

# 172 Fundamental Faith

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**I**n this, the closing chapter of our analysis, I shall attempt to search for something which in our tangled epoch of “God’s death,” in our pluralistic market of ideas, and also in light of an all-pervasive relativism interwoven with aggressive fundamentalism, would simply call to the human condition and to some kind of fundamental faith which is perhaps hidden within it. I have no illusions that its unveiling may have any practical results. At best it can enlighten our situation a bit, which in many respects seems alarming.

The term “fundamental faith” might press upon the reader, who is somewhat familiar with the philosophy of faith, a connection with what Anglo-Saxon epistemology calls “foundationalism.” Foundationalism as an epistemological doctrine can be condensed in the following way. First, it posits a differentiation of our convictions to those that come to be “on the basis” of other convictions, and those that serve as their “base,” their “foundation.” The first are inherently medi-

ated, the second unmediated. As an example one can use the arithmetical formula  $1 + 1 = 2$  or the observation “I see a tree in front of me.” There are discrepancies between foundationalists as to which convictions are “basic,” what’s more, foundationalism demands that the relation founded between convictions have a rational character. This point is especially historically relevant for the so-called “classical foundationalism” which demands – in its pre-modern as well as its modern version – that foundational convictions be self-explanatory, not able to be changed by reason nor the senses.<sup>1</sup> Classical foundationalism appears to be untenable. That fact is crucial for any investigations of faith’s rationality. However, as used here, the term “fundamental faith” refers neither to foundationalism itself, nor to the widely debated polemics against it conducted in Anglo-Saxon circles by, among others, philosophers of religion such as Alvin Plantinga or William P. Alston.

Let us return to the point of departure, to the meeting point which appears to join, despite their differences, classical foundationalists with their opponents who are arguing on behalf of faith. The formula, in which the former and the latter express convictions, and about whose justification they polemicize, is more or less the formula: “for a certain *S that p*,” thus, for example *that*, as boldly formulated by Plantinga, in certain circumstances, “God speaks to me.”<sup>2</sup> What is relevant here is not just that both camps seem to assume convictions are capable of being expressed without reserve in sentences – however, the opponents of classical foundationalism obviously do not believe that convictions appear or become reasonable only when on the level of sentences. What matters is that both the former and the latter assume that what they name convictions or beliefs possess an easily specifiable content, that they are convictions for some specified topic, even if for just a potential one. This conviction appears to be even more obvious, the more they press, like Plantinga or Alston, for the concreteness and comprehensibility of the situations in which religious convictions emerge. It is true, however, that both the concreteness, as well as the complexity, causes difficulty in precisely defining in a given situation the content of religious experience, even more of expressing it in sentences. This does not exclude the possibility of a substantial identification of experience as religious (or even theistic, meaning, within a more or less biblico-philosophical interpretation) and using that to make it the topic of some discourse.

Understanding the problem of the fundamentality of faith in this way calls for recognizing a certain kind of fundamentality of religious data, however it usually moves along an epistemological plane, which presupposes the intentionality of consciousness, assuming that faith is a *I believe that*. This conception assumes that if religious man has the right to defend the epistemological legitimacy of his experiences,

<sup>1</sup> N. Wolterstoff, “Introduction” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. A. Plantinga, N. Wolterstoff, London 1983.

<sup>2</sup> A. Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. A. Plantinga, N. Wolterstoff, p. 81.

174 it is because something is revealed to him which is capable of being recognized as a certain content. He can, for example, judge – following Plantinga’s suggestion – that God spoke to Him, and therefore he can conclude that he exists as a God who speaks, who is therefore personal. The intentionality of religious experience was defended by, as is well known, Scheler. He rightfully demanded, in a polemic with James and others, a recognition of the freedom from psychologically-understanding what these religious, subjectively lived experiences, refer to (or to whom), that is, to God.

Here a question might emerge which should not at all be so surprising after reading all the analyses contained within this book. We live during times of a general skepticism, of a growing awareness of religious pluralism and the difficulty of identifying with any specific institutional belonging, of course not negating truths contained in specific religions (above all in one’s own). Can the philosopher look for a figure of faith which in some way could justify the troublesome situation in which we find ourselves? To put it another way, does not faith play itself out primordially on a level which not only does not necessarily require clearly defined objects of faith, or perhaps does it, with equal necessity, not allow for closure in any indefensibly closed figure of it?

This fundamental question contains within itself two separate, yet closely intertwined issues. The first, by far the most important for us, is concerned with the possibility of any kind of reference to the Absolute – *ex hypothesi* the proper referent of faith – which would not automatically make the Absolute finite. To put it otherwise, how to *think* the Absolute, God, without turning him into an object? We have already turned our attention several times onto the complications associated with this problem. The second matter concerns the issue of a relation more primordial than the objectifying relation with reality *in general*, a relation that makes faith possible at all. We accept what is fundamentally correct in intentionality, with what in it is tied to the crucial question of the truth of faith, with what makes possible philosophical and theological discourse on its theme. And yet, it is necessary to once more remind ourselves of the deconstruction of intentional consciousness which has been accomplishing itself since the time of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, or, as Levinas put it, “the ruin of representation.” Heidegger demonstrated, as is well known, that the intentionality of consciousness forces itself upon a more primordial, dynamic, and practical being-with-things in the mode of everydayness. These instances of being-with demand a relational way of understanding reality’s unveiling and presuppose the presence, in a certain way immediately, of a vision of the world as a *wholeness* of possible aims and means. This fullness, seen from a point of view submerged in the world of existence, draws an indefinite field of possible encounters and events of a life lived in time, which ends in unavoidable death. Heidegger poses his fundamental thesis, that everything that appears to man, comes out of a finite horizon, which is

the most basic requirement of all intentional references and meanings, <sup>175</sup> including all references of man to himself.

The horizon as a concept – already present in the works of phenomenology’s founding father, Edmund Husserl – opens up before philosophical thought, also before thought concerned with religion, perspectives that are both as tempting as they are dangerous. They are tempting since they break through an impasse which modern philosophy fell into because it increasingly concentrated upon an impoverished, scientific-technological, picture of reality. The concept of horizon wants to be the name for something that escapes this impoverished picture, a something which we nevertheless feel was always present in European thought. It draws comparisons with the apeiron of Anaximander, from which things emerge and where they return, something inexhaustible and at the same time mysterious, which we have forever encountered and which doesn’t let itself be presented as an object, and yet somehow makes itself present to man. For Heidegger the horizon is the point of departure for thinking being as a hiddenness that is rich in meanings and irremovably present in everything that appears. For a religious thinker this seems like an opportunity to think something, a certain meaning, that escapes objectification, and thanks to that it avoids intellectual manipulation, something which also relates to the entirety of life and about which one can only say that it is transcendent in relation to objectivity. Precisely these attributes are the ones in which the religious Absolute, Sacrum, shows itself to the religious thinker.

However, at the same time, the concept of horizon traps the religious thinker in treasonous nets. It points to a definitive (however by definition not absolute, in Heidegger characterized by nothingness and historicity) “condition of possibility” of appearing and understanding all possible meanings—and therefore also God. This prerequisite is actually not man’s creation (it is caused by being), rather, it entrusts itself wholly to man’s thinking of being. Because of this it seems to occasion a conceptual mastery of God, who would have to always be thought within the frames of a horizon. In this way the horizon would designate to God the proper measure – instead of God being the measure, of what is not Him. What’s more, from this perspective God would be one particular meaning beside others and condemned, just like them, to historically conditioned shifts in interpretation. Modern French theologically-oriented phenomenology as practiced by Levinas, Marion or Michel Henry has energetically attempted to free itself from his trap of horizontality set by Heidegger. For these thinkers, all too aware of the imperialism of Heideggerian being, God cannot by definition be subservient of a horizon, because He is the final instance which cannot be subservient to anything, and therefore not even to conditions of possibility.

The problematic of the horizon to be considered calmly to see to what degree it is acceptable for a religious thinker. One has to consider whether it cannot open our eyes to different, analogical to the horizon,

176 dimension of reality – as they show themselves to the subject. What does this concept tell us? Let's dig around for hidden clues.

A. It first tells us, as Heidegger suggests, that before we adjust to a concrete content, we move in the elements of life along with its unbounded movement, changes, and unpredictability. Therefore, all contents or objects capable of univocal identification come to us from this element, which is not an object for us, because we participate in it primordially. Out of necessity we need to capture it differently than what emerges from it. We can describe this with the help of the metaphor of the horizon or background from which we always distinguish and dig up new poles of attention. It is not relevant whether these poles are more theoretical as in Husserl, or more practical and axiological as in Heidegger and the existentialists.

B. The concept of horizon also always presupposes that we participate in an intersubjective net of relations whose most fundamental tool is language. We take out of this net not only our indifferent pre-processed meanings, but also hierarchies of values, which, however, we can always modify. From the beginning our human horizon also carries on its back the load of commitments and responsibilities and also of hope and love. This means that this human horizon de facto differentiates good and evil, along with all the consequences which flow from them.

