

**SEARCHING FOR THE DIVINE IN
CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY**

*Tensions Between the Immanent and the
Transcendent*

Jolana Poláková

Translated from Czech by
Jan Valeška

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To Miloslav Cardinal Vlk

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PREFACE

It certainly is not by chance that the author of this remarkable book found her way to the faith of us Christians when she already was a grown-up, and that she became interested in philosophy in a country in which it was far from easy to study the classical texts of the Christian tradition. In the western world, a young philosopher whose parents were committed Christians would be likely to begin her/his studies by reading authors such as St. Augustin or Aquinas, that is, thinkers who tried to articulate their faith by confronting it with the secular wisdom of the old Greeks and Romans. In fact, from its very beginning the faith of this young philosopher would be suffused with the kind of rationality which Christian theology aimed for at least since the Alexandrine Fathers and probably already since St. Justin; after all, even when we pray the credo we repeat a text which is full of expressions coined by philosophers. As a consequence, this young philosopher, when considering what Aquinas has called *praeambula ad articulos fidei*¹, the preparatory steps to the articles of faith, would mainly look for rational arguments explaining why we should think that this or that proposition is true. In a word, it would not come to her/his mind that God is someone whom we “meet”; and even if such an insight occurred to him, she/he would probably hesitate to admit that such an experience should interest a philosopher, even if she/he is a Christian. It certainly is not by chance that philosophers, when they read St. Augustin's *Confessions*, may get interested in the passages about the notions of time or consciousness but almost never notice that this famous treatise of the bishop of Hippo Regius is a continuous dialogue with God.

Therefore, such a young Christian (or for that matter Jewish) philosopher probably would not notice that since World War II many philosophers², even if they are not pious, have started to think in a way that should interest the faithful. They became interested in what at first sight seems to be the most subjective, in our personal experience, and this in such a way that it no longer really mattered how we justify propositions but rather *whom* we are willing to meet, and *how* we are willing to meet him.

“Experience” is, of course, one of the most ambiguous philosophical expressions³. Yet we know quite unambiguously what we mean when we say that we experience this or that; and when someone else describes his experience in this

sense, we have no difficulty in recognizing it or else in saying that it is not familiar to us. The question then is not which abstract propositions are true or false but rather whether a philosopher is open-minded or whether he tends to ignore or even to deny what he “sees”, and whether we, as we listen to him, are ready to follow him while he probes his mind. It was the philosophical school dubbed “Existentialism” which, influenced by the analyses of Edmund Husserl, not only raised such an approach to a properly philosophical level but also pointed out that this way of philosophizing has a long tradition going back to Plato’s Socrates⁴.

Yet the existentialists, with the notable exception of Gabriel Marcel and few others (such as Rudolf Otto, Dieter von Hildebrand and Edith Stein), were not interested in religion; in fact, they usually quite explicitly restricted their search to experiences that are strictly inner-worldly, probably because, even if they were religious themselves, they suspected the traditional creeds of being so many propositions without an experiential background. One of the consequences was that many of them, indeed the most famous among them, for example Heidegger and Sartre, soon succumbed precisely to the temptation which they had tried to overcome, namely, to construct theories about the world and man’s role in it.

As Mrs. Poláková points out, it was not until the Postmodern Era that this began to change. I have to admit that the expressions “postmodern” and “postmodernity” confuse me, indeed that I dislike them; they seem too vague and too ambiguous to me to characterize what is going on nowadays. Yet Mrs. Poláková certainly is right when she suggests that during the last decades much of what philosophers write has changed: they have started to oppose, or at least to question, the rationalism characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment, a rationalism that ultimately continues that of medieval theology and its roots in the Ancient World. What suddenly began to count were *alternatives*, alternatives to abstract theorizing that, though it may turn out to be right or wrong, is irrelevant to our daily life with the exception of ethics. Practical philosophy always had its “existential” relevance; but its connection to its supposedly wiser theoretical sister always remained somewhat nebulous. As a consequence, modern philosophers usually shied away from topics, such as what the Greeks called “the ways of life”⁵, or what the Christians came to call “spirituality”⁶, or analyses of how we experience ourselves whenever we are confronted with anything that transcends our everyday awareness.

This recent change of philosophy (which many of us philosophers hardly noticed) has resulted in new, though often quite implicit, ways of discussing the tension between the Immanent and the Transcendent and thus, more generally, the issues of religion as it is perceived by philosophers. The great merit of Mrs. Poláková's book consists in making this explicit - and thereby in searching for ways in which contemporary philosophy looks out for the Divine, often without clearly noticing it.

The title of the book I am prefacing speaks of hope, a virtue which is usually defined as the right middle between the vices of pride and resignation. According to Aquinas, it is the firm expectation of a future good that it is possible, yet difficult, to achieve (*bonum possibile arduum futurum*)⁷, ultimately of the beatitude of those who are united with God. In the end, Aquinas argues, its object always is God and God alone. Certainly among most of the thinkers whom Mrs. Poláková discusses this expectation is far from firm; however, as Mrs. Poláková puts them into perspective she intimates a spiritual ladder each rung of which brings the reader closer to an insight and indeed a conviction that is no longer merely Utopian. She thus achieves the unusual feat of leading the reader to accept the Transcendent by studying philosophers who are afraid that there is no way to break the fetters of the Immanent.

Nicholas Lobkowicz, Ph.D.

former President of
the University of Munich and
the Catholic University of Eichstätt

1. *S.th.* I, 2, 2 ad 1.
2. There are, of course, precursors, even apart from Pascal or Kierkegaard; usually, however, as they did not follow traditional paths, there was little response to their approach among philosophers. Thinkers such as the Frenchman Maurice Blondel (+ 1949) or the German Peter Wust (+1940), not to speak of theologians who most influenced the 2nd *Vaticanum* (and after it remained entirely orthodox), like Henri de Lubac (+1979) or Hans Urs von Balthasar (+ 1988), even Romano Guardini (+1968), often even were suspected of being potential heretics.
3. For an attempt to clarify it through a historical analysis, cf. my paper in the festschrift for Helmut Kuhn, *ANODOS*, ed. by R. Hofmann and others, Weinheim 1989.
4. For an early study pointing this out see e.g. H. Kuhn, *Socrates. Ein Versuch über den Ursprung der Metaphysik*, Berlin 1934.
5. A distant echo of this Greek notion discussed, for example, at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is the medieval discussion of the merits of different religious orders.
6. For the history of this expression cf. the ninth volume of the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Darmstadt 1995), p. 1415 ff. Hans Urs von Balthasar once defined spirituality as "nothing but the arcane dimension (*Mysteriendimension*) of the objective church dogmatics", cf. *Verbum caro* (Einsiedeln 1960) I, p. 228.
7. *S.th.*, IIa-IIae, 17,1.

I.

TWO CONSTITUTIVE MOVEMENTS OF THE POSTMODERN ERA

The postmodern era may be seen as an epoch characterized by the gradual emergence of a trend which seems to be questioning the existing natural underpinnings of modern culture and civilization. It no longer appears to be a mere part or an echo of the modern times: new creative stimuli tend to go beyond the integrating capacities of the modern stereotypes in thinking and behaviour, and their self-correcting potentials. Postmodernity can no longer be dismissed as yet another incident of modernity's internal revolt against itself; its stimuli are no longer marked by romantic escapism or protesting for protesting's sake – they are not complementary with modernism, they are fundamentally *different*.

Viewed in a broader perspective of postmodernity, the modern life is deprived of its fascinating exclusivity: it is peacefully confronted with other, spontaneously emerging alternatives in lifestyle. The postmodern era did not emerge in any programmed fashion, as an implementation of some avant-garde intentions (the principle of such a „mastery“ is – on the contrary – quite common in modernity). Postmodernism itself is only a more or less comprehensive and revealing philosophical reflection of a spontaneously originating action.

In this sense, postmodernity is a tacit defiance of all the modes of civilizational and cultural directiveness – not through any new „revolution“ but rather through a final sobering-up of the entire progressive spirit of modernism.

Today's penetration of postmodernist tendencies from what seems to be a creative spiritual latency to the very surface of everyday life has, however, been long time coming – in some respects ever since the time of the Nietzschean „liberation of life“. Its title was coined in the first half of our century (1917 – Rudolf Pannwitz: postmodernism). Postmodernity first crystallized into the shape of a shared and coherent attitude in the field of arts and literature (since 1960s) before blossoming out (in the 1970s) into a cultural and civilizational trend with a

potential of penetrating all walks of life.

This long-running symbiosis between outgoing modernity and emerging postmodernity attests to the essentially non-violent, natural character of the ongoing changes, while providing an opportunity of blaming manifestations of degrading modernity on someone else. That is why it is essential to make precise distinctions. An attempt will be made here to outline the basic traits of a genuine innermost identity of the nascent postmodern era by depicting two specific complex movements which establish and identify it as a social and at the same time a spiritual phenomenon.

1. Release from the system societal links

States are modelled as machines; people are turned into statistical sets of voters, producers, consumers, patients, tourists or soldiers.

Václav Havel

How to break out of the technical reduction of a state, from the impersonal rationality wherein political power has anchored its claim to permanent innocence before personal consciousness?

Václav Bělohradský

It can be observed that over the past twenty years, citizens of the advanced Western countries have been promoting „alternative“ lifestyles whose essential component is no longer participation in the mechanisms of the functioning of society as a whole. This holds true of environmental protection just as well as assistance to the needy or cultural or religious activities; all these spheres are being developed to a growing extent outside the main sectors of the existing social system – without the inevitable involvement of the official „structures“ and economic values. Ever more citizens nowadays stay away from voting, engage in non-profit types of

earning their living, evolve activities in independent self-help associations. In actual fact, in this way they tend to question the very legitimacy of political representation, the meaningfulness of economic growth and the correctness or adequacy of professional solutions to human problems.

Thus, they problematize the three main functional underpinnings of modern society, which represent its specific features. Criticism and reluctance is directed towards the very principle of their functioning – to the very principle of modernity – which consists in a *technical systematicity* (with the indispensable element of totalization and automaticity) which has been perfectly elaborated in all spheres of modern society. This principle serves aims originally formulated in terms of the Enlightenment: *the emancipation of man* and *the mastery of the world*. During the modern era, these aims tend to justify all efforts for the achievement of the hegemony of Western civilization (as the „culminator of historical progress“). The harmful course of the process of attaining both objectives has, however, gradually and very convincingly concretized the mastery of the world as its objectification, appropriation and depletion, down to the irreversible phases of a universal ecological catastrophe, and the emancipation of man as his control, education and care for him, down to the irreversible phases of a universal spiritual crisis. The modern ideas have thus been gradually discredited while the technical systematicity – continuously operating in the programmed direction – persists.

Postmodernity can be understood as a vital basis of an inner detachment which allows to weigh the new, hitherto marginalized possibilities. This is a new *quest* for – no longer the shaping of – a human identity, a new *acceptance* – no longer the designing – of a human situation. All the signs are that in this search human identity is not „universal“, systematically graspable in the modern sense of the term; it is an unarranged *plurality* of mutually non-transferrable subjectivities which co-shape most diverse relationships. What used to languish under the reign of unifying and streamlining modern projects is now enjoyed as a basic reality. Territoriality, out of which man naturally grows, and spirituality, to which he freely turns, form the vertical axis of the identity of a person, a group or a nation, an identity which is not totally transparent to any – inevitably horizontal – system. The former no longer identifies itself with the

latter and therefore is not subordinated to it. Communication growing therefrom is no longer mediated by a mere totalizing neutrality of the „generally valid“; it respects the differences, „letting be“. – However, the unusual stress caused by the spreading mentality of lonely search without authoritative streamlining, with a shortage of life's fixed coordinates, gives rise to tendencies to escapism of all sorts, to drugs in the broadest sense of the term. The plurality of ideas often operates as a vacuum of ideas, causing distress, anguish and subsequent regression to a sectarian or even totemistic premodern mentality. The postmodern era has to learn how to come to terms with these specific risks by using its own spiritual instruments.

2. The Breaking of Horizons of Modern Reason

Each tradition seems to contain all the other traditions. Relativization of being into a single „conceptual system“ which is closed, separated from others and as if inambiguous crippled genuine traditions and creates chimeras.

Paul K. Feyerabend

Contemporary science seems, to an ever growing extent, to be spotlighting the yawning gap between the objects of science and the subjects of experience, (...) a divorce between the real and the truthful, between what is accessible to experience and what is acceptable from a scientific point of view.

Gianni Vattimo

Postmodern knowledge simply is not an instrument of the authorities. It tends to refine our sense for differences and strengthens our ability to tolerate the incommensurate.

Jean F. Lyotard

The confusing synchronous variety of thought processes of the postmodern era offers convincing evidence of the disruption of the sovereign status of modern rationality both in its theo-retical and practical manifestations. Its *universality* and, at the same time, exclusivity was socially sanctioned through its initial role of an unbiased neutralizer of the great controversy – religious wars at the dawn of the modern era. It established itself as a rationality capable of attaining a „higher synthe-sis“. Modern rationality succeeded in covering up the controversies of the two Christian teachings by its own secularized anthropocentric construction of the ultimate goal of history and the reliable means of achieving that. Instead of religious uncertainties, humankind was offered, with the best of intentions, the utopical rational certainty of a project converging with the most human values man's reason could ever appropriate from the Christian heritage. In the interests of human emancipation, efforts were made to promote the imposing science-based image of the world as a foundation of success of all technical interventions into the natural and social spheres. During the two centuries, the efficiency of the economy and information has been greatly increased – to the detriment of an ecological balance, at the cost of a reduced subsistence level of the members of other civilizations and at the cost of the underdeveloped spiritual horizon of the members of one's own civilization. The Western man has thus proved the universality of his reason by becoming an actual master of his world but, among other things, at the cost of becoming a barbarian himself: Within the average of his population he has become, at best, nothing but a skilful manager and indifferent consumer. The spiritual support provided to mankind by modern rationality has eventually turned out to be too rickety and too artificial.

It seems that in the present era the medium of a genuine spiritual universality, not aiming at the totalizing of performances but rather at establishing an inner contact with each counterpart, can no longer be an impersonal scientific and technical reason but a personal, non-anonymous *intellectual sensitivity*. It is on its strength that postmodern internal and external plurality fashions the possibilities of natural understanding. In accordance with the new spirit of this intellectual sensitivity members of the Western civilization are beginning to display a certain

distance from their own civilization privileges, giving up their cultural monologue. Even within their own society they are beginning to respect attitudes formerly branded as „abnormal“, „irrational“ or „incomprehensible“. This breakthrough is associated with a theoretical suspension of the abstract neutral subject of modern rationality: the situation is such that there is always an „I“ who is aware of one's own limits, and there is a „You“, different from me, whom I want to understand. Postmodern thinking is a recuperative dialogue among various rationalities which modern rationality is not in a position to grasp because in its own eyes it had „overcome“ them a long time ago. Everything it has discarded or crippled on the path of its self-confirmation is thus, once again, given a chance to express itself. The ordinary worlds of human illusions and approximations are once again taken as a foundation and a point of departure for a search, not as something which can – before all the serious effort of thinking – be disposed of all at once by the mere negative logical procedure. The issue of truth is once again open and virtually anybody can hear all the other opinions. An attitude to truth can thus be established as a humble personal quest which does not make its path easier by reducing the truth to heard claims of an expert authority. The principle of dialogue is thus preferred to the principle of power, the right to differ is valued more than the principle of homogeneity.

At the same time, an unusual problem arises. The postmodern explosion of cultural exchanges has sent into circulation so many new meanings – all the historically and geographically differentiated cultures suddenly meet almost simultaneously in a single melting pot – that the joy derived from the released plurality changes under their fire into exhaustion and resignation. Perception is becoming more superficial. The sharpening of sensitivity can thus be turned into its loss – into a new dumbness; into short-circuit instinctive solutions of too complicated problems; into a mere registering approach to matters which could have otherwise addressed us very strongly; into the fake of a dialogue by reducing it into mere dilly-dallying.

There is a danger which is to a certain extent connected with the coexistence and intertwining of the attitudes of modernism and postmodernism. A typical modern reaction is to conquer, at a hectic pace, something which is, in terms of human capacity, a matter of long-term

maturation. Quite understandably, a modern mentality also tries to exploit or „colonize“ in its own way the postmodernist contribution by transforming it into a commodity; manipulating an interested person into the role of a consumer who simply has no time to realize that his contact with other cul-tures or subcultures is not communication but once again an act of a conqueror, who exploits and discards. – The contribution of a genuine postmodern mentality comprises respect as one of its key elements. Within its context, that which is different is accepted in openness: it remains in its ultimate dimension a mystery.

TRANSCENDENCE IN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

The postmodern era creates its specific conditions for the search for transcendence; this very quest is, however, a certain anthropological constant – it is a component of human life at all the times and in all the geographical regions. „God“, the „super-natural“, the „beyond the world“ are more or less successful but elementary and commonly used words to denote what philosophy – until recently a dominating form of our civilization's thinking -has been trying to elaborate at the level of its conceptual apparatus in terms of transcendence. It does so in a permanent dialogue with non-philosophical modes of relations with that instance. Through its mode of grasping the issue (or rather the mystery) of transcendence, philosophy often reconstitutes itself in a hitherto unparalleled fashion. We can speak of a development of the self-conception of philosophy vis-a-vis transcendence. In the following passage I would like briefly to preview an exposition of the four most outstanding modes or degrees through which, in my view, philosophy has so far opened itself up to transcendence, ie. it has taken the issue of searching for transcendence as intrinsically its own. Starting from such a philosophical background – and, in turn, we will let our insights shed light on that background –, we will proceed to that form of searching for transcendence which is symptomatic for the present era.

1. Plato – Transcendence as Genuine Being

We stand in between being and non-being, yearning for the form of being which will prevail over non-being inside us and in our world.

Paul Tillich

Plato's „discovery“ of the world of ideal substances, crowned with the universal idea of Good, which Plato sometimes designated as „the Divine“ – an imperishable, perfect world,

situated above or beyond the passing and imperfect sensually perceptible world – did not originate as a mere dispassionate hypostasis of logical abstractions. The very manner Plato employs to introduce, or rather initiate, us into this supraworld – the form of narrating mythical stories (about a cave, a carriage and pair of our soul, postmortal judgement etc.) – reveals his concept's intrinsic connection with the world of experiences of Greek mysteries. The unbiased questioning of Plato's teacher Socrates aimed at discovering genuine goodness, genuine virtues, genuine life certainties, enquiries which cast doubts on and disrupted the seemingly immediate certainties of an ordinary, conventional life, gave Plato an analytically well-elaborated space to be filled with philosophical re-establishing of the main constants of the *orphyic* experiential religious world: the immortality of the soul, difference between this and the other world, body as a grave of the soul, reincarnation etc. The most profound meaning of the search for transcendence in Greek mysteries – a search taking the shape of esoteric and often drastic initiation rites, breaking through the limits of experience of everyday routines and introducing its participants to the unexplored ground of the innermost ecstatic events wherein each and everyone separately faces contacts with the adored deity, which can allegedly change human postmortal fate – was philosophically deciphered by Plato as essentially consisting in a *desire for the ideal*: the immortal soul's yearning for its original divine home in which it used to dwell before entering the world and into which it wants to return after death.

According to Plato this desire can be fully satisfied only with the help of a philosophical „care of the soul“ – through a spiritual way of life devoted to philosophical learning. A philosophy, conceived in this way as a life practice, is implemented in Plato's school by its „devotees“ through the method of dialogical search for answers to the fundamental human questions: concerning genuine knowledge, goodness, love, the best political order in the state, beauty, genuine morality... As Plato writes in his famous Seventh Letter, a confrontation of various opinions may evoke in the human soul a process of „anamnesis“ at the end of which the right solution shall emerge – but not always fully communicable by philosophical means. In this sense, philosophy, including the notion of conceptually conceivable world of ideas, constitutes

in Plato's eyes nothing but a necessary propaedeutics – this process of live philosophizing, creative analytical work forms a mere „rubbing of woods“ out of which a conceptually no longer definable spark of true cognition may suddenly burst.

A philosophical path to transcendence is thus travelled as a *spiritual practice*; with regard to it the teaching of ideas is a mere speculative aid marking out the main direction of the road: from the lower to the higher, from the apparent to the real, from the passing to the eternal, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the derived to the original, from ingenuine being to authentic being – from dark to light. Plato was the first philosopher who – operating at the level of his own conceptual equipment – attempted to capture the very archetypal plane of human aspiration to rise upwards. Without their esoteric overtones, taken solely at their „literal“ value, Plato's writings remain to be a mere speculative torso with some rationally inexplicable elements (as illustrated by the critical attitude assumed by Plato's disciple Aristotle). As a result, Plato's works thus conceived are more of an obstacle than a true guideline for genuine spiritual openness. Nevertheless, as confirmed by the powerful line of Platonism, often overlapping with the mystical level of the human experiencing, and surviving in varying forms until our days, Plato's philosophy has time and again been capable of introducing a profoundly spiritual context from which it had proceeded, and has repeatedly been in a position to stimulate continued development of concepts which, linking up to Plato's philosophy, has been striving for an ever deeper and richer elaboration of what is its virtually paradigmatically determining conception of transcendence as *genuine being*.

2. Kant – Transcendence as a World of Liberty

Finite liberty in itself expresses something absolute.

Rio Preisner

But in terms of practical relationship with transcendence, Plato's metaphysical hypothesis of the world of ideas, a proto-type of all other metaphysical hypotheses relating to transcendence, is a somewhat ambivalent contribution. It is the best mode of securing for transcendence, within the framework of conceptual thinking, both utterly firm, unshakable status and a guarantee of intellectual accessibility, and just by means of that to discredit it *as transcendence*. A speculative idea serves as a permanently available instrument to help our process of anamnesis of what cannot be recorded by any idea; but it is precisely for this immanent accessibility that a speculative idea invites us to indulge in abandoned forgetting of what it relates to or ultimately in casting doubts on its referential mission. Having become a substitute, it is later rendered unnecessary. Philosophy which has for long centuries operated within a closed world of speculative ideas becomes, together with that world, dead for a live, non-speculative contact with transcendence and thus for the possibility of its different conceptual treatment.

It was Immanuel Kant who first succeeded – at the level of peak philosophical argumentation – in overstepping that extensive intellectual horizon of constructing transcendence. Kant's spiritual background was *Christianity*, and in it its cardinal accent, which – drowned by traditional ideological artefacts – could have hardly been heard in academic thought at all: the conception of the relationship with transcendence not as an attitude primarily towards a subject of study or worship but rather as something one „comes to learn“ only after one manages to tune in one's deeds with it (with Him). (Cf. Jesus's: „Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of heaven; but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do.“ Matthew 7, 21) This non-speculative, volitive and ethical relationship – which has to this day been often jeopardized in the tradition of Christian philosophy and theology with neo-Platonistic explications, gnostically reducing spirituality's coherent practicality to matters of consciousness, knowledge and speculation – finally received in Kant's work a principled philosophical expression in the sweeping notion of the *primacy of practical reason*.

While for theoretical reason the attainment of transcendence is – as systematically

proved by Kant – a futile struggle to achieve an unattainable logical certainty, practical reason sees transcendence as its own immediate prerequisite, a guarantee of its freedom, its good will. To act reasonably means to act morally, in accordance with the will enacted by the rules valid in the „realm of purposes“ – in the world common to all free beings „headed“ by God. Therefore, in Kant's perception trans-cendence is not an endlessly distant external instance to which our speculation is heading in vain but rather a universally common internal environment in which we directly participate through that portion of our being which is not subordinated to the laws of nature but to freely observed moral laws. Transcendence enables and guarantees our freedom – our espousal of good.

3. Jaspers – Transcendence as the Origin of Existence

Human being is evidently far less anchored and secured in itself than is generally bargained for.

Romano Guardini

Having penetrated the education of many European generations, the optimistic radiance of the Kantian model of the straightforward path leading towards transcendence through rational moral improvement was radically extinguished in the 20th century. After the outbreak of the irrationality of war, there appeared in the experiences of Jaspers's generation a helpless awareness of *contradiction* existing between what ideally „should be“ and what there „is“. A gap emerged between immanence and transcendence. *A priori* rational solution is very difficult to be applied efficiently to bridge that gap under situations replete with strife, death, suffering, and guilt. It is vital to find a bridge, geared to carry the whole irrational burden of extreme conditions. Philosophical reason, which formulates the given problems, can no longer be a reason operating in the traditional elevation into the abstract. In a reflected way, it should be established as the reason of a concrete human existence proceeding from the experience of its

own being and struggling for its own and yet universally communicable spiritual illumination.

Karl Jaspers does confirm that transcendence can be rendered comprehensible even through the notions of classical conceptual thinking but only indirectly, as something that cannot be grasped through this kind of thinking; by using the method of analogy, paradox, tautology, questions which cannot be safely and unequivocally answered we will attain at least a *formal* understanding of transcendence, which however – only following the failure of conceptual thinking – creates space for existential fulfilment. Analogically, even personally experienced situations of failure offer the possibility of perceiving them not only in terms of self-ensuring mundane here-being (Dasein) but of accepting them as „extreme“ situations – seen from the viewpoint of free *existence*. This particular level of human being, noted for the fact that when involved in it man becomes fully himself, is attained – according to Jaspers – precisely through searching for transcendence.

As far mundane being is concerned, transcendence is taken for a kind of chimera of „the other world“. But existence tends to experience transcendence *here and now*, as eternity which embraces time, which – in spite of its absolute heterogeneity – is not disparate but rather pervades with its relationship everything there is. Keeping in touch with transcendence, existence will brighten up, in understanding transcendence people are interconnected, becoming capable of intrinsic communication. Transcendence therefore is reality only for existence: the latter enquires, the latter also understands an answer. „Transcendence shall never enter a blind soul“ to whom extreme situations as well as all the other ciphers of transcendence are concealed by routine survival. „Cipher“ is a trace, „vestigium Dei“, an intermediary of the „speech of transcendence“. There is nothing that could not become a cipher; even metaphysics, if interpreted from existence, not from mere reason, constitutes this self-presentation of transcendence into immanence. Thanks to this self-presentation man actually starts – according to Jaspers – really loving the world. Human being's principal uncertainty and lack of safeguarding in the world, however, does not change itself in the relationship to transcendence; what does change is the fact that destructive impacts do not lead to decline but rather to fuller

being, to a free claim *to be out of origin of one's own self*. – From the abyss of death we return to ourselves. Existence as a rebirth endowing man with greater abilities to bear his own fate – this is reminiscent of the harsh and illuminating depth of ancient mysteries. Many indications are that this time philosophical reason has penetrated it almost to the very bottom. Man has to suffer his way whole through to freedom; that path is lined with crises and catastrophes man does not choose of his own will. Therefore, existence is not a self-assertion in the sense of satisfying one's needs and emancipatory aspirations; it is not sovereignty which constitutes a measure unto itself. Its fundamental freedom conceals an act of being grasped from some different quarters.

