ourselves all the more with the technological reduction of the spirit by ontology and its disastrous consequences which have clouded the triumphs of subjectivity in modernity.

To close, we quote these significative and challenging words from American Philosopher H. Putnam which somehow speak of the legitimate range of our hope, whether collective or individual:

A human being cannot live forever. A human being is finite in space and time. And the words and actions—the ‘outputs’, in computer jargon—of a human being, insofar as they are perceivable by the unaided senses of other human beings...can be described by physical parameters which are specified to only a certain macroscopic level of accuracy. But this means that the ‘outputs’ can be predicted during the finite time the human lives by a sufficiently good approximation to the actual continuous trajectory, and such a ‘sufficiently good approximation’ can be a recursive function.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ H. Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1992, 5. I acknowledge my indebtedness for this closing to P. Gilbert, ‘Pensiero, misericordia e speranza’ in Idem., *Sapere e sperare. Percorso di metafisica*, Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2003, 359-374. Also: A. Koyré, *Du monde clos à l’univers infini*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962.