C. The key matter is how we interpret the unity of this horizon. For Husserl its sign is the unity of the world's meaning thanks to which individual meanings do not explode, but rather guarantee a certain continuity. For Heidegger, it is the meaning of being – the mysterious abyss of meanings. Levinas and Tischner reminded us of a different key that regulates the human world, that is, the horizon also as a primordial "from where." Their key is "the light of the Good," which, according to them, regulates the deepest core of meaning in itself. Either way, the idea of horizon suggests a return – with totally new philosophical eyes – to the question of arche. It is key to say that, as our analyses have shown, the light of the Good, the agathological and axiological horizon, is the climate in which one's humanity grows.

D. An inherent feature of what we participate in this manner is that it does not allow itself be exhausted by particular, also religious, contents, that it carries within itself an uncircumscribable potential. What this potential eventually signifies, or even if this question makes sense, cannot be resolved, in any case that should be even apparent on the level of objectifying thinking. Yet, we can in some way interpret and schematize this basic participatory mode. All these attempts always come, as it were, "a bit too late," because they refer to a pre-existing Ur-fact, thanks to which we see and understand everything. We participate in this Ur-fact from the beginning – it is not only outside us, but also within us; it is not only

transcendent but also immanent. This perspective guides us toward an attempt to name this source of meaning in a new philosophical language. <sup>177</sup>

E. The horizon as concept brings up two distinct questions which are often mistakenly combined. One is concerned with the possibility of conceptually schematizing, in other words, with the hermeneutics of the horizon. This questions requires us to mull over the limits of human understanding and its linguistic articulation, which is mirrored in the inescapable paradox of thinking and expressing that which conditions all thinking and expression – as if it itself were conditioned. This can only confirm the inescapable finitude of all symbolic, artistic or conceptual articulations of the horizon, which continually attempt to encircle that which escapes them. But the tension between what continually sneaks away and its finite mediations and schematizations questions the identification of the horizon with a certain more or less closed totality. Because of this, it is impossible, or so it seems, to identify it with being understood in Parmenides, Hegel, or maybe even Heidegger, as the sense of the whole. This is because all thinking and capturing of the whole is in danger of treating it as a super-object, patterned after Spinoza's substance. Naturally, it also threatens all beings emerging from the horizon with homogenization. The horizon, of this we can be sure, is always open, therefore infinite.

F. This faces us with another, much more difficult question, concerning the how of the horizon. It consists of the question of finite temporality as conceived by both Husserl and Heidegger. If we understand the horizon as a background wandering along with the temporality of consciousness, which is at the same time the finitude of mortal existence, then it seems temporality is inescapable. On the other hand, temporality seems to have certain characteristics which point it in a strictly axiological direction. The temporality of human existence is not only directed toward a future heading toward death, on the contrary, the future is felt existentially as the environment of hope. Within this meaning – as we followed it through analyses of Blondel or Ladriere – human temporality carries within itself an inescapably teleological, goal-oriented, unrest. If we take the horizon as an open space, goal-oriented toward the future and fed by a search for meaning and participation, then one is right to ask about the direction of this teleology, of goal-orientation as such. For example, whether it does not appear to us as self-transcending, as directed by its own dynamism of life toward a beyond not only beyond possible objects, but also all goals that are attainable within the confines of a finite life. For our problematics of faith this is a key question and presupposes another: the question of what lets itself be not only objectively represented, but also lets itself be meaningfully thought.

G. At this point the philosophy of the horizon could have a recourse to the Kantian distinction between thought and experience and also between

178 ideas and concepts, a distinction, which, as Levinas observed correctly, was expelled from phenomenology. The cause of this expulsion was caused by the fact that the field of possible phenomena, of that which can be meaningfully grasped, was relativized by both Heidegger and Husserl according to our always finite possibilities. As noted by Wolfhart Pannenberg, the main victim of this reduction was – already to some extent accomplished within Kant’s work – the concept of infinity considered only as the infinity of time and space.<sup>3</sup> In a special way the fate of the idea of infinity seems to be a turning point which endangered the potential of any philosophy of religion and reduced the concept of the horizon – that which does not let itself be exhaustively known through objectification – to that which limits, rather than opens up thinking. Whereas, the concept of horizon as a possible limit should direct our attention not only toward that which is within the horizon, but also that which is beyond it, even if such a formulation betrays the above-mentioned conceptual and linguistic aporia.

H. Above all, the horizon as concept seems to be a synonym of measure for the unveiling that grows out of our lives. The concept of measure is more capacious than just conditions of possibility which are axiologically indifferent: it creates the conditions for evaluating events, human behavior, the meaning of life. If so, then one can say that the key question concerning measure is the question of the relation, as Levinas would say, between totality and infinity. This is because it is far from being indifferent whether we consider the world as measure, or whether the measure is something that infinitely exceeds the world.

The philosophy of faith in its search for this answer sees an opening in the concept of the horizon by first turning to the philosophy of the subject, without which any concept of meaning would lose its meaning: from this angle the Kantian “Copernican Revolution” in thought is inescapable. It is within the human subject, in man as conscious of himself and the world, that the philosophy of faith seeks the traces which might lead him to religious thinking. It is nothing more than a search for the place where we find the locus of possible religious meaning, a meaning that is always for a subject. Philosophy thus understood is nothing else but a philosophy of asking and possibly opening up to the religious. Philosophy of religion must take seriously the fact that real religious experience is always a witness of a source not derived from it and of what always exceeds it. Precisely this fact should encourage philosophy to look for the least closed-in, that is, for the most open conceptual formulas. And anyway, all attempts to capture that which we here call “fundamental faith” are not a description of religious experience in the strict sense; but neither are they what Heidegger calls fundamental ontology, which analyzes the

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<sup>3</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Człowiek, wolność, Bóg* [Man, Freedom, God], trans. G. Sowiński, Kraków 1995, p. 164-195.

human subject from the perspective of our inability to transgress time as <sup>179</sup> the playing-field of being and nothingness.

Our attempt here will be woven around three philosophical stances, three philosophies of faith – two close to each other in time, the other from the distant past. Only then will we attempt to outline the shape of elemental faith, which we here call fundamental. One might argue that to some degree it emerges from the situation of the contemporary subject, above all the Western subject, who at times asks about faith in itself, led by a worry and intuition that religious formulas are not adequate to his unrest.

## Faith That Participates

The idea of a faith that participates has its source in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. Marcel arrives at the idea of participation through a complicated polemic with the heritage of transcendental idealism, which leads him to question – it seems more radically than even Heidegger’s thought – the philosophy of the modern subject and at the same time our inherited philosophical language. For Marcel participation designates the impossibility of sustaining the dictatorship of not only the Cartesian *cogito*, but in general, of an autarchic subject who stands against the world. This is because, in reality, the subject exists in a way that does not allow it to designate a clear boundary between itself and the world. In thinking the subject always refers to reality – but not as a subject of knowledge which would immediately sever it from reality, making him a stranded subject. From this emerges the idea of outlining a subject who participates in reality as a dyad, whose most distinctive property is individuality, concreteness, and ultimately dialogue.

In this perspective faith is first of all, “a personal way of metaphysically describing the world, that is, experience,” or more precisely, “a *sui generis* relation between an actual individual, which is not an impersonal form, nor pure empirical content, but a reality to which the individual clings by invocation and comes to grasp itself in this clinging.”<sup>4</sup> Thus faith cannot be understood – as sometimes formulated in Scheler – as a solution to the dilemma of attempting to construct a bridge between the *cogito* and reality, since that already presupposes a distance between the subject and object. Because of this, faith is not a consciousness of itself as faith, “it is rather as if it stretches itself beyond what consciousness can grasp of it – the comparison which forces itself upon me is that of the underground branching out of a tree.”<sup>5</sup> This is the reason why faith is not a “being convinced that,” not an opinion, not “an imagining that.” This is also the reason why Marcel writes, identically like Karl Jaspers, “I do not know that in which I believe,” but in a different and more basic

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<sup>4</sup> G. Marcel, *Journal Métaphysique*, Paris 1927, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> G. Marcel, “La Croyance comme dimension spirituelle,” *Bulletin de l’Association Presence de Gabriel Marcel*, 1999, no. 9, p. 20.