Since in his existence man becomes his own self in his total dignity and value, mundane being is in no way devalued – it is penetrated anew. Transcendence-God does not approach existence as a mere factor of complementing or enriching; it is *the found-ation of implementing* existence, experienced as what man can never become but what is „donated“ to him in the form of power through which he is himself.

The spiritual background of Jaspers's philosophy is formed by no special religious confession. His conviction is an exclusive „philosophical faith“ which essentially aspires to forestall any possibility of confusing transcendence in its concealment with the manifest religious image. In our century brimming over with idols, religious mediocrity and false prophets Jaspers's philosophy stands guard over the open possibility of encountering transcendence independently of anything from the world.

4. Lévinas – Transcendence or The Other One

The idea of God is for us an unthinkable idea.

Maurice Blondel

Unlike Jaspers, Emmanuel Lévinas sees a guarantee for preventing the thinking of

transcendence from sinking into the structures of immanent knowledge, ie. guarantee of preserving a live relationship with transcendence, precisely in a *religiously determined* faith, specifically in a faith whose cardinal message lies exactly in eliminating all the false certainties and in introducing man to the only certainty of absolute commitment to the One who baffles any absolute knowledge. The metaphysical desire, so powerfully kindled by Auschwitz and Gulag – to put it in the words of Beatitudes: the desire cherished by the poor and the weeping who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the desire of the pure in heart who are persecuted for righteousness's sake, the desire of those who suffer for their mercy, the desire of all peace-makers for the indestructible, absolute kingdom of such peace – can no longer be turned only to the God of an parlour philosophical creed; it calls on the God of the multitudes, the Lord of history. That is why the philosophical striving towards transcendence, in case of the Jewish thinker Lévinas, has broken through to this ultimate dimension. The preceding philosophical insights into the issue of genuine being, of freedom, of the origin of existence seem to be mere indications; standing behind all this for Lévinas is *Him*. Living, acting, obliging. Inaccessible to the austere religious fundamentalism, which adores the dead letter, and elusive to philosophical speculation which clings to practising a dead system. Lévinas as an explicator of the Talmud and Lévinas as a philosopher inseparably personifies a possible penetration of two universalities; he demonstrates that the faith and experiences of monotheistic religion can be immediately made accessible through philosophical concepts – without either philosophy or transcendence having to cease being themselves.

Nevertheless, philosophy is forced to overstep its existing framework (inherited since ancient times) whose determining centrepiece has always been, expressly or implicitly, a cogitating I, and a determined content what this I finds thinkable. Lévinas's Copernican turn towards the Other One represents a turn towards thinking of the „unthinkable“, which as God and as neighbour transcends my active cognitive intentions. Instead of Me the Other One becomes the determining centre of my philosophizing – it is what binds me to *responsibility* still before I can think of that. Transcendence, in Lévinas's interpretation, is not embodied into an

idea, into an object, into a background; „the spirituality of transcendence does not coincide with the assimilatory act of consciousness“. Relationship towards transcendence – as an act of recognition of its absolute initiative – is not cancelled out but rather evoked and stimulated by an awareness of its unthinkability. On the contrary, what is totally graspable in the act of thinking can serve as a refuge for retreating from transcendence, as a material for ontological defence (related to mere being) against that to whose claim man is defencelessly exposed at the level of ethical commandment. Lévinas's priority given to *ethics* before ontology is reminiscent of Kant's priority of practical reason to theoretical one, as well as Jaspers's interpretation of metaphysics from the viewpoint of existence and Plato's fervour for the incommunicable. All these thinkers were aware that a certain mode of thinking, to use Lévinas's term – intentionality -, fails when confronted with transcendence.

In Lévinas's consequential and systematic treatment, transcendence is what has always principally baffled the ambition of thinking to have reality under its control. That what is thought directly touches on the thinking agent, evoking in him love, awe and responsibility. It is not a concept but *relationship* that provides a gateway to Transcendence.

THE DOMINATING FEATURE OF POSTMODERN SPIRITUALITY: SEARCH

Once upon a time, an old man and his daughter Agapé who enchanted people with her exceptional goodness and beauty lived in a hut on the edge of a desert. Agapé had many suitors. She insisted on her very special condition for marrying one of them: she could give her hand only to the one who will build a large and firm house for her in the desert. Most suitors were immediately put off by that condition. They were well aware of the impossibility of meeting that demand: after all, desert sands are constantly moving so that no permanent dwelling can be built on them with the exception of a tent or a simple hut. But not all of the suitors would listen to the voice of sound reason. Not far from the old man's and girl's house there lived seven able-bodied brothers with their parents. As each brother matured he fell head over heels in love with Agapé. Each was prepared to make whatever sacrifice was demanded of him to win her heart.

The first to go to the desert was the eldest son. As usual, he was the most self-confident of all the brothers: „*My house shall never fall down. Agapé shall be mine.*“ He found a nice even spot in the desert and built a wooden house whose individual parts were joined together very well. Then, tired by his hard work, he rested, assured of his success on the following day. An unheard-of sand storm broke out during the night. The wind blew the house miles away and the young man, having fallen out of a window was killed by the furious elements.

This gave an opportunity to the second brother. „This is a chance for outsmarting the eldest brother once and for all,“ he thought and got down to work. He tried to use the brother's house which still held together, digging underneath the house and laying new foundations he could build in the sand. He worked with a joyful mind, hoping to deserve his bride soon. When he was in the midst of his efforts the sands moved unexpectedly under the weight of the house and this came crashing down on the poor man, killing him instantly.

The third brother did take the fate of his two brothers as a sufficiently serious warning against ill conceived action. He decided to explore primarily all the conditions and circumstances of the project. Encouraged by his thoughts of Agapé, he studied the movements of desert sands and the properties of

building materials, doing his best to master all the possible laws of motion one has to take into consideration until he developed a really solid theory. But a practical solution was still nowhere in sight. Yet he did not give up trying and tirelessly devoted himself to his studies during which he became absolutely oblivious of his surroundings. So it happened that he was stung by a scorpion and died.

The fourth brother was shattered by the evident hopelessness of the whole situation. He was a very sensitive boy since his childhood and he set his sights on Agapé with unbridled passion. At the same time, he was very well aware that he could never devise a better plan than any of his brothers. He did not know what to do, he only felt that he simply cannot live without Agapé. In apparent anguish and sorrow he groped aimlessly about the desert, composing beautiful poems about his futile love. His fine and fragile soul soon succumbed to despair, and he committed suicide.

The fifth brother realized that there is only one way left for him which might turn out to be the right path. If everything that is worldly and human turns out to be posing the threat of death, while trying to win the heart of Agapé, then one must pin one's hopes on the supernatural. With a deeply religious mind which anticipates only miracles in dedicated faith he went to the house in the desert. He turned it into a shrine, daily bringing sacrifices, meditating, fasting and committing himself to the will of God. He lived the life of a saint and his fame soon spread far and wide. People would come to see him to receive his blessings and advice. But nothing happened with the house. It was still standing there on the sands, as threatened by their sudden movement as ever before. The young man's faith did not give him his Agapé. His sensibility was complicated, full of contradictions. He did not want to admit to himself that he had failed to win Agapé, he wanted to know nothing about her. He explained the fact that he had to force himself into making pious acts as his own special merit which brings him closer towards God. He dismissed his occasional bursts of hostility towards other people as manifesting his own godliness aiming for loneliness and as providing him with an opportunity for self-sacrifice. He was desperately dependent on everything that made it possible for him to detract attention from the truth deep in his heart that he is missing Agapé terribly much in his life. He was apt to interpret his suffering as a mysterious test devised by God. People seemed to be willingly to understand his problems in the same light, and when he died of his heart condition one day they prepared a ceremonial funeral for him.

„Without accepting the truth there can be no salvation,“ the sixth brother who closely watched the behaviour of his elder brother realized only too well. „I have to start anew, from scratch.“ He thought the old house was as obnoxious as a pawn shop filled with all human errors and follies. He burnt the house down together with all the religious objects, love poems, scientific texts and tools left behind by his brothers. With a pure and dedicated heart he got down to digging deep foundations for a new house for Agapé. It must be possible, he thought, to dig through the sand to solid rock and build a house on it to keep it safe from the elements. He dug on and on, disregarding everything else. He was going deeper and deeper, but his strength was draining away fast. His hands were full of blisters and callouses, his back was scorched by the sun, his legs were wobbly and his eyes glistened with a strange glow. But he kept digging yet harder. One day he stopped eating not to lose time for work. He died insane, at the bottom of the hole he had dug, his hands spasmodically clawing at the endless desert sands.

The seventh and youngest brother shared his elder brother's passion for the truth. He sensed that only through this leads a path to Agapé. His desire for Agapé was so strong that to give her up voluntarily, he felt, would be like death. That is why he decided to follow the same terrible path as his brother but he was encouraged by an uncertain glimmer of hope that perhaps he could be guided and supported also by things existing outside his own iron will. He left for the desert not only with a firm resolve to admit to himself and face all the unpleasant facts of life but also with a bland openness towards everything positive which could give him outside help and which would not amount to delusions. In this jealously guarded state of mind he got down to deepening the foundations. Not even when his work progressed well did he allow himself to be intoxicated with the feeling of success – instead he carefully propped up the layers of sand to prevent them from slipping. When his work did not go well he would put his feelings of sorrow, helplessness and anguish into lyrical poems, thus giving vent to his frustrations. Perhaps he prayed too -but more probably it was his self-effacing listening to the oppressive silence of the desert at night which transformed him inwardly. He felt that everything around him was silently supporting him in his efforts. „I shall continue even if I had to dig through into the very centre of the Earth. I have nothing to lose but my desire.“ He broke all his tools and he had to use his bare hands, going on with the last drop of his strength and abandon: and without knowing it he lost his

own self for ever. And only then did it happen. The soil under the sand suddenly opened up, sprouting a spring of water. A gorgeous silvery fountain stood there glistening in the sun. Life-supporting water flowed all around, awakening seeds which had laid shrivelled and dried up in the sand. Grass began to grow together with a large palm-tree under which the young man slept for a long time, exhausted by his hard work and protected by its refreshing shadows. When he woke up, birds were singing above him and Agapé was sitting next to him: „You have fulfilled my condition, you have built with you a house of life for me.“

J. P., the 1970s

A salient feature of the postmodern world is its shifty in-stability; a radical aggravation of the possibility of attaining certainties: these range from elementary certainties of everyday life via those associated with the reliability of technical and scientific reason or with the meaningfulness of aesthetically cultivated experience to those certainties that create outward support for religious life. Lurking behind all the attempts at leading a spiritual and moral life is the drastic phenomenon of the desert. Faced with it, even the tragic nihilism of the advanced modern era is found to be just an empty pose. The hidden reverse side of the postmodern lightness, abandon and playfulness, sometimes appearing a trifle spasmodic, is a silent and raw element of seriousness verging on the insane. Drawing on both sources, the postmodern expression which has not yet achieved its catharsis typically keeps oscillating between the ridiculous and the horrible. But the more the „too human“ matters tend to be acquiring as superficial a quality as some waxworks, the more radical opportunity is offered to present-day man of relaxing himself to the very depth of his being for accepting that which addresses him radically „from the outside“. Moving on the shifting sands of the postmodern world not only a blind ephemeral bustle and hustle but also the launching a new search is possible. The measure of hope connected with it is commensurate to the intensity of the present-day feelings of uncertainty. The different nature of future certainties will probably correspond with the unusual character of alternatives now available for mutual confrontation. The postmodern development

of the Western civilization and culture is unique: for the first time in mankind's history it offers the chance of giving the floor probably to all cultures anyone can ever hear of, regardless of their geographic or historical distance from the contemporary West. They have their say in that (powerful) sense that ranging from magic to Zen it is now possible not only to read about them but also to experience everything, personally and at first hand, which belongs to the cultural reality concerned. This mutual opening-up of the worlds, a process whose originator and cross-section our own civilization has grown to be thanks to its long-standing academic training throughout the thousand-year long accumulation of knowledge about everything and anything any knowledge can be obtained, is – for the first time in history – so hugely multi-dimensional and so utterly unarranged beforehand. In its post-modern hospitality the Western world has all but given up its own explanatory frameworks in which „alien“ influences and elements could somehow be placed into well-defined and meaningful contexts. With the extent of this non-conceptuality of the total offer of the possibilities of spiritual life our era far exceeds both of the similarly characterized eras, namely the end of Antiquity and late Renaissance. The search for transcendence in the post-modern era is not, in the least, „obligatorily“ aimed in a certain direction through some kind of generally accepted order of faith, religious practice or spiritual experience. It is a search in the fullest sense of the term: roughly speaking – all the roads leading from its point of departure are equally accessible and equally unknown.

Surrounded by the confusing multitude of spiritual alternatives, the reflecting thought, shocked by the unbounded nature of their seeming accidentality, relativity and chaos, initially seems to be losing itself but gradually it can regain its role of a sensitive discoverer of an *inner order* through which the search for transcendence intuitively arranges itself *on its own*, sorting out its alternatives according to the rules and criteria which are not established artificially and from the outside but which form a spontaneous component of the very process of searching. An attempt is now made to develop the basic constants marking that inner order and to investigate its specific inner criteria.

II.

RELATIVE TRANSCENDENCE

The first hesitant steps aiming beyond the horizon of immanence – an area which is spontaneously „intrinsic“ to us – are not very accurately targeted. At the same time, they are not guided by any maximalist courage. They are aimed at gradually exploring the nearest vicinity into which modern immanence is immediately grown. Discoveries, however revolutionary they may be, therefore still concern only transcendence in the relative sense. Searching is directed more to finding *whether there is anywhere* to set out to; not yet *whither* is it possible to go. The main goal at this stage is to test the main passable roads step by step. To find out – primarily with a view to the initial immanence – whether and how to explain diverse anomalies accumulated in the closed worlds of modern knowledge; whether and where to find alternatives to the manipulative modern attitude to the world; whether and how can the modern dominant West view itself also through the eyes of other civilizations; whether and how to save man's human nature in the face of the modern tendencies to narrowing it down and exhausting it. The postmodern search for relative transcendence thus amounts to searching for the possibilities whether the immanence of the modern man and the modern world can be at all somehow overstepped to some avail. Using the term „relative“, I would like to imply that preliminary and in a sense limited nature: relative transcendence is not a transcendence beyond which it would be impossible to proceed.

1. Transpersonality

People who have no aim keep going to and fro,
Marching in closed ranks,

Going from somewhere to nowhere

From nowhere to somewhere

Going and cursing as they march.

They no longer care for anything, that's why they keep going,

Filing through one-way streets.

A dense traffic everywhere, like in rotundas during a siege

Whose end somebody's forgotten to announce.

People who care for nothing keep dejectedly marching on

With feeling of self-importance

As pilgrims announcing to the Lacedaemonians.

Both sides couldn't care less.

And people go and keep swarming.

And people go and keep multiplying.

Albert Kaufmann

Our hormones produce enzymes of hungers which cannot be assuaged, dreams which cannot be made true, desires which cannot be suppressed. And I am standing in the very centre of this and my head is empty, I have a huge heart without blood and dissolved soul consisting of anti-matter. I am tired of myself and my time. I am tired by restrictions, powerlessness, misunderstanding.

Tadeusz Konwicki

The search for transcendence through personal experiencing, its search inside oneself and through oneself, appears to be the most typical method of our times. It was stimulated by two factors: dissatisfaction with the depersonalized way official religious institutions are run and

the need to compensate for the pathogenic influences of the dehumanized complex of modern civilization. Men and women – feeling to have been stripped of themselves and subordinated to systems which were originally to have served them but which, instead, made their lives more difficult, men and women uprooted by work which they perform not out of innermost necessity, and equally uprooted through entertainment, in the midst of which they try to forget everything important – live anything else but their own lives, subordinating themselves to all the other authorities but the authority which would have addressed the inner identity of each of them. The only place whither a secularized man could have been led, during the 1960s and 70s, by his desire to extricate himself from that machinery was the study of a psychiatrist or a psychologist. A disengagement into the inner world – into that unexplored, prohibited realm – was generally seen as a sure sign of contracting a disease rather than embarking on a path towards improving one's health. But a therapeutically mediated rediscovery of one's *Self* could provide man, „controlled from the outside“, with a totally emancipating insight of the natural state of human affairs and change his attitude towards spiritual values.

In this sense, the changing needs of its patients and clients were accompanied by changes in psychology and its philosophical starting points. In addition to positivist behaviourism and biologizing Freudism this century has seen the emergence first of humanistic psychology and, in connection with it in the mid-1960s in the United States, the so-called fourth power – transpersonal psychology. The purpose of the psycho-therapy conceived by it was not only to develop integral, spontaneous personality and its humanistically delineated self-realization, its will to meaning, its freedom, love, growth and creativity, but above all this, also the attainment of an inner contact with what goes beyond a personality thus conceived: truth, good, beauty, perfection, order, immortality, unity etc. It is in the transpersonal stage of its development that psychology is beginning to be able to grasp the horizon of human motivation in its entirety and proclaim the legitimacy even of its overreach vis-a-vis the usual system of values recognized by an ordinary modern man. It finally assumes his underdeveloped ability of self-transcendence – offering him the chance of deblocking his deeper spiritual potential. Its therapeutic methods are

aimed at a single goal: to expand the consciousness of the client as much as to reach the sensation of the supra-personal dimensions of his being.

Secularization of Religious Experience

The universalism of transpersonal psychology, arising from its initial scientific foundation and motivated by endeavours to provide access to spiritual values of all people without exception, has – in view of religions as hitherto exclusive administrators of these values – constituted itself as a kind of secularizing syncretism. An explicit programme focused on this expropriation of spiritual experiences (and their explanation) from the exclusive competence of religious communities was formulated – in connection with the selfsame tendencies which figured prominently already in Erich Fromm's humanistic psycho-logical conception – by one of the founders of the transpersonal movement **Abraham H. Maslow** already in his lectures from the late 1960s, published in a book entitled „Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences“. (1) „I want to demonstrate that spiritual values have naturalistic meaning, that they are not the exclusive pos-session of organized churches, that they do not need supernatural concepts to validate them, that they are well within the juris-diction of a suitably enlarged science, and that, therefore, they are the general responsibility of *all* mankind. „, (2) All the more so that alternatives of religious experiences originate – accord-ing to Maslow's research – also in a secular environment: in the sphere of aesthetic perception, creativity, sexual love etc. „Religion becomes then (...) a state of mind achievable in almost any activity of life.“ (3)

The „peak-experiences“ recorded by Maslow have certain common salient features: the entire universe is perceived as an integrated, unified whole (a shattering experience bringing a significant therapeutic effect); everything that is perceived is regarded as equally important (this results in boosting the ability of an unconditional intensive reception of the unique other person); everything is perceived as it is, independently of human interests, without the projection of human purposes (fear, personal wishes and other self-centred reactions tend to disappear); everything is experienced from the angle of universality and eternity (the awareness of time and

space is momentarily weakened or missing); the world is perceived positively, it is understood even in its negative aspects (life's polarities and conflicts are transcended); everything is viewed as sacred (even death is faced with humility and dignity); it is felt that this particular experience cannot be evaluated from the outside, as it is – on the contrary – something that gives meaning to the rest of the human life (even though on many occasions external validation is necessary – analogously to the state of blind love). The effects of these experiences on the personality are described by Maslow as therapeutic – even a single experience may avert suicide and other forms of self-destruction (alcoholism, drug abuse, violence), obliterate the feeling of existential inferiority, value vacuum, fear of death -or as similar to religious conversion: promotion of personal identity; enhanced responsibility, activity, creativity, freedom; attainment of selflessness and disinterestedness; feeling of happiness and gratefulness, desire to do something good; integration of dignity and spontaneity; etc.

These peak-experiences are expressed by mystics through expressions available in the given culture; they convert to a specific religion which can, however, disinterpret or mortify their experiences. Speaking on behalf of non-theistic and non-church religion, Maslow thus defines peak-experiences as „secularized religious or mystical or transcendent experiences“ (4). But secularization has another aspect too: „it is also a religionizing of all that is secular“ (5). Maslow therefore levels the edge of his criticism not only at conventional religion (whose followers have according to him less experiences of transcendence because they separate sacred and profane and desacralize most of their lives) but also at conventional atheism (which Maslow describes as a manifestation of spiritual pathology). He is concerned with religion as an authentic, live innermost experience.

Maslow's formulations are intended as a gauntlet thrown down to all those who, out of conformity or indifference, have been guilty of allowing today's emptying and mortification of spiritual values, which are important for a healthy functioning of any social organism. Maslow believes that a tradition which has proved to be unable to prevent the spread of pessimism, nihilism and cynicism – the dissemination of a value vacuum – „never was a firm foundation“

(6). According to Maslow, a vital foundation for positive developments could at present be offered by science, provided it serves better the existing values: i.e., it abandons its positivistic narrowing down which resulted in its isolation from religion and its instrumentalization. Based on such a dichotomization of knowledge and values, religion has unjustly been transformed into an enemy of knowledge, and science into an amoral, antihuman learning, usable for any purpose whatsoever. In such a competitive interrelationship between science and religion the latter has degraded into a blind faith and sheepish obedience while science has ceased being able to examine subjective experience (creation, love, play, arts, mysticism), experience of the sacred and the transcendent. Religion without scientific examination and criticism, just as science stripped of ethics and spirituality, are, according to Maslow, crippled, with repercussions for the education of whole generations. After all, if the sacred is separated from the profane, if it does not penetrate the whole life, if it does not belong to all people, then it tends to become a museum exhibit. Through this dead attitude the official religion is said to be supporting everyday evil: contact with the ideal is disappearing from human life and the real possibility of effecting spiritual improvement *in* the world is vanishing with it. Maslow sees a way out in recognizing religious issues and desires are scientifically respectable and worth studying, claiming that they correspond with human nature. He regards a failure to deal with them as humanly abnormal.

In this sense, mystic illuminations, „erroneously“ treated in the terms of supernatural revelations, are not something utterly extraordinary; according to Maslow they rank among „peak-experiences“ which we encounter daily. They are part and parcel of human life to which each religion is constitutively related. „The universal nucleus of every known high religion (...) has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer“. (7) Organized religion is thus here solely to render such a personal vision available, in a mediated way, to those who are capable of having peak-experiences only exceptionally or latently; they are afraid of them, suppressing them, forgetting them or turning away from them. These „non-peakers“ are exemplified by Maslow as people limited to practical concrete matters (money, possessions), as persons fearing their own insanity, then as people

having succumbed to materialistic ideologies and compulsively obsessive personalities (fighting emotions). In Maslow's view, a typical church organizer is exactly such a non-peaker. That is why his bureaucratic endeavours to interpret other people's peak experiences has degraded into idolatry and fetishism: the symbols, words and rituals which were originally designed to intermediate inner experiences have now become sacred themselves. In Maslow's view there are, in actual fact, only two religions: of peakers and non-peakers.

In this context, we should not ignore one of the many discrepancies so typical of Maslow's gründer's „fast“ mode of thinking: a discrepancy between his emphatic insistence on the unity of all religions, or rather his own assessment of peak-experiences as a meeting-place for all the people of any direction and type, and his claim that „each person has its own private religion“ with its myths, symbols and rituals that „have no meaning to anyone else“ (8). This is an unintentionally formulated serious question concerning universalistic illusions and the real integration of the internal and external evaluation of spiritual experiences, which any major religious system seeks to solve responsibly by employing its own available means. But Maslow does not see the issue of religious experience so comprehensively. Instead he zeros in on the immediate psychological possibilities of removing anti-experience barriers in today's individual. He wants to rid religious experience of its exalted mysteriousness, to make it accessible to active human efforts and efficient scientific research. He seems to have paid a price, among other things, by reducing the experience of transcendence to its „natural“, minimal layer that is readily accessible even in everyday hustle which does not lend itself to a stronger spiritually edifying influence (eg. rules of monastic life). Maslow rejects discussions of the more profound, maybe really „supranatural“, dimensions of spiritual life – whose concrete manifestations find themselves outside his scientific horizon –, dismissing them as mere interpretational balast. In that way his delineation of peak-experiences loses its claim to general validity – not corresponding to the postulated fact that (in his own words) it covers all kinds, modes and levels of religious or mystical or transcendent experiences.

But precisely because of that Maslow's conception can attract, at least to the threshold of

the relation with trans-cendence, a broad section of the public who see themselves as non-religious as they are put off by the cold (and sometimes even pathological) surface of Christian religious institutions. This elementary involvement into the sacred through immediate, personal, vitally important experiences is what Maslow appears to be most concerned about. He justifiably views superficiali-zation, mortification as an alarming problem of the entire modern society which does not seem to be bent on knowing anything about the subrational and unconscious, about psychological defences; a society which does not give much space to emotions, will, impulses, mystery, the unknown, incommunicable; a society which ignores mystical literature; which does not know what to do with the aspects of personal experience, subjective, phenomenological; a society which normally underestimates the inaccuracy, illogical, metaphoric, mythical, symbolic, controversial, and ambiguous. These experiences – coupled with the experience of humility and self-giving – have their say precisely in sensations of the transpersonal (regardless of its profundity). Without them „people have nothing to admire, to sacrifice themselves for, to surrender to, to die for“ (9). Maslow notes that traditional religion *was* emotionally satisfactory: it inspired, led, taught to take one's bearing in values, made it possible to experience joy, love, creativity, play, humour (10); it developed proportionately intellect, morals and emotions. America's contemporary liberal religions and semi-religious associations have, however, lost that comprehensive nature.

Maslow's postmodern conception can be seen as a major spiritual breakthrough out of the functionalized psycho-social world. The limited impact and provisionality of this landmark concept is reflected by the author himself: „For the moment, I shan't attempt to go beyond these 'species-relative absolutes' to discuss the absolutes that would remain if the human species were to disappear. It is sufficient at this point to affirm that the values of being *are* absolutes of a kind, a humanly satisfying kind, which, furthermore, are 'cosmocentric' in Marcel's sense, and not personally relative or selfishly ego-centred.“ (11)

In Maslow's peak-experiences man communicates in a supra-personal position of his being with the very universe in its entirety. He associates himself with what is a guarantee of

organic existence and meaningful rootedness of the entire human race in the vital and aesthetic dimension of its being; what is a confirmation of his humanity at the level of nothing less (but neither nothing more) than concordance with the entire universe. This level is quite convincingly higher than the level of life of an isolated and ego-centric person. Its private „selfish“ world - whose stereotype hopeless closeness is backed up from the outside by the ruthless atomization and technologization as the under-lying principles of the modern manufacturing and consumerist way of life – is opened up by transpersonal psychology to the supra-personal (12). It tends to enrich individual self-knowledge by adding a sacred accord with the universe and with race-related values which have since primeval age cemented the human community into the shape of an organically functioning whole dovetailed to fit in with the surrounding nature.

However, can *this* rediscovered transcendence – whose (mere) relativity Maslow himself realizes just marginally – be at the same time petrified as no longer transcendable? Can we legitimately „redefine“ even the concept of God of monotheist religions as being itself, an integrating principle of the universe, the entirety of all, meaningfulness of the universe etc.? (13) Do these secular redefinitions really and fully cover everything the postmodern man searching for transcendence may ever encounter?

A Topography of Transpersonal Experiences

While Maslow who, according to Grof, „deserves credit for the first explicit formulation of the principles of transpersonal psychology“ (14), founded this new psychological trend on the research of spontaneous, naturally originating peak-experiences and their motivational charge, **Stanislav Grof** – another co-founder of transpersonal psychology and, at present, its most influential representative – initiated a yet more advanced phase of the development of this branch. He replaced the method of description of spontaneously arising phenomena with the method of their artificial evoking, facilitating immediate research in controlled („laboratory“) conditions (15).

Grof's techniques of intentional stimulation of transpersonal sensations are not quite

new; they result from the author's study of practices used for religious and curative purposes since the primeval age: the effect of substances contained in sacred herbs, the effect of musical and dancing rituals, the effect of abstaining from food and sleep, sensual and social deprivations, the effect of hypnosis etc. – all this was and still is to be found in the shamanic, mysterious and extatic rituals of almost all religions of the world used to activate the innermost potential of unconsciousness in order to make contact with the transphenomenal world possible.

Grof began experimenting with psychedelic substances (LSD etc.) as early as in the 1960s. The anti-drug laws forced him to abandon that practice and start seeking other methods. Since the end of the 1970s he has been using, with the same effect, a combination of simpler traditional procedures – intensive breathing and perception of purposefully selected music. Thanks to this technique, known as the *holotropic therapy* (or holotropic breathing) (16), Grof's clients attained what is called extraordinary states of consciousness in which they immediately identified themselves with normally unattainable realities that cast doubts on and transcend the horizon of their usual psychosomatic integrity and reach. These states of extended consciousness operate as catalyzers of a profound inner transformation. A personal purification and psychic rebirth of the participants in sessions, experienced by them never before, point, according to Grof, to the generally neglected spiritual potentialities of the Western civilization as a whole. (17) Grof claims that the Western man lives under the exclusive spell of a *hylotropic* (ie. materially oriented) state of consciousness; he confines himself to the everyday experiences with conventional reality, he connects manifestations of spirituality with mere primitive superstitions, lack of knowledge or clinical psychopathology. On the other hand, a *holotropic* state of consciousness makes it possible to grasp being in its transcendent entirety and completeness: not being limited by the scope of physiological senses, man can contact and identify himself with anything that has whenever and wherever in our universe left any information trace. „Humans can also function as infinite fields of consciousness, transcending the limitations of time, space, and linear causality.“ (18) Psychic health is according to Grof conditioned by the ability to accept alternately a hylotropic and holotropic „programme“ – without their intermixing but with

a noticeable effect on the shift of man's live philosophy towards holistic, transpersonal spiritual premisses and starting points. (19)

Proceeding from ancient Indian classification patterns of mystic states, Grof devised a certain topography of the realm of transpersonal experiences whose each individual kind is demonstrable by extensive material acquired by research of clients. (20) Experiences with the overstepping of common personal consciousness are classified by Grof into two main categories: 1) sensational extension of consciousness *within the framework* of conventional reality and time-space (with spatial subgroups of identification with other persons or groups of persons, with animals, plants, organic and anorganic processes, with the planet, with life and the entire animal kingdom etc., and with time subgroups of entering into one's embryonal past, into the life of one's ancestors, into phylogenesis, planetary evolution, cosmogenesis etc.); 2) experiential *overreaching of the limits* of conventional reality and time-space (with numerous subgroups – experiences involving animal spirits via encounters with spiritual leaders to contacts with deities, universal archetypes and a coalescence with cosmic consciousness). (21) Activation and mobilization of deeper layers of the unconscious and „supraconscious“ spheres of human psyche can, therefore, lead both to the direct experiential contact with any element of conventional reality as well as with various mythically and archetypally documented instances. (22)

These findings led Grof to formulating his new model of the human psychological setup. In his view „psyche“ is divided into three levels: *biographic-memorial* (including individual unconsciousness), *perinatal* (concerning sensations before, during and shortly after birth), *transpersonal* (in the genuine, ie. the broadest possible sense). Key experiential motives usually overlap from one level to another and shape man's basic attitude in various life situations. (23) The fact that in states of altered consciousness the human organism is capable of undergoing a radical catharsis and a profound retuning to the positive experiential pattern establishes their spontaneous curative potency. Furthermore, these states uncover much deeper inner contexts of life than those available to the common experiencing of modern man. (24)

Holotropic experiences of transcendence culminate, according to Grof's topography, in identification with a „cosmic conscious-ness“ and with a „supracosmic and metacosmic void“. (25) While experiences of cosmic consciousness represent contact with some kind of pure ambience or energy field where all the information pertaining to the sum-total of cosmic being is concentrated, (26) the experience of void constitutes an „experiential identification with the primordial Emptiness, Nothingness, and Silence, which seem to be the ultimate cradle of all existence.“ (27)

Grof's topography of transpersonal consciousness thus represents a holistic and probably also exhausting model of reality which can be experienced through *actively and artificially induced* contact of our conventional consciousness with our (usually) extraconscious ability of cognition. This model has, however, been construed from a mosaic of very fragmentary and mutually hardly coherent testimonies of Grof's clients who have arrived at their inner experiences in conditions of controlled experiment which does enhance their scientific evidence but which, beforehand, tends to detract from these experiences a certain organic and comprehensive quality which is intrinsic to them within a natural context of human spiritual maturation, whether spontaneous or consciously cultivated on a long term basis, within the framework of this or that spiritual culture. As a result, a price to be paid for scientific legitimacy is a certain existential distortion. If, in terms of the transpersonal sphere, man is content solely with what can be evoked methodologically and with an immediate effect, he misses what he cannot contact in this simple manner. This might be something which could give his whole actively acquired knowledge a completely different meaning. Something that could change not only (in Grof's manner) himself (by grasping broader contexts of one's being) but that could change even his attitude to the entirety of these contexts and to himself in them.

Stanislav Grof speaks solely of a relative transcendence attainable through holotropic breathing. He does not mention (not even in methodological terms) that there still could be something (at least eventually hidden aspects of the attained) outside that reach. Such a failure to mention it may be suggestive (28). Yet, it in no way disclaims the possible question whether

even the universe of holotropic consciousness could not be a mere curtain covering a more comprehensive quest for transcendence in *its* innermost sense.

The Highlighting of Spiritual Meaning of Spontaneous Crises of Identity

In addition to natural religious experiences or – to put it in a broader sense – „peak-experiences“, and in addition to experimentally induced „extraordinary states of consciousness“, there is still another gateway to the direct experiencing of relative transcendence in the transpersonal sphere. It leads to personal experiences accompanying psychic states which modern medicine classifies as belonging to the field of mental pathology.

In terms of starting conditions, a major difference exists between: 1) a spontaneously originating experience of a mentally integrated man, 2) an experience induced on the basis of artificial psychic disintegration (by undermining the egotistic identity, eg. through Grof's techniques), and 3) a spontaneously originating experience of a man whose psychic integrity (the stability of „I“) has been disturbed by mental illness; but the contentual aspect attests to the fact that in all these three modes man faces the selfsame sphere of transpersonal transcendence with its typical phenomena.

Grof's claims that „the mystical and psychotic states are not always as clearly distinguishable from each other“ (29) seem to find consonance with findings of the English psychiatrist **Ronald D. Laing**: „Experiences may be judged to be invalidly mad or to be validly mystical. The distinction is not easy. (...) Some psychotic people have transcendental experiences.“ (30).

Using his psychotherapeutic method, Laing does not attempt to play down the importance of these experiences of patients passing through psychotic crises; on the contrary, he finds a needed source of treatment and recovery in them. That is why he strengthens their spiritual interpretation (31) and their very undisturbed course (32). His conception (published primarily during the 1960s), just like the conceptions of many transpersonal psychologists, links up to the Jungian model of human psyche: the „ego“ of an ill person loses his place in the

world, dropping out of the network of human relations; due to the resultant extreme loneliness the centre of experience is shifted into an „inner world“, from „ego“ to „Self“. – That loss of firm ground in a social universe is interpreted by Laing as a loss of „ontological safety“ caused by the alienation of social life in the modern world. „We are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world. (...) What we call 'normal' is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience. It is radically estranged from the structure of being.“ (33). The experiential complex of schizophrenia is therefore, according to Laing, an essentially comprehensible and justified reaction to the perverse reality of the „outer world“. Schizophrenous symptoms constitute a „special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation.“ (34).

But in an inner world man can easily lose his way without a guide. Inner aspects tend to be confused with external ones and such a man ceases to be socially functional. Nevertheless, his path can eventually have a positive culmination: a greater integrity of his personality than that in which man used to live before the outbreak of psychosis, a deeper insight and even a better social integration.

The structure of this path to transcendence through insanity is described by Laing as follows: „I. a voyage from outer to inner, II. from life to kind of death, III. from going forward to a going back, IV. from temporal movement to temporal stand-still, V. from mundane time to aeonic time, VI. from the ego to the self, VII. from being outside (post-birth) back into the womb of all things (pre-birth), and then subsequently a return voyage from 1. inner to outer, 2. from death to life, 3. from movement back to a movement once more forward, 4. from immortality back to mortality, 5. from eternity back to time, 6. from self to a new ego, 7. from a cosmic foetalization to an existential rebirth.“ (35)

Laing thus demonstrates that „the experience of trans-cendence“ is possible even under the conditions of a mental illness: a mental patient „often can be to us, even through his profound wretchedness and disintegration, the hierophant of the sacred.“ (36)

Somewhat lesser known than Laing's above-mentioned interpretation of schizophrenous experiences is the analysis of *Elisabeth Ott* examining the possibilities of a spiritual explanation of psychotic experiences, in this case in persons diagnosed – or possibly diagnosed – in the category of endogenous depression.

The motto of her book entitled „Die dunkle Nacht der Seele -Depression? Untersuchungen zur geistlichen Dimension der Schwer-mut“ (37) is a quotation from A.M. Klaus Müller: „Suffering always contains a hidden offer of entering a new future which cannot be reached in any other way.“ Ott poses the question whether grief, melancholy, depression are invariably negative and biologically determined states of mind. Using examples of famous religious personalities, such as Theresia of Lisieux, Martin Luther, Reinhold Schneider, Simone Weil and others, she documents that the very same external symptoms – feeling of one's abnormal-ity, powerlessness, helplessness, „nakedness“, loneliness, desertion, feeling of strangeness and alienation, one's inferiority, perverseness, sinfulness and condemnation, and hence anguish, pain, dejection, loss of meaning, feelings of being overpowered by darkness, feelings that may culminate with rejection of life, oneself, one's neighbour, God, and sometimes with hatred and experience of „hell“ – can be indicative of not only a clinically curable depression but also – next to it or together with it – „a state of one's soul which cannot be cured by medicaments or any other therapy which comes from the outside“. (38) This is an inner state for which the Christian spiritual theology has come to use the term of John of the Cross „dark night“. It cannot be totally explained at the level of common methods used by psychiatry and psychology. It can be understood from the viewpoint of individual spiritual development as a certain radical phase in innermost purification from dependence on anything else but transcendence in the absolute sense of the word: „This is God's work in human soul (...), a phenomenon of a Christian on the Way of the Cross.“ (39) -- In our context „dark night“ represents a certain extreme phase of a personal inner transition from (active) search for relative transcendence to (passive) search for absolute transcendence.

Ott declares that „a depressed man may *choose* 'dark night' as an alternative.“ (40) A

man like that can himself view „the waiting for light“ as an analogy to Jesus's solitude on the cross and accept a similar meaning and justification of his state – can become Jesus's „disciple“. But such an interpretation principally oversteps the narrow horizon of modern distinctions between illness and health. Ott introduces a more subtle and profound distinction which adds as a criterion also the self-interpreta-tion of people who have passed through these states of mind: whether *they* perceive themselves as ill, without any spiritual implications of their experiencing (this perception even bringing them a certain amount of satisfaction, relief, as any found solution) or whether, on the contrary, they view this classifica-tion as a kind of unbearable *reduction of meaning* of their experiences. A transcendence-oriented man, in his passage through the purifying darkness, does not want to be assisted by artifi-cial lights and would-be reliefs blocking his further path. He does not concentrate on himself and his state of mind but rather remains focused outside himself: „on God, his will and his love -in illness, in suffering, in fight, in 'dark night', despite the awareness of his own sinfulness“. (41) „We assert two facts: the proximity of 'dark night' to depression, and at the same time their utter mutual otherness.“ (42)

The medical label of depression may hide a man's ongoing personal crisis which has a spiritual meaning. „Concealment in God's inconceivability can help them in saying their 'Aye' to their difficult lot. This is, however, possible only in a consciousness extended towards transcendence. (...) 'Dark night' represents total events which may be brought to its meaning solely through a total reply. 'Dark night' is events touching the roots; it can be rendered new solely from the roots. 'Dark night' is events relating to the core and it can attain its goal solely through a change from the very core.“ (43) „It is a destruction and at the same time a new creation. (...) The whole process is located *also* in another dimension of Grace.“ (44) This determines the different course and culmination of the process: namely overstepping the area of immanence to that level of spiritual life for which any relative transcendence will, eventually, be too little anyway. In this sense, Elisabeth Ott claims, the pilgrims through the 'dark night' are – unlike hopelessly depressed persons – healthy: internally free, admitting of no reduction of their personality to a point of intersection of immanent determinants yielding no fullness of being.

2. Transculturality

Keep searching and everywhere around you will see miracles. By staying within yourself you will grow tired, and tiredness will render you deaf and blind to all the rest.

Carlos Castaneda

Search for transcendence by overcoming not only the boundaries of one's self but also the limits of collectively shared cultural stereotypes is called forth by the need of restricting and compensating for many negative aspects of the modern Western culture: its technological coldness, rational aggressiveness and spiritual aridity, accompanied by typical unease, exhaustion and diffuse anxiety permeating a society doomed to routine and commonplace stereotype. Basically, trans-culturality is possible, because these most malign traits of the Western civilization have not yet been exported, in their original intensity, to all the corners of the globe. The unique spiritual atmosphere of this or that non-Western culture has, in the postmodern era, been actually coming into the spotlight of interest of not only gifted thinkers; a leaning towards planetary cultural togetherness has grown to be part of the general Western mentality.

Unlike transpersonality, the transcultural dimension opens up not only new inner worlds but, moreover, enables even outer tentative appropriation of certain whole life styles. Within their context man does not have to accept experiences of trans-cendence only as a solitary „psychonaut“ but he can encounter them even as the framework of everyday social milieu. What he enters here are not mere fragmentary impressions but whole coherent systems of perception and recognition which cannot be internally appropriated without themselves appropriating us, to a certain extent, as well. To see through the eyes of other cultures means to perceive the non-self-evident nature of one's attitudes and thought stereotypes, to extend the space of freedom of

one's spiritual being; this also means – through diversity of mutually transcendent views – to perceive reality as a never-ending mystery.

In a broad spectrum of variants – from ephemeral ecstatic insights to a thoroughgoing structure of permanently passable bridges – for many Westerners the discovering of other spiritual cultures is becoming a primary mode of uncovering transcendence in general. A creative response to new contexts can evoke changes significant even for the overall spiritual atmosphere of this planet.

Esoteric Assimilation

It can be said that postmodern esotericism embodies the very opposite of the original meaning of this word. The esoteric, „inner“, accessible only to the initiated, has since the 1970s become a widely available consumer commodity. Astrology, meditation, the Kabbala, healing, reincarnation teachings, black and white magic – a plethora of offers of this kind has been eclectically providing to the general public sometimes its very first contact with non-European spiritual cultures. But these contents and attitudes are only isolated fragments, taken out of their original cultural contexts. Separation or eventually arrangement of partial disparate pieces of knowledge into new artificial wholes is a traditional characteristic feature of esotericism. A corresponding mode of esoteric reproduction of elements of non-European spiritual cultures – their instrumental rationalization – is justified within esotericism by its basic mission: „*to attain the goal of religion through scientific methods*“. (45) But these efforts typically fail to stand the test of either the yardsticks of science or those of religion. „Once religion and science are put together, religion loses its depth and science loses its accuracy.“ (46)

But esotericism views a lack of sense for independent religious reality as its advantage: „Man can finally *know* instead of having all the time only to *believe*.“ (47) In our context pertaining to the search for transcendence this approach can be formulated as *immanentistic reduction*: transcendence is sought solely in „the mirror“ of immanence – in the esoteric terminology either gnostically (at the level of cognition) or magically (at the level of practice).

The chief purpose is not an unconditional opening up to transcendence but rather a self-discovery, self-recognition and self-assertion mediated through it. A typical illustration of this reduction can be found in the nowadays very influential psychology of Carl Gustav Jung, a thinker of a broadly transcultural orientation who, however, focused himself solely on symbolic *images* of what spiritual man vividly relates himself to. (This methodological orientation grows into an uncritical claim when Jung declares that immanent symbol and transcendent reality cannot be distinguished.)

„Jung refers to *empirically* ascertainable, typically recurring formations of unconsciousness which carry a numinous, autoevident content and hence a character of *revelation*. (...How- ever) is such an *empiricism of revelation* possible?“ (48) Followers of esotericism have been persistently trying to achieve it. Jesus Christ (for instance) is to Rosicrucians „a fiery ether“ and „emanating force“; according to theosophy it represents „the first emanation of God which has been embodied in animal-man“; in anthroposophy it is regarded as „a noble sun being which accelerated the development of Earth and mankind“. (49) A deep-rooted rule of the esoteric approach to religious realities is a *speculative systemization of personal visions* (50) not amenable to publicly acknowledged (scientific or religious) criteria of plausibility. (51)

In the transcultural dimension the esoteric principle of immanentistic reduction is manifested by endeavours to *assimilate* as much as possible all spiritual trends and all world religions under its categorial roof. A classical example of the impact of this ambition is the still influential theosophy of Helena Petrovna Blavatska: all the religions are based on a unique secret wisdom which is incomprehensible to „common believers“ and which is known only to esoterics. It can be noted that „religions are (...) syncretistically integrated into a comprehensive insight, (...) at the same time, they are interpreted in a modified fashion and proclaimed to be outdated. (...) Esoteric teaching decodes their true meaning.“ (52) That can be formulated in different teachings differently; it is, however, always „revealed“ through the optics rendering the understanding of the *own and independent* *raison d'être* of religions impossible. An example:

„This ecological religion inspires the very and most profound meaning of religion; it takes out, adjusts and implements the core which all religions have been secretly following and yet have been failing to attain in current history. (...) After the anthropological critique of religion by Ludwig Feuerbach, after Karl Marx's socio-economic critique and after the psychanalytical critique by Sigmund Freud, mankind is now entering – almost inevitably because this is being enforced by the current industrially technocratic fundamental crisis – into the stage of ecological critique of religion.“ (53) Positive concepts of these quasi-religions artificially tend to nail their secular term of god to a non-personal stream of life, nature, the universe or even to personified ideas (Mother Goddess, Satan etc.). (54)

In the field of spiritual transculturality these assimilation tendencies can now be also found at the level of conceptions of the so called new scientific paradigm – with all the characteristic features of esotericism involved. The vision of the nuclear physicist *Fritjof Capra*, proclaiming profound resonance between his field and the mystical philosophies of the East, provides a good illustration. It was developed especially in his book „The Tao of Physics“ (55) where, typically enough, he proceeds from a personal inner experience: „Five years ago, I had a beautiful experience which set me on a road that has led to the writing of this book. I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance. Being a physicist, I knew that the sand, rocks, water and air around me were made of vibrating molecules and atoms, and that these consisted of particles which interacted with one another by creating and destroying other particles. I knew also that the Earth's atmosphere was continually bombarded by showers of 'cosmic rays', particles of high energy undergoing multiple collisions as they penetrated the air. All this was familiar to me from my research in high-energy physics, but until that moment I had only experienced it through graphs, diagrams and mathematical theories. As I sat on the beach my former experiences came to life; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew*

that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.“ (56)

Even though „to overcome the gap between rational, analytical thinking and the meditative experience of mystical truth was, and still is, very difficult“ (57) for Capra, he tried to formulate systematically a certain view of the world in which the latest findings of nuclear physics are presented as analytical confirmations of the intuitive cosmologies of ancient India and China. These cosmologies, created within the framework of religious philosophies (Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism), are marked in Capra's interpretation by the same elementary traits as today's nuclear physics. What was originally based in them solely on intuition has, according to Capra, been confirmed in present-day science by the exact results of experiments and consistent mathematical formalization. But what has actually been thus confirmed are only two very general and vague ideas: the unity and interdependence of all phenomena, and the internally dynamic nature of the world. Following on from there, Capra sets out to create „a conception of the world in which scientific discoveries can be in perfect harmony with spiritual aims and religious beliefs.“ (58) „The way – or Tao – of physics can be a path with a heart, a way to spiritual knowledge and self-realization.“ (59)

For Capra, an instrument for demonstrating this postulated harmony between the mystical and the rational is the construction of the general term „Eastern mysticism“. Somewhat voluntaristi-cally, Capra seeks to cope with a certain controversial nature of the term by readily replacing – during his search for common features of such abysmally different modes of thinking as the Chinese and Indian ones – rational comparative method with his own personal intuition. The effect of subsequent parallels likening „Eastern mysticism“ to scientific knowledge – especially if touching on some less vague and general items – is, if possible, yet more forced: „The firm basis of knowledge on experience in Eastern mysticism suggests a parallel to the firm basis of scientific knowledge on experiment. (...) The repeatability of the experience is, in fact, essential to every mystical training. (?? – J.P.) A mystical experience, therefore, is not any more unique than a modern experiment in physics. (?? – J.P.) The complexity and efficiency of the physicist's technical apparatus is matched, if not surpassed, by

that of the mystic's consciousness – both physical and spiritual – in deep meditation. (...) A page from a journal of modern experimental physics will be as mysterious to the uninitiated as a Tibetan mandala. Both are records of enquiries into the nature of the universe.“ (60) At this methodological level, it is not possible to be convincing either for Western science or vis-a-vis the East. Differentiation is suggestively overstripped by a holistic construct, and aspects which are incompatible with the initial vision are totally ignored. The proclaimed analogies are either too general, fail to capture the specific features (eg. the existential shock, experienced by Heisenberg, Einstein and others at the time of „ground being swept away beneath their feet“ as a result of the loss of reliability of their previous explicatory theories, is a general human experience, typically associated with the learning of anything radically new, on which it is difficult to base any specific and exclusive link between nuclear physics and Eastern spirituality); or they are somewhat unreal (how a meditating Hindu feels to be „a part of the world“ is incommensurate with how a scientist trying to calculate or deduce his own impact on an observed phenomenon feels to be that part).

As for the quite abstractly considered features of some Oriental views of the world Capra is primarily concerned with – for instance with a kind of „holism“ or „organicism“ or some overlaps of classical logic – precisely these are, even in the expression peculiar to the West itself, contained in older European esotericism. What, then, is the reason for finding for them what is not a very adequate confirmation in distant thought systems and attitudes? Is it Capra's sharing of the intrinsic desire of esotericism for unrivaled universality, for a global overview (while nothing, however distant, should get out of its control), a Faustian desire for the attainment of the ultimate key to the entire wisdom of the world?

Given a non-instrumental inner attitude (which is a feature of both science and religion) one can perceive that Eastern spiritualities may, on the contrary, incite in us a sense for basic *otherness*. (61) Transculturality may show to us that what *cannot* be brought into required harmony with our mode of experiencing can be very valuable to us *precisely because of that*.

Indications are that an esoteric assimilation of non-Western spiritual cultures represents a

new peripeteia of the Western aspiration to learn and master. But religious spiritualities are usually much deeper and richer – and largely „more transcendent-ly“ oriented – than what has been presented under their names by the esoteric wave. (62) One can roam in its vague labyrinths of gnosis and magic for a long time; but if we look for *transcendence*, we will soon find out that this path does not lead very far. It keeps moving in a magic circle of searching for spiritual safety in a self-centredly constructed Whole; (63) it leads to a self-sufficient vision, not to encountering.

Interreligious Dialogue

While the esoteric attempts at a system synthesis of various religions tend to absorb and dampen their transcultural plurality, an interreligious dialogue, on the contrary, keeps strengthening it and making it spiritually and intellectually productive. This productivity certainly is nothing that would, somehow, automatically stem from the initial plurality itself. Dialogue is a principle or power which is only in a position to *transform from the inside* a certain sometimes intransparent, contingent and destructive self-motion of postmodern plurality into a free and humanly cultivated growth of intrinsic mutual self-opening up. Unlike conflict, passing by, competition, indifference, attempts at absorption or annihilation (and other spiritually fruitless socio-ontological interactions), dialogue implements a different kind of inner possibility of plurality: discovery of another one in his authentic shape, *approved by himself*. (64)

There are indications that the irreducible plurality and *mutual intransferability* of spiritual cultures of our planet (65) has inevitably been established precisely because at the peak levels of such cultures the search for *absolute* transcendence has always had priority over the quest for relative transcendence (in the sense of transculturality). Therefore, a dialogue among spiritual cultures cannot in itself replace a direct „vertical“ relationship with the absolute, based on the means of expression of one's own culture and establishing plurality from which a dialogue arises; yet a „horizontal“ dialogue can make that direct relationship easier and deeper. On some occasions, only through „quite different“ cultural approaches can we understand a

similar shocking otherness also in the hitherto concealed depths of one's own spiritual culture, and authentically to proceed from its background towards a personal spiritual experience. This is possible because in a dialogue individual religions *do not lose their identity* but promote and enrich it in a mutual and life-giving manner. (66) That is the distinguishing mark of each genuine dialogue, in our case in stark contrast with the totalizing, deadly ideological syncretism of esoteric teachings.