180 sense than did traditional theologies of faith. Faith cannot know, because it is beyond the subject-object relation, in the strictest sense it is not any type of relation which presupposes mutually isolated elements. It is an “immersion” within the center of experience, in that which Marcel calls the “depth (l’épaisseur) of experience.” This depth “can only be thought negatively, since it is inherently in opposition to anything with describable characteristics, *it is that thanks to which experience escapes the control of any objectifying verifications.*” This is why “if anyone is capable of faith, then it is according to the measure of experience, which inevitably escapes our view at the moment when thought tries to formulate objectifying and graphic representations of that experience.” And thus faith, “cannot be in the full sense of the word a consciousness of faith” and why “one ought to treat with suspicion all attempts to rationalize faith.”<sup>6</sup>

One can still ask what Marcel has in mind when speaking about the depth of experience. In the text quoted here Marcel speaks of the “rousing of a soul calling on invisible reality,” a reality that is “other and called upon in its otherness.” He fleshes out the concept with this commentary: it is not about some kind of losing oneself in an abyss, “the essence of faith is precisely the fact that it does not lose itself, that it is, in a manner hard to precisely capture, a certainty of achieving that which in all other perspectives is inaccessible. It is faith only when it is this certainty.”<sup>7</sup> In this way faith is in a specific way, but not dramatic, stretched between some kind of “below” and “above:” “Below – that is the depth of experience, above – that which is unattainable, and yet in some manner attained, about which we said that faith is sure of it.”<sup>8</sup> Faith understood this way is not imposed on experience, which would inevitably turn it into a system of beliefs, articles of faith. The most one can say from this perspective – and of course that is a whole lot – is that faith in this rousing toward the invisible is at the same time an “active negation of death.” This negation is possible only as an answer to something which we can describe as a calling:

[T]his faith can only be a clinging to, or more accurately an answer. A clinging to what? An answer to what? It is hard to describe: to an unclear, silent invitation which fills the soul, or to put it another way, which puts pressure upon it, but does not force it. No, this pressure is not irresistible, if it were, then faith would cease to be faith. It is only possible for a free creature, meaning one who has been entrusted with the mysterious and fearful power to refuse itself.<sup>9</sup>

But the awareness of this calling, and this is crucial, is only given in one’s answer to it; “Here the called consciousness, the pre-conscious consciousness if you will, is the mysterious certainty about which I’ve spoken, and *that certainty becomes clear only in faith and through it.*”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 26–27, my italicization, K.T.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>10</sup> G. Marcel “La Croyance comme dimension spirituelle,” op.cit., p. 31, my italicization, K.T.

Let us then attempt to fill out with several theses, and interpret Marcel's philosophy of faith. 181

The first thesis is that the subject is not, in a certain decisive sense, separated from that which is not it, from that which differs from it. He is immersed in a kind of field of presence that is opened up before the subject – in a sense not far from what Heidegger describes as a “being-in.” This field is opened *before* the subject has tied itself up, shaped, within its own subjectivity. It is a field of hospitality and that is why it is composed of intimacy, closeness, and in its most primordial meaning, of mineness. This is also the reason why on this level of faith one cannot speak of intentionality which would lead to an identification of some kind of content. Let us look at a representative quote:

I do not know that in which I believe . . . We are spontaneously wont to believe something contrary – meaning, that I can make a kind of inventory of the objects of my belief, or else air-out that *in which I believe*, and that *in which I do not believe*, which presupposes that the difference between that to which I adhere, and that to which I do not adhere is *given* to me and can be felt by me. All inventories (concerned only with the content which I judge that I know that I believe in) presuppose at the very least the possibility of such a differentiation, such an inventory. On the other hand, it seems to me that being toward which faith (*croissance*) turns, transcends all possible inventories, meaning, that it cannot be a thing among others, an object *among others* (and inversely, this “among” only has a sense for something that is a thing or object). . . They will say to me: what kind of believing (*croissance*) are you talking about, sir? About *what* faith (*foi*)? Here again they will demand details of me: and if I refuse, I will be accused of such a lack of precision that all discussion, and also all explanation is impossible. And yet one must maintain a faith (*foi*) which is full, monolithic, and as preceding all possible explanations; it presupposes a clinging to a reality whose properties are *indivisible* and *innumerable*. This clinging would be impossible if this reality was not present to me, or maybe it is more appropriate to say: *if it didn't completely surround me fully.*<sup>11</sup>

These complex thoughts point toward a totally primordial phenomenon: this “clinging” to a reality, which does not at all have to presuppose an intuition of *totality* as in the famous analysis of anxiety in Heidegger. Heidegger's analysis points toward a primordial isolation from reality of the subject, *Dasein*<sup>12</sup>, which makes possible a capturing of the whole; whereas on this stage Marcel's faith is an expression of trust, closeness in relation to a concrete in itself, but before it coagulates into objectified shapes that can be manipulated and controlled. This does not exclude the possibility that reality, “the world,” is a field of battle and drama, what's more, Marcel is especially sensitive to this dimension. But reality is not only this, first it is a mystery which demands an experience of “depth.” The subject opens itself up onto itself and onto the world always already immersed within these depths, already participating in their larger scheme, but not in a numeri-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 177–179.

<sup>12</sup> This is why the analysis of anxiety is surely Heidegger's reply to Husserl's idea of the *epoche*.

182 cal sense. As is known, Marcel calls this field the “ontological mystery,” in which it is possible to trail the traces of a *Sacrum* that is personal.

The second thesis has an epistemological character. It says that this field of hospitable participation cannot be captured – and what’s more, one should not attempt to think and express it – with the aid of any immediately petrifying concepts. This does not mean that nothing about this field can be understood, that it is, speaking pictorially, only darkness. Neither does it mean, as opposed to Heidegger, that all which can be understood here is stamped by historically changing prejudices and by a dialectic of various interpretations. This is because this field is experienced, whereas experience has a primordial “affective tonality” – *Ur-gefühl* – which is not blind, but rather can be falsified in its articulation by attempts to capture it in inescapably historically variable rationalizations. This affective tonality reveals our subjectivity as “incarnated,” inseparable from fleshliness, and thanks to which participation encompasses the unity of all that we are and makes possible intimacy with other subjects and the world. Marcel wants to convince us to listen to what in its essential affectivity resounds; this aural metaphor is especially appropriate, although it should not be pitted against concepts which take their impetus from the vocabulary of contemplation. All linguistic articulations of the field of participation must presuppose contemplation, meaning, an enduring in experience, something like the stopping of time, or rather a certain way of living within it, which allows this experience to give birth to its own light.

The third thesis talks more about content, in the widest sense, as belonging to our experience of the depth, which characterizes the field of participation. This depth darts away from visibility – that fact is not provisional, it is of its essence. However, Marcel immediately adds what he means by it: going beyond death. This key judgment immediately points to the dramatic aspect of faith, which is decisive for our entry into its religious dimension. We are continually subjected to “trials,” when we stand up to an obstacle or temptation which constitutes for us a calling, within us it opens up a field for freedom, “The area of the trial is the same as the field of freedom.”<sup>13</sup> In this light, “Of its essence faith is something that should be and wants to be, tried. . . . A trial is that which has its own ‘above.’”<sup>14</sup> It is possible that the trial might break me and from that perspective I can evaluate my life and reality, “My life. It is a fact that it may seem to me utterly deprived of meaning and that fact constitutes an integral part of its structure.”<sup>15</sup> Marcel harbors no illusions, “It is a fact that suicide is possible and in this it constitutes a crucial anchoring point for all metaphysical thought. Not only suicide, but also all forms of despair, all aspects of betrayal.”<sup>16</sup>

But Marcel seems to say, that in a specific way, we can overcome the temptations of despair in the bosom of a living dialectic of experienced

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<sup>13</sup> G. Marcel, *Journal Métaphysique*, Paris 1927, p. 229.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 198, 228.

<sup>15</sup> G. Marcel, *Être et Avoir*, Paris 1935, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

depth, which is inseparable for him from the experience of intimate in- 183  
tersubjective ties. This experience does not negate being-toward-death, it  
goes beyond it, just as with what can be seen, we can go beyond toward  
the invisible – which at the same time is not de-corporalized. The exceed-  
ing is done by a presence in the bosom of experience which above death  
brings back immediacy: “this internal realization of presence within  
the bosom of love, which exceeds all possible verifications, because it ac-  
complishes itself within the bosom of immediacy, which situates itself  
above all thinkable mediations.”<sup>17</sup> It is precisely love, along with the hope  
inseparable from it, that constitutes the bedrock of a faith which is chis-  
eled out in trials, but whose *terminus ad quem* is impossible to identify,  
because it is simply too close:

From the perspective of faith, which at the same time is the perspective  
of freedom, that-which-is-impossible-to-identify is experienced as an  
Absolute Thou. Maybe this is a too condensed way of saying it, it would  
be better to say that that-which-is-impossible-to-identify is seen in the  
light of whom we pay homage to as presence.<sup>18</sup>

Of course faith understood in this way is not in any way a confessional  
phenomenon, because in its essence it is untranslatable into any definite  
*credo*, into any “faith that.” Nor is it a radical stepping outside of experi-  
ence, since the Transcendent is, “a reality which exceeds and embraces me,  
but which I cannot in any way treat as something external to that which  
I am.”<sup>19</sup> It is rather a sunken “metaphysical Atlantis,” in whose interior a  
“heart” beats.<sup>20</sup>

We now understand why we can talk of a fundamental faith in Marcel,  
and what’s more, this faith is doubly fundamental. First, because we take  
it everywhere along with our existence, so long as it does not shut itself off  
from the call to exceed the visible – that is, that which is circumscribed,  
finite, mortal. Second, because this scaffolding is the only way for a living  
historical faith to take root, and upon this foundation it joins us with other  
historical figures of faith, rather than separating us from them.

## Philosophical Faith

Behind this phrase hides, as it is easy to surmise, a conceptual tool taken  
from the writings of Karl Jaspers.

Jaspers’ philosophy is in many respects similar to Marcel’s, since he  
also is one of the representatives of the philosophy of the horizon. How-  
ever, Jaspers has a much keener feel for the tragic sense of being and feels  
a greater impetus toward systematization. He is allergic to the dangers  
posed by fideistic sentimentalism. While citing Kierkegaard, he writes

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<sup>17</sup> G. Marcel, *Positions et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique*, Paris 1949, p. 263.

<sup>18</sup> G. Marcel, *Le Mystère de l’être*, v. 2, Paris 1951, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> G. Marcel, *Du refus à l’invocation*, Paris 1940, p. 188.

<sup>20</sup> G. Marcel, *Percées vers un ailleurs*, Paris 1973, p. 405–421.

184 critically about Schleiermacher's philosophy of religious feeling: "Faith, which, 'thus flows away, melts away in the mist,' is not faith. . . It is not an experience, it is not something unmediated that can be described as given. Rather, faith is a deeper and deeper coming to know the source of being for oneself as mediated through history and thinking."<sup>21</sup> This is the reason why Jaspers is quite far off from phenomenology, at the very least from its earliest attempts of studying the essence of phenomena with an unprejudiced gaze.

The experience of borders seems to be the key to Jaspers' thought; and not only the well-known "border experiences," instead every step of life and thinking is a banging of one's head against a wall; experience is in an essential way an "experience of borders."<sup>22</sup> Because of this, instead of talking about mystery, Jaspers talks about problematization, which calls forth questions, "There can be nothing about which one is not allowed to ask questions."<sup>23</sup> In thinking, and even more in living and acting we continually collide with borders, and we go beyond that border, only to immediately collide with another one. But from borders there blows the chill of that which is murky and final – of nothingness. Above all, we are led into these regions by "border situations:" guilt, suffering, death. All of these are manifestations of the most basic border situation, crisis, "A crisis is that which is final."<sup>24</sup> The possibility of nihilism does not only reside in culture, but is a basic component of our existence. However, nothingness itself is a border concept and only a possibility, because it is preceded by the experience of borders, where a border means that there is something else. Nothingness is more like the face of the Otherness which Jaspers calls Transcendence and in this sense, "a crisis does not reveal nothingness, instead it shows the being of transcendence."<sup>25</sup> If we were to describe the climates of particular philosophies by metaphors, then the metaphor for Marcel would be "immersion," for Jaspers it would be the opposite: surfacing, lifting oneself up. But for both Jaspers and Marcel these terms are a taking leave of familiar philosophical lands.

For Jaspers the key to experiencing transcendence is, like for Kant, the experience of freedom:

Man discovers within himself something that is not found anywhere in the world, something that does not let itself be recognized or known, something that never becomes an object . . . freedom and all that is tied to it. I do not experience it through knowledge of something, but thanks to an act. In freedom I rediscover the way leading through the world and myself toward Transcendence.<sup>26</sup>

But what is freedom? At its core freedom is a "choosing of oneself," exist-

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<sup>21</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara Filozoficzna* [Philosophical Faith] trans. A. Buchner, J. Garewicz, D. Lachowska, M. Łukasiewicz, Toruń 1995, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, 3 Bände, Berlin 1932, v. II, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, op.cit., v. III, p. 220.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>26</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara filozoficzna*, op.cit., p. 46–47.

ing “out of one’s own resources.”<sup>27</sup> It can only be accomplished as a “leap toward myself as freedom,”<sup>28</sup> this means that only in fundamental praxis, for which one cannot sufficiently prepare by thinking it through – freedom exists only in deciding. It is very interesting that the same act of freedom as decision leads to philosophies as disparate as that of Sartre or Jaspers. For both philosophers man without any appeals decides about himself, but the landscape which emerges from it widely varies. For Sartre decidability of freedom expresses nothingness, whereas for Jaspers it opens up the road to faith. The uniqueness of Jaspers’ philosophy of faith lies in its intertwining of thinking and acting, theory and practice. Things are this way since on the one hand freedom slides through the fingers of logic, on the other hand it is precisely in faith, as philosophical faith, that a man becomes sure of his being a man, “The way in which a man becomes sure of being a man is the rudimentary outline of philosophical faith.”<sup>29</sup> How should we understand this?

The essence of the problem depends on the fact that, “Man becomes conscious of his own finitude by an encounter with that which is not finite – with the unconditional and infinite.”<sup>30</sup> Precisely at this point Jaspers moves beyond phenomenology and comes closer to Kant. After all, that which is unconditional does not let itself be discerned in any way, but at the same time it is by definition concerned with the truth, “faith lets itself be tracked down on the borders of what can be known, as an awareness of unconditional truth.”<sup>31</sup> Jaspers once again exceeds the *sic iubeo* of freedom toward some kind of measure, which we cannot come to know, but by leaning on it we can emerge as really existing. Thanks to this, faith is a continually renewed gesture of becoming certain of that which exceeds knowing, but is also the source of a thinking, that is philosophical, existence. But in itself this existence is accessible only through a decision to be oneself.

Philosophical faith means that among other things it has to be a thinking faith. Jaspers also distinguishes *fides qua* and *fides quae creditur*, but it signifies for him, as it does for Marcel and Tillich, the necessity of stepping outside the opposition between subject and object, to their common foundation: philosophical faith “can only be made conscious by something that is neither a subject nor an object, which is a unity of one and the other.”<sup>32</sup> The thing which is “at the source” Jaspers calls “The Encompassing” (*das Umgreifende*) – a term that cannot but remind one of Marcel’s participating faith. “The Encompassing” is not by nature an object, rather, it is the source of thinking or of a thinking existence, “when we are philosophizing, we talk, coming out of it and aiming for it.” Faith for Jaspers always has to reveal itself in one’s way of thinking and

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<sup>27</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, op.cit., v. II, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, v. III, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara filozoficzna*, op.cit., p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, op.cit., v. I, p. 246.

<sup>32</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara filozoficzna*, op.cit., p. 13.

186 arguing, on the other hand, and this is crucial, “it cannot be a confession. Thought about it cannot become a dogma.”<sup>33</sup> This, for Jaspers, is the cause of the unbreachable gulf between philosophical faith and religious faith. But philosophizing does not lead to an impersonal faith. Gaining certainty about the Encompassing is connected, each and every time, with a decision for a personal tie with the Source, which as philosophical leads the subject in the direction of the living source of thinking, and so also toward the history of thought, which puts existence within the historical chain of cultural witnesses; it is a “coming to certainty through historical movement through time.”<sup>34</sup>

Jaspers tries to think the Encompassing with the help of what Kant calls “schemata,” which are supposed to represent a kind of trampoline for stepping beyond, with the help of representations, that which in essence cannot be represented. These schemata allow Jaspers to distinguish (a) “being in itself,” which we are not and which surrounds us, within it is the world and also Transcendence, and (b) “the being that we are,” that is, man, in all his various layers. These schemata make us aware how we always encounter dualism in thinking, which presuppose something else, something that falls through their fingers and exceeds them. For example, take the idea of the world as the “in which” of all objects of thought, “Everything that we can know is in the world, but is never the world;”<sup>35</sup> or as that which makes thinking possible, “we are often not aware of the mystery contained within the awareness of reality;”<sup>36</sup> or with ideas which “direct us like wake up calls dwelling within us, as the sign of the sensible whole in things.”<sup>37</sup> However, free existence is above all concerned with a philosophical “life flowing out of the Encompassing.” Thus one must start by “going beyond all objectivity and becoming certain of the Encompassing in thinking, thinking which always objectifies, meaning: it is imprisoned within being, which shows itself as divided up into subject and object, to escape from this prison, even though one truly cannot escape beyond its scope.”<sup>38</sup> This escaping from the chains of objectivity is, as Ladriere would say, a desert road. For Jaspers faith has, “a fluid character – I do not know whether I believe, or, in what I believe – and at the same time absolute.”<sup>39</sup> But this freeing of oneself is not in any way sentimental, because for Jaspers faith is dialectical. The sense of this dialectic is not Hegelian, instead it is Kantian. It depends upon a tension of opposites without resolving them and “a reaching-out toward borders in which being shows itself as totally torn, where my own being becomes a matter of faith, and faith the grasping of something seemingly absurd.” This is why, very much like in Marcel, faith and unbelief are dialectically fused,

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

“they are inseparable, any yet they continually repel each other.”<sup>40</sup> Within this dialectic philosophical faith “moves through nothingness, but does not express itself in an abyss.”<sup>41</sup> 187