Christianity was the first – speaking through the Catholic Church – which approached the other world religions with a propo-sal to start a dialogue. (67) Growth and search, so typical features of the Christian tradition throughout its history, have matured in postmodern catholicism to a substantial complementa-tion of the missionary work by adding activity helping, in solidarity, „different cultures in preserving their religious values amidst fast social changes.“ (68) This approach by the Pope was reciprocated especially by the Tibetan Dalai Lama: „I am not interested in converting other people to Buddhism but in how Buddhists can contribute to human society. (...) Love is the centre of human life. (...) Religious teachings are here to help people and not for people to quarrel about.“ (69)

Dialogue – based on respect for the identity of the other one (70) – helps in attaining, among other things, an authentic partnership of the members of different religions in support of planetary shared human ideals. (71) Thus, in an unconditioned mutuality, without a link to any ideology or drive for power [„because the end of con-currence, co-running is seen by neither of the runners moving in time“ (72)], an interreligious dialogue offers a chance to what are probably the most important values of mankind: truth and love. Two excellent actors in this dialogue have this to say: „Dialogue is experience which both sides un-dergo unselfishly, ie. not with the intention of winning but simply to allow the truth to come out into the open as it really is.“ (73) „Careful consideration must be given to significant differences and whenever man no longer understands or agrees, it must be left open – without a useless debate. There are differences which are not suited for discussion, and trying somehow to persuade others is a useless and stupid temptation.“ (74)

Unlike in comparative studies of religions, in a dialogue man cannot bypass certain claims to one's own maturity. There are signs that so far persons who are best equipped to conduct a dialogue are members of various religious orders: monastic communities of Buddhists and Hindus, Islamic Sufis, Christian Trappists, Jesuits, Franciscans etc. (75)

A graphic example of the existential impact of the need of an interreligious dialogue, bound with the ability of its *philosophic* reflection, is found in the works of *Raimundo Panikkar*. Partly, perhaps, because there is Spanish blood running in his veins after his mother and Indian blood from his father, and partly thanks to his alternate stays in both countries this priest-philosopher seems to be called upon (or at least provoked) more than anyone else to engage in an inner dialogic attitude: to balance in his mind and in his heart both perspectives of which either is equally close to him, and hence so directly revealing its relative incommensurability with an opposite perspective. In his book „Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics (Cross-Cultural Studies)“ (76) he proceeds from an irreducible plurality of possible religious experiences. (77) In his eyes, this „postmodern thesis“ constitutes an authentic hermeneutic piece of knowledge.

Linking up to it, he does not succumb to the syncretistic temptation of constructing an artificial harmony or forced unity. Panikkar views the transcultural mutuality between the spirituality of the West and the East in its complexity and ambiguity. His „diatopic hermeneutics“ does not aim at the notion of unifying knowledge but rather at a practical reality of an understanding mutuality, a relational coming together. (78) Plurality is no reason for mutual elimination or absorption

but a reason for dialogue.

„Dialogue becomes a religious act, (...) a mutual recognition of our human condition and its constitutive relativity.“ (79) It is a mutual service, making it possible to eliminate one's prejudices and genuinely to grasp one's prerequisites and most profound sources of self-renewal. This is a forum „of all people for whom care for the other is as sacred as a concern for one's own household.“ (80)

This very opening up of different spiritual contexts reveals the ultimate human horizon, a common basis of understanding: a trans-logical space of the „heart“, which is not objectifiable but within which it is possible to communicate. (81) It is within the same space that the basic human act of *faith* occurs, which is not dependent on an established teaching but rather on man's existential relationship with Transcendence. (82) It does express itself in concepts, crystallizing into different systems of beliefs, but their intellectual element does not exhaust it. Panikkar views this faith as a human invariant, as a challenge which has been posed to all people whatever its conceptual treatment: „The same grace cannot inspire doctrinally equal acts of faith“, (83) which are conditioned by different cultures. Faith as an „openness towards transcendence“ or merely as an „openness“ (84) implies an infinite receptiveness, constitutive incompleteness, imperfection of man who has no foundation for his existence in himself and from himself, he is not a God, something in him must develop. „The openness of faith is Man's capacity to proceed towards his fullness.“ (85) This is not, primarily, a capacity of the intellect or will but of existence itself.

Faith thus expresses human imperfection as well as ability to grow and „represents a much firmer foundation than human autonomy or self-sufficiency and expresses the supreme ontic richness possible; we recognize that no 'human' or limited value whatsoever can fill it“. (86) Faith is a foundation of freedom, a basis for the generation of new possibilities; it is like an abyss in human being that cannot be filled in, through which the Infinite is reached. Panikkar puts into this context the Eastern term of emptiness (*shunyata* in Sanskrit, *kung* in Chinese, *ku* in Japanese). Faith, as such an insatiable spiritual thirst, renouncing all the images and words, is an act of search and desire, demonstrably identifiable in all religions. It is precisely a dialogue between them which no longer makes it possible even for Christian theology to be content with the understanding of faith as a command of the correct doctrine. In Panikkar's view, faith is a „vessel“ rather than „content“: „It belongs (... to) all who automatically seek, desire, love, wish - to all those of 'good will'“, (87)

„There are things we cannot 'have' because having or even intending to have them

amounts to annihilating them. Faith is one of these.“ (88) Panikkar's concrete comparative interpretations of Christian, Buddhist and Hindu concepts, ideas and methods occur against faith's horizon that cannot be appropriated. Their dialogue is for him a manifestation of a joint search for transcendence – a revelation of the human need of overstepping oneself to be saved. Unlike dialectics as a counterpoint of „two logoi“, dia-logue thus penetrates „through logos“. This ability is constitutive for it: without a live relationship with transcendence (besides which mediation of the philosophical „logos“ is only secondary) not only religion but even dialogue itself would be impossible. In a situation of natural religious plurality its alternative is either indifferent tolerance or assimilatory aggressiveness. In the postmodern era, no merely immanent starting point can be truthfully presented as an independent instance capable of non-violent universal mediation. Such an instance is legitimately thinkable only as a transcendent one – of course not in the sense of an artificially construed dominant of relative transcendence (when one of the attitudes would render itself privileged and able to synthesize the others as its own „inferior moments“) – but in the sense of utterly humanly indisposable, independent, „outside“-standing *absolute transcendence*. In a dialogue of mutually relatively transcending subjectivities it latently presents itself. It is „part of the process“ of dialogic encounter – but without entering it in its entirety. Communication about it is a search for it and an opportunity for its self-presentation. Words and silence, reflection and ecstasy are related to it.

Therefore, in its deepest layer an interreligious dialogue is a sharing of the incommunicable: even though each religion can believe in the unrivalled nature of its truth, it knows, at the same time, that it is incapable of comprehending that truth completely. Dialogue then serves not to a symbolically reducing confirmation of what is jointly immanent to all religions but to a relationally truthful opening to what, in their undisturbed plurality, transcends them in a life-giving fashion. On the soil of dialogue the search for relative transcendence can thus naturally overlap with the quest for absolute transcendence. Transpersonality as well as transculturality can be understood here (exactly in their greatest depths) as a still merely immanent mirror – which refers further: to what cannot be totally delineated in respect to person

or culture.

Wild nature, in the uninterrupted dependence of which we live and die, the abyss of the universe we will never succeed in mastering, the lethal ecological danger which can be avoided only by respecting the laws that have not been laid down by ourselves – all there are only marginal traces of the mystery which cannot be reduced into a greenhouse phantasy of a „spiritual“ mind but which keeps crushing us, by the surplus of its reality and by its intransparent heteronomy, in the very roots of our being. The world is owned by God, not by us – all these clear traces keep reminding us. But they cannot address the abyss of our humanity, so vulnerably open to good and evil, in a most profound manner precisely because of their only external evidence; they cannot address it in a fashion particular solely to communication in respect and love: „And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.“ (89)

ABSOLUTE TRANSCENDENCE

Transition from searching for relative transcendence to the quest for absolute transcendence represents, for human spirituality, a greater breakthrough than the first relative overstepping of the boundaries of modern immanence. Unlike the kind of groping exploratory toying, which constitutes a quite sufficient motive for successful movement in the areas of relative transcendence, the opening up of the path to the Absolute requires an intrinsic decision supported by desire which can really no longer be satisfied with anything smaller. This is not a useful exploration mediated by spiritual knowledge and spiritual techniques. This is a radical, on the human part not entirely mediatable, turnaround or upsurge regardless of anything. The goal is not a completion or transcendent contextualization of immanence; it concerns Transcendence as such, in its entire, ultimate shape, the search for which is not conducted for some secondary avail but because of it alone. Due to the surplus of relativity of everything that postmodernity, in its amorphous openness, is capable of mediating, its era paradoxically creates favourable conditions for such a radical search.

1. Transuniversality

The infinite Being can have or suffer next to itself something which is outside it and a free being can strike roots in the infiniteness of a God.

Emmanuel Lévinas

A condition for penetrating into the trans-universality of absolute transcendence is not an exhaustive investigation of the universe of transcendent relativity in the entirety of its transpersonal and transcultural spheres. The range, which lies in the sphere of transcendence between the relative and the absolute, evidently cannot be surmounted by grading in the same

dimension. Absolute transcendence is not a mere culmination of relative transcendence, a kind of its extreme margin: it is an opening up of something new.

Metaphorically speaking, one can say that relative trans-cendence renders itself accessible to our search as an unknown landscape – vast to infinity, mysterious and complex, teeming with fateful dangers as well as miraculous gifts. We can even begin gradually to settle down in it; in actual fact, we will always find it „in its place“: with its inner dynamism, it more or less passively offers itself to our examination and to our consonant and gathering reposing. Absolute transcendence lies outside the framework of such an image and will never succumb to us in this way. As we will see, its transuniversal inaccessibility is a prerequisite for the possibility of its free initiative.

Divine Freedom

It is not surprising that it is the relaxed postmodern language concerning God that creates space to what had had, in the previous history of Western thought, a rather limited chance of gaining adequate expression: Divine freedom.

The primary touch with its reality is opened up in elementary experience that the relationship of absolute transcendence to us is essentially independent of our relation to it. We might not necessarily encounter it at the moment of *our* most intense effort to achieve it; it can address us when we least expect it, even in the absence of any search. However strongly we seem to be clinging to the banal surface of utter immanence, just like however greatly enchanted we may be with the depths of relative transcendence, this poses no obstacle to absolute transcendence in diverting our attention from any instance to itself. But, at the same time, there exist no neutral laws on which an eventual technology, to which we could safeguard such an encounter according to our will, could lean. Unlike the quest for relative transcendence, more or less passively accessible and methodologically always attainable, when searching for absolute transcendence, we find ourselves, in terms of experience, in a kind of void; however, at the same time, we find ourselves in a more or less „tangible“ field of power, surmounting the universe of

everything we can think, we can be and we can somehow assume any attitude to.

Seen from such a perspective, the atheism, characteristic of the modern era, with its calculating rejection of free God (who does not want to be a mere transmission lever of human aspirations and interests) appears to be a shortcut reaction of a childishly narcissistic attitude within whose framework man is interested only in things for which he alone can become a determining centre. It is obvious that nature, culture or even relative transcendence do not principally stand up against it; they are capable of serving man also to their and his detriment. But absolute transcendence remains, on the contrary, an independent support for each case of resistance to human arbitrariness.

To put it in the words of Emmerich Coreth, „God needs neither the world nor man to be God.“ (90) Only in a mature unbiased dialogic relationship is it possible to believe in his freedom – which is „menacing“ to man because it attests to his powerlessness – and to forge ahead to meet it. The realism of respect inhered in this relationship prevents human projectivity to reverse search into an optional illusory dictate.

In this sense, the conceptually available „God of Philosophers“ – God conceived in Aristotle's fashion as the „prime mover“, in the neo-Platonic mould as „One“ in the Thomasian manner as „esse“, in Hegelian terms as „Idea“, ... – is already beneficially distant to the postmodern era. In actual fact, it does not allow, fully and in the positive sense, to think the transuniversality of Divine freedom. Originally, an ancient thought horizon, in which the „God of Philosophers“ had been born and in which it jointly developed, actually does not permit of any other but *negative* understanding of freedom. To the Greeks and Romans, the Divine order of the universe was Necessity, to which even gods were subordinated (Cf. terms like *ananké* and *fatum*). Within this world of thought and life, God who stands principally and absolutely „above necessity“ can incite usually only negative preoccupation. The universe – an area of a tough and yet certain and comprehensible order – would, in relation with the free absolute, somehow open up to the anarchic irrational power of the threatening Chaos. Philosophical thinking which knows no *personal relationship* with trans-universal God (a relationship where „theoretical“ fear

of Divine freedom could turn into practical trust) and its subsequent relevance to thinking, secures the meaning of its conceptual world by sticking to the principles which illusorily convert absolute transcendence to a mere apex of non-personal and necessary universal order. Philosophy and theology for which Divine freedom is not expressible in any other way but as – in the late Middle Ages -demonic licence (91) or as – in late modernity – a starting point towards despotic terror (92) can probably only through gradual articulation of *human* freedom proceed to the necessity of expressing, with fuller understanding, the freedom of absolute transcendence. Nowadays even because free postmodern man has been quite urgently searching for greater freedom than that embodied by himself and proved to be quite powerless and limited – leading to destruction in many areas. Postmodern man has been casting about for a relation with *more powerful and real freedom*. But he cannot reach it by climbing an artificially created conceptual ladder bound up into the „other world“ – an imaginary area, from which access to the world appears to be closed.

Philosophy has been gradually finding instruments for a relatively difficult formulation of the fact that the relation-ship between God and man does not have the nature of a discursively transparent conceptual necessity but that the „Divine covenant with Man is based on Divine freedom“. (93) As early as at the end of the modern era Peter Wust stated: „The uncertainty in which the religious certainty of God is constantly stuck reduces the danger (...) of humanizing the Divine image through dead images and letters. (...) This higher order of incalculability is a scandal to reason, it is a boundary at which reason shall speculate itself to death. (...) This is the voice of spiritual power, which uniquely and absolutely defies the framework of all that is humanly common, which with its message -in terms of form and content profoundly mysterious and unusually dictatorial – disquiets the entire humankind to the utmost, bringing it into vehement motion and challenging it to the absolute scandal of natural reason.“ (94)

The ground-breaking (and at the same time orthodox) steps in the thinking of the Jewish philosopher *Emmanuel Lévinas* can be perceived as a relatively most comprehensive postmodern expression of a philosophically well-defined understanding of Divine freedom.

According to his views, least of all, God shall not be incorporated into the human world; neither shall he be used as a mere coping stone of an all-encompassing system. The term „God“ has the structure of an enigma (95), which cannot be clarified, being more than what can be thought. The „Divine name“ is outside any universe, outside any order that can be laid down by man; it defies definition, it cannot be integrated into a system of knowledge; God is different from any fulfilment of an intention of a cognizing subject. We „get to know“ him by accepting his ethical demand (96) with which he reveals himself -in his free otherness – through the other man. The face of our neighbour, however, is not some kind of a sign of a hidden God (a sign which would again, in an illusory manner, incorporate absolute transcendence into human meaning-forming contexts); God is not a denotatum; rather, my neighbour transcendently „keeps following the trace of God“ (97): he makes the extra-discursive speech, which comes from God, his own speech, thus relating my responsibility required by God to himself.

God, therefore, never reveals himself in conditions that would be set to him by the human I. On the contrary, a genuine contact with him transforms even philosophy itself, which otherwise seeks to create such „universally valid“ conditions in a systematic way. Lévinas allows himself to be led to the statement that not a self-assured I but *the other man* is the spot of a transuniversal encounter with Divine freedom as a freedom: with an absolute independence and, at the same time, with an absolute requirement of awakening my ethical action. In his free passages God goes round each human construction and from the closest possible proximity to those who create or share them he renders them metaphysically unsure. In Lévinas, this can be illustrated by the example of the ratio between the ethical challenge of Transcendence and two late modern versions of the immanent philosophical universe: Husserl's intentional phenomenological conception of the transcendental I and Heidegger's ontological conception of Being. (98) According to Lévinas, thinking which proceeds solely from natural contexts – ontology, phenomenology – can provide, as far as God is concerned, only his caricature: they put him into the events of Being, eventually into the process of the human imparting of meaning, thus defying his ability *by himself to express himself*. Only as if in an „atheistic“ restraint of

Divine ontology and phenomenology is a philosophizing man given a chance to open himself up to a free, „living“ God.

This is feasible only in a mode of „thinking which would not convert the transcending once again into immanence and would not disturb transcendence through comprehending, (...) a mode of thinking which is no longer either an aiming or seeing or will or intention“. (99) This „non-intentional experience“ (100) is describable in the briefest terms as „an irreversible affection of the finite by the infinite. Passivity and patience which does not recover its self-certainty in some thematization, (...) the idea of God as love of God and fear of God (...) a paradoxical entanglement which is apparent already in a religious revelation. This revelation, associated since the beginning in its *concreteness* with the obligations towards human beings – the idea of God as love for one's neighbour – is the 'knowledge' of God, who, even though offering himself in this 'openness', remains, at the same time, also absolutely different or transcendent.“ (101) Faced with this paradoxical experience of the transuniversal, we are not those who – as usual – seize the experienced object, incorporate it into our world and subordinate it to the reflective construction of our identity. Through our relation with God as God and with another man as a neighbour, this manipulative power is broken, its ego-centric asymmetry is outweighed by the asymmetry of respect towards the demanding Divine freedom. The reflexive circle centred around I ceases to close itself; the transcendent „other one“ is becoming closer to me than I am to myself; I am ceasing to belong to myself. (102)

In the world of self-centred I and impersonal Being a free and living God is fatally impossible to be contacted. An ethical relationship constitutes for Lévinas an initial as well as eschatologically relevant mode by which absolute transcendence „subjugates“ the human „subject“: well before all of its choice it orders him to be tied to the good. This „violence“ [characteristically criticized by Jacques Derrida (103)] provides a meaningful alternative to our spontaneously totalizing thinking and acting. It is an opening of space in which genuine, destructive violence can be surmounted by a life-giving – and liberating – relationship with the transuniversally free Absolute. Thus, Lévinas's philosophy is not a „conception“ of Divine

freedom (even the very expression „Divine freedom“ appears there rather implicitly). It is a „prophetic“ speech – in the sense that it is an embodiment of what it refers to, an embodiment of an ethical relationship in which God himself speaks out.

In the postmodern era, such an approach to absolute transcendence is becoming exceptionally necessary. To be true, it is valid exactly for this period that the most convincing sign of an independent influence of absolute transcendence in this world is – as it seems – not so much the order of overall creation (which was admired, in a characteristic way, by the Antiquity and the Middle Ages), not so much the existence and attractiveness of great ideals of mankind (to which the modern era has been looking up) as the existence of ethically reliable relations, which increasingly appear to be impossible to attain without support of an absolutely free Transcendence.

Dark Night

„The biggest problem any attempt at establishing an autonomous society has to cope with is to bring people around to recognizing not only their own mortality but also the mortality of the collective and of everything they have created.“ (104) – In postmodern reflection, the theme of supra-individual death emerges ever more frequently and in the most diverse context, not always without reference to the enquiry after absolute transcendence. Whatever the explicit substantiation of this fact, its omnipresent background is formed by all the more menacingly looming threat of a planetary ecological catastrophe with its entire ethical context. The lukewarm reactions on the part of the wealthiest section of humankind to this threat, which is actually being posed to all the others by that very part of mankind, imply that there exists something worse than a physical threat. A factor which precludes any efficient protection: namely metaphysical tiredness. A tiredness caused by us, by our illusions which have kept dragging us throughout history from one construed goal to another, by our own nonsensical, unfulfilled, „too humane“ being. A strong integrating reason for preserving such being is eventually lacking.

In a situation when the probability of arresting the various disastrous trends (based on the non-technicizable factor of radical common willingness to change the style of life) keeps decreasing, there is a growing urgency of launching a search for an absolute support for efficient action, whether towards physical salvation or the salvation of humanity independently of any conditions of physical life (or dying). The search for absolute transcendence, therefore, constitutes a spiritual reaction which goes radically beyond the given situation – unlike the ever more illusory consolations and increasingly powerless warnings and in opposition to the escapist senseless practical principle „after us – the Deluge“. Heidegger's categorical dictum „we can now be saved only by a god“ (105) spells out the growing intuitive recognition that by searching for transcendence nothing can really be lost. While losing everything, we can become relaxed inside us to an unbiased centredness towards what is sufficiently „outside“ so that it still could – if we really cared for it – save us.

But if, once again, this transcendent centredness of ours is not to lapse into a mere toying with illusions, designed to divert attention and fill the time by passive unrealistic hoping and relationless utopian daydreaming, it is vital to proceed from a full acceptance of the state of human affairs. We have noted above that worse than the awareness of an (approaching) end is – besides that – the encroaching awareness that life of certain qualities is not worth saving at any cost. Paradoxically enough, this awareness is liberating. Man disengages himself from too spasmodic a struggle to protect ozone molecules, to save trees in an Amazonian rain forest, to provide food for the Third World. Yes, it is necessary to keep fighting to the very last minute – only that is humanly dignified (particularly so if we defend ourselves against the consequences of our own follies). But is that really all we can still do? Has mankind been here only to keep alive? The awareness of such an absurdity of the human being so far is yet more unpleasant than an awareness of an approaching death, releasing, however, man from all illusions. Search for absolute transcendence is gradually ceasing to be contaminated by secondary interests – the whole world of interests seems to be coming to an end. The search for absolute transcendence no longer has any meaning because of some relative human perspective but because of

Transcendence itself. A mortal danger poses a shock whose most important meaning does not seem to be the calling forth a banal struggle for survival but a challenging manifestation of finality of everything (after all not only of our civilization or planet) – the postmodern accentuation of the universal principle of the transient nature of everything, usually appealing to genuine and pure aspirations of the human spirit. It is increasingly clear that the human question, which aims through and above that finite universality, can be answered truly reliably only by absolute transcendence itself – or by nobody at all. Faced with death, man can and should prepare himself also for the latter variant. And perhaps exactly then, when he has fully *accepted it and yet* keeps on searching – when standing silently and enquiringly before unobscured nothingness -only then will „God accept the hospitality in man's heart“, on many occasions just because only then has it been genuinely opened to him. (106)

To describe the individual state of such a spiritual shock and awaiting of the impossible the Spanish mystic John of the Cross coined, at the threshold of the baroque period, the fitting term „dark night“ (107). At the time of post-modern (and also proper-modern) threat to mankind, this term was taken up by **Elisabeth Ott** in a non-traditional extension to cover supra-individual spiritual situations. „An individual's 'dark night' is nowadays immersed in a collective night, in the midnight hour of the world. Man enveloped by the 'dark night of today' realizes that his own salvation is closely connected with the salvation of the world, his world which has become so vast, of the earth and even – according to John's Apocalypse – of the entire universe, of creation.“ (108)

Ott shows that „only in the field of the ultimate dimension can 'dark night' be recognized as something creative which is filled with meaning“. (109) She understands today's era of the end as „a Good Friday of the world“ in which the ultimate goal of everything is involved, co-determined by our decision to follow Christ as far as such a love which does not stop even before the greatest sacrifice. „After the collapse of all the external supports – such as vitality, health, involvement in various communities, cohesion of the family, human love, conventions, social consensus, cultivation of religions according to traditional patterns – there looms before

man his own 'wretched-ness' (Luther), his poverty, his nakedness. Nowadays in a truly exemplary way. This is emptiness which clamours for fullness.“ (110) „The abyss of evil“ is confronted here with the „abyss of Divine love“; faced with that, all the hidden guilt comes out into the open, with evil being stripped of its power. „In this sense 'dark night' is a *crucifixion* followed by resurrection.“ (111)

Ott does not treat the issue analytically, asking to what extent and depth can the awareness of mortality, futility and absurdity (as far as the elementary turnaround) be really shared with one another. She outlines only a basic general framework specific to our time and its general opportunities. (112) It would be possible to specify that this situation becomes a „dark night“ in the true sense of the term only to individuals who are able to accept it as dark night, who have been addressed by it sufficiently profoundly and not anonymously. To many others, the one and the same situation needs not reveal its spiritual dimension at all: to them it can still be just an opportunity for an ever meaner way of making profit (even out of the death of others), of achieving prosperity (even on ruins) and of indulging in a senseless self-provisioning until the moment of the very end. Experiencing the same time as the time of dark night is probably some kind of a gift. There are people who can pass through that time – opened to transuniversality so radically – with their eyes struck with a merciful blindness reminiscent of the blindness of all the other creation. There are other people who will pass through it „from death to life“.

At the same time to accept anything else than absolute transcendence (veiled in dark night) in this way, as if it were absolute transcendence, would mean straying to a path whose danger is directly proportional to the unconditional inner openness and defenceless inner abandonment, adequate only and solely to the contact with the Absolute. Man passing through dark night is, therefore, protected both by the fact that he can be attracted to and satisfied with nothing less than God and by the fact that absolute transcendence here touches man in the deepest centre of his being which is accessible only to it. Dark night thus transpires not as a special state visible from the outside or as a special activity but in the midst of everyday life, as an inconspicuous and covert opening of any of us to Divine trans-universality. In this way, the

human situation of finality is placed in contexts radically restructuring its present meaning and completely transforming its perspective.

2. Transalterality

(...) out of the desire for one-to-another and one-with-another in the no-foundation, no-phenomenon, no-image.

Alois Halder

Rahner's forecast that the Christian of the future will either be a mystic or there will be none at all is slowly beginning to come true. The traditional and modern replacement of the vertical religious relation with a relation to horizontal mediating supports is ceasing to be spiritually tenable. The „natural“ human world is losing confidence, faith as a collective sharing of certain formulated contents appears to be a mere empty shell. *A genuine relationship* with absolute transcendence cannot be taken over from one another as is possible with a habitual (traditional) thought content or with a plausibly justified (modern) idea. A relationship cannot be established in any other than original way, each for himself, in going beyond all that I can get from others, in a harsh (postmodern) solitude – and yet in the hope that in precisely that way the plurality of our search shall reveal its non-violently unifying foundation of trans-alterality.

The vertical cannot be replaced by a horizontal: a modern reduction of religion to love for one's neighbour (continuing in its extension to cover love for all creation) has already exhausted its not too big strength. In the postmodern world, this love tends to lose its self-evident meaning, common in the times of an established order of values. It must have deeper foundations, grounded in what it immediately proceeds from in its supreme forms and without which it is transformed into a mere part of self-love: in the love of God. „The theology of the death of God“, the last echo of the modern theology, which had hoped that only a consequential

secularization would still save some residues of Christianity, has turned out to be an error of the type of thinking fixed on an ideological purposefulness even in deadly serious situations. It is a sort of ultimate provocation for a possible alternative „theology of the death of man“ whereby man could finally lose his illusory central position which turns even the Absolute into a mere function of human immanence.