What is accomplished between existence and Transcendence is the key matter for philosophical faith. What is accomplished is a personal experience “of oneself as a gift” in the moment of deciding for oneself – it is here that the departure from Sartre is the greatest. Being oneself is decidedly a possibility which may also not take place and this is why, “I am not indebted for my decision only to myself. My self-possessed being is a being given to me in my freedom. I can encounter a deficit of myself and none of my willing will be able to give me to myself.”<sup>42</sup> To put it another way, “I am an existence when I know that I am a gift of Transcendence to myself.”<sup>43</sup> Transcendence has a liberating sense – it allows me to have “freedom with regard to the world” and “freedom toward my own self in the world.” We gain this freedom when “reaching a point of suspension within being-in-the-world where we touch ground in Transcendence. That is where shelter is. From there, returning toward the world, we take up tasks which stand before us on our way through the world.”<sup>44</sup>

And thus, what we traditionally call an act of faith has a threefold rhythm. First, one must let all that is objective, “dissipate, as it were, in smoke, so that objectivity disappears, and so that precisely in this disappearance the full awareness of being should appear.”<sup>45</sup> Second, this awareness of being is possible only within a decision in which I discover both that I am not alone, and in which I gain certainty, without having anything to lean on, “To have something to lean on in philosophy means to ponder oneself, to be inspired, making the Encompassing conscious to oneself thereby gaining your own self, by being given to yourself.”<sup>46</sup> And lastly, there is no faith without reference to the truth, which signifies above all making oneself aware that, “Transcendence is being proper (that is God), and the correct understanding of this encompasses all philosophical faith and all enlightening philosophical faith.”<sup>47</sup> One can shed light on philosophical faith and it does not “melt away in the fog,” but instead is a labor of thinking within the pattern of tradition:

This faith only exists in each individual’s reflection upon himself, it has no objective support in institutions, it is that which remains when everything breaks down, but is it is not present when we try to grasp it, searching for help within the world. It always appears in the present however many times we return to ourselves under the influence of tradition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>44</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara filozoficzna wobec Objawienia* [Philosophical Faith and Revelation] trans. G. Sowiński, Kraków 1999, p. 169.

<sup>45</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiara filozoficzna*, op.cit., p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

188 The “will to communication” is key for this faith, which can be best described as a seeking of brotherhood and at the same time a looking for clarity of thought, thanks to which we can communicate with others.

Since philosophical faith does not allow us to rest in any intellectual constructions it is a reading, devoid of certitude, of the “ciphers of Transcendence” in the world, culture and in the annals of philosophy. The cipher is an individual sign, given here and now, a flaring up of Transcendence through the mediation of the content that reveals Transcendence along with the disappearance of the definitiveness of this content and through my building up of bridges to Transcendence through my own decisions. This is why in the final analysis philosophical faith in Jaspers lives in the depths of its antinomies – the movement between certitude and uncertainty, clarity and darkness:

The historical ciphers talk to us today only under the condition that by grasping them in the depths available to us, we maintain the ciphers in a state of suspension by not treating them as reality, nor as indubitable knowledge. The ciphers shed light on our path, and in moments of decision they radiate their light as the speech of transcendence.<sup>49</sup>

## The Lesson of the Philosophies of Faith as Horizon

What I am calling here philosophical faith is a certain kind of theoretical construct that accounts for our present epoch’s consciousness of itself. It is an epoch of the crumbling away of barriers separating various beliefs. At the same time, because of various often analyzed causes there is a disappearance of the obviousness of the foundational relation of the human subject to the Transcendent. Perhaps one must attempt to seek whether there is in the most basic layers of human consciousness a smoldering of some primary, and just maybe impossible to eliminate, figure of faith. We can track down the outline of this conception in the thought of many philosophers, and especially in those analyzed in this book: Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers. For now, let’s outline what joins these philosophies in a way pertinent to us.

A. Both philosophies rise out of a protest against the domination of objectifying thought, which always concentrates upon contents that can be clearly defined and analyzed. For this type of thought whatever cannot be easily defined stops being interesting and even worthy of notice. In the meantime Marcel and Jaspers underline with emphasis that, “I do not know whether I believe, nor what I believe in.” I do not know, meaning, for substantial reasons I cannot conceptually capture the content of this particular relation, which outlines itself in fundamental faith. Marcel talks about “the fullness of faith,” Jaspers of “philosophical faith,” which excludes references to any kind of religious object, even in the widest sense,

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<sup>49</sup> K. Jaspers, *Wiaro filozoficzna wobec Objawienia*, op.cit., p. 189.

whatsoever. In this aspect fundamental faith is a prelude to apophatic <sup>189</sup> religious thinking.

B. If things do happen this way, then it's because faith refers positively to a something, which exceeds, in a specific sense, all that can be circumscribed clearly and distinctly. I defined it as a horizon in a sense that expands upon the technical phenomenological application of this word. For Husserl and Heidegger the horizon defines a background from which emerge both cognitions as well as acts of the transcendental consciousness which is basically intentionally oriented. The background, *a priori*, assigns the basic character of the meanings of that which appears, of phenomena. For both of these philosophers the specific measure of meaning is temporality, being as time.

Whereas, for the philosophers of faith under consideration here the horizon has a character of a certain, hidden, but palpable quality, the depth of experience from which everything emerges and falls back into. This is not an equivalent of the *apeiron* of Anaximander, because the horizon under consideration here lies along the lines of the human world, not the cosmos. Thus it is, as for the phenomenologists, a reservoir of meanings, which builds them up and saturates them with a certain excess, whose imprint is above all axiological, but also metaphysical. This horizon gives human being-in-the-world a basic orientation, a rudimentary direction to the meaning of existence, which is not reducible to any partial meanings, nor to the all-encompassing meaning which is being-toward-death, even if it is not indifferent to it. Among other things, these philosophers describe this horizon as the Mystery or the Encompassing.

C. The manner in which this horizon makes itself present to the subject is defined by these thinkers as faith. What do they understand by that?

First, they have in mind a presence participating in reality. It runs counter to both the stance of the disinterested observer and the ready and willing pragmatist. Marcel would describe it as an active hospitality, "a personal relation to reality as certain thou," therefore an elementary tie with others and the world, ready to accept others and pay attention. Jaspers, on the other hand, would probably speak of a liberating rooting of oneself within the transcendence of the Encompassing. Participation is, above all, a readiness to give the proper responses to situations in the field of callings to do the good and to be oneself.

Second, fundamental faith denotes an ecstatic presence. This, difficult to grasp, aspect of the relation refers to the impossibility of an objectifying distance toward both the eventual contents of faith, as well as to the accomplishing of an act of faith. Marcel's and Jaspers' definition, "I do not know whether and in what I believe," signifies this basic irreducibility of fundamental faith into the subject-object relation. This, however, does not lead to an indifference to the truth, but rather points

<sup>190</sup> to a way of thinking other than the objective. Marcel speaks of a “blind intuition” somewhere in the neighborhood of a certain moral and spiritual “hearing,” and also of an unconquered hope, whereas Jaspers of a loyalty toward the transcendence of truth and an active agreement to “being given” one’s own freedom.

Third, horizontal faith does not seem to be an unproblematic belief. It is a particular kind of fusing with the foundation given in the elementary dialectic of faith, which experiences the tragism of separation, betrayal, defeat and, precisely because of that, it does not allow for rationalizations which are too comfortable. It presupposes a loyalty toward the questionableness or problematization of existence and at the same time requires a continually renewed “fundamental option,” which becomes possible through a specific, dark, certainty of the foundation. Fundamental faith is not merely trusting for these thinkers, nor even more a “believing that,” but rather, “a faith in. . . despite everything.” This is why the thinking of faith for these thinkers encroaches upon a non-confessional religious register.

D. For Marcel and Jaspers fundamental faith is an affair of freedom. It happens that way because the contents of faith are always inadequate to faith itself and drag with themselves the risk of being responsible for identifying the infinite correlate of faith with its finite interpretations. But freedom itself has revelatory characteristics so long as in our decision for it, in a decision for authenticity, it is possible to rely upon a transcendent foundation.

Freedom appears to have several key qualities. First, it is able to liberate us from the blackmail of worldliness and from concrete non-essential cares. Second, in the act of faith it shows, most deeply, the specifically dialogical structure of freedom – as Marcel says, “we are not made for ourselves,” or borrowing from Jaspers, that in my freedom “I am a gift to myself.” Third, precisely for freedom from all *credos*, all formulations are too tight, because faith touches opaquely upon the final things which bear it along. This is also the reason why it is susceptible to the mistakes of idolatry and also accusations of vagueness and leaving too much undefined – and Marcel is aware of this when he writes his analysis of what he calls “the fullness of faith.”

In sum, within the conceptions outlined here, faith appears as being on the border of that which is religious and that which is philosophical, but also on the border of that which is capable of being thought. Here, for us, emerge the preliminary outlines of the form of a primordial, and crucial for existence, fundamental faith.