Only through transalterality is it possible to overstep the horizontal human links (both system-based and personal) in the vertical direction, where their re-establishing is possible on a freer level and in a fuller form.

Human Freedom

Freedom drawn from the relationship with absolute transcendence is not only a gift but also an art. Not to resign to it even in a situation of enthralling corruption requires longterm self-cultivation. And yet the ability to sacrifice life out of solidarity with Divine freedom has been, especially since the birth of Christianity, a permanent and – on a global scale -constantly living phenomenon, enforced by various historical situations in various places of the world. Until recently this applied to our country too. „There was no protection against the destructive, liquidating hatred of totality. Yet it was impossible to act in any other way than – according to the command of one's consciousness – to engage in an unequal fight. (...) The heroism of martyrs, the loyalty of the last ones in their loneliness, the strength of the oppressed. (...) That is the ultimate testimony for God. That is loving unto death.“ (113) In a similar vein, the Church in Latin America has, over the past few decades, been waging a struggle until making the sacrifices of life. Its „theology of liberation“ is a spiritual reaction to the fact of human suffering which can be answered only with selfless mercy. (114)

In his own search for a postmodern theology the North American theologian **Harvey Cox** (115) finds significant promising moments particularly in this theology of the poor, combined with the traditional Roman theology. „No one is quite sure just what the postmodern era will be like, but one thing seems clear. Rather than an age of rampant secularization and

religious decline, it appears to be more of an era of religious revival and the return of the sacred.“ (116) The source of postmodern theology, lies, according to Cox, in the „periphery of the world“ – in its „bottom“ or „edge“ which takes no part in the academic life of the modern theological centres of the West. He bases his claim on an important insight: that unlike science and philosophy, theology needs a social basis – it grows, to a decisive extent, out of living religious movements. In this sense, Cox views the theology of liberation as an antagonism to the modern liberal theology. He sees a guarantee of its greater fertility in the return to the original Christian message, in the radical participation in political life and in the emergence of many charismatic personalities. Its fusion of mysticism and politics, anchored in the practical recognition of the transalateral presence of Christ in the poor, leads to a prophetic critique within whose framework religion is, in no case, a merely private affair but an embodiment of liberating Divine power fighting on the side of the poor, resisting the evil.

Cox, therefore, forecasts that the postmodern theology will see a certain liberating inversion: the source of articulating religious truths will cease to be in the academic „centre“ (the modern theology is not so universal as it had believed it was), its role will be taken over by what is known as popular religion (especially of the Latin American, African and Asian nations). Coloured people, women and the poor – the forgotten and the ignored – have since the present time, without forming any cohesive community or subculture, been working on a new pattern of Christian life. The shallowness of its modern form – which has in no way eroded the institutional structures of ruling and money-making – is calling forth a history-making reaction. Cox believes that „Christianity can and will make a decisive contribution to this new global civilization, and will do it in a manner completely different from the way it contributed during the modern age.“ (117)

The „engaged mysticism“ of the theology of liberation leads to the Christian's direct conflict with his secular environment. This attests to a live and powerful spiritual inspiration which determines the preponderance of faith, love and efficient service to theology as an academic „esoteric insight“. Cox also highlights the plurality of the theologies of liberation

(Latin American, Indian ones etc.); nevertheless, their shared idea – that God is present among the poor – can address *all* kinds of poor people all over the planet.

This anticipation of the renowned theologian – who was, thirty years ago, a pioneer of Christian secularism (!) – is remarkable precisely because of its ability to highlight the specifically postmodern social and historical implications of that level of human freedom which can be constituted solely through the transalteral relationship with absolute transcendence. At this level, the individual freedom of choice is guided not by horizontal power pressures (which usually enter the personal sphere in the shape of „interests“ and „needs“) but by the regularly posed question after live (non-academic) truth. Somebody once asked the American theologian Diogen Allen: „Why should I go to church, when I have no religious needs?' I had the audacity to reply, 'Because Christianity's true!' (... Christi-anity) is so serious and so demanding personally that adherence to it cannot be properly described as merely a matter of personal taste.“ (118) The spiritually demanding (non-ideological) nature of its free relationship with the truth is even strengthened by the fact that „of all the religions of the world none has been exposed to as intense and persistent critical examination as Christianity.“ (119) Postmodern Christianity is a Christianity refined under the fire of modern criticism. Human freedom in it is a freedom to the truth that cannot be manipulated – Blachnicki: „Man is free when he has the courage to endorse the truth and live the truth regardless of suffering and sacrifice“ (120) – and the Christian's free external attitude towards social justice is the result. As a matter of fact, critical reflections have always concerned, and still do, exactly that „God“ who is a mere enslaving illusion, an artificial resonating board for immanent wishes and interests. „God“ as a human creation (conceptual, imaginative, emotional, archetypal), as a mere image, which is insufficiently transparent, would really be the most perfect „screening“ obstacle to a free and truthful relationship with God (and, eventually, with everything else). (121) Therefore, the biggest enemy to the spiritual fullness of human freedom is evidently the human tendency to create idols. Modern atheism justifiably turns against the genuine (and unjustifiably against illusory) idolatry: against the false and enthralling provisioning of something immanent or

merely relatively transcendent through the epithets or names of absolute transcendence.

With an idol – an artificially „elevated“ piece of reality, which, set in a mere interhuman space (lacking the kind of transalteral openness), substitutes for absolute transcendence, lacking, at the same time, its lively independence and life-giving initiative – man creates for himself arbitrarily dogmatized standards for his behaviour and sets artificial limits to his knowing and to his responsibility. In so doing, he restricts his freedom – turning it against it itself. An idol is a boundary stone of that spiritual world beyond which its creator is (as yet) unable or unwilling to go, and hence he transfers to it the dignity whose real holder is *beyond* the horizon of action of the idol. As a matter of fact, it is sometimes difficult to preserve one's free inner openness towards a potential encounter with absolute transcendence when dealing, in too detailed and intense a manner, with what is seemingly closer to us and when allowing ourselves to be, more or less, absorbed by that. Even by sticking to mere relative transcendence – in terms of volume virtually inexhaustible but in principle limited – we prematurely lose the independence of a searching man. In this way, we can gradually confirm ourselves in the illusion of the inaccessibility, insignificance or „inexistence“ of absolute transcendence, and – as a substitute for it – we may pin our thoughts on religious artefacts. With their help, it is possible to build around oneself a magic circle wherein symbols replace real relations and an endless self-mirroring of an enclosed spiritual world is a substitute for events which would have occurred had this „universal“ integrity freely opened itself to absolutely independent transcendence.

The postmodern idolatry can assume both traditional collective forms (ranging from primitive sects to gnostic communities) as well as utterly individualistic manifestations inherited from modernity. A remarkable piece of evidence attesting to this is provided in a book written by *Elisabeth Hämmerling* (122), where – on several hundred pages – the authoress describes her own private cult of the god Orpheus and recommends to all her readers any analogous personal mythology. She says that „just as most children, I too had, as a child, had my hero whom I loved and with whom I identified myself: it was Orpheus as I had known him from the realm of Greek mythology. We usually discard our heroes with child shoes. They no longer suit

our new ideas and ideals, we keep laughing at our childish infatuations out of which we have grown. Surprisingly enough, as it turned out, Orpheus would not be so easily put aside, in the changed circumstances and experiences of my life, to reveal, in a Protean manner, ever new aspects of his multi-layered appearance. Orpheus kept growing with me as my inner brother.“ (123)

As illustrated also by this quotation, a typical feature of the belief in idols is that, for one, such credence does not overstep human dimensions and does not pass through inner crises (which are, on the contrary, supremely characteristic of the belief related to absolute transcendence). A relationship with what we have ourselves (usually with the help of our unconsciousness) created and with what we allow ourselves to be internally menaced, is, to be sure – unlike a free relationship to anything independent – under a lesser threat. The archetypal idea, which need not be confronted with anything real, is invulnerable; on the other hand, any idea, which is not permitted by us to discharge anything but its servicing, mediating function towards something that infinitely transcends it, is constantly subjected to judgement. Exposed to the fire of criticism and doubts, what always burns on is that which turns out to be only our own artefact which relates to nowhere. An idol is precisely such an intransparent idea, an end to itself, which, however, we voluntarily want and cultivate. We do not subject it to any external correctives, on the contrary, we keep moving within its horizon as if it were something independent of us. We tend to forget that we are enclosed in it originally out of our own choice, being artificially immune towards spiritual crisis and spiritual growth – until we opt for liberation: for a more demanding search, fixed less on relative transcendence.

Elisabeth Hämmerling's captivating text portraying the entrance of her soul into mankind's orphic proto-memories (expressed in the Jungian terminology) and Orpheus's power to save the world (ie. to transform the views of mankind, become a peace-promoting spiritually political force) offers not only a convincing document for the conception of the idol as „useful fiction“ (which is at least endowed with a certain „therapeutic“ and spiritually cultivating power) but also attests to the phenomenology of the idol which aims deeper – seeing the idol as a

phenomenon whereby man worships only his own pious experience (and nothing else), as a phenomenon fixing the divine according to human measures, disqualifying everything that goes beyond that framework.

In this sense, the French philosopher **Jean-Luc Marion** (124) compares the idol with the icon – with an image which also seeks to present the divine but not „ex analogia hominis“ but in the opposite – immediate and authentic – direction. In the icon, „the invisible has opted for the visible“ (125), in its respectful observation man finds himself under *its* spotlight. Marion illustrates the difference between the icon and the idol with two quotations. The New Testament, Paul's Letter to the Colossians (1,15): „Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God.“ Plato, Timaios (92 c 7): „an image of the comprehensible – a perceivable god“. Therefore, the icon is an image of the invisible that remains invisible; unlike the idol „it does not obscure what it cannot render visible“ (126) but aims human look at an „endless journey“. „During that journey man's look gets lost in the invisible gaze which is visibly looking at him.“ (127) This is matched by the manner of depicting icons, which is not an act of human creation in the usual autonomous sense; it spells out the intention of the ungraspable because it renounces its grasping. Hence, while the idol only mobilizes human pious memory, the icon expresses the infinite distance of absolute transcendence. In this way, it introduces a liberating dialogue with it.

It was not incidental that Marion mentions Jesus Christ as an example of a living icon. Even in the postmodern era one can see that Jesus's unique corporealization of absolute transcendence acts out of unselfish love – out of the principle through which the world could have been created and through which it can probably be saved. Such a profound, infinite transparency of his personality – extending as far as direct revelation of the absolute – is determined by his freedom: by independence of any self-centred interests, going as far as independence of the preservation of his own physical life and as far as its free sacrifice.

In the throes of the postmodern world where the original beauty of creation is ceasing to be apparent, where ideals have already been trampled down into dust, where the only recourse that seems to remain to human life is everyday care of oneself, whose banality can be somewhat

brightened up perhaps only by an exciting crime or unbridled orgies, *free* personalities stand out as highly conspicuous in their surroundings: Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Janusz Korczak, Václav Havel, Helder Camara, Roger Schutz, Thomas Merton, Chiara Lubich, ... – postmodern icons inviting us to follow them at our free will.

Dialogue

Cox's appraisal describing the theology of liberation as the most promising theology of the postmodern era comes from a certain prophesying position. The licence associated with it – which is legitimate and stimulating in a field where no exact forecasts are practicable – stresses the traits of hopefulness and prospectiveness. The controversial and „too human“ elements whose permanent preference within this spiritual movement could, on the contrary, result in sterility lie outside the focus of Cox's attention. These are primarily a certain affliction (in Latin America in particular) by the modern conceptions of human emancipation which reduce human freedom to its horizontal socio-economic dimension. A theological consequence of this is the reduction of Divine freedom to a mere instrument for achieving a utopian worldly justice. Should the „liberation from oppression“ (Leonardo Boff) really become a dominating idea of this spiritual movement, then theology too shall be reduced to a kind of utility concept of an anachronic revolutionary way of thinking within whose restrained and murky horizon the expression „God“ shall mean nothing but a fictitious legitimizing ideological phrase.

Taking a more distinctly *postmodern* outlook, the search for absolute transcendence views, in its various variants, the socio-economic horizon in a far more contentful, relativizing perspective, abandoning – without any regret – the idols of the modern emancipatory movements. Economic poverty and even social oppression are accepted not as a mere negative reality but even as a „gift“, as a unique opportunity for developing the fullness of human being which – if anchored in the transalterality of absolute transcendence – is capable of freely transforming any suffering into an opportunity for love. Standing closer to this more realistic

and spiritually more comprehensive conception is perhaps the Indian variant of the theology of liberation (Tisha Balasurya) and especially the versions created under atheistic dictatorships in Central Europe (Franciszek Blachnicki, Oto Mádr, Josef Zvěřina). Unlike the „classical“, Latin American theology of liberation (Gustavo Gutiérrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino etc.) these insights are accessible also to the plurality of religions and to a dialogic search within the postmodern openness and tolerance. Not so much interested in the educational project of the future „new human type“ (Boff) (128), they are preoccupied with the hope related to the presence of absolute transcendence at any time and in any environment, a hope associated with the fact that this presence is not bound up with any special, in this sense „privileged“, human types or situations, but establishes the possibility of universal dialogue. (129)

The philosophy of dialogue meets in a fruitful manner these non-totalizing theological speeches about God respecting natural plurality and going beyond modern anachronisms. The philosophy of dialogue constituted itself as early as in the 1920s – in the works of Ferdinand Ebner, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber (130) – proceeding from the completely different dispositions than those represented by the typical modern (but also traditional) system unity, the unity of I, the monologic self-sufficiency of immanence in general. This way of thought has attained its most developed form so far in the works of *Emmanuel Lévinas*. Its starting point is the recognition of the freedom of the other one and the recognition of plurality – systematic respect for the „otherness“ (that can be assimilated neither through perception nor thinking), for the independent identity of anything perceived and thought: The traditional and modern principle of adequacy or correlation turns out to be in the philosophy of dialogue a principle of mere fulfilment of the measures and intentions of our immanence. What remains outside the framework of knowledge thus conceived is, however, most important – the „other“, intrinsic to the thing itself which we can never hope to appropriate. We can only open up to it in a dialogic mutuality which is possible only as an opening up to transcendence in general, going as far as its absolute (ie. creational and redeeming) dimension. In a dialogue, the unthinkable opens up to man. The biblical sentence „My thoughts are not like yours, and my ways are different from

yours“ (Isaiah 55, 8) is accepted by the philosophy of dialogue as a cleansing judgement upon all human endeavours to seek and absolutize parallels between the order of our reason or spirit on the one hand and the order of everything created (which stands primarily under the power of God) or even the order of absolute transcendence itself on the other.

This impoverishing hybris – in Lévinas's view culminating in Hegel's philosophical system (131) – reduces dialogue with the unthinkable to a mere dialectic of thinking. In it everything is converted into the mere thinkable and by and large to the neo-Platonic One – to the apex of self-sufficient immanence of the thought universe, explainable in a unified fashion from the universally valid laws of reason. It is possible to integrate into this whole only categorially accessible mutual differences in the field of immanence, not a mutual otherness of all created things or beings that cannot be grasped categorially, cannot be synthetically „surmounted“ but only dialogically accepted, face to face with its guaranteeing background – the transalterity of absolute transcendence. The world has not been created by man and that is why his order cannot be grasped in its entirety within the order of the human spirit.

Dialogue is probably the only method through which it is possible perceptively to address that which disappears beyond the horizon of human immanence (and which is, precisely because of that, important for man). One can even go as far as saying that dialogue „is identical with the total, intrinsic prayer – which is no longer a mere (often only autosuggestive) talk or a mere (similarly monological) meditation but an authentic endeavour on the part of man and God to keep getting closer to one another.“ (132) Dialogue cannot be subordinated to knowledge, experience, relatedness to oneself or to any system. It has its own and original spiritual authenticity whose background is deeper than a mere idea of universal Unity. Compared with the spirituality of dialogue, attempts at a consistent explanation of the universe on the basis of immanent principles amount to theoretical violence which, sooner or later, produces violence at ideological and practical level. The eschatological Divine peace is not anchored in such a unity but in a universal relationality of plurality.

In Lévinas's words, „a relationship differs from all the bonds that are established within

the world in which thinking as knowledge thinks according to its measure, in which perception and comprehension occupy and appropriate the given, thus contenting themselves. This is a relationship which to Buber represents a relation in the genuine sense of the term and which existed 'at the very beginning'. Language is not there to *express* states of consciousness; relationship is an incomparable spiritual event, an event of transcendence and sociality to which the whole endeavour for expression – the entire wanting to impart a thought content – is already related. Franz Rosenzweig understands this at the level of Revelation in the supreme and religious meaning of the word, which signifies to him the creation of a relationship with the Absolute, a relationship of isolated elements defying synthesis, rendering in totality and in any connection in which they lose – as in idealistic philosophy – their life too. (...) In this way, superior to the unity of *self-consciousness*, which is equal to itself and which equals the world, is an act of encountering in a dialogue, in a thought thinking outside the world. Inherent in this radical difference between I and You, which are located in the relationship of dialogue where an encounter takes place, there is not only a mere failure of getting to know one another, a failure of synthesizing their coincidence and their identification but something extra or *better* of something outside oneself, extra and better of the *proximity* of one's neighbour, proximity which is 'better' than coincidence with oneself, despite or because of reasons of difference which separates them. (...) The reality that human spirituality, which does not proceed from knowledge, in the psyche as experience, is possible and that relationship with you in its purity is a relationship with an invisible God is doubtlessly a new view of the human psyche, which has already been stressed above. But this is likewise very important for the orientation of theology: the God of prayer – of invocation – is older than God derived from the world or from whatever an a priori radiation expressed by an indicative clause; the old biblical theme of man made according to God's image receives a new meaning but this similarity is declared in 'you' and not in 'I'. The movement which leads to the other one leads to God.“ (133)

The Lévinasian position „face to face“ – whose theoretical expression is also the elevation of ethics to the decisive place of the „first philosophy“ – is a position of genuine

listening. Compared with this „realism“ of dialogue, what recedes into the background is not only the naive realism of traditional metaphysics (whose insufficient regard for the mediating role of subjective factors has passed, during the modern age, through a long period of comprehensive critique) but also the most sophisticated procedures of modern hermeneutics whose sense for authenticity has its limits lying in the very principle of interpretation – after all, in the passive submissiveness of that who (what) is interpreted to that who does the interpreting. The asymmetry of our marshalling intentionality and the subject „being marshalled“ remains intact. On the other hand, the

post-modern principle of dialogue is a principle of listening to direct speech, and the principle of giving direct answers to it *in the presence* of the Other one. In dialogue – which is not possible without an implicit relationship with absolute transcendence – subjectivity discards its protective coat of naivety, reflection and prior understanding, offering the sphere of its immanence up to immediate encounter. Speaking truthfully of this encounter means speaking of it *in it*. Equally, to talk *of* absolute transcendence always means talking only *together with* it.

The principle of dialogue thus represents a liberating opposite to the ideological stereotypes with which man takes up in his hands – also with the help of theological terminology (cf. some views of the theology of liberation) – the illusion of his absolute spiritual power. In this way it enables, in an outgoing manner, an original sharing of oneself to anybody with whom we find ourselves in a relationship. It brings reciprocity, though not meaning any mechanical symmetry. It provides necessary purity through which it is possible to get at the truth however „powerless“ it may be. That is why genuine spiritual power can prevail only in a dialogue. The Divine kingdom as a state of mutuality anchored in transalterality, in which no force, artifice or beneficial self-illusions are used, in which everything is transparent and neither lie nor violence can survive, is basically possible at any time but cannot be constituted in a totalitarian fashion „for all“; the desire for it is a matter of personal free choice.

3. Proexistence

Oh Lord, when you come in your glory, remember not only people of good will. Remember the people of ill will as well. However, do not think of their cruelties, torturing and violence. Remember the fruits we have born because of what they had done to us. Remember the patience of some and the courage of others, the friendship, humility, magnanimity and faithfulness they have illuminated inside us. And one day, Lord, please let those fruits we have born be their salvation.

An anonymous Jew before dying in a Nazi gas chamber

The principle of relationality of absolute transcendence is proexistence. It is not only an answer to the question why anything exists at all and the question about the prerequisites of human freedom but also an answer to the question of the absolutely valid.

Basically, the principle of proexistence can be expressed very simply too: in the words of John of the Cross, „Everything I do is love“.

The metaphysical non-objectifiability of absolute transcendence is a negative reference to its relatedness; to its total departure from itself, to its inexhaustible state of „being for“.

That is why the attainment of fullness in a found relationship with absolute transcendence has its immeasurable importance for man and can motivate even the supreme sacrifice. (134) To the typical modern Christianity this devotion – the full sharing of God's self-giving – was and is quite distant. (135) The postmodern era is marked by the remarkable process of increasing meaning of constants without which Christianity and Judaism would be nothing but withered human fabrications but with which they are, on the contrary, supremely significant modes of free being in the challenging splendour of a lively relationship with absolute transcendence. At a theological and philosophical level, it is precisely this central Christian theme – proexistence – which has been asserting itself nowadays.

From the angle of his diatopic hermeneutics the Catholic philosopher and theologian

Raimundo Panikkar views proexistence as a sacrifice and in the dialogue with non-Christian currents of religious thought – especially with Vedic literature – confirms its universal ont-forming nature. „One of the central intuitions of the entire Vedic tradition consists in seeing all life, divine as well as cosmic, in terms of a dynamism rooted in the sacrificial character of reality itself. Sacrifice is the primordial energy, prior to everything. It was by sacrificing himself, by offering himself as a victim, that Prajapati created the world. And, when exhausted by his creative act, it is again through sacrifice (offered in turn by his creatures) that he regains his power. By sacrifice the Gods win immortality. From the sacrifice of the cosmic Man (purusha) by the Gods, Men and animals and the cosmos are born. By sacrifice Men obtain heaven. Sacrifice is the fundamental law that regulates absolutely everything: cosmic, divine, human life. 'The sacrifice is Man.' Sacrifice is the total oblation of all we have and all we are; by this offering, life unfolds and we are redeemed from death. Although the notion of sacrifice may have been modified, refined and interiorized down the ages, then underlying Vedic intuition remains vital. (...) Sacrifice is the communication, and communication constitutes the very structure of the universe. Reality is neither self-subsistent nor purely contingent. It is not necessary that beings, or even Being exist. (...) We have no guarantee, no certainty, that time will always continue, that the world will not destroy itself one day, or even that Being will not cease to be. (...) Sacrifice is what conserves and perpetuates life, what gives life and gives it hope. (...) To offer sacrifice is not to take part in a profitable exchange, or to pleas the Gods, or humanity, or oneself; to sacrifice means to live, to contribute to one's own survival and to that of the entire universe. It is the act par excellence by which the universe continues to exist.“ (136)

The Catholic theologian and philosopher **Hans Waldenfels** uses the stimuli supplied by Buddhist thinking and in an explicit reference to Karl Rahner he itemizes proexistence christologi-cally as an emptying in the sense of Biblical *kenosis*. (137) „The high point of the kenosis of God is realized in two steps, with the radical and total correspondence of the self-emptying of God and the self-emptying of man. That is precisely what Christian belief confesses in the figure of Jesus Christ and in no other. The self-surrender of God to the world in his Logos

corresponds to the radical obedience of Jesus of Nazareth in his total self-surrender to his 'other' which he calls 'God' and whom he addresses as 'Father'. In Jesus of Nazareth the self-emptying of God and the self-emptying of man coincide. This process reaches its final consequences in death – as a historically comprehensible event in the life of Jesus – since only through death are things shown to be what they are. (...) The stages of God's 'emptying' – creation, incarnation, death, death on a cross – point to an ever greater radicality of the 'emptiness' of God. No motivation is given for the kenosis of God; it happens groundlessly, selflessly. But when God acts groundlessly and selflessly, the highest name we have at our disposal for such a motive is: love. (138) (...) Christian dogmatics as persistently very complex and yet as a consequential commitment to the freedom of an indescribable God whose unfathomable love man cannot confine and cannot get to the bottom of.“ (139)

For his part, the Catholic theologian Cardinal *Joseph Ratzinger* describes Jesus's proexistence in personalist terms, as relationality. „'Son' means being-from-the-Other-one; St. John uses this word to define Jesus's being as being from the Other one and towards others; as being which is concurrently opened in both directions and delineates no space for pure ego. If it is thus clear that Jesus's being as Christ is an absolutely 'open' being, that his being is pure relationality (not substantiality) and as such it is pure unification, that this is being 'from' and 'towards' which never leans to itself and nowhere stands with itself, then it is equally clear that what can thus be said of Christ, essentially becomes (...) at the same time an interpretation of Christian existence. For St. John, to be a Christian means being as the Son, becoming a son, ie. not standing with oneself or not staying inside oneself but living quite openly in that 'from' and 'towards'.“ (140) When meeting Christian intellectuals for discussion, the Jewish philosopher *Emmanuel Lévinas* expresses Jesus's self-giving proexistence in ethical terms as unlimited responsibility for others, through the identification with which we can fulfil our choosing. „The problem of Man-God encompasses, on the one hand, the idea of humiliation set to itself by the Supreme Being, descent of the Creator to the level of a creature, ie. absorption of the most active activity through the most passive passivity. On the other hand, this issue, and somehow through

this passivity taken by suffering to the extreme, contains the idea of redemption for others, the idea of substitution. (...) Incarnation (...) amounts to exposing oneself to insults, accusation, pain. (...) If such a betrayal of identity is possible, if such a turnaround is possible without leading to a pure and simple alienation, what else could it be, if not exactly responsibility for others, for what others are, leading as far as the responsibility even for the persecution it suffers? To quote the 30th verse of the 3rd chapter of Lamentations: 'He turns his face to the one who is striking him and feeding him with contempt.' (...) To be oneself is passivity within identity, passivity of the hostage. Absolute passivity transformed into absolute intractability: freedom accused from the other side but precisely because of that obliged to initiate an answer. As a result, this involves an unusual reversal of passivity into activity, the singular into the universal, an outline of the order and meaning in being which does not depend on any cultural work, not even on any simple structuration. (...) It is exactly towards this infinite passivity or suffering or patience of I – my own self -, towards the exceptional uniqueness to that the one is brought who is that never-ending act of substitution, that defence of being by getting rid of *his* being. (...) The fact that I take onto my shoulders the burden of suffering and mistakes of others establishes the very I of (my) I. I, only I, can – without any cruelty – be designated as a sacrifice. I is that person who, before all the decisions, has been chosen to shoulder the responsibility for the whole world. Messianism, that peak in Being – a turnaround in the being 'residing in its Being' – begins in me.“ (141)

Let us leave these four direct speeches concerning proexistence without any analytical commentary. Let us listen to them as examples of dialogic plurality of deeper insights into the transcendent relational principle which the current era – so evidently, severely (and purifyingly) manifesting the situational contingency of all merely human endeavours – allows to stand out in its absoluteness in a completely new light.