## Faith Seeking Understanding, Reason Seeking Faith

This double seeking, of which Tischner wrote<sup>50</sup>, presupposes that faith is not an adventure foreign to reason, instead it establishes a particular

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<sup>50</sup> J. Tischner, “Myślenie religijne” [Religious Thinking] in *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], Kraków 1982, p. 339.

possibility and at the same time a provocation. Faith thinks, because man thinks, and man's thinking might already presuppose some kind of faith, thanks to which faith can also encroach upon the "of what" of thinking. What is at stake here is not only philosophy of faith as a way of existing, but also a philosophy concerned with its pole of reference. What I have tried to present on the pages of this book has, in a way, the nature of a report – it talks about the indispensable components of faith, and its conditions of possibility. The question remains whether and how it is possible to believe intelligently, to think believably, if you will. 191

If faith seeks understanding and reason seeks faith, then equally in first and in the second instance, however in varying degrees and in varying proportions, there already is an attraction through the *terminus ad quem* of faith. It depends on many, variegated, and impossible to foresee, factors. This is obvious, and I've written about it frequently, that faith is an event and a leap in a Schelerian, rather than a Kierkegaardian sense of the word. The event of faith cannot be forced, if only because in the most important sense, it is an affair of freedom – theology speaks here of grace. The leap of faith, which is a strictly individual event, can happen always and in every epoch.

Yet, at this moment, we are still navigating on the outskirts of faith, that is, we are outlining the conditions of its possibility without any apologetic intentions. Naturally, they contain both the possibility of thinking faith itself, and also its *terminus ad quem*. This thinking obviously presupposes a *logos, ratio* – which makes radically irrationalist philosophies of faith, like Shestov's for example, basically inconsequential. The previously outlined conceptions considered faith in the perspective of the idea of horizon, or rather the equivalent of this idea, and attempted to name the intentional pole of faith. Above all, they did this within the perspective of necessarily overcoming the opposition between subject and object by pointing to a certain "in which" of believing existence, which demands other than rationalistic conceptual tools. And yet the concept of horizon possesses a negative resonance: it is an attempt to face obstacles on the road to faith. This fails to sufficiently demonstrate the positive conceptual counter-proposition that allows us to think the pole of faith.

It seems that the candidate for such a positive concept is the idea of God from St. Anselm's ontological proof and its extension in the form of the idea of Infinity in Descartes and Lévinas.

Let us consider the start of the second chapter of Anselm's *Proslogion*:

And so, Lord, do you, who do give understanding to faith, give me, so far as you know it to be profitable, to understand that you are as we believe; and that you are that which we believe. And indeed, we believe that you are a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. . . Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived,

cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater. . . Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.<sup>51</sup>

It is clear that we are not concerned here with defending or refuting the validity of this proof for goodness knows what time. We are also not concerned with the fact that there appears in it, for the first time in the history of Christian thought, a passage from the level of invocation to the level of reasoning by representing the Thou of prayer as a “something that. . .”<sup>52</sup> Rather, we are only concerned with the content contained in Anselm’s definition, which is a definition that takes our thinking into consideration. It is composed of at least two parts.

The first one talks about the paradox of thinking something which does not let itself be thought, because whatever will be thought, will be less than the referent of thought’s intention. What does this mean? That finite contents do not stand up to the measure of this X toward which human thinking strives. It is as if the ecstatic nature of human thinking must be satisfied by something that goes beyond it, but in such a way that thinking halts this process on the border of the concept-name, “The one than which nothing greater can be thought.” This name, which Ricoeur describes as the Name I from the *Proslogion* is, as another commentator puts it, “the pole of my thinking’s tension, defined exclusively by what my thinking does in its aim of achieving this pole or meaning,” it is “the final boundary of the thinkable.”<sup>53</sup> Precisely in this sense it is correct to express this concept with the idea of Infinity. This is because, especially as underlined by Lévinas, this idea contains in itself more than my own thinking, always finite, can hold:

*Cogitatum*, which at first glance contains *cogitatio* – the idea of God, which in essence does not close itself, is content-less in the strictest sense of the word, after all, does not the liberation and absoluteness of the absolute depend on this? It exceeds our ability to conceptualize it; the ‘objective reality’ of the *cogitatum* shatters the “formal reality” of the *cogitatio*. This surely abolishes – already before the appearance of phenomenology – the theory of the importance and fundamental character of intentional consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

In this sense Infinity is not a name of a being, but rather of a relation. “The distance that separates the *ideatum* from the idea marks the content of the *ideatum*. Infinity belongs to transcendent being as transcendent; infinity is that which is absolutely other.”<sup>55</sup> Claude Bruaire wrote similarly on the topic of Anselm’s proof:

<sup>51</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, trans. T. Włodarczyk, Warszawa 1992, p. 145–146.

<sup>52</sup> P. Ricoeur, “Fides quaerens intellectum: antécédents bibliques?” in *Lectures* 3, Paris 1992, p. 328–329. This remarkably important text is my guide here.

<sup>53</sup> H. Giannini, “L’interprétation existentielle de l’argument ontologique” in *Mythe et foi*, Colloque Castelli, p. 572.

<sup>54</sup> E. Lévinas, *O Bogu, który nawiedza myśl* [Of God Who Comes to Mind], Kraków 1994, p. 123.

<sup>55</sup> E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność* [Totality and Infinity], Warszawa 2002, p. 39.

... the idea of God, the Absolute, as I understand it, in a necessary way implicates that it should be thought as *Other*. What St. Anselm was simply saying was that ... all attempts to reduce the Absolute to reason itself, all attempts to articulate the idea of God collide with this otherness, which God implies as a concept. ... He can manifest himself as my Absolute Other.<sup>56</sup>

However, we must be careful here: from the point of view of Name I absoluteness only signifies Otherness to which we are led, of necessity, by the always gradated greater. This is why, as Giannini phrases it correctly, “the proof’s author did not intend to talk of the divine attributes, but rather of the dynamism of human consciousness, caught on the ‘highest threshold’ of its movement and intention.”<sup>57</sup> “That which nothing greater can be thought,” from Anselm’s proof is an Enigma of the “above-finite,” which Descartes considered to be more primary in ourselves than ourselves, because, as he judged, “in a certain sense the concept of infinity is in me earlier than the concept of finitude, that is, the idea of God before myself”<sup>58</sup>

And yet St. Anselm says more. In chapters 5 and 14 words like these appear: “My soul, did you find what you were seeking? You searched for God, and you discovered that He is the highest of all things, nothing greater than it can be thought; and that this is the life itself, light, wisdom, goodness, eternal happiness and a happy eternity; and that it is everywhere and always.”<sup>59</sup> This name, in turn, gets the label Name II from Ricoeur and he asks:

What does Name II add to Name I? In a significant way it adds a relation to desire, which holds up the dynamics of seeking and finding. This desire is countered by the goods here mentioned (life, light, etc.). Name II signifies an excess in relation to the desired, just like Name I signified an excess in relation to the thought. But to the degree that thought is seeking, and therefore desire, Name II encompasses Name I.<sup>60</sup>

This statement cannot but remind us the relation between the idea of Infinity and desire in Lévinas:

The infinite in the finite, fulfilling itself in the idea of Infinity, occurs as Desire. Not as a desire, which can be satisfied, which can possess the desired being, but as a Desire of infinity, whose Desired never satisfies, but rather, only arouses (*creuse*). A completely disinterested Desire – goodness.<sup>61</sup>

To put it another way, we are returning to the problem of desire, which aims as such, both with respect to acting, just as it does in thinking – how-

<sup>56</sup> C. Bruaire, “Une lecture de Journal Métaphysique” in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (in an issue devoted to Gabriel Marcel), July–September 1974, issue 3.

<sup>57</sup> H. Giannini, op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> Descartes, *Medytacja o pierwszej filozofii* [Meditations on First Philosophy]; cited in Emmanuel Lévinas, *O Bogu, który nawiedza myśl* [Of God Who Comes to Mind], trans. M. Kowalska, Kraków 1994, p. 124.

<sup>59</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, op. cit., p. 158–159.

<sup>60</sup> P. Ricoeur, “Fides quaerens intellectum” in *Lectures 3: Aux frontières de la philosophie*, Paris 1992, p. 332.

<sup>61</sup> E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>194</sup> ever this distinction has only a provisional meaning – toward *excess*, and in this toward *Absolute Alterity*. This Otherness, and this is key, does not let itself be thought, but it can be desired. This desire cannot lead to an absorption of the Desired, but this does not mean that it most deeply expresses our logic, always already endangered with the possibility of tragedy, an existence, which says, like the famous opening words of *Totality and Infinity*: “‘True life is absent.’ But we are in the world. Metaphysics arises and is maintained in this alibi. It is turned toward the ‘elsewhere’ and the ‘otherwise’ and the ‘other.’”<sup>62</sup> These words, no matter how elevated is their ethical interpretation, cannot be reduced and nothing can weaken them. They express a sensitive membrane within the human heart which has its own inner logic that is ready to hospitably host within itself the Absolute Other, but which can also express itself through the conceptual hermeneutics of “That which nothing greater can be thought”. However, it can also desire it, precisely because desiring goes further.

“That which nothing greater can be thought,” Infinity – these are conceptual figures, which can still render service not only to ethics, but also to the philosophy of faith. They do not say much, they even say regrettably little, but at least they do not falsify the experience, which is most deeply relational and which can, thanks to its own logic, be named. On the one hand, these figures can help a faith thought in the perspective of the horizon not fall into the trap of conceptual formalization and conceptual immanentization. They maintain the fundamental (yet impossible to express compactly) dynamics of desire which is also the desire of thinking and understanding that strives toward a conceptual crystallization contained in the desire of agathological intentionality. On the other hand, they can conceptually mediate between this intentionality without an object and the philosophy of dialogue, and can prevent the philosophy of dialogue from doubling up the leap of faith with a conceptual leap, no matter how much it would encroach upon the deepest intention of faith. This is so because the existential decision of faith leans upon on certain anthropological and metaphysical vehicles whose paradoxical articulation can be the thought of St. Anselm and some of its continuations. Desire and Excess thought and named – the oscillation between them might allow us to grasp, in inadequate formulas, what is behind, at the base, of all confessional declarations and especially all ontotheological burdens – lets the philosophy of faith come at least a bit closer to the contemporary ups and downs of faith itself. Perhaps it will also allow us to sketch out a certain fundamental faith, which everyone carries within himself and which at the same time does not close itself to supplements and decisions.

## What is Fundamental Faith?

It seems that the philosophers of horizontal faith mirror, to use Jaspers’ words, “the spiritual situation of our epoch,” which has seen a weakening

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

and questioning of long-lasting structures of thought and institutionalized <sup>195</sup> beliefs in the Western world. It seems *a priori* certain that all attempts to place oneself outside of this context are doomed to failure. On the other hand, philosophy withers away without a “second naiveté,” which is inescapably loaded with assumptions, but which is a direct, in its intention, way of looking at reality experienced from a particular perspective. What emerges for the philosopher from the collision of our hermeneutic analyses and this look upon reality? Let us attempt a provisional sketch of the thoughts which come to mind.

Does anything remain from faith as a concept where there is a loosening of faith in the strictly religious sense, or when it collides with the variety of faiths? Instead of directly answering this question, let us labor over a much more important question: the foundations of humanity when, as Tillich wrote, there is a breakdown of feeling for any meaning to life. What’s at stake here is not only some sort of “life worth living,” but also what is contained in the words, “life can be won or lost.” Human life as we know is not a mere happening, but a stake in a battle for a subject’s value which cannot be reached without sacrifices, disinterestedness, effort and hope. There is in life a care, in the Heideggerian sense, for life itself, a care more basic than all egocentrism. Under what conditions is care, of the kind which Tillich calls absolute, possible? Tillich and Scheler both think that everyone possesses it, and that one can only misidentify or overlook it, by putting it immediately into preconceived notions. I have written critically about the conviction these philosophers hold as to the certainty of the Absolute in opposition to the uncertainty of circumscribed contents. But maybe there is something true in these views? But what?

I shall state a thesis: in living we trust, life is a surge of trust, which we can name pre-trusting. One should not understand this as an *explicite* intersubjective relation. Yet, it does contain some sort of fundamental truth. Let us then rephrase the questions more clearly: what does it mean to live? As we know, we should not look for the answer only in scientific, naturalistic, knowledge. “The radical phenomenology of life” as conceived by Michel Henry puts it within the context of the fundamental problematics of the phenomenological questioning of the source of appearing. For Henry, to live means to reveal oneself to oneself within one’s sustaining of oneself, and at the same time to take into oneself given life. But living is not just feeding oneself with one’s own energy, but to feed upon what is other, with the supplies which continually flow toward us along with life. Lévinas frequently underscored that the immediacy of reveling in various contents does not exhaust the openness pulsating under life. This openness is a fundamental trust, which endures undefeated, despite the continual piling up of disenchanting experiences.

This is why life contains within itself something more than just a feeding of itself with itself, more than even feeding on contents; it contains an acceptance of life as an elementary and absolutely uncircumscribed good. This good continually incarnates itself somewhere, and at the same

<sup>196</sup> time it permeates all contents with an atmosphere weaved together from expectations and the unwritten promise of their fulfillment – it is not above life, but within it, in its immanent power. Pre-trusting is undefined in its direction, but it is not indifferent. It continually awaits some concrete good, and hope is nothing else but that. If pre-trusting can be defined as the stuff of human existence in its fulfillment within the present of an act, then hope also directs itself in the direction of the future toward the possibility of the “totally otherwise.”

This is how the foundation of what we here call fundamental faith shows itself, that is, in the double sense of something upon which, despite everything, we can depend, and that on which we already factually incessantly depend. It is also, just as life in Michel Henry, a transcendental faith, because it constitutes the heart of the conditions of possibility for the appearance of phenomena and also of the subject to itself. Phenomena appear for human consciousness, which accepts into itself variegated qualities occurring within the horizon of trust that are inseparable from the ur-event of life as my own. This horizon, the horizon of the good in the widest sense, makes it so that the time of life is primarily the time of hope. Patience, in Lévinas’ understanding of the word, of an inescapably aging life is not only a surrender to necessity, but a hope, ready to exceed its own finitude. To be open is to await, it means to accept the arrival of things in a gesture of elementary hospitality. It welcomes the incoming or encountered presence, only because it carries within itself the promise of the good – otherwise the appearing presence could even be intentionally anticipated, but it would not be welcomed. However, this elementary structure has nothing directly to do with particular expectations, which carve out our existential orientation in the world and our horizons of intentional consciousness, as they project anticipated, more or less known, objective meanings. On the contrary: the horizon of fundamental faith is undefined not only as to its “how,” but also toward its intensity, its “how much.” It contains in its meaning the possibility of an unending variety of concrete goods, and more primordially, of values<sup>63</sup>, it is the unlimited amplitude of intensity, and therefore of an infinitely great (i.e., wonderful, lofty) good, which can always come to me, flow like a gift. The possibility of this seems to be embedded in the fact that the good draws itself out onto the cut between factual hierarchies of values or concrete goods and also – perhaps contained within the hierarchy itself – onto an opening toward something more, which by its nature does not allow for tracing any barriers whatsoever. This is the reason why expectations can take on the most strange or utopian shapes and demand in their encounter with reality a re-definition of its specific axiological and ontological truth.

Let us add now, fundamental faith contains in its “what” and “how” an obvious reference to others, to alterity. Trusting life is above all trusting

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<sup>63</sup> I use this term, bypassing the not unjustified critique of the concept of values conducted by Heidegger and his followers. I do not think that this critique would suffice to discredit this concept, analyzed so aptly by Scheler, Ingarden, Hartmann, and finally, by Tischner.

others, close-ones, their good-will, their accepting freedom, their initiative. Fundamental faith flourishes where there is a certain fundamental where, which is none other than the family home. We learn fundamental faith with the most basic gestures of motherhood and fatherhood, which bring into this pre-faith an inseparably dialogical coloration that decides the deepest meaning of faith, especially when it transforms itself into religious faith. Fundamental faith stratifies itself or wraps itself around our personal history, carrying within itself the potential encounters, fascinations, loves, and also, unfortunately, betrayals whose deposits accrue within our memory.

This pre-trust is not deprived of internal drama, because there is also something that lodges itself within life, something which is life's denial. We constantly encounter opposing pressure, obstacles, dramas and border situations. Faith in life and the possibilities for the good inherent within it has to deal, from the beginning, with raw facticity, with real experiences, which throw onto the horizon of expectations the memory of not only experienced joys, but also things unfulfilled, disenchantments, sufferings, evil. These situations problematize life, call forth questions, mobilize the intelligence and our powers to face up to all sorts of evils, but in the final analysis they could lead to discouragement. This is the road of the factual horizon of life and it creates a certain axiological and intellectual confusion in which good and evil neutralize each other, making the horizon appear axiologically indifferent, precisely factual.