III.

THE MAIN CROSSROADS OF POSTMODERN SPIRITUALITY

1. Two Modes of Self-formation of Postmodern Immanentism

Remain faithful to earth.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Even in the postmodern era, constant insistence on what is „intrinsic“ to man may prevail in a programmatic way over relation to what transcends him: immanentism moves in closed circles around what is naturally given to „us“, to „me“, to „mankind“, to „the world“, what can always be somehow mastered, subordinated or at least safely appeased. Attempts have been made to apply this approach towards transcendence as well – and it invariably fails exactly on what it is no longer able to add to the credit of immanence or dismiss as „unhealthy“, „dangerous“ or irrelevant. Immanentism survives the clash with what man can thus neither absorb nor bring up only thanks to the fact that at the point of its potential inner transformation – when by genuinely recognizing transcendence it could lose itself – it allows fiction to come in: presenting immanence as the only living space of man and transcendence as either a mere fissure in a seemingly infinite womb of immanence or as a mere empty formal negation thereof.

In proportion to the expanding horizon of the postmodern search for transcendence, the range of the means available to postmodern immanentism is extending, too. This multiform shell succeeds in covering up many human weaknesses. But only at the price of burying the very humanity as well.

Totalization

„God can be understood as transcendent in relation to the world without being thought of as existing independently of it,“ writes the American philosopher ***Jerry G. Gill***. (142) His „God“ is „a symbiotic whole“ which is „more and other than its parts“ and at the same time „is itself dependent upon its parts“. (143) It is bound into a compact structure of the world as its mere integrating factor which basically does not defy its rules, connections, measures and dimensions.

„God“ which thus lacks the basic independence and freedom towards the world can, however, appear to be only a terminological misunderstanding; in actual fact, his salient features rather correspond to what we are accustomed to call „cosmos“ or „universe“ or eventually „creation“; on the other hand, the word „God“ is usually reserved for what has no other name. Gill's semiotic procedure thus dismisses absolute transcendence to sudden anonymity and man to curt spiritual limitation. The term „God“ is used here only as a totalizing coping stone for the petrification of a limited field of experience which itself eschews a live and non-speculative relationship with absolute transcendence.

At the theological level, this horizontal programme of a holistic and organicist conception of the world with an immanent religious aura is spelt out by the leading personality of what is called American constructive postmodernism – ***David R. Griffin***: Postmodern theology is „naturalistic theism“ (144). This term is presented by Griffin, in a free link to Whitehead's and Hartshorn's processual theology, in contrast with „supranatural-istic theism of premodern and early modern theology“ and with „nontheist naturalism of the late modern view of the world“.

He declares the primacy of extra-sensual perception (145) and qualifies relative transcendence accessible through it, which can be incorporated into the horizon of immanence, as the only possible: „God (...) cannot interrupt or unilaterally control events in the world.“ (146) Because God's transcendent independence is thus denied, naturalistic theism is without obstacles „fully compatible with the reality of genuine evil“ in the world. (147) That is also why no „jump of faith“ is necessary for the acceptance of this theological doctrine, faith is here completely

devoid of the component of the open „risking“ trust and simply fused with Jamesian „radical empiricism“ and rationality. „The divine is the soul of the world.“ (148) Griffin proclaims this theology to be Christian, naturally not referring to Revelation – to the „extrinsic authority“ with its „truth claims“. (149) After all, in Griffin's view, God's presence in Jesus does not differ from the mode of his presence in other people; the reason for this statement, however, lies only in that the principle of naturalistic theism excludes such a difference. (150)

The basic explicit rule of Griffin's theological reasoning is the requirement that truth should correspond to experience; however experience, which can be fitted into the speculative framework of his reasoning, is very limited. The basic explicit ethos of his work is „the salvation of God“; but what fits into this philosophical-theological category of Griffin evidently is not worth that name. (151)

It is certainly possible to concede the truthfulness of the pantheistic analyses of the delicate, non-violent ways of God's comprehensive effect *in the world*. But *having embarked* personally on those ways and trying to get nearer to their Creator, we are soon forced to abandon the idea of a kind of synchronicity of the world and God. Live God is not a tame assistant of the world, he is not a mere „soul of the universe“. But this is what theological immanentism fears most: that God does as he likes. As Griffin notes too, naturalist theism originated in America as a reaction to the religious mentality of the Calvinist voluntarism which has, however, made a caricature of Divine freedom, changing it into an infamous idol – a kind of feelingless, coldly observing and severely punishing Father-Tamer – which has become an efficient tool of neurotizing religious education and subsequent atheization of whole generations. (152) Faced with this religious idea, Griffin finds himself in the relation of negative dependence upon it. Vis-a-vis this „spectre“ he does not defend the honour of freely known Divine freedom; he keeps moving as if in the shadow of the Calvinist trauma; he thinks in *fear* of God (153), a fear which does not lead him along a straight path to an open inner communication but only to an ersatz solution.

He constructs a universe in which man is protected against Divine „arbitrariness“. In

which God does not stand outside the universal order of causal interaction – even at the cost of admitting that „God“ and evil in the world will quite successfully mutually tolerate themselves, without the hope of redemption, without the prospect of catharsis: eschatological liberation, conditioned precisely by that banned Divine freedom. The defence against Divine „arbitrariness“ thus protects man against Divine love as well. It destructs human hope (no less than the idea of a cruel deity), blocking normal sound confidence. The rigidity of irrational compensations attains its Pyrrhic victory here.

But immanentism „principally“ avoids direct encounter with Divine freedom – outside the world of any (either injuring or compensating) ideas: „If reality is approached as something that exists independently of the knower and the knowing process, then our understanding of it will take a dualistic form.“ (154) On the contrary, declares Gill, the main goal is to abolish „the dichotomy of the natural and supranatural“. However, there are, demonstrably, two modes of taking this commendable step (independently of J.C. Gill). The first one consists in the endless imaginary conversion of everything transcendent to the „unified“ structures of immanence (eventually to the Gillian structures of mutuality). The second mode, on the other hand, lies in establishing communication with transcendence *as transcendence*: for instance by posing the question to which I cannot myself give an answer within the limits of immanence. To put it very briefly, „the duality of the natural and supranatural“ can be surmounted either in an illusory fashion, by totalization based on immanence, or through dialogue with genuine transcendence.

In the first case, it is impossible to check whether duality is surmounted genuinely or ficticiously at all because that mode of „overcoming“ is identical with the exclusion of such a distinction. (155) (We are thus finding ourselves in a world not responding to anything outside itself – and in this way actually promoting the duality -, in a world of totally sealed-off self-expression.) – In the second case, the act of overcoming is completed through an independent and free answer of the other side. (This answer is unpredictable, inexhaustible in terms of formulation and deeply influential towards the transformation of immanence.) In spite of eventual partial mistakes – which are, however, identifiable and can be ruled out (156) –

orientation towards the transcendent Other, towards *his* self-expression is therefore the only possible path leading towards a non-fictitious abolition of the gap between immanence and Transcendence. (Under these circumstances, even relative transcendence may eventually be its own self, being freed from the yoke of unilateral assimilatory tendencies to master it only and only for the benefit of previously determined intentions of human immanence, and can – to a certain extent – become a mediating instance.)

Dialogue with absolute transcendence, sooner or later transposing itself into the sharing of its proexistence, is an efficient solution to the inner problems of totalizing immanentism – which however at the same time divests immanentism of its *raison d'etre*. But a turn from totalization to proexistence is a matter so radical and demanding that, under a less profound consideration, immanentism may appear to be an alternative whose inner contradictions and problems seem more tolerable than free efforts towards a dialogue with an utterly unimaginable partner. Through this consideration, however, man is mastered not by his top spiritual capacities but by his lowest psychic automatisms. (157)

In its totalizing variant, immanentism is fascinated with the whole, entirety, completeness out of whose bounds nothing should be allowed to go; the denial of transcendence thus has a „positive“ nature of its absorption leading as far as the limits of human possibilities. This hidden desire for absolute transcendence (due to its proprietary traits being somewhat perverted and impracticable) is unable to accord the right to free existence to that over which it is impossible to exercise practical or theoretical power (158). It builds around itself a magic circle wherein symbols replace real relations; there is nothing „outside“, everything has been imaginarily sucked inside, absorbed into a manageable „unity of all contradictions“. The centre of immanence is, to be sure, „everywhere“, unifying everything; there is no otherness. – This state of unrelatedness eventually turns out to be a defenceless food to all external manipulative tendencies towards man thus shut off from everything, especially to tendencies managing to comply with the desire for restfulness, security and harmony.

Entropic, regressive nostalgia for the lost Unity with everything, whether prenatal or

prehistoric, disappointed by the failure of utopian attempts for its artificial reproduction (159) is even consciously turned towards natural sources of its re-experiencing: towards dream and myth (160) where everything is symbiotically intertwined. The human mingles here in direct continuity with the extrahuman, in itself personifying the expressive potential of the sub-human breeding ground out of which it arises and to which it completely plunges – without opening itself to the *calling* coming from „elsewhere“.

Apart from the postmodern world of *relations* – where respect is shown also to absolute otherness and where, therefore, dialogue and search for transcendence is possible – there exists a postmodern *symbiotic* world, guaranteed by immanentist idols, reducing human relations to a biogenous harmony and dismissing any radical spiritual otherness as something indigestibly anorganic. The emerging postmodern science, with its uncritically „universal“ holistic paradigm, occasionally assists in building this immanentist spiritual world. But the postmodern search for *transcendence* invariably views any mere paradigm as that totalizing „bottom of the bucket“ which – according to the Zen saying – should be „pierced through“.

Negation

In the postmodern era, the principle of negative immanentization has been depicted in the most abstract terms by **Jacques Derrida**, notably in his term *differānce*. (161) In the author's words – *differānce*, „the driving discord of different forces and the difference of forces“, (162) „an ambiguous and winding road leading from the different to the different, from one term of opposition to another“ (163) thanks to which „each sign amounts precisely and solely to what it differs from the others“, (164) „is not a simple concept or term but it is the very possibility of conceptuality, of conceptual process and of conceptual system in general“. (165) „Philosophy lives inside *differānce* and out of it“ (166) and „permanent deciphering (of its traces) replaces the disclosure of truth as a presentation of the matter itself in its presence“. (167)

Relationship with transcendence is replaced here by watching the infinite negating referral in the circle of „sameness of difference and repetition in the eternal return“. (168) It is

evident that „the totality of this field cannot be teleologically mastered by any transcendent truth present outside the field of script“. (169) Everything is subordinated to immanent differ^{ance} – to what is (as has already been mentioned) „the very possibility of conceptuality, of conceptual process and of conceptual system in general“. (170) Derrida's „deconstruction“ thus constitutes the logic of self-transformatory possibilities of the system of signs which moves against itself out of itself and which is open to nothing but its own negation.

But this free floating in space (or rather free fall of a torn-off artefact) is conditioned by the fact that there is still something to rebound *from*, something *towards which* we can delineate, that there is still *something* to turn against itself. The inability of creatively overstepping the horizon of negative dependence is precisely what makes postmodern immanentism just immanentism. In spite of its ambitions it is not „the shakeup of everything“ (Derrida); but rather some kind of final „withering“. Negating immanentism is a movement along a steady line of what was and failed; it canonizes the metaphysical failure of a certain mode of Western thinking through a fatal description of the (end) play of the system of signs resignedly left to themselves. (171)

The principle of negating immanentism is also projected into the level of cultural and political discourse: through „play“ of convictions destructively negating one another and their mutually levelled-off contexts. This situation, lacking any relationship towards some kind of a universal criterion of truth and justice, is described in particular by *Jean-Francois Lyotard*. At the level of the diverging plurality of mutually closed „truths“, human „interests and passions are antagonistic. (...) People are situated into systems of heterogenous rules and principles and drawn into games of heterogenous genres of discourse.“ (172) As a result, the interhuman reality has the nature of insoluble controversies.

After all, at the level of impersonal discourse among different language games there is no other possibility. (173) The plurality of viewpoints can become a positive feature and mutual enrichment only when the level of discourse – the level of immanence incorporated in the rules of this or that game – has been overstepped and related to the highest level. Dialogic distance

from the rules of all games (and from one's own entire immanence) is possible only towards the universal „space“ of Transcendence, which can be neither managed nor totalized by any particularity. The uninstrumentalizable ethical rules of moving inside it can make us more free and human – in mutual communication capable, without delay, of recognizing the terrorist illusion posed by the level of a mere discourse and trying to square up with our own human limitation in a manner turning it into a gift and not a threat to other people. (174)

A breakthrough from discourse to dialogue is, at the same time, an opening of possibility to transform one's own singular world in a creative fashion: to see anything beyond its boundaries through unbiased eyes and let this sight efficiently address ourselves. (175) Just as such a plurality-filled search for transcendence – or *mutual* search through transcendence – with its infinitely diversified perspectives can be for everyone participating immensely enriching, on the other hand such a relation-free (176), negatively delineating variant of plural immanence is in its consequences destructive. (177) Because closeness, intransparency and incalculability is the most intrinsic characteristic of wild beasts. In an environment where the possibility of dialogue has been totally forgotten, hedonism and brutality are, after all, the only „meaningful“ modes of communication. For how long after that can the initial plurality postmodernism „was so concerned with“ still manage to last? (178)

But the only thing negating immanentism is capable of genuinely negating is, once again, only immanence. Coming to the rescue of people who do not resign is that what has absolutely defied any negation.

2. The Specific Features of the Postmodern Search for Transcendence

Man cannot live on sand dunes.

Czesław Miłosz

We have been created for transcendence just as a bird for flying or fish for swimming.

Mwalimu Imara

Only God has a value.

Anselm Grün

Openness to Experiences

Accentuation of the importance of process of direct experiential knowing has been accompanying the postmodern search for transcendence at all its levels. This stress on the authentic personal experience makes it possible to maintain a constructive distance from many ingrained modern prejudices (the conception of nature as a dead raw material, of history as a process that can be managed, of the human mind as determined exclusively non-spiritually, of one's neighbour as nothing but an alter ego, of God as a mere idea or illusion etc.) and from specifically limited modes of modern search for transcendence, encumbered primarily with a one-sided rationalistic natural theology and of course also with a one-sided prescriptive theology of Revelation. Through them the modern functionalization and rationalization of life even in the spiritual sphere has exacted its price in the shape of a relative suppression of the role of the intrinsic personal experience. (179) Its newly added significance is often supported by the most important insights of authentic traditional spiritualities. But no more than supported. The independent ability of spiritual intuition, once again, ranks among the most valuable human qualities (180), because to understand transcendence in the postmodern era means *experiencing it*. Beyond the limits of concepts and words, where discursive reason has no dominating position and religious faith justified by mere arguments is found to be too shallow and unstable, hunger for direct experience will arise.

With the naivity of beginners the Western civilization has been rediscovering how to meditate and pray. „There are no closed experiences. (...) Each experience we gain is open to other, more profound, more fundamental one.“ (181) The postmodern man discovers that the

equilibrium of human life and world could be restored from inner resources, which exceed the material world and selfish human interests. (182) „Reckoning with transcendence (Jenseits), that is a new life attitude. Its cognizing sign is openness and enquiry; the art of waiting and searching; acceptance instead of defence.“ (183) This relaxedness is always ready for something more than can be encompassed by actual comprehension. This is a relaxedness open even to radical experiences: to a rebirth of one's own personality, a new vision of the entire world, a new encounter with God. It is „biophilous-ly“ opened Upwards – towards a perspective which has no end, towards light which cannot be exhausted, towards purity which cannot be dragged down to earth:

„To experience God

To kneel before him in respect

To be lifted up towards light

To be touched by the ardour of love

To experience God

To be unable to understand-grasp him

To be allowed to look into fire

To be overcome by light and beauty

To experience God

To be given the ability of feeling one's weakness

To be touched by powerful energy

To be penetrated by the charge of suprahuman strength

To experience God

To touch the source of life

To be immersed in light

To leave darkness behind

To experience God

To understand genuine Being

To become aware of one's own humanity

To realize the distance and proximity between Creator and creature

To experience God

To accept the created as a gift

To see the world divinely and God mundanely

To embrace the earth with the force of his love

To experience God

To be drawn as if by a huge magnet

To understand that „everything revolves“ around him

To be unable to disengage from him any more

To experience God

To sense what self-giving means

To be consumed by the desire for him

To want to be more and more unified with him“ (184)

This searching, focused on the Infinite, makes it possible to perceive even the infinite transparency of everything relative, which thus manifests and communicates more than it is itself. (185) By closing off the horizon at anything only seemingly infinite, this speech disappears; in things and persons we see again only them and our own reflection. An

experiential openness to a live relationship with Transcendence in its furthestmost depth and most subtly correcting presence is possible only in an attitude of profound relaxedness and flexibility of searching and, at the same time, of vigilant soberness and caution of distinguishing. All the indications are that the main distinguishing feature of the experience of transcendence is unconditional respect. In it „each reality is perceived in its unmanipulatable depth“. (186) „Respect is a tacit 'yes' to another one, even if we know of its distance.“ (187) Amidst the often consciously and deliberately necrophiliac turmoil of the postmodern violence and killing, cultural regression and spiritual aggressiveness, there flowers postmodern experience of transcendence as the latest example of anthropologically invariant experiential possibility, the condition of whose updating is invariably nothing but a „free preparedness to accept the experience. (...) Without willingness to freedom it cannot be done“. (188)

Therefore, in its full shape, the postmodern radical extension of the experiential horizon represents the introduction into the all-embracing relationship whose focal point lies in the absolute Other one (189) and his activity. Communication with him can be never closed.

Need of Participation

Also the second accent of the postmodern mode of searching for transcendence is partially stimulated by the one-sided nature of the typically modern situation. The manner of incorporating individual persons into the whole of a modern society was and is systematically immanent. Smooth function of the dynamic structures of production, education, public life etc. calls for man's functional reduction to his outward, technically and bureaucratically graspable dispositions. Under such a situation, his deep personal identity remains socially undiscovered and unconfirmed, and spiritually unaddressed, undeveloped. Also modern search for transcendence – its psychosocial aspect – was marked by this one-sidedness. Frequent reduction of common Christian life to a functionalized run of emptied forms of prescribed individualistic behaviour considerably complicated the penetration „towards the core“ where it would be possible genuinely, ie. spontaneously and with personal creative satisfaction, and jointly to

participate. (190) As for postmodern man (especially young), search for transcendence is, therefore, often associated with a desire for more intense participation in something „genuine“ and inner, that would offer the possibility of communicating about matters most fundamental for the meaning of human life, that would offer the opportunity of a reliable value orientation and would present personal models thanks to which man could find and strengthen his own inner identity. (191)

But only absolute transcendence is in a position to satisfy this need in a perfect and inexhaustible fashion – whether outside or within the social context. A direct mode of establishing contact with it, basically opened to anybody and at any time, is „contemplative prayer“: an uncompromising inner path of human desire and courage outside any words, concepts and images – to „a place of inner silence“ to which „neither people, nor problems, nor ideas, nor feelings, nor troubles, nor worries“ have access (192), where we are „alone with God“. Gradually we can learn to live in the light of this relationship even when we are not expressly thinking of him. – But this ultimate fulfilment is, at the same time, being injured by everything in the human world that is not compatible with it. (193) Born out of this collision is the desire to build in the world at least islands of such compatibility with absolute transcendence – to seek and create social focal points and structures at least mediatedly radiating the fulness of this ultimate participation. To a greater or smaller extent, this role is discharged by the churches and some other religious communities.

The degree of the credibility of spiritual mediation is governed by a similar law as that of the openness to experiences: a live relation with Transcendence is transmitted only by the participation which does not give up deep relaxedness and flexibility of search and, at the same time, vigilant soberness and caution of distinguishing. This attitude also represents a backbone coordinate of contemplative prayer. Its spirit permeates only such a community which is concerned with the mediation of the same in which this prayer participates. Blind desire for religious participation at any cost (to which the postmodern freedom of spiritual choice is actually of no use), however, does not distinguish anything: it does not prove the external forms

through independent inner search and defencelessly devotes itself to any authoritarian immanent substitute as it were transcendence. (194) Also, in any cases of individual, personal spiritual guidance, a „guru“ or a spiritual therapist is capable of opening to another person only that horizon to which he is opened himself. (195) That is why the freer and spiritually more open mode of religious participation, described from one's own experience by the Catholic priest and theologian Gisbert Greshake, has a more profound justification:

„The fact that (in the Church) salvation is mediated through the institutional aspect offers to its 'recipient' something immensely liberating. Through office the Lord just does not connect his salvatory work with subjective abilities of certain persons but rather (...) with a supraindividual quality which as such relates above itself to whom it embodies here. (...) The immediacy of the believer's relationship with God is not disturbed even by the confinement to religious grandeur and giftedness and subjective religious pathos of a certain person, neither to its limitations and poverty. It is the objectivity of office that causes that the community involved is not bound to a specific person of churchman but to the Lord.“ (196)

A healthy „system for resting“, which is really opened to the impact of Transcendence, is not a system of mere human power, based on human weaknesses; it does not stand on the „soft“ principle of spiritual infatuation and uncritical admiration (disturbing one's sense of reality), neither on the „hard“ principle of indoctrination and control (turning people into puppets or gramophone records). According to W. Lauer, the supreme mode of participation is genuine love, which abolishes isolation while preserving independence. (197) Therefore, *absolute* love (hiddenly relating to each of us separately) should not be replaced in a religious community by anything human. Artificial „family“ worlds of religious immanentism satisfy the human need of spiritual participation only at the cost of amputating its transcendent dimension.

Participation in absolute transcendence is infinitely more than a collective euphoria, a meditational experience or an enrichment through a mysterious piece of knowledge. It is a sober, deep and subtle awareness of the ever present absolute Relationship – that can be abolished only through our voluntary betrayal. This relationship, whose „matter-of-factness“ can be perceived

only in a respectful inner silence and openness, has its ethical conditions and requirements (it is never with us in any lie or act of violence) but, at the same time, it immediately protects human willingness if we want to comply with its conditions. To a cursory glance, the presence of the ageold, institutionalized Christianity in the postmodern spiritual milieu is provocative. With its inner plurality, ability to dialogue and the transparent openness Upwards it, however, remarkably anticipates and with the qualification of a thousand-year old experience behind it confirms precisely the most profound and demanding positions of the postmodern spiritual quest.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSCENDENCE AND POSTMODERN SPIRITUALITY

As we have seen in the previous chapters from various angles, the contemporary philosophy of transcendence proceeds from the principle of live relationality rather than from the principle of thought substantiality. Its immediate openness to the Absolute brings it closer to spirituality, and so much so that it is possible to say that both move in the same element. Nonetheless, unlike spirituality – which constitutes the very *events* of spiritual relationality, occurring often without any claim to any external expression – the philosophy of transcendence offers a methodologically precise expression for depicting these events.

This expression, although it can capture reliably the experiential nuances out of which doctrinal differences of various religious and spiritual systems then secondarily grow, is not itself bound up by either of these systems and also lacks ambitions to become such a system. Philosophy is nothing more than an independent evaluating reflection – open to any specific spirituality and, concurrently, unbound with any of its limits. Since the philosophy of transcendence itself is, at the same time, open to transcendence with methodological principality – i.e., *ad absolutum* – it can recognize and comprehensively formulate any limitations of this or that specific spiritual horizon and spell out its position in the whole of possible modes of the human search for transcendence. (In the previous

chapters we have attempted systematically to prove that distinguishing ability of philosophical thought.)

Philosophical reflection is thus capable of revealing the inner order of human spirituality as such – without reductions and instrumental intentions, to which any other, too special or ideologically tainted an interpretation which does not avail itself of those neutral and generally contextual methodological principles so uniquely intrinsic solely to philosophy, may succumb. On the other hand, the uniqueness of the postmodern spirituality consists in that it presents to philosophical reflection arguably the broadest possible spectrum of spiritual search man is capable of. The openness and the distinguishing acuity of philosophical thought can be applied

in a genuinely orienting fashion. The postmodern era is a great opportunity for spirituality and the philosophy focused on it to yield its best.

We have attempted to show that mutual competitive and dialogic confrontation of various spiritualities gives rise to a number of decisive distinctions for a philosophical insight. The most fundamental one – between transcendence and immanence – is dynamically projected also in two different tendencies of bridging it (and generally in tendencies of bridging any postmodern differences): from a humanly available starting point in immanence or from an unavailable starting point in absolute transcendence. A concrete analysis has shown that these tendencies – seemingly, in a mere conceptual reduction, meeting each other – can be passing themselves, in proportion to the absence of a dialogic attitude on the part of immanence. Relative transcendence – both transpersonal and transcultural – plays here a more or less passive role: it can become either a medium of a dialogue of open immanence with absolute transcendence or a material for spiritual self-confirmation of endorsed and expanding immanence.

Even the valuable postmodern plurality, if bound up solely with immanence, will, by and large, exhaust itself and lose its creative potential because a mere horizontal interaction, characteristically described as the „phenomenon of the melting pot“ (198) has an entropic final effect: the conversion of all to the lowest possible denominator whether through mutual absorption or (simultaneous) mutual negation. On the contrary, in the postmodern plurality bound up with absolute transcendence, none of its members loses its creative identity because it is elaborated primarily within this inexhaustible relationship. Due to the the selfsame reason, its participant has no tendency to confirm himself (with controversial result) through negation or mastering what is *otherwise* identical. Horizontal relations in the plurality bound up with the Absolute are carried with the order inspired vertically: an ethical order – universally open without in any way compromising its demanding nature. The predominance of absolute transcendence, if immanence is prepared to open up to this predominance, lays its own claims under which the postmodern spiritual search can be permeated by a dialogic spirit. Without

meeting these demands even the most spiritual plurality shall turn into a scramble for power to be won by persons with least ethical inhibitions. But philosophical reflection confirms the elementary spiritual experience that a relationship with Transcendence – with everything that ensues from it in the infinite perspective – can be established regardless of any immanent situation of this finite world.

NOTES

(1) New York, 1970

(2) A.H. Maslow: Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences. New York 1970, p. 4

(3) Ibid, p. XII

(4) Ibid

(5) Ibid, p. XIII. In Maslow's interpretation, religionization of life carries merely pagan features.

He conceives it, for instance, in making matrimony sacred by man seeing in a woman kind of a goddess or at least a priestess of an ancient religion: her preparation of supper is perceived as a ritual, her menstruation as a sacred mystery etc. In a similar vein, a woman can find a divine event in her husband's return from work which conjures up the image of hunter's return with food. Sacral excitement is then said to be evidently found in sex, child birth etc. This principle of „seeing heaven on earth“ (Op. cit., p. 110) allegedly makes it possible to cope better with common life – albeit only according to the model of primitive cultures. There arises the question why did this practical instruction lose sight of values specific to our civilization with whose secularization Maslow seemed to be concerned at the initial theoretical level. Many values specific to Christian spirituality are hopelessly missed by this somewhat regressive secularization in Maslow's specific treatment even though in his abstract intention he appears to be focused precisely on them.

(6) Op. cit., p. 9

(7) Ibid, p. 19

(8) Ibid, p. 28

(9) Ibid, p. 42

(10) Ibid

(11) Ibid, p. 96

(12) In this sense, transpersonal psychology seeks to make use of „spiritual psychologies“, for

centuries developed in Buddhism, Christianity, yoga, sufism, etc. (Cf. Charles T. Tart: *Transpersonal Psychologies*, New York 1975). These „psychologies“ are reformulated as certain „technologies“ of attaining „extraordinary states of mind“. In its efforts to bridge the gap which has appeared in the Western culture between spirituality and science, transpersonal psychology links up also to long-standing traditions of Western esoterics (ranging from more recent systems such as anthroposophy, theosophy, the teachings of Gurdjieff, Uspensky and Bennett to alchemy, the Kaballa and other magic systems). For the same reasons he incorporates into his sphere of interest also parapsychology, research of reincarnation and similar marginal branches. Among the psychotherapeutic schools originally arising outside the framework of transpersonal psychology a valuable source of spiritual promotion is seen especially in Jung's psychoanalysis, the psychosynthesis of Roberto Assagioli (Roberto Assagioli: *Handbuch der Psychosynthese*. Freiburg 1978), initiation therapy by Karlfried Graf Dürckheim (Karlfried Graf Dürckheim: *Von der Erfahrung der Transzendenz*. Freiburg 1984), Stephen Sabetti's bioenergetic therapy etc.

By means of eclectic assimilation of all these approaches transpersonal psychology – aiming primarily at therapeutic practice – deals with the possibilities of finding some kind of timeless and culturally neutral (therefore apt to be technologized) spiritual truth or ultimate mysterious learning about man and world. This ethos brings it markedly and profoundly closer to esoteric disciplines, representing an attribute which is uniquely typical for them, in the essential distinction both from science and from religion. (More on this in the chapter on esotericism.)

The latest official self-definition of transpersonal psychology was presented in connection with the 12th World Conference of the International Transpersonal Association, held in Prague (June 20th to 25th, 1992). The current leading light of the transpersonal movement and ITA Chairman Stanislav Grof described this multifarious common project as follows: „ITA's purpose was to support the development of new

scientific paradigms recognizing the role of consciousness and creative intelligence of the universe. ITA stresses the unity of mind and body, and uses as the object of its study the human beings in their complex interpersonal, intercultural, ecological and cosmic connections. ITA supports all the sincere and well-meant efforts for formulating an all-encompassing, whole human nature and universe.“ (Gemma /Prague/, 1992, special issue, p. 6)

(13) Op. cit., p. 45

(14) Stanislav Grof: Beyond the Brain. New York 1985, p. 195.

(15) „The fact that the phenomena involved here have parallels in psychedelic states offers a unique opportunity to study them under controlled conditions of a clinical or laboratory experiment.“ (Stanislav Grof: The Adventure of Self-Discovery. New York 1988, p. XIII.)

(16) Grof characterizes this technique as „an important and effective alternative to the traditional approaches of depth psychology, which emphasizes verbal exchange between the therapist and the client. The name holotropic literally means aiming for totality or moving towards wholeness (from the Greek holos = whole and trepein = moving in the direction of). The basic philosophical assumption of this strategy is that an average person of our culture operates in a way that is far below his or her real potential and capacity. This impoverishment is due to the fact that the individual identifies with only one aspect of his or her being, the physical body and the ego. This false identification leads to an inauthentic, unhealthy, and unfulfilling way of life, and contributes to the development of emotional and psychosomatic disorders of physiological origin.“ (Ibid, p. 165)

(17) „Experiential psychotherapy has thrown entirely new light on the problem of spirituality and religion and has returned to the human psyche its cosmic status. In full agreement with the Jungian perspective, spirituality or numinosity appears to be an intrinsic property of the deeper dynamics of the psyche. Whenever the process of experiential

self-exploration reaches the perinatal and the transpersonal levels, it leads to spiritual awakening, and the individual becomes interested in the mystical quest. I have seen many highly educated persons undergo this process in our psychedelic training program and in holotropic workshops, and have yet to see a single individual, including atheists, Marxists, and positivistic scientists, whose scepticism and cynicism about spirituality would survive such an experience.“ (Ibid, p. 268)

(18) Ibid, p. 239

(19) „The consensus reality reveals only one aspect or fragment of existence. There are important realms of reality that are transcendental and transphenomenal. The impulse in human beings to connect with the spiritual domain is an extremely powerful and important force. It resembles, in its nature, sexuality, but is much more fundamental and compelling. Denial and repression of this transcendental impulse introduces a serious distortion into human life on both an individual and collective scale.“ (Ibid, p. 250)

(20) As an example of such documentation here is a case of identification with an animal: „Then I had a very real experience of being an eagle. I was soaring by skillfully using the air currents and subtle changes of the position of my wings. I was scanning with my eyes the area far below me looking for prey. Everything on the ground seemed magnified as if seen through a binocular. I could recognize the most miniscule details of the terrain. It seemed that I was responding to changes in the visual field. When I spotted movement, it was as if my eyes froze and zoomed in. It was something like tunnel vision, looking through a long and narrow tube. The feeling that this experience accurately represented the mechanism of vision in raptor birds (something I had never thought about or had been interested in) was so convincing and compelling that I decided to go to the library to study the anatomy and physiology of their optical system. I have found out that the position of the lens enables raptor birds magnified vision and that they have the capacity of bifocal perception. (Ibid, p. 55).

An analogy to this experience can be found, for instance, in Castaneda's Teachings

of Don Juan (Carlos Castaneda: *The Teachings of Don Juan*. Los Angeles 1968), where the author learns from an Indian magician, among other things, how to „change into a raven“.

What is Grof's opinion about the possibilities of explaining these experiences? „The existence and nature of transpersonal experience violate some of the most basic assumptions of mechanistic science. They imply such seemingly absurd notions as relativity and the arbitrary nature of all physical boundaries; nonlocal connections in the universe; communication through unknown means and channels; memory without a material substrate; nonlinearity of time; or consciousness associated with all living organisms (including lower animals, plants, unicellular organisms and viruses) and even inorganic matter. – Many transpersonal experiences involve events from the microcosm and macrocosm – realms that cannot be directly reached by human senses – or from periods that historically precede the origin of the solar system, formation of planet Earth, appearance of living organisms, development of the central nervous system and appearance of homo sapiens. This clearly implies that, in a yet unexplained way, each human being contains the information about the entire universe or all of existence, has potential experiential access to all its parts, and, in a sense, is the whole cosmic network, as much as he or she is just an infinitesimal part of it, a separate and insignificant biological entity.“ (Ibid, pp. 162–163).

(21) Ibid, pp. 42–148 or a later and less documented book *The Holotropic Mind*. San Francisco 1992.

(22) Encounter with one category of these instances – spiritual guides – can be illustrated even from the personal experience of Carl Gustav Jung: „During his lifetime, C.G. Jung had many powerful transpersonal experiences. I have already mentioned a dramatic episode in which he channeled his famous text *Seven Sermons for the Dead*: the entity that inspired this channeling introduced himself as the Gnostic Basilides. Jung also had experiences with his spirit guide Philemon who taught him much about the dynamics of

the human psyche. Upon reflecting on this channeled material in the last years of his life, Jung said that most of his work had been derived from information he received in this way, and he was doubtful that his personal achievements in the study of the human psyche would have been possible had he limited himself to information he acquired by more traditional means.“ (Stanislav Grof, *The Holotropic Mind*, San Francisco 1992, p. 153).

(23) „Early experiences represent an original model and an experiential pattern for all future relations to the world.“ (Stanislav Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery*. New York 1988, p. 262.) The four so-called „Basic Perinatal Matrices“ (Cf. *The Holotropic Mind*, San Francisco 1992, pp. 31–79), establishing themselves during the four phases of birth, constitute the perceptual patterns of the entire human life. (Life guided, for instance, by the matrix of horrifying experience of the captivity in the pathways of delivery has an utterly different quality from life marked by the dominance of positive matrices of foetal or natal happiness from whose viewpoints the world appears to be a beautiful and safe place.) In Grof's opinion the biographically narrowly oriented therapy of psychic disorders is unable to capture such connections at all; that is why it operates as „a conceptual straitjacket and is inhibiting and counterproductive.“ (*The Adventure of Self-Discovery*, p. 167). The roots of psychopathological changes go „far beyond the events of early childhood and beyond the individual unconscious“ (p. 166).

(24) „As we feel united with everything that is, the appreciation for natural beauty and simple uncomplicated life takes precedence over most other concerns. (...) With the experience of rebirth, all our sensory pathways are suddenly wide open. Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile sensations all appear to be unimaginably more intense, vivid and pleasurable. We may feel that we are really seeing the world for the first time in our lives. Everything around us, even the most ordinary and familiar scenes, seems unusually exciting and stimulating. People report entirely new ways of appreciating and enjoying their loved ones, the sound of music, the beauties of nature, and the endless pleasures

that the world provides for our senses. – Higher motivating forces, such as the pursuit of justice, the appreciation for harmony and beauty and the desire to create it, a new tolerance and respect for others, as well as feelings of love, become increasingly important in our lives. What is more, we perceive these as direct, natural, and logical expressions of our true nature and of the universal order. (...) Interestingly, there are striking parallels between these new awarenesses and what Abraham Maslow called 'metavalues' and 'metamotivations'. He observed changes of this kind regularly in people who had spontaneous mystical or 'peak experiences'. Positive after-effects of this kind are most intense during the days or weeks immediately following spiritual breakthroughs and tend to weaken with time; however, on a more subtle level, they leave the person permanently transformed.“ (The Holotropic Mind, pp. 76–77).

(25) Situated just one rung lower is the contact or, eventually, identification with the „Demiurg“ in different variants: with personality features, without them, in one person, in several persons, in the shape of a female-male dyad etc. (The Adventure of Self-Discovery, pp. 142–143). „It is possible to sense the forces that underlie and initiate the process of creation. Various subjects identified them as overabundance of generative energy, irresistible artistic impulse, boundless curiosity, passion for experimentation, thirst for knowledge or self-knowledge, pursuit of experience, immense love that wants to be expressed, or even flight from monotony and boredom. – Experiences of this kind can lead the subject to serious questions about his or her role in the universe. (Ibid).

(26) „(...) there seemed to be immense extension of consciousness. Time stopped and we entered a state that I identified as consciousness of amber. The external manifestation of this state where time is frozen is the fact that life forms, such as plants and insects, are preserved in amber in an unchanged state for millions of years and amber itself is mineralized organic substance – resin. – We underwent a process of purification, through which any reference to organic life was eliminated from the experience. I realized that the state of consciousness I was in was that of a diamond. It seemed very important that

diamond is pure carbon, an element on which life is based, and that it originates in conditions of extreme temperatures and pressures. It was as if the diamond contained all the information about life and nature in an absolutely pure and condensed form, like the ultimate computer.“ (Ibid, p. 146)

(27) Ibid, p. 147. „As in the quantum wave theories of modern physics, the Void may be perceived as (...) complete set of possibilities for virtually anything to occur.“ (The Holotropic Mind, p. 171).

(28) Especially if supported by the negative evaluation of those spiritual institutions which point demonstrably further. (The Adventure of Self-Discovery, pp. 269–270)

(29) Stanislaw Grof: Beyond the Brain. New York 1985, p. 308

(30) Ronald D. Laing: The Politics of Experience. London 1967, pp. 108, 112

(31) Here he refers, among other sources, to Karl Jaspers's conclusion: „Mind and spirit are present in the morbid psychic life as well as in the healthy.“ (Karl Jaspers: Allgemeine Psychopathologie. 7. Aufl. Berlin – Heidelberg 1959, p. 349; quoted from: R.D. Laing, Op. cit., p. 112)

(32) A similar therapeutic strategy was also used, independently of Laing, by the American psychiatrist **J.W. Perry**. In his book The Far Side of Madness (New York 1974) he views, in a pioneering fashion, psychosis not as a genuine „illness“ but rather as „a transformed state of consciousness“ in which „a natural reorganization of the psyche“ is taking place, overcoming the limitation of the existing pathogeneus life stereotypes. In his developmental crisis model of therapy he sees a schizophrenic as a „more whole person“ living in a rich world of erupted depths of the psyche. He assesses his symptoms not as a deviation from norm but as manifestations of an inner experience. He rejects the routine, ruthless reactions of the surroundings which lead, sooner or later, to the liquidation of such a personality. He supports what he calls a respecting and spiritually qualified „inner“ approach to psychosis. Perry discards the term „patient“ which, together with medicaments and social isolation, tend to fix man in his inability to regain

health. (This psychiatrist was known to use psychopharmaceuticals only in vital indications and in order to lower information oversaturation, ie., to make a dialogue possible.)

Perry turns to man in this difficult situation with a willingness to listen and participate in a search for a new, meaningful path of life. In his opinion, psychosis appears to be chaotic only at a cursory glance; in fact this is a reconstitutive and reintegrative process resembling archaic dramas of religious resurrection. Perry quotes other authors who confirm his experience that having successfully gone through psychosis, man is healthier than people who have never been cured of psychosis: unlike their sleek, shallow normality he is capable of deeper relations and interests.

A repressive psychiatrist shall not allow his „patient“ to reach such a wholesome synthesis of life; as a result he is a loser too. The cause of psychotic collapse actually lies, in Perry's view, precisely in the limitation of consciousness; madness is a compensatory reaction to rationalistic „schizoid“ isolation of the ego from enlivening and enriching emotional sources of spiritual life, a reaction to the loss of contact with one's unconsciousness. (An optimum prevention is leading a passionately involved and deeply perceptive life.)

In the prepsychotic development, personality has grown into an identity which does not suit it and which keeps weighing it down with negativity, resulting in a profound need of rebirth. Perry notes that psychedelic and meditative movements find themselves within the same dimension of life experiences as psychosis. Both share the same goal: to find transcendence and a unified life, to reach the depths of mastered unconsciousness whose strength is transformed into a productive and rich life, containing in itself a culture-forming mission. A detour of psychosis consists in that man (through weakness or isolation) has succumbed to the forces which should otherwise serve him. But Perry is not afraid of the chaotic turbulences of inner psychic processes, proceeding from the ability of culture to structurate psychic activity in a way enabling psyche to streamline its

energy into a creative and efficient result.

According to Perry, the culture of social life should thus not be reduced to a „paranoid“ structures which, through their power orientation, rigid logistic systematization and exclusion of experiential immediacy, tend to block an inner human growth. That growth is possible only in an atmosphere of open inwardness, trust, hope, brotherhood, love and compassion – without which our civilization is doomed to gradual destruction.

(33) R.D. Laing: Op. cit., pp. 12, 23–24

(34) Ibid, p. 95

(35) Ibid, p. 106

(36) Ibid, p. 109–110

(37) (The Dark Night of the Soul – Depression? Studies of the spiritual dimension of melancholy) Elztal-Dallau 1981

(38) Elisabeth Ott: Die dunkle Nacht der Seele – Depression? Untersuchungen zur geistlichen Dimension der Schwermut. Elztal-Dallau 1981, p. 11

(39) Ibid

(40) Ibid

(41) Ibid, p. 34

(42) Ibid, p. 31

(43) Ibid, pp. 13, 14

(44) Ibid, p. 32

(45) Subtitle of the magazine Equinox (1909–1914)

(46) Jörg Wichmann: Die Renaissance der Esoterik. Stuttgart 1990, p. 18

(47) Ibid, p. 26

(48) Tilman Evers: C.C. Jung – Psychologie und Gnosis. In: Peter Koslowski (Hg.): Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie. Zürich – München 1988, p. 344

(49) Bernhard Grom: Esoterik heute. Stimmen der Zeit, 1986, 6, p. 364

- (50) In this sense, any transpersonal experience whatsoever can give rise to esoteric teaching.
- (51) External persecution which esotericism suffered at the hands of societies shaped by both Christianity and the Enlightenment can be explained precisely by that somewhat socially dangerous conviction of its own infallibility.
- (52) Bernhard Grom: Op. cit., p. 364
- (53) Hubertus Mynarek: *Ökologische Religion. Ein neues Verständnis der Natur*. München 1986, pp. 246–247. The genesis of these conceptions corresponds, in sociological terms, with the fact that many followers of new esoteric movements (especially the stream New Age) have had left-wing careers. (Der Spiegel, 1988, 27, p. 169). In actual fact, Marxism itself led, in the course of its development, also to a certain explicit form of esotericism. (Cf. Boris Groys: *Elemente des Gnostizismus im dialektischen Materialismus /sowjetischen Marxismus/*. In: Peter Koslowski /Hg./: Op. cit., p. 352–367)
- (54) „Let the spirit of Gaya present itself to us and let the breath of life continue to caress this planet. (...) We invoke the spirit of Evolution, that miraculous power (...) not to leave us today. Give us your power and awaken in us the purity and sparkling creative ability.“ (John Steed, quoted from: Boris Merhaut: *Hlubinná ekologie*. Gemma 1991, 2, p. 20 – in Czech)
- (55) New York 1975
- (56) Fritjof Capra: *The Tao of Physics*, New York 1975, p. 11
- (57) Ibid, p. 12
- (58) Ibid, p. 30
- (59) Ibid, p. 31. By the way, C.G. Jung formulates, in an analogous manner, the covert goal of alchemy. (C.G. Jung: *Psychologie und Alchemie*. Zürich 1944)
- (60) Ibid, pp. 42, 44–45
- (61) At a conference Capra was confronted with a key feedback: „the spiritual teachers of the East (...) were not able to understand the key aspects of the new paradigm which appears in Western culture“. (Epilogue to the Slovak edition of *The Tao of Physics*, Bratislava

1992, p. 254)

- (62) For instance: the concept of karma is demonstrably much closer to the Christian teaching of hereditary sin than to the fashionable vulgarized teaching of reincarnation; the approach of the so-called „primitive nations“ to nature does not exhaust by far their relationship to transcendence; etc.
- (63) „The feeling of being meaningfully incorporated into a cosmic whole gives a 'heavenly feeling of hiddenness'.“ (P. Niehenke: Jupiter-Trigone machen keine Sonnyboys. In: Esotera, 1984, p. 402). „(...) the dual structure which is also characteristic of modern esotericism and New Age: search for (or obsession with) a unity with one's self and a dream of a certain cosmic unity of this Self with everything.“ (Burkhardt Haneke: Nová religiozita. Teologické texty, 1991, 3–4, p. 101 – in Czech)
- (64) One of the principles of an interreligious dialogue is that „hetero-interpretation“ of a certain religion should proceed from its „auto-interpretation“. (Hans Waldenfels: Theologie im Kontext der Weltgeschichte. Überlegungen zum Dialog zwischen Christentum und Weltreligionen. Lebendiges Zeugnis, 1977, 3, p. 11)
- (65) Raimundo Panikkar finds this basic differentiation already at the level of immediate mystic experience, on whose breeding ground individual religions are based. He records four mutually totally disparate forms of fundamental experience of the „ultimate reality“: 1. Jahve (sovereign unmixed with the world, holy, free), 2. Brahman (common basis of existence which „keeps no distance even for the knowledge of the fact that it is Brahman“, and hence does not lead, only supports), 3. nirvana (ultimate goal, negation of everything thinkable, a release to accept living immediacy), 4. world (intranscendable immanent horizon, in which there is everything that is necessary). (Raimundo Panikkar: Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics. Cross-Cultural Studies. New York 1979, pp. 312–315)
- (66) „Dialogue does not require its participants to bracket, for a time, faith in their religion. (...) Interreligious dialogue helps every participant to grow in his or her own faith. (...) mutual enrichment among religions entering in dialogue.“ (Francis Arinze:

Mezinábo_enský dialog – problémy, vyhlídky a mo_nosti. Teologické texty, 1990, 2, pp. 45, 46, 47 – in Czech)

(67) The principles of dialogue were formulated by the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration on Relationship of the Church with non-Christian Religions *Nostra aetate*, issued in 1965. The theological formulation concerning the omnipresent activity of the Holy Spirit represented to Catholic Christians a principal recommending justification. In an effort to support dialogue between religions, one year earlier the Secretariat for non-Christians was established in Rome, issuing since 1966 a quarterly Bulletin which carries reports and articles on interreligious dialogue all over the world. After the Council the first groups of non-Christian believers – Japanese Buddhists and Hindus – arrived in the Vatican, starting an uninterrupted and still continuing stream of visitors. The main venue of the dialogue was immediately and quite naturally moved to multireligious countries (Japan, India). (Cf. eg.: J. Poláková: *Dialog v praxi*. Teologické texty, 1990, 2, pp. 49–50 – in Czech)

(68) John Paul II: A speech delivered at a meeting of the Secretariat for non-Christians in 1984. – Chairman of this Rome-based secretariat, the African cardinal Francis Arinze describes interreligious dialogue as a „religious partnership without complexes and without hidden intentions and motives“. (Francis Arinze: *Op. cit.*, p. 45). He does not view dialogue as a mere process of mutual tolerance or mutual exchange of information, or still less as competitive communication or an effort to persuade the other side over to change his faith. „If an interreligious dialogue is to be fruitful, its participants should assume inner attitudes such as respect, ability and willingness to listen to the other side, sincerity, openness and readiness to accept others and cooperate with them.“ (Ibid)

(69) The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso: *Kindness, Charity and Insight*. New York 1984, pp. 48, 64, 115

(70) „Each religion itself must first of all formulate how such a path (of dialogue) should look like.“ (Hans Waldenfels: *Begegnung der Religionen*. Bonn 1990, p. 326)

(71) A historical landmark in this practical direction was the meeting in the Italian town of Assisi on October 27th, 1986 which, for the first time in human history, brought together for a common prayer (for peace on Earth) 150 representatives of virtually all the religions in the world: starting with the Pope and the Dalai Lama, via other Christian denominations and Buddhist schools, to Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Taoists, Confucians etc, ending with African and Indian shamans. The spiritual authority of this gathering caused that on that day at the behest of its participants a ceasefire was observed all over the world. The purpose of the prayer – performed in many different ways – was – according to John Paul II „to express in the variety of religions the relation to the supreme power which transcends all our human forces, (...) and to show to all the substantive link among genuine religious attitude and the great value of peace“. (Osservatore Romano, October 31st, 1986, p. 1) The Catholic theologian and philosopher Hans Waldenfels characterized the meeting in Assisi as „an invitation to a wordless communication which, in turning to God and in openness towards him, creates also new transparency towards one's neighbour“. (Hans Waldenfels: *An der Grenze des Denkbaren: Meditation – Ost und West*. München 1988, p. 66)

(72) Hans Waldenfels: *Theologie ...*, p. 17

(73) Hans Waldenfels: *Absolute Nothingness. Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*. New York 1980, p. 121

(74) Thomas Merton: *Mnišská zkušenost a dialog*. Teologické texty, 1991, 3–4, p. 116 (in Czech)

(75) „I come as a pilgrim who gained not only information. (...) Genuine communication at the deepest level is more than a mere sharing of ideas, conceptual knowledge, formulated truth. (...) I am convinced that such an exchange should take place under the genuine monastic conditions of silence, tranquility, sobriety, cool-headedness, meditation and quiet secluded from the world. (...) The 'postverbal' level, at least in an ideal case, will be that on which both (traditions) shall encounter outside their own words and their own

understanding in the silence of the resultant experience which would have conceivably not arisen had they not met and talked. (...) I think that this is something the profoundest foundation of our being clamours for and that this is something lifelong endeavours are not long enough for.“ (Ibid, pp. 114–115)

(76) New York 1979

(77) See note No. 65

(78) Panikkar asserts that unity is very difficult to attain if we note mutual contradictions already at the level of experience. This state of affairs, however, is not for him a challenge making it imperative to introduce peace, so to say, above the heads of the participants under the banner of the loftiest spiritual utopias of a better world but rather a challenge to cultivate everyday understanding, trust and openness. Against human hybris he positions human brotherhood in which each experience preserves its value without being convertible to a simple common denominator.

(79) Raimundo Panikkar: *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*. Cross-Cultural Studies. New York 1979, p. 333

(80) Ibid

(81) Ibid, p. 9

(82) Ibid, p. 198

(83) Ibid, p. 207

(84) Ibid

(85) Ibid, p. 208

(86) Ibid, p. 209

(87) Ibid, p. 212

(88) Ibid, p. 218

(89) The Old Testament, 1 Kings, 19, 11–13

(90) Emmerich Coreth: *Vom Sinn der Freiheit*. Innsbruck – Wien 1985, p. 92

(91) „(Nominalism) teaches: If God chose to order hatred instead of love, hatred would have

- been just good.“ (Robert Spaemann: *K_ es_ anství a filosofie v novov_ ku*. In: *K_ es_ antství a filosofie (velké epochy)*. Praha 1991 – in Czech)
- (92) „Why do people worship God whose most important quality is power, whose interest is subjugation, whose anxiety is the anxiety caused by human equality? The being which is addressed as 'Lord' and which is not content with mere power – theologians had to confirm its omnipotence! Why should we worship and love a being which does not transcend the moral level of contemporary man-determined culture but stabilizes this level?“ (Dorothee Sölle: *Es muss doch mehr als Alles geben. Nachdenken über Gott*. Hamburg 1992, p. 29–30)
- (93) Robert Spaemann: op. cit., p. 54
- (94) Peter Wust: *Nejistota a odhodlání (Ungewissheit und Wagnis)*. Praha 1970, pp. 108, 110, 113 (in Czech)
- (95) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Autrement qu'etre ou au-dela de l'essence*. La Haye 1974, p. 196
- (96) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Difficile liberté. Essais sur le judaïsme*. Paris 1963, p. 33
- (97) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Humanisme de l'autre homme*. Montpellier 1972, p. 63; Emmanuel Lévinas: *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*. Paris 1949, p. 202
- (98) In Husserl's perspective – Lévinas concludes on several occasions – it is impossible to think anything outside the world of phenomena constituted by the intentional activity of I. In this way Husserl's phenomenology (linking up to the main line of modern thinking) principally legitimizes the conceptual totalization of the world. Transcendental I attributes to everything around a structure of meaning in which it essentially encounters only itself again. In turning to another one, it still remains related to itself – another one is always only that which is accessible to the arranging activity of I, and which takes its meaning from it. Even the other person enters this world under these given conditions. The other one – including God – cannot operate here as a determining factor but always as the determined one; not as he himself and how he himself wants but only as a moment of active self-mediation of the subject through inviolable whole of „my“ world.