Because the horizon is not simply an object and is not ever given as an object (even if it can be thought as such secondarily), its presence shows itself in the manner in which we live life, by its attunement. Moods are changeable, whereas we experience the horizon – that which is non-thematic and surrounds the entirety of our life – in the manner in which we decide for a certain basic attunement, *Grundbefindlichkeit* – which is a synthesis of experience and our answer to it. It seems that we can experience reality within an accepting pre-trust and the ethical stands which flow from it, such as faithfulness and goodness. We can also live it within an equally chosen pre-betrayal, of which both Tischner and Niebuhr wrote, one which can engender an anti-ethic of revenge and despair. Moods and stands have a wider and deeper reach than any mythological or theological constructions. One can further fill them out with feelings and stands such as, on the one side, thankfulness and hope, and on the other, anxiety and the feeling of being thrown without one's agreement into existence. It is not necessary, as Heidegger states in *Phenomenology and Theology*, that religiously motivated gratitude is built upon a primary feeling of being-thrown. However, if pre-trust in its primal tug does not allow, at all, the possibility of failure, in reality the pre-failure is never disconnected from it. In fact, it is probably screamed out already with the first yell of the newborn. But the pre-failure presupposes a pre-trust, and not inversely, it depends on it and that is what makes possible an eventual victory over it. Pre-trust is precisely the most basic foundation, yet it is

198 not an independent foundation, meaning, it is such that it needs to deal with the feeling of the pre-betrayal with the help of meanings, sense. To put it another way, pre-trust is *de facto* a dialectical structure. How is it accomplished? We can only add a couple of preliminary remarks, which sketch out the problem of fundamental faith.

The collision of pre-faith with pre-betrayal gives birth to an unrest and moves thinking. Namely, it lastingly inscribes protest into our lives, or as Tischner aptly put it, it creates, “a preferential rebellion”<sup>64</sup> and at the same time a search for meaning, existential meaning above all, and with it – questioning. The indefinite horizon of the good collides with the horizon of evil, which disturbs, but at the same time puts before us the question of the basic direction of existence and the direction of our choices of freedom. Good in itself is inclined toward overcoming evil simultaneously on the theoretical and practical plane. This is why evil does not draw itself on the same plane as the good for fundamental faith, rather, it always carries within itself an impossible to define clearly excess of possibility for triumph, the battle for which is what Tillich called “the courage to be.” The drama of thinking and acting is inscribed in pre-faith, that is, fundamental faith. Something need not only become more important, it can also become ultimately important, become a concretely drawn out “absolute concern,” because one has to choose this, while throwing off something else, or even the whole world. We are beginning to suspect that our life is at stake in a deathly serious game – deathly, because we have only one life, which ends in death, but it is not the case that death, with its facticity, automatically closes the spheres of fundamental, metaphysical resolution. Thus, perhaps, by hedging my bets with the “absolute concern,” I am also betting on some kind of salvation and at the same on an authentic being-myself through an identification with the horizon of the good? Is it that by deciding for a battle for the good in me and around me, by agreeing with this same motion to be given up to trials through which something is chiseled out within me for which death will only be a trial – granted, the toughest – so that *non omnis moriar*?

However it may be, the questioning arising from our inner depths – calling forth rebellion – from the collision of good with evil demands a dramaturgy that plays itself out in the sphere of meaning, and at the same time in the sphere of truth. The horizon of the good can at first reveal itself to us as a horizon endangered with a definitive disaster, whose signals seem to saturate us from all sides and all planes. Yet human life is not totally defenseless against this disaster. First things first: despite everything, it continues to live and with freedom at its disposal, acts – in the final analysis, not thanks to itself, since it receives life from sources other than itself. The problematizing clash of the horizon of the good with the menace of evil might bear fruit with a feeling that “the intrigue toward the good” is written into the mystery of life and the beauty of the – however inhuman it might seem – universe, and also when it comes to

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<sup>64</sup> J. Tischner, *Myslenie według wartości*, op. cit., p. 490.

interpersonal communication, that is, culture. Fundamental faith runs <sup>199</sup> into a *logos* that makes possible an elementary orientation within the drama in which it participates, but it does not give away any circumscribable particulars. In this way the horizon can be submitted to symbolic and conceptual articulation, which in turn allows us to read life and the course of things as the speech of cyphers – but of what? – of an instance that allows a widening of the sphere of sense with structures, which allow the human subject to have hope that evil and chaos do not have the last word and can, in the final analysis, be staved off.

This is because fundamental faith encroaches upon the universe of meaning in a specific way. By experiencing the doubt and question-inducing collision of the horizon of the good with evil – experiencing, meaning by participating in this collision, rather than observing it from a distance – in its essence fundamental faith never abandons the situation of protest and questioning for symbolic constructions. That is the reason why when one believes, “one does not know whether or in what one believes.” If, however, one does believe, he summons up this faith, sometimes through acts of real martyrdom, always in the dark, always risking, thanks to a secret pact with the desire for unconditionality. It is a metaphysical desire which feeds off the speech of the cyphers, or traces, of Transcendence. Obviously, this is only possible because there is a strength within faith that does not allow for a complete breakdown nor a closing of the horizon through negative meanings, rather it supports itself through positive meanings. In a fundamental faith that has not crossed the threshold of religious faith, but is potentially open to it, one meaning-creating operation seems to be a *sine qua non* of faith today: the one which does not allow for a closing of the horizon through the schematization, however it is understood, of the whole, instead it continually holds it open through the mediation of the schema of the infinity of goodness. Precisely at this point fundamental faith may encounter the idea of, “That which nothing greater can be thought,” and the idea of Infinity. The deepest intention of faith depends on this – not intentionality in the objective sense – so that it does not allow for a confusion of its basic orientation toward the good, nor for an idolatry of the whole, that is, facticity. Fundamental faith is nothing if it does not reach beyond and at the same time into the depths, therefore also possibly beyond temporality toward eternity. It is nothing if it does not experience the infinite good as a present reality, which can in no way be encompassed, understood and known, nor in the most ordinary sense of the word can it be identified, rather it is one in which, through freedom, it can somehow participate.

Through freedom because the flip-side of the infinity of the good is this infinity's, perhaps only seemingly so, absolute absence, of which Simone Weil wrote. This is why the infinity of the good becomes present only within the decision of believing, and at the same time thinking, subject, who through this decision most deeply defines himself as one who stakes his bets on this infinity. In this way the search for meaning

200 can widen itself into the religious register – it can, but it does not have to. It so since fundamental faith cannot be exhausted by any religious *credo* (times of crisis are acutely aware of this), because it contains an inexhaustible excess of meaning. This constitutes the indubitable truth of fundamental faith.

One must add that this excess of meaning gains a whole new dimension with the moment when it is interpreted as the infinite depth of a person in itself, and especially when it concerns the Person of the Absolute Thou, God. This is only possible when the subject of fundamental faith discovers that he has been invited, above all by a trustworthy witness, to step beyond himself into a dialogue with the Hidden One. This dialogue is a way, an event, an adventure which chisels out that which is key for faith: the continual giving up of initiative into the hands of the Other, and the chiseling out, through all the trials and doubts, of one's own faith as faithfulness.

KAROL TARNOWSKI

(b.1937) is professor at the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Kraków where he has held the Chair of the Philosophy of God since 1978. He earned his PhD in 1988 and in 1999 he received the title of professor. For several years he was dean of the Philosophy Department at the Pontifical Academy of Theology.

His fascination with philosophy started when, in the 60's, he took part in Fr. Tischner's seminars and lectures devoted to contemporary philosophy, which took place in a private apartment. Until then he only knew Józef Tischner as an insightful preacher, especially liked in academic circles. Now the priest's colloquia on phenomenology introduced him to a world of thought which was not easily accessible in communist Poland. He decided to study philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, though he had been working as a pianist for the Academy of Music in Kraków. Tischner remained a patron of his academic studies, offering him the post of lecturer at the newly founded Pontifical Academy of Theology after his academic career was blocked at the Jagiellonian University – since atheist Marxism was the *sine qua non* of continued participation in official academic life.

For many years now Karol Tarnowski has been lecturing and writing on the following questions: God, faith, revelation, witness, the desire for transcendence, and the relationship between the God of the philosophers and the God of believers. The rationality of faith, the relationship between faith and thinking, as well as the essence of the act of faith are now the focus of Tarnowski's intellectual researches. *Usłyszeć Niewidzialne: Zarys filozofii wiary* [To Hear the Invisible: An Outline of the Philosophy of Faith] (Kraków 2006) gathers the conclusions he has reached and constitutes the only such compendium within the field of philosophy of religion in Poland.

He is also the author of *Ku absolutnej ucieczce: Bóg i wiara w filozofii Gabriela Marcela* [Towards the Absolute Escape: God and Faith in Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy], *Człowiek i transcendencja* [Man and Transcendence], *Wiara i myślenie* [Faith and Thinking], *Bóg fenomenologów* [The God of the Phenomenologists].

He has published and lectured worldwide. Professor Tarnowski is an editor for 201 Polish philosophical journals and publishers, most notably of the series “Philosophy and Religion” by Znak Publishers, which introduced Polish readers to important contemporary philosophical works. He is also a member of advisory councils for the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Tischner Institute.

As a pianist Karol Tarnowski studied at the Academy of Music in Kraków with Henryk Sztompka and Barbara Korytowska. He has worked extensively with that Academy and also the Philharmonic Orchestra of Szczecin. He founded the Trio Krakowskie [Kraków Trio] with Antoni Cofalik and Krzysztof Okoń. As a soloist he gave concerts in France and Switzerland. He usually plays Chopin and Brahms, but Bach, Debussy and Szymanowski are also in his repertoire.