Against the Husserlian term *phenomenon* Lévinas develops the term *expression* – self-externalization which is not subjected to any semantic context. He who expresses himself does so on his own behalf and from himself, presenting himself as himself, in his entire freedom and otherness towards any horizons of meaning. Above that power of extra-discursive, personal expression I has no power because it is not objectifiable, graspable, appropriable. The other one displays „ethical resistance“ towards I, being „outside“, being „a revelation“, being „an unannounced visit“ which unsettles the wordly self-confirmation of I. Through expression, which thus manifests itself in the „face“ of the other one, God addresses man. As a result, an ethical relationship can appear in the spot instead of a noetic pattern of adequacy, which is described and used (not only) by phenomenology.

The ontological perspective – Heidegger's interpretation of being – actually assumes, together with the entire Western tradition, the existence of the human subject to which being manifests itself. In Lévinas's view a human thus becomes a mere function or lawless appendage of a self-revealing impersonal being, from which he cannot disengage himself at the level of ontology. Man is radically threatened by this anonymous, indeterminate and indeterminable being in the determinateness of his personal identity. Only the ethical Absolute „outside being“ is in a position to „plot“ against the thinking of being, relativize it – once again through the unconditionally appealing „face of the other one“ – through the identifying „choosing“ of man to his personal responsibility.

(99) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Transcendence a inteligibilita*. In: *Člověk v moderních vědách*. Praha 1992, pp. 138, 140 (in Czech)

(100) Emmanuel Lévinas: *De Dieu qui vient a l'idée*. Paris 1982

(101) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Transcendence a inteligibilita*. In: *Člověk v moderních vědách*. Praha 1992, pp. 140, 138 (in Czech)

(102) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Autrement qu'etre ou au-dela de l'essence*. La Haye 1974

(103) Jacques Derrida: *Violence et métaphysique*. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 69

(1964), pp. 322–354, 425–473

(104) Cornelius Castoriadis: Psychoanalýza a politika. Lettre internationale, 1991, 2, p. 20 (in Czech)

(105) Martin Heidegger – Interview. Der Spiegel, May 31st, 1976 (No. 23)

(106) If everything ends for us where *we* can still relate actively, where our ultimate human horizon is closed – though capable of an active extension as far as transcendence, albeit only to a relative extent – then we are mere captives of that horizon and prisoners of our own activity. But if we admit that Another active instance, which transcends our cognitive and operational radius, can relate to us from the starting point beyond that horizon and under the condition of our outgoing openness, then we at least open for us the *possibility* of salvation, a possibility we, however, are incapable of availing ourselves of. If we seek transcendence mainly just for purposes fixed by ourselves, through this motivating starting point we actually restrict our potential findings to nothing but the passively offering relative transcendence. It is impossible to open ourselves to Divine freedom with any special purpose in mind; on the contrary, with a relationship to it we accept the questionability of all our purposes. By enclosing ourselves into their conditioned horizon – in which we do not defy the eventual power of Creator, but because we „do not know“ about it, it cannot touch us in any other way than through external anonymous conditons and stimuli, as it does with other subhuman creatures – we „only“ deprive ourselves of a specifically human *understanding* above all purposes.

(107) „An instrument for man to get to know God and himself is that dark night with its aridity and emptiness. (... In it there occurs) a secret, peaceful and loving inflowing from God which, if unobstructed, will kindle the soul with the spirit of love. (...) That is why – for the soul to proceed to those great things – it is highly desirable and necessary that this dark discerning night should first introduce it into nothiness and crush it as far its lownesses are concerned, introducing it to darkness, aridity, anxiety and emptiness; because the light which it is to get is the most sublime divine light, which exceeds every

natural light and which reason cannot naturally comprehend. (...) This fight and struggle goes into the depth of the soul because the peace which is hoped to be gained shall be very profound; and the spiritual pain is piercing and sharp because the love which the soul shall have will also be very piercing and refined. (...) In the midst of these dark sufferings the soul is feeling to be cut to the quick and pervasively so by the powerful love of God in a kind of feeling and anticipating God. (...) But at the beginning, it is not love that is usually felt but rather aridity and emptiness. (...) God takes you by the hand and guides you through the dark as a blind man, taking you to a place you do not know where, and along a route you do not know whither, and to a destination which your eyes and legs, however nicely they would carry you, would have never succeeded in reaching. (...) Because this dark discerning night will submerge and absorb the soul into itself, and will put it so closely to God that it will be protected and freed from everything that is not God.“ (Jan od Kříže /John of the Cross/: Temná noc /Dark Night/. Olomouc 1941, pp. 61, 55, 86, 89, 93, 56, 106–107, 107 – in Czech)

Among 20th century philosophers it was Peter Wust who touched upon this theme: „In the mystic's 'dark night' we have before us the most horrible situation of uncertainty into which not only man in general but mainly *homo religiosus* can be transported. (...) The soul) must suddenly experience that ground seems to be swept away from its feet and that it must feel completely in a bottomless void. The former being, whose inner instability it had known, can no longer satisfy it. 'The world' with its mundane delights and the people in it which it has left can no longer offer it the only thing that could satisfy it. (...) And so it is now, as it seems, completely alone, alone with its own wretchedness and frailty. (...) In this feeling of the ultimate abandonment by God it experiences the destitution of uncertainty, which cannot be compared by far with any other experience of being unsecured in the world. (...) It seems to be afflicted by mortal sleep. (...) It must suffer injustice from the world. (...) It even feels how deep in its heart there rise dark, demonic powers it is afraid of falling victim to. (...) But God shall not test

- any soul beyond the limits of its strength. (..) When, faced with this ultimate threat, it has passed the test, sudden salvation arrives. The abysmal darkness of the dark night shall start dwindling. A new light shall suddenly flood in from all directions going inside. (...) The Getseman night is followed by the transformation on Mount Tabor.“ (Peter Wust: *Nejistota a odhodlání /Ungewissheit und Wagnis/*. Praha 1970, pp. 134–137 – in Czech)
- (108) Elisabeth Ott: *Die dunkle Nacht der Seele*. Elztal-Dallau 1981, p. 135
- (109) *Ibid*, p. 136
- (110) *Ibid*, p. 139
- (111) *Ibid*, p. 145
- (112) Cf. also Jean Guitton: „Mankind has now realized that it is mortal; and as such it resembles a solitary individual.“ (Jean Guitton: *Mlčení o podstatném*. Brno 1992, p. 51 – in Czech. Original: *Silence sur l'essentiel*. Paris 1991)
- (113) Oto Mádr: *Slovo o této době*. Praha 1992, pp. 203, 240 (in Czech)
- (114) Otto König – Gerhard Larcher (Hg.): *Theologie der gekreuzigten Völker*. Jon Sobrino im Disput. Graz – Budapest 1992
- (115) Harvey Cox: *Religion in the Secular City. Toward a Postmodern Theology*. New York 1984
- (116) *Op. cit.*, p. 20
- (117) *Ibid*, p. 207
- (118) Diogenes Allen: *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World*. Louisville 1989, pp. 1,2
- (119) *Ibid*, p. 2
- (120) Franciszek Blachnicki: *Teologie osvobození – v Duchu*. Samizdat almanach *Orientace*, 1988, 25. (Original in: *Religion in Communist Lands*, 1984, 2)
- (121) Cf. Jolana Poláková: *The Truthfulness of Faith. Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 14 (1991), 4, p. 263–278
- (122) Elisabeth Hämmerling: *Orpheus' Wiederkehr. Alte Mysterien als lebendige Erfahrung*. Interlaken 1984

- (123) Op. cit., p. 13
- (124) Jean-Luc Marion: Dieu sans l'etre. Paris 1982
- (125) Op. cit., p. 29
- (126) Ibid, p. 29
- (127) Ibid, p. 32
- (128) Leonardo Boff: Erfahrung von Gnade. Düsseldorf 1978, p. 131. Quoted from: Klaus P. Fischer: Gotteserfahrung. Mystagogie in der Theologie Karl Rahners und in der Theologie der Befreiung. Mainz 1986, p. 127
- (129) Cf. eg. Oto Mádr: Slovo o této době. Praha 1992, pp. 79–80 (in Czech)
- (130) Bernhard Casper: Das dialogische Denken. Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners und Martin Bubers. Freiburg 1967; Jolana Poláková: Filosofie dialogu. Uvedení do jednoho z proudů filosofického myšlení 20. století. Praha 1993 (in Czech)
- (131) Emmanuel Lévinas: Totalité et Infini. Paris 1961
- (132) Jolana Poláková: The Possibilities of Transcendence. Lewiston, N.Y. 1996, p. 73
- (133) Emmanuel Lévinas: De Dieu qui vient à l'idée. Paris 1982, pp. 223, 224, 226
- (134) „In Auschwitz, Maximilian Kolbe voluntarily went to his death instead of a father of three children (...) South American Christians – bishops, priests and laymen – go out of their way to stand up for the poor, exploited and humiliated, being arrested, imprisoned and murdered by secret police or other death commandos (...) Russian Christians keep protesting against the violations of human rights in their country and then disappear behind the soundproof doors of psychiatric clinics or behind the barbed wire of concentration camps.“ (Johannes B. Brantschen: Bůh je v naší duši. Samizdat edition „Duch a život“, Praha 1988, p. 14 – in Czech)
- (135) „In the end, Christian culture has eventually perished because of the lack of relatedness, due to the universal l'art pour l'art not only in the arts but also in philosophy, theology, in politics, in economy. It has ceased giving a testimony of the Christian

relations, of the elementary Christian principle of communication. The vaults of churches, which were meant to bring people of God together, became mere illusory facades of eternity. Instead of celebrating God beneath them, utopian dreams began to be hatched there.“ (Rio Preisner: *Kritika totalitarismu*. Rome 1973, p. 18 – in Czech)

(136) Raimundo Pannikar: *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*. Cross-Cultural Studies. New York 1979, pp. 125–127

(137) Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 2, 5–8: „Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.“

(138) Commenting on the same, Karl Rahner says: „There is really no word capable of describing this love, because there is nothing else like it which we could use as an external standard in order to define it; also because it is, in itself, the unifying and absolutely original essence of all reality, and therefore there is nothing apart from it except emptiness and nothingness.“ (Karl Rahner: *Theological Investigations*. Vol. 8: New York 1973, p. 240;., quoted according to: see following note, p. 160)

(139) Hans Waldenfels: *Absolute Nothingness*. Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, New York 1980, pp. 158, 160, 161

(140) Joseph Ratzinger: *Einführung in das Christentum*. München 1968, pp. 146–147

(141) Emmanuel Lévinas: *Dieu l'homme?* In: *Qui est Jésus-Christ? Semaine des intellectuels catholiques*. Paris 1968.

(142) Jerry G. Gill: *Mediated Transcendence. A Postmodern Reflection*. Macon 1989, p. 44

(143) *Ibid*, p. 41

(144) David R. Griffin: *God and Religion in the Postmodern World. Essays in Postmodern Theology*. New York 1989, p. 4

(145) *Ibid*

(146) *Ibid*, p. 5

- (147) Ibid
- (148) Ibid, p. 8
- (149) Ibid, p. 9
- (150) Ibid, p. 10
- (151) As for Griffin's conception, the following is valid without conditional: „If God lost his absolute transcendence, then he could degenerate into a usable deity or, still worse, into fiction.“ (Oto Mádr: Dialog zwischen zwei Theologien. In: Otto König – Gerhard Larcher (Hg.): Theologie der gekreuzigten Völker. Graz – Budapest 1992, p. 29
- (152) Cf., for instance, films by Ingmar Bergmann, books by Erich Fromm and the entire stream of the so-called theology of the death of God.
- (153) Griffin goes out of his way to assert that God is *necessarily* (not out of freedom) compassionate. (Ibid) And also that he did not create creativity itself – that stands above him as „ultimate reality“ and is therefore binding to him. (Ibid, p. 139)
- (154) Jerry G. Gill. Op. cit., p. 124
- (155) Let us quote here a like-minded Czech postmodernist: „It is shown to us that with the very *reality* it is as follows: that in it is impossible to distinguish creation and discovering, fiction and finding.“ (Zdeněk Neubauer: Nový Areopág. Praha 1992, p. 126 – in Czech)
- (156) Cf. the principles of distinguishing especially in Christian and Buddhist schools of spiritual life.
- (157) This particular danger of insufficient conscious decision-making in the field of spirituality was singled out, for example, by William Horosz: „Man is swept away by levels of awareness that are no longer under his control and directionality. (...) I think it is the lonely, solitary, aimless, alienated self that is deified. (...) The price of fulfilment is the loss of human directional awareness. (...) Self-2 doesn't want to humanize reality: it wants to be god.“ (William Horosz: Search Without Idols. Dordrecht – Boston – Lancaster 1989, pp. 6, 11, 40, 42). In the postmodern era, uncontrolled narcissistic self-deification at the cost of excluding reason and responsibility has had many specific and

readily available manifestations even in many „spiritual personalities“. Also at a practical level, it is becoming obvious that immanentism nowadays no longer has the outer appearance of openly proclaimed atheism (as was customary in the modern era) but also the outward face of superficial spiritual perfection.

(158) This resembles the noetic logic of sleep described by Jan Patočka as inspired by the Heraclitean tradition: „In our sleep, in the dream, we are quiet, we are free from excitement. We are our own masters: whatever our phantasy likes that matters, we ourselves matter with our wishes and intentions, but only in an empty phantom, while in a dream we do not know anything about reality – great or even our own. Life contains the archetypal tendency to enclose oneself and to dream. This archetypal tendency is far more widespread than we would normally recognize. It does not appear only in sleep. It does not appear only in some people but in everyone. We do not want in it what is evident but we want only ourselves, only our life, only our wishes and interests. Sleep and dream is rest and delight, each enjoyment is, after all, just a piece of that elementary effort to enclose oneself. In it, in this endeavour we do not adjust only this or that particularity, we adjust everything, that opens an imaginary attitude to objects, that creates 'cosmos', the world of ours. (...) Thus we normally live being awake with closed eyes, ignoring the conflict inside us.“ (Jan Patočka: *Platonskí filosofie*. Praha 1968, p. 98 – in Czech)

(159) Many adherents to the New Age spirituality had a left-wing past. (New Age. *Der Spiegel*, 1988, 27, p. 169)

(160) The postmodern re-mythologization of the world bears similar traits as its ideologization which immanentism proclaimed in the modern era: the inability to recognize a general error and, on the other hand, the ability to universalize its own particular point of view.

(161) By transcribing the unusual pronunciation of the French word, the author implies that the term is not identical with the ordinary „difference“.

(162) Jacques Derrida, *Texty k dekonstrukci*. Bratislava 1993, p. 163 (in Czech)

(163) Ibid, p. 162

(164) Miroslav Petřík jr., Post. Pítomnost, 1991, 3, p. 26 (in Czech)

(165) Jacques Derrida: Op. cit., p. 155

(166) Ibid, p. 162

(167) Ibid, p. 163

(168) Ibid

(169) Ibid, p. 150

(170) Cf. Note No. 165. If it is at all possible in this thought situation to use the word „undesignable“ then it is exactly *diférance*: „The undesignable is not any ungraspable being to which no name can be approximated: for instance 'God'. This undesignable is a game thanks to which there are nominal effects, relatively uniform atomic units to which we give names, chains of substitutions of names in which eg. even the nominal result of 'diferance' is anchored, carried away, transcribed just like an incorrect input or incorrect output is still part of the game, function of the system.“ (Ibid, p. 172)

(171) So that thinking would not become all that, it would have to break out of the circle of „eternal return of *diférance*“, it would have to transcend its own fascination with inner laws of movement of a (mere) conceptual system, it would have to dare open up to a greater and different otherness than that brought by *diférance*, it would have to *encounter* that which establishes metaphysics (of the Lévinasian type) quite differently than it is established by human dominating concept or by archetypes of unconsciousness and what can keep it living and inspiring quite differently from a play of differences which is an end in itself. (172) Jean-Francois Lyotard: Der Widerstreit. München 1987, p. 233 (Original: Le Différend. Paris 1983)

(173) „Your eyes, accustomed to sunlight, must get accustomed to the light you are carrying yourselves,“ Václav Bělohradský quotes a guide through old mines who was instructing a group of visitors to whom he had just distributed electric torchlights. (Václav Bělohradský: Pravd světélka. Lidové noviny, October 8th, 1993, p. 1 – in Czech)

(174) „When we then talked about the composition of the greater circle from which public initiative should come (we have agreed that it is to meet in August of that year) one of us, a man of passionate concentration and the strength of a judge's love, expressed his reservation that too many Jews had been appointed so that some countries would be overrepresented by Jews. Even though such reasoning was not totally strange even to me because I believe that only in its community, not in scattered members, can Jewry gain more than a stimulating, to wit efficient, share in the construction of a stable peaceful world, it seemed to me that once these reflections have been thus expressed, their legitimacy shall suffer. Being an obstinate Jew myself, I protested against that protest. I do not know how it happened that I then started talking about Jesus and about the fact that we Jews know him from our hearts in such a way precisely in stimuli and movements of his Jewishness, which remains inaccessible to nations subordinated to him. 'In a way which remains inaccessible to you' – that is how I put it to the former parson. He rose, so did I, and our eyes were locked. – 'Let us leave,' he said and we gave one another a brotherly kiss in front of everyone else.“ (Martin Buber: *Zwiesprache*. Werke I. München 1962, p. 177)

(175) The opposite to this attitude is a „free“ rejection of any claims: to my responsibility, ability to communicate, creativity, personal identity, respect, refinement, solidarity etc. This rejection of one's growth and development is associated with the negation of the qualitative conception of human time in general (time as emptiness „from nowhere to nowhere“) and may lead as far as to a necrophiliac contempt for life – both one's own and other people's.

(176) In this sense, postmodern autism is sometimes mentioned. Cf. H.J. Luibl: *Rain Man oder: Autismus als postmodernes Lebensgefühl*. Orientierung, 1989, 10, pp. 119–120.

(177) In its ruthless game I accept only the *surface* of the otherness of the other one; I do not care about his suffering, I relish his goodwill with ironic restraint, I am prepared to respond to his eventual hostility harshly. The plurality thus structured does not bring life:

it is a mere mutual degradation to the lowest possible human level. It aims to destruction, entropy, extinction.

(178) „If I do not relativize my approach by nothing else but by the power of others, freedom (... becomes) a mere broomstick used by the will to power insolently to smooth its way.“ (Václav Jamek: V_d_í bludička a rozmrzlost doby. Literární noviny, 1993, 10, p. 4 – in Czech)

(179) „Over the past centuries up to the middle of our century in catechesis and also in university training, natural theology was conceived as if man 'in natural state' and grown up in utter isolation could get to know God by himself and come to the certainty about his existence simply on the basis of reflecting about the real world.“ (Henri Bouillard: Transzendenz und Gott des Glaubens. In: Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft I. Freiburg i.B. 1981, p. 110)

„The proofs of Divine existence evoke in me admiration and great respect for the precise logic of the structure and bold upsurge of the principles. This is a difficult ascent to the heights of metaphysical abstractions. (...) We strenuously overcome difficulties throughout the journey and we are full of anticipation of what will loom ahead of us. We do not want to discover a new bird species or a hitherto unknown island but an existence which is to be the meaning of our life. From the very bottom of our hearts we aspire to reach that goal. Shall I betray my disappointment? (...) I would like to implore philosophers not to leave their listeners with abstract names which appear to them as dried-up wells but lead them to a live God.“ (Karel Šprunk: Dokazovat Bo_í existenci. Nad knihou Ji_ího Fuchse Cesta k d_kazu Bo_í existence. Souvislosti, 1992, 1, p. 127 – in Czech)

(180) „Intellectual understanding does not transform the character and behavior. Experiential understanding is necessary for that.“ (Claire Myers Owens: Zen Buddhism. In: Charles T. Tart /ed./: Transpersonal Psychologies. New York 1975, pp. 197–198)

(181) Norbert Scholl: Gott ist immer grösser. Wege der Gotteserfahrung heute. Mainz 1985, p.

(182) But the utopian idea of a New Age's paradise on Earth (perhaps the residue of modern ideological deposits) sometimes obstructs a non-consumer – and genuine – deepening of experiences of transcendence. However, it depends on the seekers themselves what they are prepared to contend with.

(183) Herbert A. Gornik. Einführung. In: H. A. Gornik (Hg.): *Das Jenseits. Erfahrungen mit einer anderen Wirklichkeit*. Freiburg i.B. 1985, p. 11

(184) Norbert Scholl: *Op. cit.*, supplement following page 96

(185) „Things, people, scenes are more than their surfaces. They are messages, they are a sacrament, they are the real presence of God.“ (Fulbert Steffensky: *Wie ernähren wir unsere Träume? Über den Zusammenhang von Spiritualität und der Liebe zur Gerechtigkeit*. In: Kuno Füssel, Dorothee Sölle, Fulbert Steffensky: *Die Sowohl-als-auch-Fälle. Eine theologische Kritik des Postmodernismus*. Luzern 1993, p. 88)

„When I accept all the things from him, I will accept his joy into my soul, not because the things are what they are but because God is that which he is and his will wanted my joy to be in all those things.“ (Thomas Merton: *Co je a co není meditare*. Prostor, 1993, 25, p. 178 – in Czech. Original: Thomas Merton: *New Seeds of Contemplation*)

„Yet in the relation to God and in it alone does all that is not God assume the role of a penetrable, transparent image. Seen in terms of that relation, nothing has a 'firm' purpose of its own, everything becomes a means of the global communication between God and humans, an expression of their essential dialogue. The world as (originally, in its purity) the work of God and the life and work of humans in this world are, down to the last vibration of their being, something like a total speech in which God and humans communicate. A person who is not overly concerned about the truthfulness of faith just does not realize that, will it or not, he is conversing, and with whom. Communication with God cannot be restricted to the self-conscious act of intentional prayer at a given

time. For God, all our being is translucent and bears testimony about us. And in turn, as we relate to God, all that we encounter becomes translucent to us, as we sense in it the speaking which touches the very core of our being.“ (Jolana Poláková: *The Truthfulness of Faith. Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 1991, 4, p. 274)

(186) Gerhard Marschütz: *Ztracená úcta. Teologické texty*, 1993, 5, p. 156 (in Czech). (Original: *Die Verlorene Ehrfurcht. Über das Wesen der Ehrfurcht und ihre Bedeutung für unsere Zeit*. Würzburg 1992)

(187) Theodor Steinbüchel: *Christliche Lebenshaltungen*. Quoted from: Gerhard Marschütz: *Ibid*

(188) Bernhard Welte: *Das Licht des Nichts. Von der Möglichkeit neuer religiöser Erfahrung*. Düsseldorf 1985, pp. 55, 56

(189) „Nothing else is important now. (...) After a long search I am finally home here.“ (Anselm Grün: *Modlitba jako setkání. Kostelní Vydří* 1993, p. 38 – in Czech. Original: *Gebet als Begegnung*. Münsterschwarzach 1990)

(190) On the Catholic soil a comprehensive practical breakthrough out of this modern mass-based religious mortification came in the 1960s in the shape of the Second Vatican Council. Its unequivocal spiritual overtones, stressing personal responsibility, dialogic mutuality, an openness to the broadest possible contexts and a relaxed sensitivity for „the Spirit which blows, where it wills“ (Cf. Documents of the Second Vatican Council), qualify its historical initiative as intrinsically post-modern. In a negative sense, this is attested to by the typical reactions of those Christians whose mentality has actually remained unreflectedly enclosed in the confines of the modern era: fanatical „revolutionaries“ and (versus) unquestioning „functionaries“. They share what seems to be fear of that new and deeper spirituality: dialogue (in the true, spiritual sense) is by infinitely more difficult than self-centred populist protests, and responsibility for others is far more demanding than a skill, without feedbacks frequently only illusory, to lead someone and organize things. The rhetoric used by these contented as well as

- discontented late modern Christians unconsciously confirms the postmodern truth (to put it in the words of a post-Council Dominican) that „we cannot know of any value unless we live in its spirit“. (A.-M. Besnard: *Duchovní život dnes a zítra*. Samizdat edition „Duch a život“, Praha 1980, p. 13 – in Czech. Original: A.-M. Besnard: *Ces chrétiens que nous devenons*. Paris 1967)
- (191) „Many members of the younger generation apparently feel a basic need to live naturally, simply and spiritually, to obey the laws of their innmost nature and of the cosmic principle rather than the artificial rules of man-made ego-based society.“ (Claire Myers Owens: *Op. cit.*, p. 194)
- (192) Anselm Grün: *Op. cit.*, p. 24
- (193) „I am scared of this era in which killing is becoming an entertainment.“ (Pavel Zemek: *Psycho /interview/. Signál*, October 26th, 1993, p. 11 – in Czech)
- (194) „The so-called destructive cults gravitate towards total subjugation of their members to the will and orders of the leader of the sect. (...) They are exposed to more or less strong psychic pressure which can lead to the loss of identity or to self-destruction.“ (Joachim Keden: *Takzvané mládežnické sekty a okultná vlna*. Bratislava 1990, p. 9 – in Slovak. Original: *Sogenannte Jugendsekten und die okkulte Welle*. Neukirchen-Vluyn 1989)
- (195) „The transpersonal context in therapy is determined exclusively by the therapist's convictions, value standards and intentions. (...) What happens during therapy is inevitably restricted by the personal apprehensions and convictions of the therapist.“ (Frances Vaughan: *Transpersonální psychoterapie – kontext, obsah a proces*. Gemma, 1992, special issue, p. 9 – in Czech).
- (196) Gisbert Greshake: *Imprese k Drewermannovým „Klerikům“*. Getsemany, 1993, 11, p. 5 (in Czech)
- (197) Wolfgang Lauer: *Partizipationsbedürfnis und christliche Glaube*. Theologie der Gegenwart, 1973, 3, pp. 140–148

- (198) Alexandr Kramer: Jsou Spojené státy (anti)intelektuální? Lidové noviny, March 27th, 1993, p. 16 (in Czech)

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